



# Defending

The International Coaches Association

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# ***Defending Drills and Games***

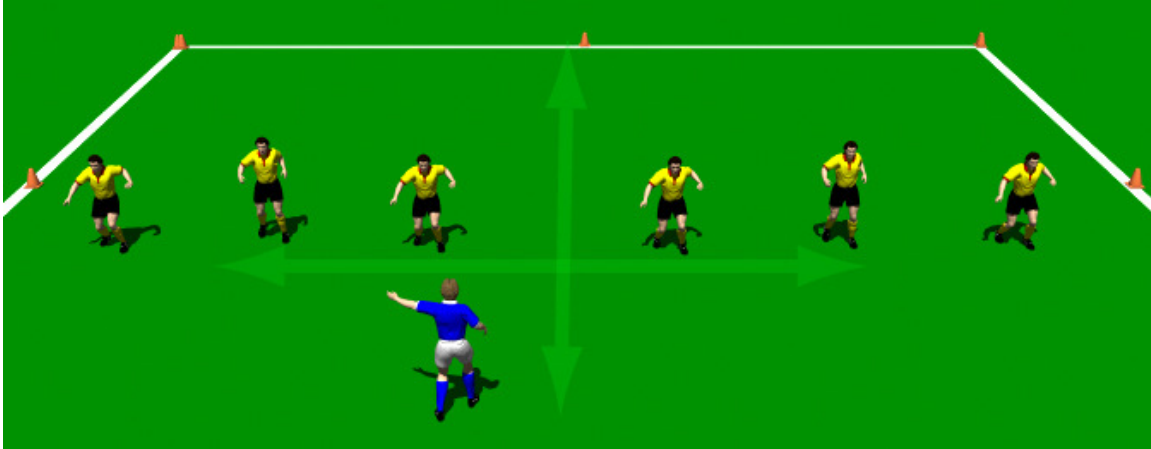
Select from a large variety of Defending drills and games to custom design your own practice sessions. There are fun and challenging practices for every age and skill level.

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## Defensive Footwork Warm Up



### Exercise Objectives:

This drill is a good introduction to a session on defending. It can be incorporated in your warm up. The drill places an emphasis on defensive footwork and body stance.

### Field Preparation

- Area 20 x 20 yards
- Cones or Flag poles

### Coaching Pointers:

The entire group are positioned on the end line of a grid 20 yards x 20 yards. The coach dictates the direction that the players move by shouting out commands.

When the coach shouts;

" **Delay**" all the players must retreat backwards.

" **Pressure**" all the players must move forward.

" **Right**" all the players must move to the right.

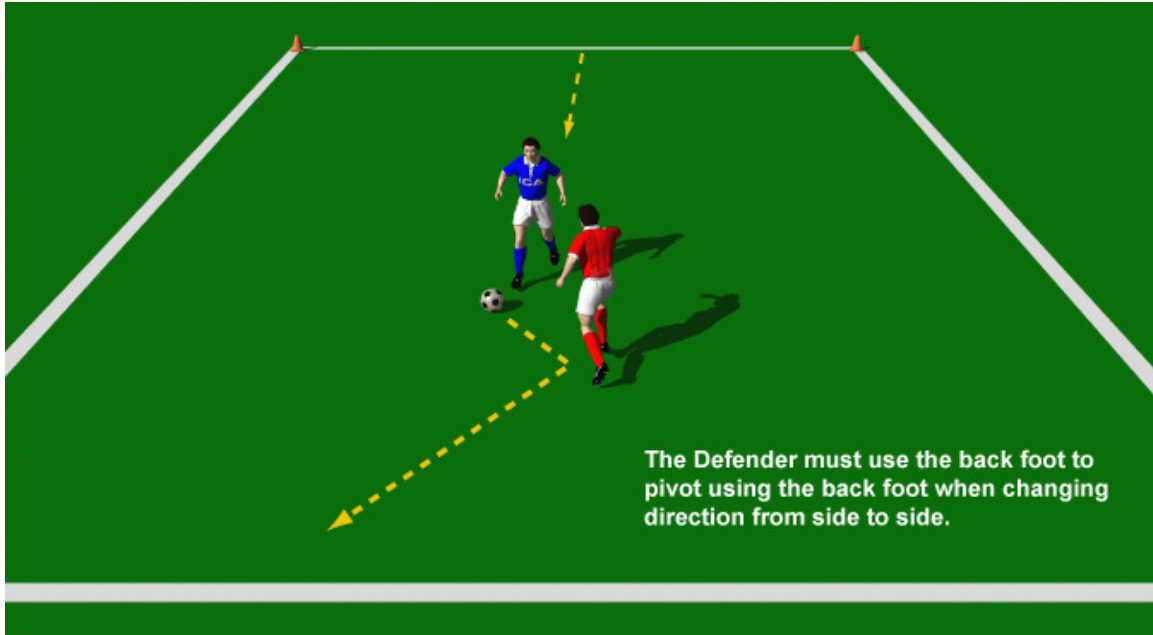
" **Left**" all the players must move to the left.

The speed of the practice should be increased gradually.

### The coach should emphasize the following coaching points:

- Bend the knees and keep the body low. (don't stand tall, stand small). This position enables the legs to be "spring loaded" to change direction quickly.
- Leg position should be with one leg behind the other.
- Pivot using the back foot when changing direction from side to side.
- Keep the upper torso forward, this is crucial for changing direction from a backwards to forwards position quickly.

## Defending 1 v 1



### Exercise Objectives:

This practice is designed to improve each player's defensive footwork and body stance.

### Field Preparation

- Area 10 x 20 yards
- 2 Players
- 1 Ball
- Cones or Flag poles

### Coaching Pointers:

Two players are positioned in a grid 10 yards x 20 yards. Both players start the practice from the end line and work their way up and down the grid. Alternating roles when they reach each end line. One player is an attacker the other a defender. There is no tackling involved in this practice, emphasis is strictly on footwork and body stance.

The attacker starts the practice by slowly running with the ball towards the defender. The defender must retreat and keep a distance of approximately 1-2 yards from the attacker. As the attacker travels down the grid they must move the ball from left to right, right to left so the defender must change their body position.

When both players reach the opposite end line they reverse roles and work their way back up the grid.

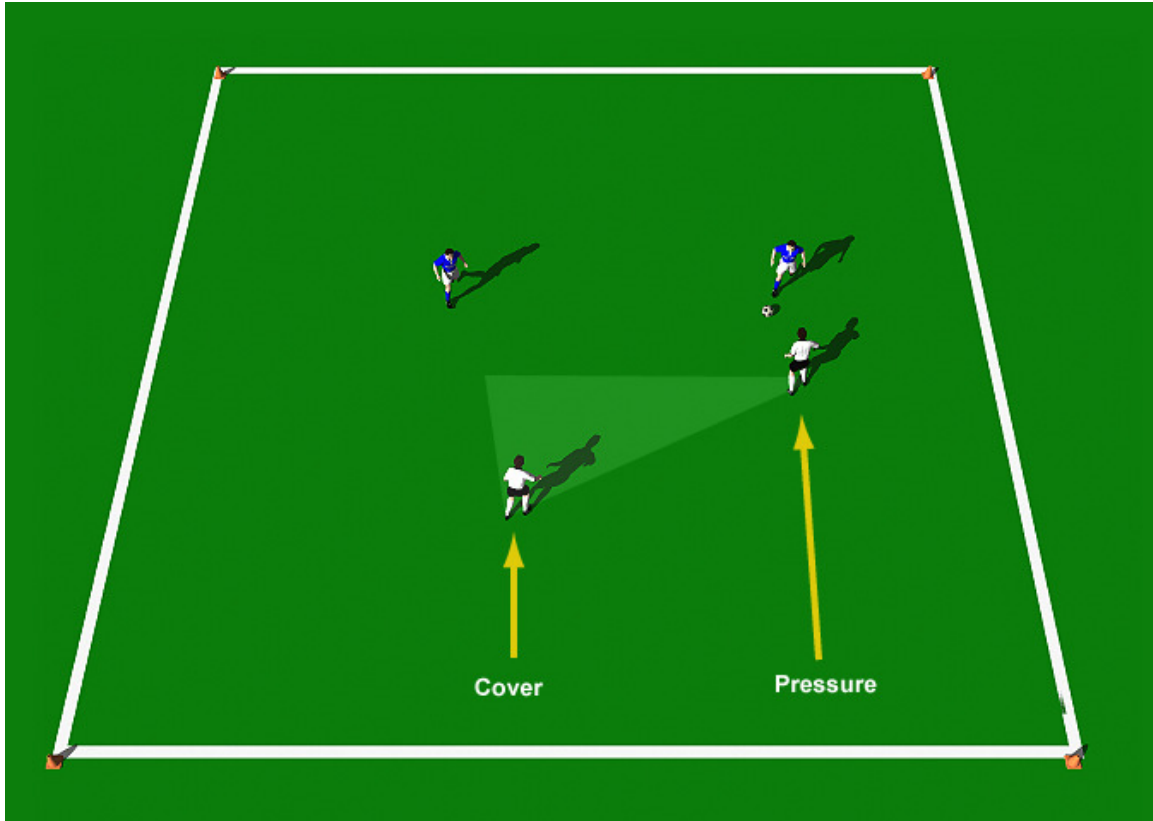
The speed of the practice should be increased gradually.

**The coach should emphasize the following coaching points:**

- Bend the knees and keep the body low. (don't stand tall, stand small). This position enables the legs to be "spring loaded" to change direction quickly.
- Leg position should be with one leg behind the other.
- Pivot using the back foot when changing direction from side to side.
- Keep the upper torso forward, this is crucial for changing direction from a backwards to forwards position quickly



## ***Defensive Positioning 2 V 2***



### **Exercise Objectives:**

This practice is designed to improve each player's defensive positioning in a 2 v 2 situation.

### **Field Preparation**

- Area 20 x 20 yards
- 4 Players
- 1 Ball
- Cones or Flag poles

### **Coaching Pointers:**

Four players are positioned in a grid 20 yards x 20 yards. Players start the practice from the end line and work their up and down the grid. Alternating roles when they reach each end line. Two players are the attackers the other two defenders. There is no tackling involved in this practice, emphasis is strictly on defensive positioning.

The attackers start the practice by slowly running with the ball towards the two defenders. The defenders must retreat and keep their correct defensive positions as the ball is exchanged between the attackers. As the attackers travel down the grid they must pass the ball so the defenders must change their defensive roles.

### **The Pressurizing Defender (1st defender):**

The nearest player to the ball is the pressurizing defender. They must keep a distance of approximately 1-2 yards from the attacker.

### **The Supporting Defender (2nd defender):**

The supporting defender role is to add cover and balance to the defensive shape. **Cover** is important so they are in a position to add depth for the pressurizing player. For example in a game if the pressurizing defender is beaten then the covering player would be in a position to put pressure on the attacker or clean up any mistakes. **Balance** is important to prevent any through balls in behind the defense. By dropping off at an angle the defender encourages the player with the ball to make a pass in front of the defender and not behind.

The supporting player should be in a position to cover the pressurizing defender and mark their own player. When both players reach the opposite end line they reverse roles and work their way back up the grid.

The speed of the practice should be increased gradually.

### **The coach should emphasize the following coaching points:**

- Players should adjust their defensive positioning quickly as the ball is exchanged between the attackers.
- Players should adjust their position as the ball is traveling and be in a good balanced position when the attacker has the ball at their feet.
- Communication is vital, especially from the covering defender as they can see the entire situation.
- Bend the knees and keep the body low. (don't stand tall, stand small). This position enables the legs to be "spring loaded" to change direction quickly.
- Leg position should be with one leg behind the other.
- Pivot using the back foot when changing direction from side to side.
- Keep the upper torso forward, this is crucial for changing direction from a backwards to forwards position quickly.

## ***Defensive Recovery Runs***



### **Exercise Objectives:**

This practice is designed to improve each player's reaction to recovering when possession is lost.

### **Field Preparation**

- Area 10 x 20 yards
- Small Groups
- 1 Ball
- Cones or Flag poles

### **Coaching Pointers:**

Players are divided into two small groups. A group is positioned on each side of a grid 10 yards x 20 yards. One player starts the practice by running with the ball to the first player in the opposite group. When the player with the ball reaches the first player in the opposite group he stops the ball dead with the sole of the foot for the player to run with the ball to the opposite group.

Immediately after giving the ball, player must chase the player with the ball back to his group. He then joins the end of the line of his group. There is no tackling for the ball. The recovery player has to try and tag the player with the ball on the back. The drill is repeated from each side.

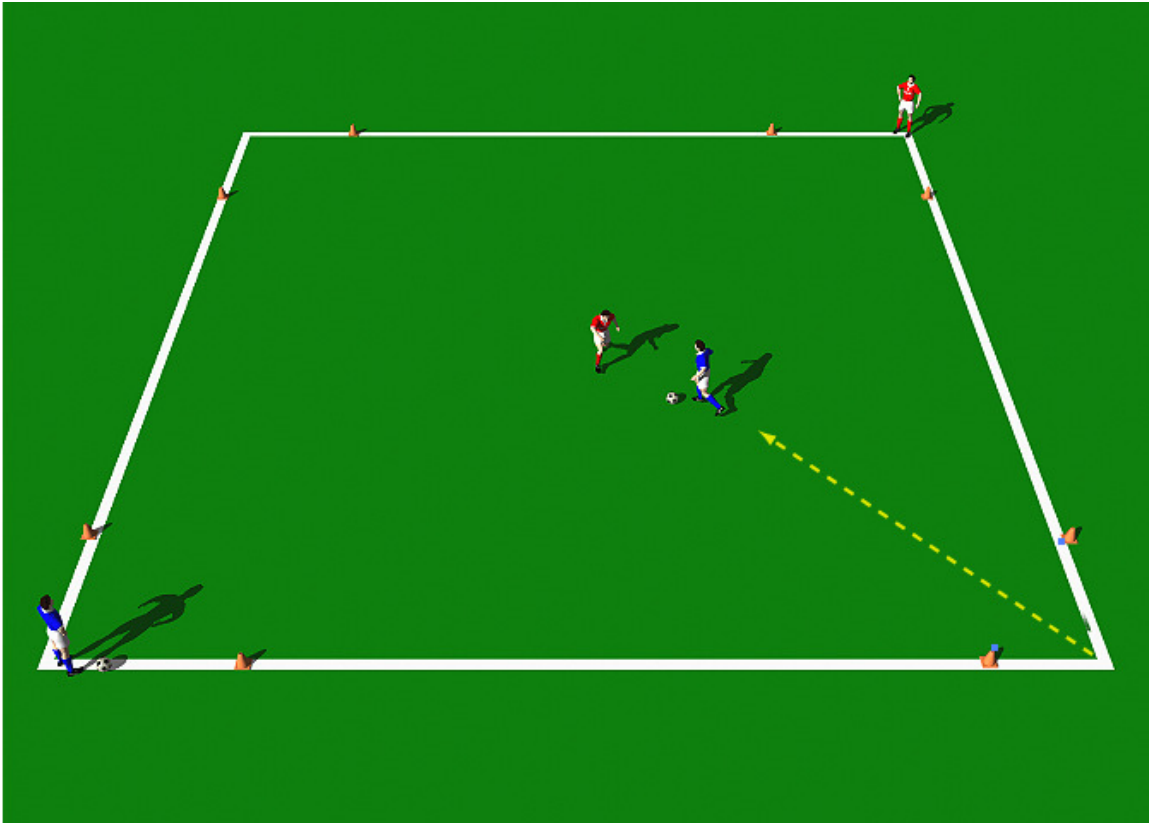
The speed of the practice should be increased gradually.



**The coach should emphasize the following coaching points:**

- Travel quickly with the ball.
- Recover immediately when the ball is transferred to the player in the opposite group.

## ***Defending 1 v 1 across Grid***



### **Exercise Objectives:**

This practice is designed to improve each player's one on one defending skills.

### **Field Preparation**

Area 10 x 20 yards, Small Groups, 1 Ball, Cones or Flag poles

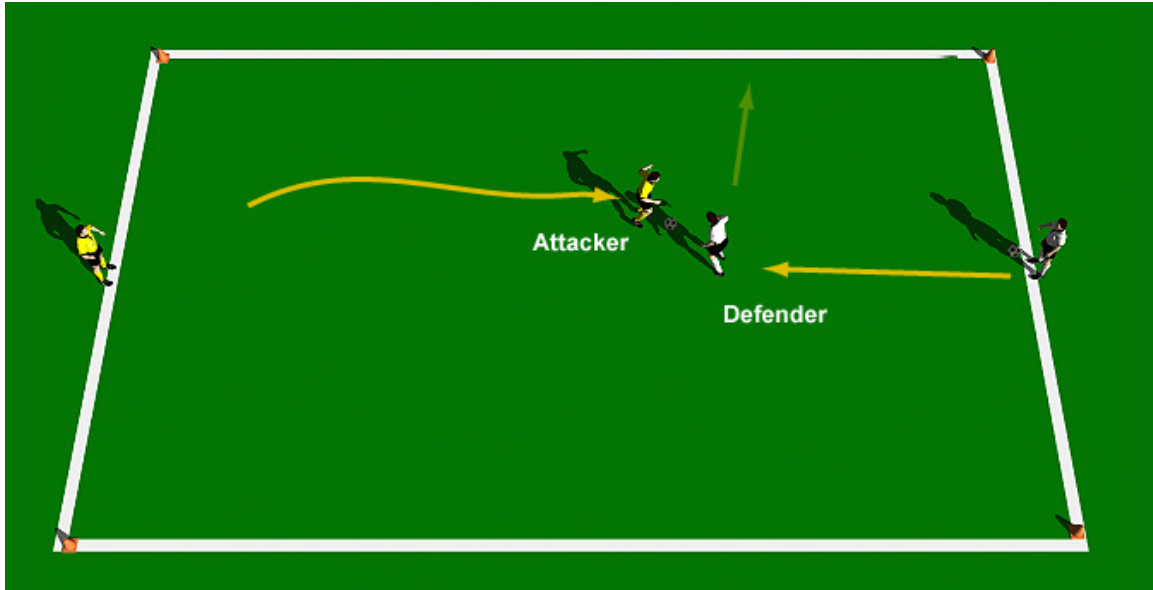
### **Coaching Pointers:**

A player is positioned at each corner of a grid 10 yards x 10 yards. Small goals are made using cones which are placed approximately 1 yard apart. The players alternate in pairs playing one versus one across the grid. The practice should be performed with high intensity.

### **The coach should emphasize the following coaching points:**

- Gain as much ground as possible to close down the attacker.
- Slow down on the last 2 yards. Get low with knees bent.
- Adopt a "side on" position.
- Keep goal side of the ball, in between the player and the goal.
- Make the direction of the play predictable.
- Timing of the tackle is important, wait for the forward to make their move.
- Quality tackling is as much an attitude as it is technique.

# Defending 1 v 1



## Exercise Objectives:

This practice is designed to improve each player's one on one defending skills.

## Field Preparation

- Area 10 x 20 yards
- Small Groups
- 1 Ball
- Cones or Flag poles

## Coaching Pointers:

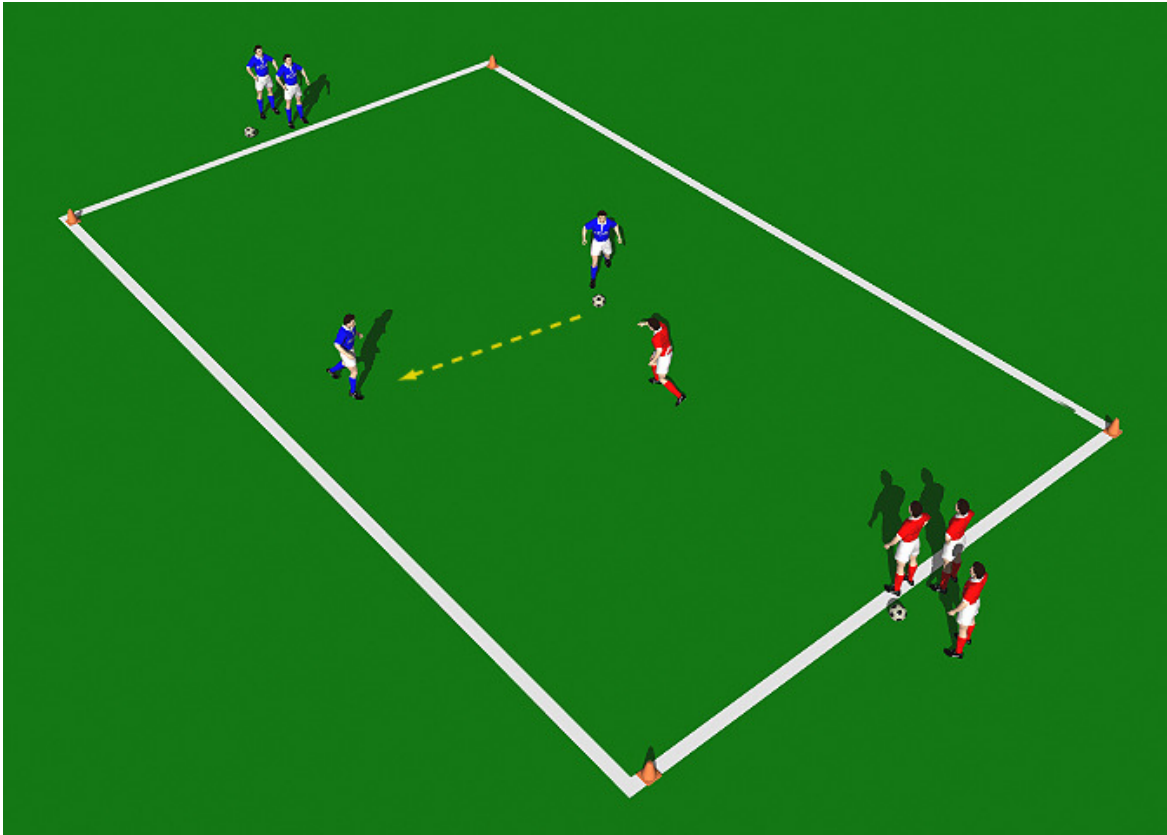
Two players are positioned on each side of a grid 10 yards x 20 yards. The player with the ball starts the practice by passing the ball to the first player at the opposite side of the grid. After passing the ball, the player immediately must defend the player receiving the ball. The player in possession must reach the opposite end line to score a point. The defender must win the ball to score a point. The next two players repeat the practice from the opposite side. The speed of the practice should be increased gradually.

## The coach should emphasize the following coaching points:

Pass the ball firmly to the receiving player.

- Gain as much ground as possible as the ball is traveling.
- Slow down on the last 2 yards. Get low with knees bent.
- Adopt a "side on" position.
- Make the direction of the play predictable.
- Timing of the tackle is important, wait for the forward to make their move.
- Quality tackling is as much an attitude as it is technique.
- Players must develop an aggressive and savvy attitude towards winning the ball.

## Defending 1 v 2



### Exercise Objectives:

This practice is designed to improve each player's one on two defending skills.

### Field Preparation

- Area 10 x 20 yards
- Small Groups
- 1 Ball
- Cones or Flag poles

### Coaching Pointers:

A small group of players are positioned on each side of a grid 10 yards x 20 yards. The player with the ball starts the practice by passing the ball to the first two players at the opposite side of the grid. After passing the ball, the player immediately must defend against the two attackers. The attackers must reach the opposite end line to score a point. The defender must win the ball to score a point. Players repeat the practice from the opposite side.

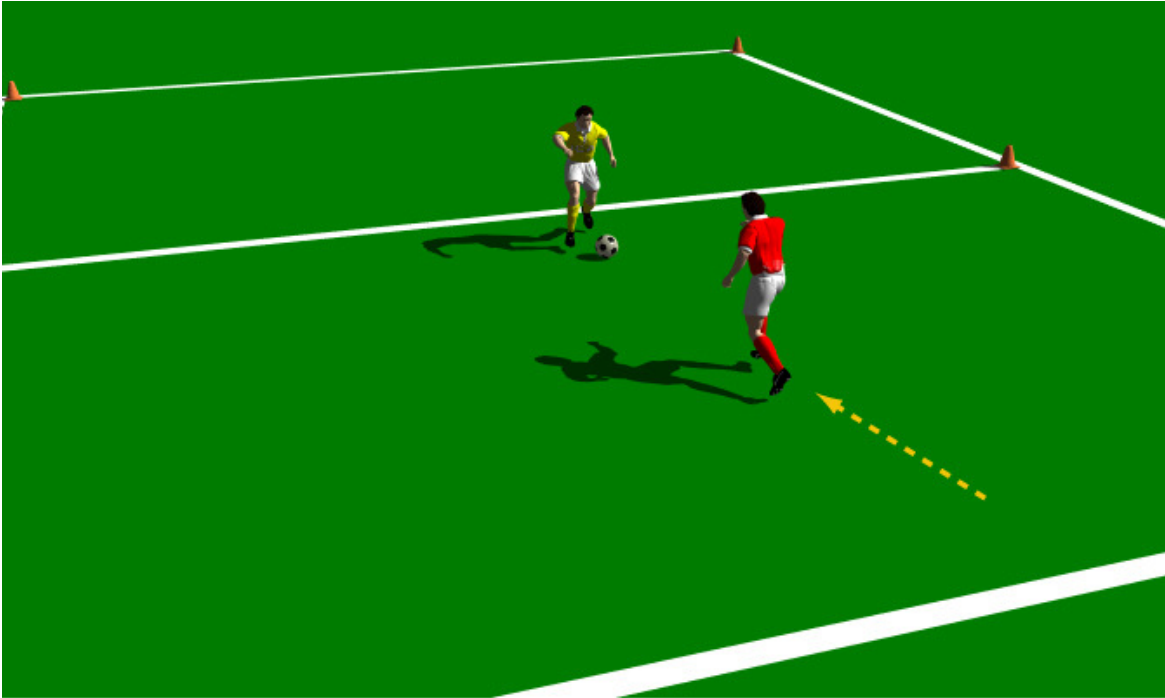
The speed of the practice should be increased gradually.

### The coach should emphasize the following coaching points:

- Pass the ball firmly to the receiving player.
- Gain as much ground as possible as the ball is traveling.
- Keep both attackers in view at all times.

- Slow down on the last 2 yards. Get low with knees bent.
- Adopt a “side on” position.
- Make the direction of the play predictable.
- Timing of the tackle is important, wait for the forward to make his move.
- Quality tackling is as much an attitude as it is technique.
- Players must develop an aggressive and savvy attitude towards winning the ball.

## ***Defending 1 v 1 Swap Grid***



### **Exercise Objectives:**

This practice is designed to improve each player's one on one defending skills.

### **Field Preparation**

- Area 10 x 20 yards
- Small Groups
- 1 Ball
- Cones or Flag poles

### **Coaching Pointers:**

Two players are positioned in a grid 10 yards x 20 yards. The grid is divided into two smaller grids. To start the practice both players pass the ball around one of the grids. After several passes, one player plays the ball into the opposite grid for their partner to chase, control and turn. The player with the ball becomes the attacker and the other becomes the defender.

To score a point the attacker must get past the defender and stop the ball at the opposite end of the grid. The defender scores a point by winning the ball and running with it to the attackers end of the grid. The practice is repeated, alternating roles each time.

The speed of the practice should be increased gradually.

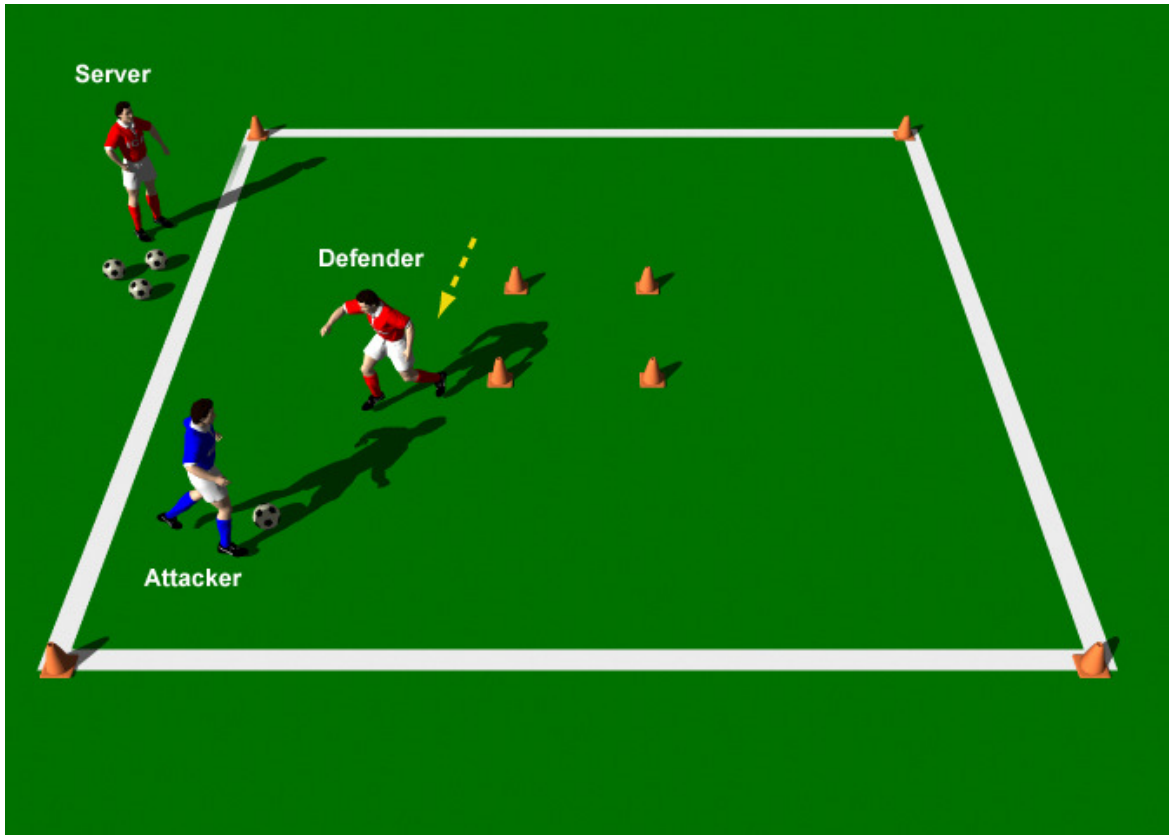
### **The coach should emphasize the following coaching points:**

- Pass the ball firmly into the opposite grid.
- Gain as much ground as possible as the ball is traveling.
- Slow down on the last 2 yards. Get low with knees bent.
- Prevent the attacker from turning whenever possible.



- Adopt a “side on” position.
- Make the direction of the play predictable.
- Timing of the tackle is important, wait for the forward to make his move.
- Quality tackling is as much an attitude as it is technique.
- Players must develop an aggressive and savvy attitude towards winning the ball.

## ***Defending 1 v 1 Goal in Middle***



### **Exercise Objectives:**

This practice is designed to improve each player's one on one defending skills.

### **Field Preparation**

- Area 10 x 20 yards
- Small Groups
- 1 Ball
- Cones or Flag poles

### **Coaching Pointers:**

Two players are positioned in a grid, 10 yards x 10 yards. One server is placed outside the grid. A small square (goal) 1yard by 1 yard is made in the middle of the grid.

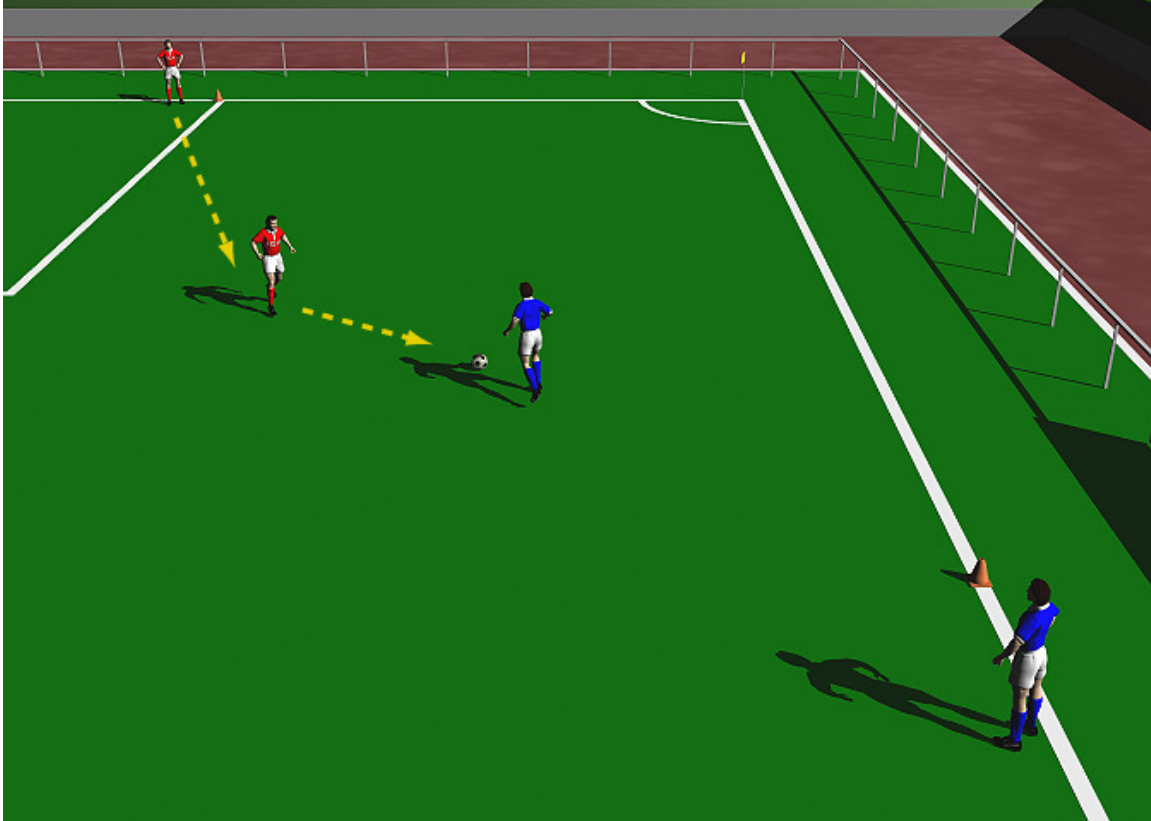
The server starts the practice by passing the ball into the grid. The two players inside challenge for possession of the ball. The player with the ball becomes the attacker, the other the defender. The defender has to prevent the attacker from scoring a goal through any side of the goal. A point is awarded for each goal scored. Players should rotate with the server so each player performs the activity.

### **The coach should emphasize the following points for defending:**

- Gain as much ground as possible as the ball is traveling.
- Slow down on the last 2 yards. Get low with knees bent.

- Prevent the attacker from turning whenever possible.
- Adopt a “side on” position.
- Make the direction of the play predictable.
- Timing of the tackle is important, wait for the forward to make his move.
- Quality tackling is as much an attitude as it is technique.
- Players must develop an aggressive and savvy attitude towards winning the ball.

## ***Defending 1 v 1 Edge of the Box***



### **Exercise Objectives:**

This practice is designed to improve the player's one on one defending skills in and around the penalty area.

### **Field Preparation**

- Area 10 x 20 yards
- Small Groups
- 1 Ball
- Cones or Flag poles

### **Coaching Pointers:**

This practice is designed to improve the player's one on one defending skills in and around the penalty area. One defending group is positioned at the junction of the six-yard box and the end line. The attacking group is placed on the sideline approximately 25 yards from the corner flag.

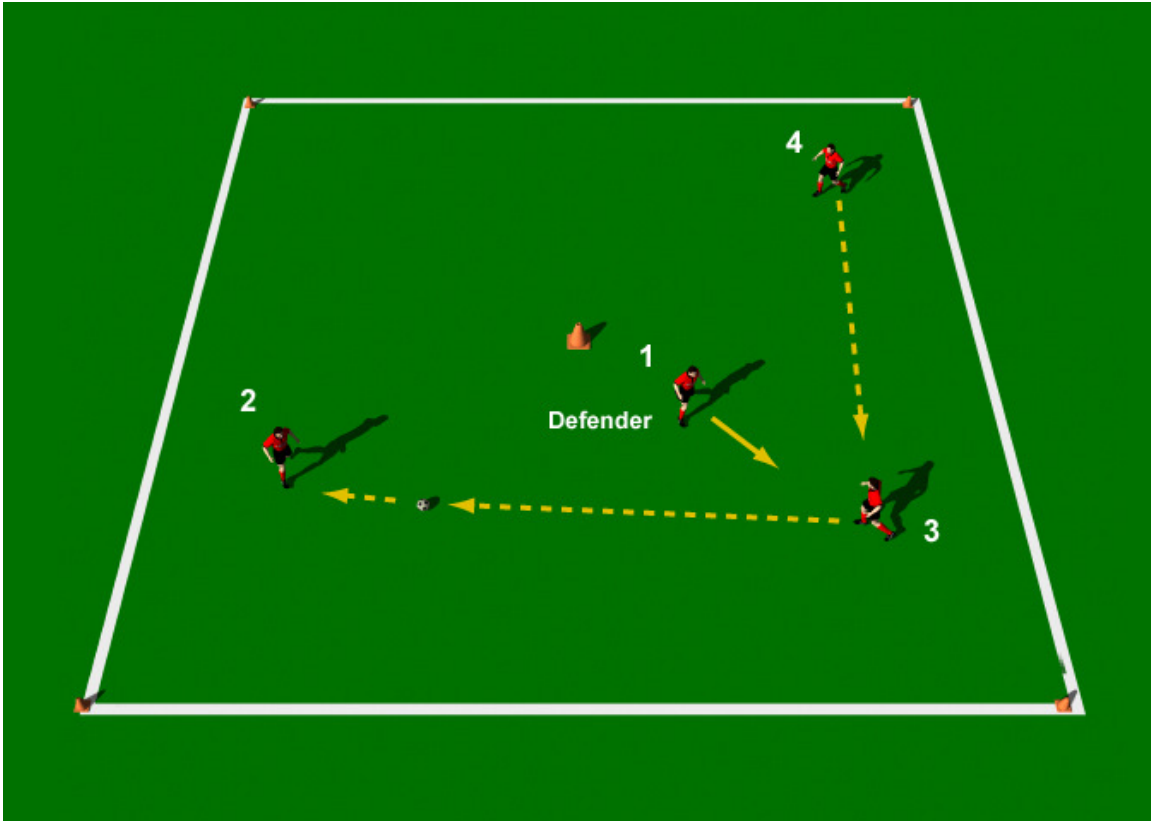
The practice starts when the first defender passes the ball to the first attacker. The defender must follow their pass and prevent the attacker from scoring a goal. A goal is also awarded each time the defender can successfully dispossess the attacker. After the play is completed, both players return to their starting positions. The next players in line repeat the practice. Players should alternate the roles after frequently.

The speed of the practice should be increased gradually.

**The coach should emphasize the following coaching points:**

- Pass the ball firmly to the attacking player's feet.
- Gain as much ground as possible as the ball is traveling.
- Keep between the ball and the goal.
- Slow down on the last 2 yards. Get low with knees bent.
- Adopt a "side on" position.
- Make the direction of the play predictable (away from the goal).
- Timing of the tackle is important, wait for the forward to make his move.
- Quality tackling is as much an attitude as it is technique.
- Players must develop an aggressive and savvy attitude towards winning the ball.

## Defend the Cone



### Exercise Objectives:

This practice can be used to emphasize either attacking or defensive skills and tactics.

### Field Preparation

- 4 Players
- Area 10 yards x 10 Yards
- Cones or Flag poles
- Supply of Balls
- Colored Bibs

### Coaching Pointers:

Four players are placed in a square 10 x 10 yards. Players are numbered one through four. The players pass the ball around the square unrestricted. When the coach shouts out a number, such as "One", that player must defend the cone placed in the middle of the square. After several minutes the player return to passing the ball and the coach then calls out a new number.

### Focus On:

- Realistic defending. Always stay in line between the cone and the ball.
- Quality passing techniques. Good disguise, pace and accuracy.
- Support with deep and wide angles



## 4 v 4 Plus 2 - Transition Game



### Exercise Objectives:

This practice can be used to emphasize either attacking or defensive skills and tactics.

### Field Preparation

- Small sided field by extending the penalty area approximately 20 yards
- Cones or Flag poles
- Supply of Balls
- Colored Bibs

### Coaching Pointers:

Make a small sided field by extending the penalty area approximately 20 yards (18 metres). Place a goalkeeper in each goal. Divide your team into two groups of six players. Position 4 players from each team inside the field. Position one player from each team on each side of their goal. (see diagram above). Identify teams by using colored bibs.

### Rules of the Practice:

One team starts off as the defending team and the other the attacking team. Have both teams start from the end-lines. The practice starts with the attacking team serving a ball to one of the defenders and receiving a return pass. Once the attackers receive the return pass the game is live and the defenders may pressure the ball.

The object is for the attacking team to try and score and the defending team to prevent them. Whichever team has possession becomes the attacking team. After the attacking team has taken six passes, two extra defenders are allowed to come onto the field to make it a 4 v 6 situation in favor of the defenders.

This condition rewards good defending by denying penetration and forcing the attacking team to keep the ball in front of the four defenders. The condition also puts an emphasis on quick direct attacking to get a strike on goal using six passes or less.

**The coach should emphasize the following coaching points:**

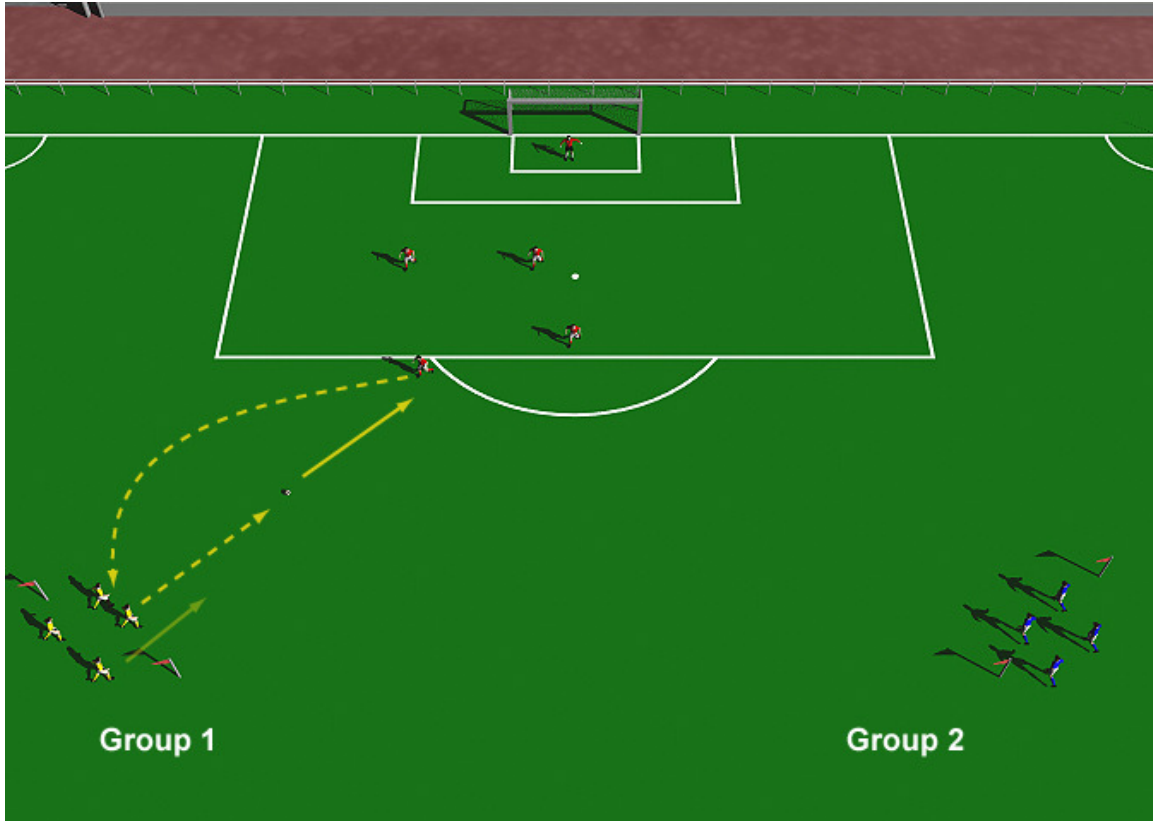
**If the emphasis is on Defending**

- Close the ball down quickly after you have passed to the attacker.
- Closest defender pressures the ball.
- Force the attacker in possession to get their head down and deny penetration.
- Supporting defenders add balance and cover.
- Be patient, allow attackers to pass in front of you but not through you.
- Constant communication from the deepest defender.
- Keep the defensive shape compact.
- Squeeze the attackers away from the goal.

**If the emphasis is on Attacking**

- Cease the initiative and attack under six passes.
- Make forward runs behind the defenders, such as blind-sided runs and overlapping runs.
- Frequent use of "give and go" passes.
- Shoot from long range.
- Shoot if the goalkeepers view is obstructed by the defenders.
- Attack with width and depth.
- Run with the ball and dribble at defenders.

# Defense Building



## Exercise Objectives:

This practice is designed to improve group defending in and around the penalty area.

## Field Preparation

- Half Field
- Cones or Flag poles
- Supply of Balls
- Colored Bibs

## Coaching Pointers:

Place a goalkeeper in goal. Divide your team in three groups. Identify each group with colored vests. One group will start as the defending team and be positioned in the penalty area. The other two groups are placed at the two wide goals.

The practice starts with (group one) serving a ball to one of the defenders and receiving a return pass. Once the attackers receive the return pass the game is live. The object is for the attacking team to try and score and the defending team to win the ball. Once the defending team wins the ball, one defender must run forward with the ball to the opposite goal and score past a defender from (group 2).

If the defending team scores, they then become an attacking team and the team they won possession from becomes the defending team. If the attacking team scores, the defending team stays as the defenders.

Alternate attacks from each side.

A goal is awarded each time the defenders successfully win possession and score in a wide goal.  
Keep score.

**The coach should emphasize the following coaching points:**

- Close the ball down quickly after you have passed to the attackers.
- Closest defender pressures the ball.
- Force the attacker in possession to get their head down and deny penetration.
- Supporting defenders add balance and cover.
- Be patient, allow attackers to pass in front of you but not through you.
- Constant communication from the deepest defender.
- Keep the defensive shape compact.
- Squeeze the attackers away from the goal.
- Once possession is won, swap the ball quickly and attack wide goal.

**Progression:**

- Once the defending team wins the ball, 2 or 3 defenders must run forward with the ball to the opposite goal and score past the defenders, making it a 2 v 1 or 3 v 2 situation.

# Defending 1 v 1 Wide Goals



## Exercise Objectives:

This practice is designed to improve each players "one on one" defending skills. It also provides a good workout for the goalkeeper.

## Field Preparation

- Half Field
- Cones or Flag poles
- Supply of Balls
- Colored Bibs

## Coaching Pointers:

Place a goalkeeper in goal. Position a group of players with a ball each in the center of the field. Place a defender in each side goal as shown in the diagram above.

The practice starts with the first attacker in-line. The attacker places a firm shot for the goalkeeper to save (they are not trying to score). When the goalkeeper catches the ball he then throws it to one of the wide defenders. The attacker turns and receives a first time pass from the defender. After receiving the pass, the attacker has to try and beat the defender and score in the wide goal. The defender must try to prevent the attacker from scoring.

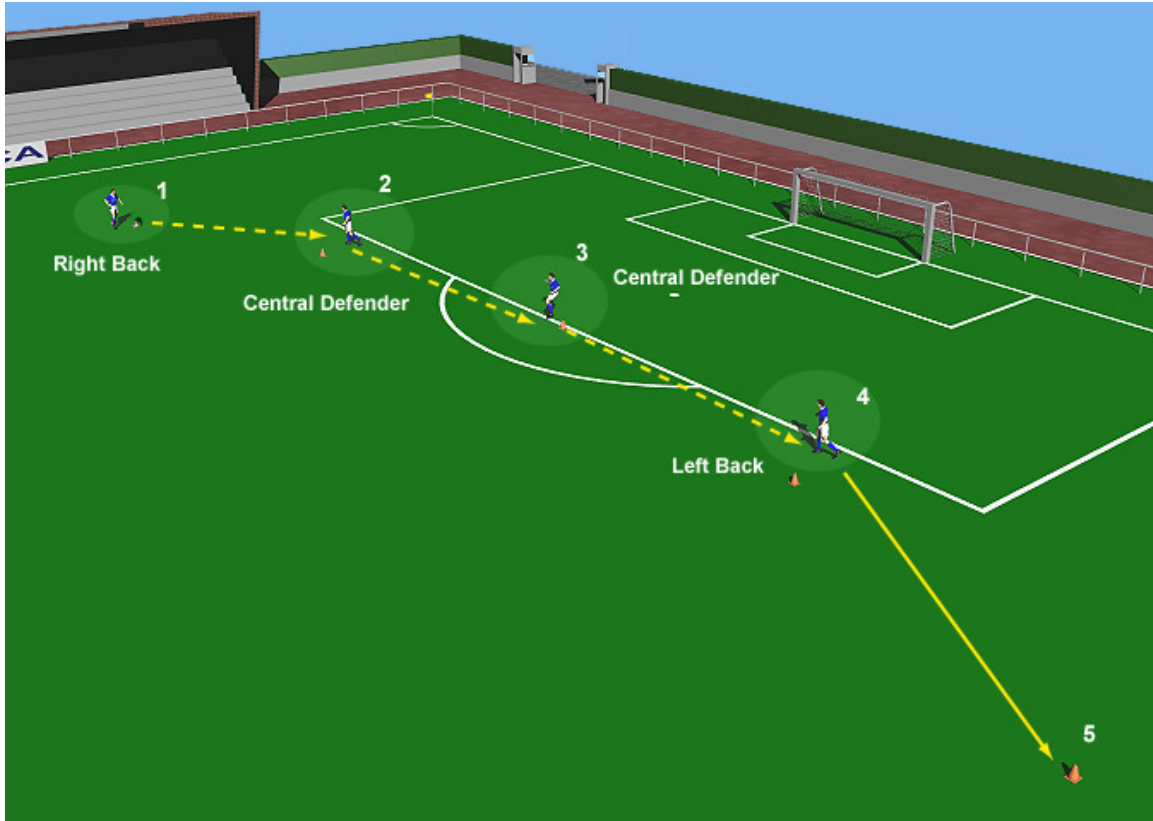
When the attack is ended, the attacker then becomes the next defender, and the defender joins the line of attackers. On the next attack, the goalkeeper serves the ball to the opposite side of the field, to alternate the sides. A point is awarded each time the defender successfully defends their goal. Encourage goalkeepers to throw and kick the ball when distributing wide.

**The coach should emphasize the following coaching points to the defenders:**

- Close the ball down quickly after you have passed to the attacker.
- Maintain a position between the ball and the goal.
- When defending, bend the knees and keep the body low. (don't stand tall, stand small). This position enables the legs to be "spring loaded" to change direction quickly.
- Leg position should be with one leg behind the other.
- Pivot using the back foot when changing direction from side to side.
- Keep the upper torso forward, this is crucial for changing direction from a backwards to forwards position quickly.
- Squeeze the defender away from the goal.



# Defensive Balance



## Exercise Objectives:

This practice is designed to improve the distance and balance of the back four defenders.

## Field Preparation

- Half Field
- Cones or Flag poles
- Supply of Balls
- Colored Bibs

## Coaching Pointers:

Place 5 cones across the width of the field as shown in the diagram above. The cones should be equally spaced and slightly arched. Position a defender at each cone leaving one open cone.

The practice starts with the right back (at cone 1) passing the central defender (at cone 2). The right back follows the pass to (cone 2). Immediately upon receiving the ball, the central defender passes to the second central defender (at cone 3) and follows the pass. The second central defender passes to the left back (at cone 4) and follows the pass to cone 4. The left back then runs with the ball to cone 5, turns and repeats the practice in the opposite direction.

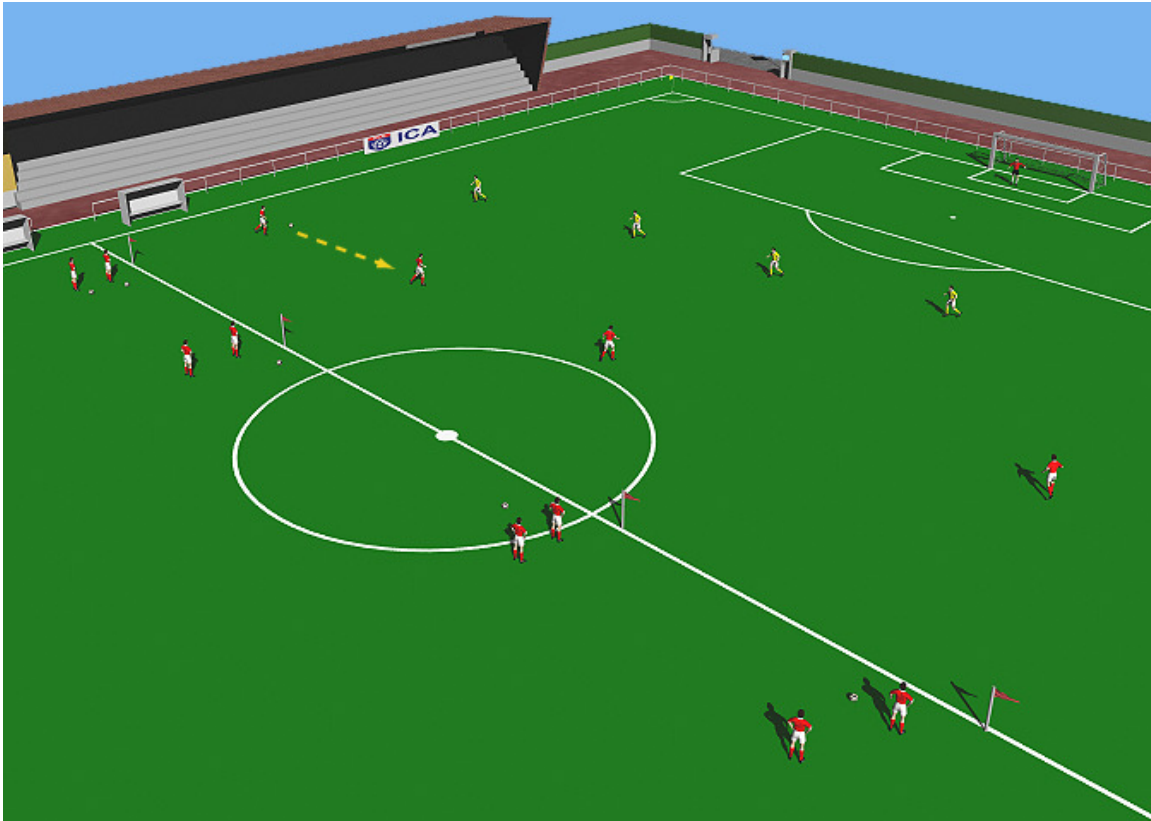
Players do not have to pass to the next defender in sequence. For example, the right back (at cone 1) can play to either central defender or across the field to the left back (at cone 4). Once the pass is made, all players must move quickly to the next cone.

The objective is for the defenders to pass the ball efficiently across the width of the field and move across the field as a compact unit, keeping equal space between each defender.

**The coach should emphasize the following coaching points:**

- Play firm accurate passes to the players feet.
- Drive the ball with pace across the field when switching over long distance.
- Move quickly after you have made the pass.
- When controlling the ball, use your first touch to redirect the ball in the direction you want to pass.

# Defense Building



## Exercise Objectives:

This practice is designed to improve the distance and balance of the back four defenders.

## Field Preparation

- Half Field
- Cones or Flag poles
- Supply of Balls
- Colored Bibs

## Coaching Pointers:

This practice is designed to improve the performance level of the back four defenders and goalkeeper while under pressure from the opponents attackers. Specifically, the practice is designed to improve each players passing and decision making under pressure when building from the back.

Place a goalkeeper in goal. Position four defenders across the width of the field at the edge of the penalty area. Place four groups of players at the half way line as in the diagram above. The practice starts with one of the attackers on the left side passing the ball to the right back. After passing the ball, two attackers from the left side pressurize and attempt to with the ball.

The object is for the defenders to keep quality possession of the ball when under pressure and try to pass the ball to one of the four players on the half way line. The defenders must achieve

four passes before they are allowed to play forward to the target players on the half way line. The defenders can use the goalkeeper whenever necessary.

Once the player play is completed, the practice is then repeated from the right side and the ball is played into the left back.

A point is awarded each time the defenders successfully pass the ball to one of the four target players.

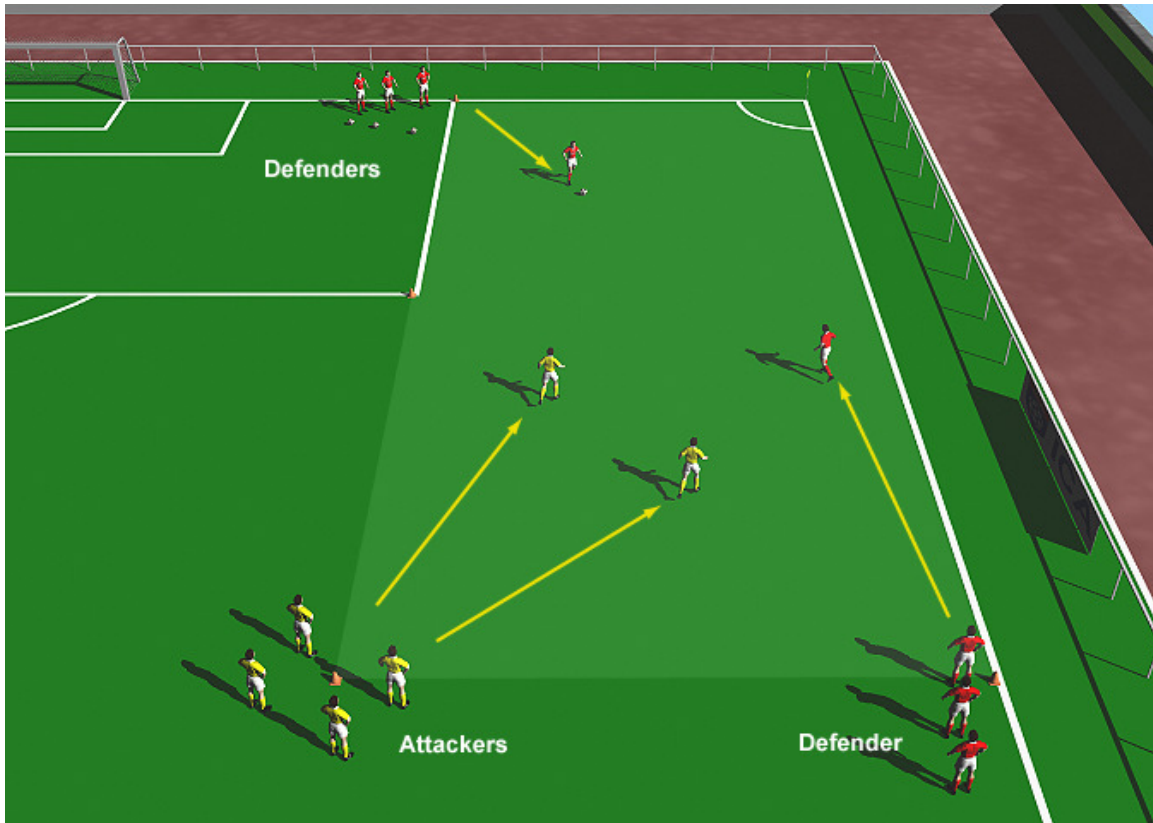
**The coach should emphasize the following coaching points:**

- Play firm accurate passes to the players feet.
- Drive the ball with pace across the field when switching over long distance.
- Move quickly after you have made the pass.
- When controlling the ball, use your first touch to redirect the ball in the direction you want to pass.
- One of the central defenders should look to receive the ball in advance of the two pressuring attackers.
- Use the goalkeeper as a "release valve" when under pressure.
- Play with width and stretch the two attackers apart.  
Make them cover as much ground as possible to pressure the ball.
- Switch the point of attack to the opposite side of the field as quickly as possible.

**Progression:**

- Use 3 pressurizing attackers.
- Restrict defenders to 2 touch.

# High Pressure Defending 1



## Exercise Objectives:

This practice is designed to improve each player's defensive technique by high pressurizing their opponents.

## Field Preparation

- Corner of Field
- Cones or Flag poles
- Supply of Balls
- Colored Bibs

## Coaching Pointers:

Make a grid extending from the goal area as shown in the diagram above. Divide the players into 2 groups, 1 group of defenders and 1 group of attackers. Identify groups by using colored bibs. The defenders (yellow) are divided into 2 groups and are positioned diagonally opposite each other. The attackers (red) are divided into pairs and are positioned at the corner of the grid.

The play starts with one of the 2 attackers playing a diagonal ball towards the opposite corner flag. The attackers cannot move until the defender touches the ball. As soon as the yellow defenders have the ball they must attempt to get to the end of the grid with possession of the ball. If they do, they score 3 points.

The primary objective of the practice is for the 2 attackers to go full out and try to win the ball inside the grid.

If the attackers win the ball they get **3 points**.

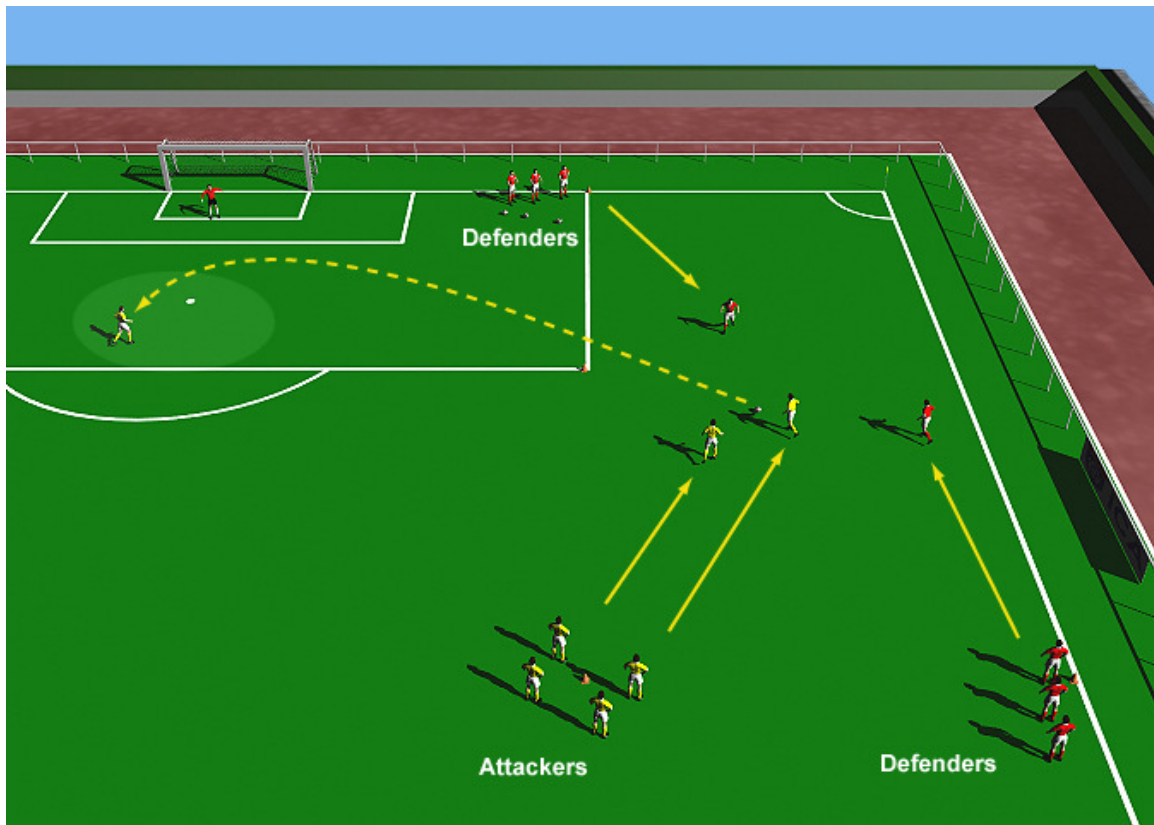
If they force the ball out over the end line they get **2 points**.

If they force a "throw" in they get **1 point**.

**The coach should emphasize the following coaching points:**

- Close the ball down as quickly as possible.
- When defending, bend the knees and keep the body low. (don't stand tall, stand small). This position enables the legs to be "spring loaded" to change direction quickly.
- Leg position should be with one leg behind the other.
- Pivot using the back foot when changing direction from side to side.
- Keep the upper torso forward, this is crucial for changing direction from a backwards to forwards position quickly.
- Squeeze the defenders against the end-line or side-line. This will reduce the amount of space they have to play in and minimize the time they have on the ball.

## High Pressure Defending 2



### Exercise Objectives:

This practice is designed to improve each player's defensive technique by high pressurizing their opponents.

### Field Preparation

- Corner of Field
- Cones or Flag poles
- Supply of Balls
- Colored Bibs

### Coaching Pointers: Progression from High pressure Defending 1

Make a grid extending from the goal area as shown in the diagram above. Divide the players into 2 groups, 1 group of defenders and 1 group of attackers. Identify groups by using colored bibs. Add a goalkeeper and forward inside the penalty area.

The defenders (yellow) are divided into 2 groups and are positioned diagonally opposite each other. The attackers (red) are divided into pairs and are positioned at the corner of the grid.

The play starts with one of the 2 attackers playing a diagonal ball towards the opposite corner flag. The attackers cannot move until the defender touches the ball. As soon as the yellow defenders have the ball they must attempt to get to the end of the grid with possession of the ball. If they do, they score 3 points.

The primary objective of the practice is for the 2 attackers to go full out and try to win the ball and play a cross to the forward in the penalty area who must try and score. The forward is limited to a maximum of three touches.

If the forward scores using "one touch" they get **3 points**.

If the forward scores using "two touches" they get **2 points**.

If the forward scores using "three touches" they get **1 point**.

If they force the ball out over the end line they get **2 points**.

If they force a "throw" in they get **1 point**.

Continue play on throw-ins and have attackers mark up quickly.

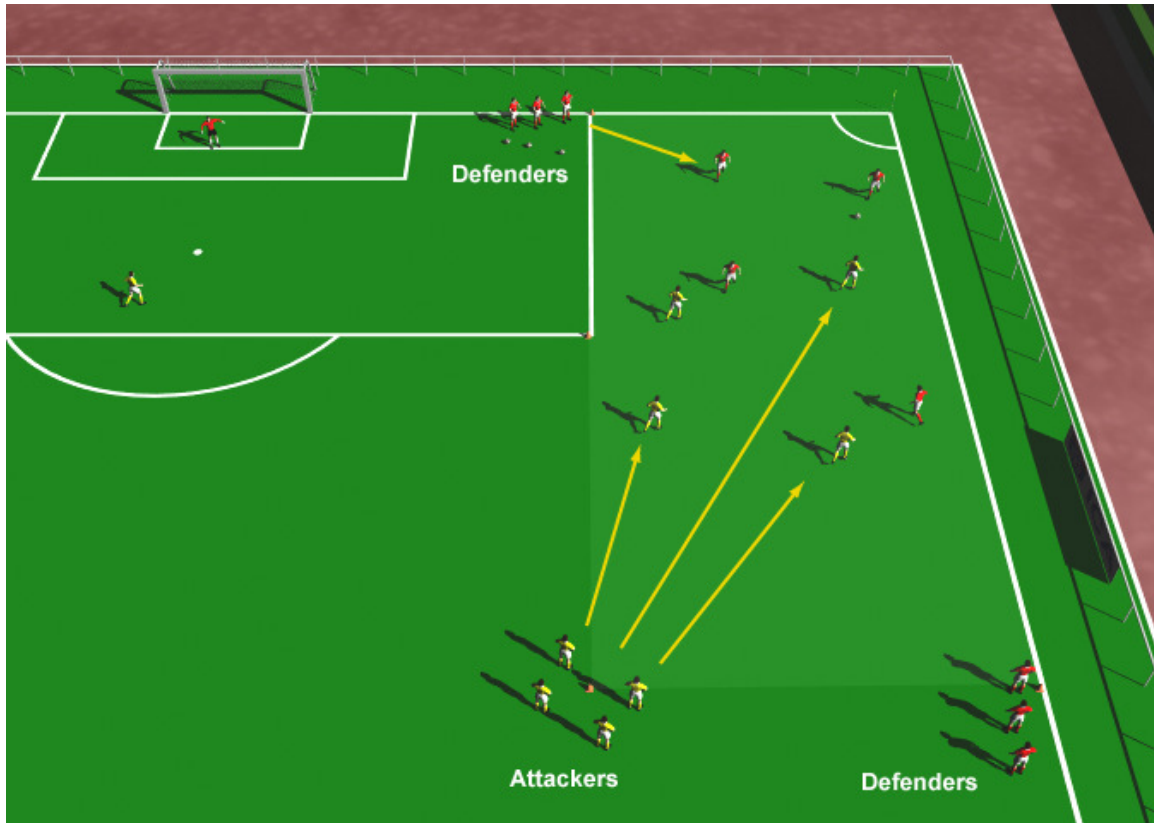
You can also add a trailing attacker who can only come into the grid when the attackers win the ball. His purpose is to look for the ball played back and cross the ball "first time" to the forward in the penalty area.

**The coach should emphasize the following coaching points:**

- Close the ball down as quickly as possible.
- When defending, bend the knees and keep the body low. (don't stand tall, stand small). This position enables the legs to be "spring loaded" to change direction quickly.
- Leg position should be with one leg behind the other.
- Pivot using the back foot when changing direction from side to side.
- Keep the upper torso forward, this is crucial for changing direction from a backwards to forwards position quickly.
- Squeeze the defenders against the end-line or side-line. This will reduce the amount of space they have to play in and minimize the time they have on the ball.
- Play early crosses into the forward.



## High Pressure Defending 3



### Exercise Objectives:

This practice is designed to improve each player's defensive technique by high pressurizing their opponents.

### Field Preparation

- Corner of Field
- Cones or Flag poles
- Supply of Balls
- Colored Bibs

### Coaching Pointers: Progression from High Pressure Defending 2

Make a grid extending from the six yard box as shown in the diagram above. Divide the players into 2 groups, 1 group of defenders and 1 group of attackers. Identify groups by using colored bibs. Add a goalkeeper and forward inside the penalty area.

The defenders (yellow) are divided into 2 groups and are positioned diagonally opposite each other. The attackers (red) are divided into groups of four and are positioned at the corner of the grid.

The play starts with one of the 4 attackers playing a diagonal ball towards the opposite corner flag. The attackers cannot move until the defender touches the ball. As soon as the yellow defenders have the ball they must attempt to get four passes before then try and get to the end of the grid with possession of the ball. If they do, they score **3 points**.

After the defenders make a minimum of four passes they can also score **3 points** by chipping or lofting the ball to the goalkeepers hands at the end of the grid.

The primary objective of the practice is for the 2 attackers to go full out and try to win the ball and play a cross to the forward in the penalty area who must try and score. The forward is limited to a maximum of three touches.

If the forward scores using "one touch" they get **3 points**.

If the forward scores using "two touches" they get **2 points**.

If the forward scores using "three touches" they get **1 point**.

If they force the ball out over the end line they get **2 points**.

If they force a "throw" in they get **1 point**.

Continue play on throw-ins and have attackers mark up quickly.

You can also add a trailing attacker who can only come into the grid when the attackers win the ball. His purpose is to look for the ball played back and cross the ball "first time" to the forward in the penalty area.

**The coach should emphasize the following coaching points:**

- Close the ball down as quickly as possible.
- When defending, bend the knees and keep the body low. (don't stand tall, stand small). This position enables the legs to be "spring loaded" to change direction quickly.
- Leg position should be with one leg behind the other.
- Pivot using the back foot when changing direction from side to side.
- Keep the upper torso forward, this is crucial for changing direction from a backwards to forwards position quickly.
- Squeeze the defenders against the end-line or side-line. This will reduce the amount of space they have to play in and minimize the time they have on the ball.
- Play early crosses into the forward.