

9 - Defending 1 v 1 (1st Defender)

Perhaps because most youngsters dream of being world class strikers, poor defensive technique is almost epidemic among youth teams. We need to teach our players that when we lose possession of the ball everybody is a defender and all players should know how to press the player on the ball correctly and win it back. Not closing down quickly enough or tightly enough, and diving in to tackles are the most common errors we need to help them avoid.

The principles of pressing the ball, retreating to keep the ball in front and preventing opponents from turning to face our goal should be covered. We want players to understand when to tackle, when to delay and force the direction of the next pass ("show" the attacker) and how to draw shots from less dangerous wide angles.

Some young players will show a natural desire to be defenders early on but it is best in general to avoid labelling players too early. Insist that all players take responsibility for defensive duties.

Coaching Points - Observe the following details:

- ✓ Is there a sense of urgency from the defensive team? Every player needs to be switched on and determined
- ✓ The nearest player to the ball, between the attacker and the goal, should close down as fast as possible
- ✓ See that they arc their run to block off early forward pass, they need to "*get in line and down the line*"
- ✓ If they force a bad first touch by opponent then they should go ahead and nick the ball
- ✓ If the opponent has control, defender must not dive in, slow down, take short steps to close and get tight
- ✓ Look carefully at foot and body position, side on, crouched position with good balance, vital to watch the ball
- ✓ Can they seize the initiative by feigning to nick the ball? Get the opponents eyes down on ball if possible
- ✓ 1st defender should jockey and be patient. Retreat if necessary to buy time and keep the ball in front
- ✓ By adjusting foot position defender should show the attacker in the direction they want them to go
- ✓ Can defender force attacker towards cover, onto weak foot, or away from dangerous areas down the line
If attacker has their back to the defender, we need to prevent turn, get "*touch tight*" stay low and watch the ball
- ✓

Useful reminders:

- "*close down, slow down, sit down*" - i.e. get there, don't dive in and jockey
- "*fast, slow, show*" - i.e. move quickly, stay balanced and dictate to the attacker where the ball goes next

Useful Drills

23	The Square	42	Two v Two v Two	58	The Numbers Game
24	4x4	43	Open Goal	59	First Defender
27	Five v Three	44	Have a Go	60	No Turn
28	Three Teams	45	Last Man	61	Defensive Triangle
29	End to End	50	Tractor versus Trailer	62	Delay
30	Mixed Passing	51	Bill's Gates	63	Man Marking
33	Quads	53	Take a Turn	69	Winner Stays On
34	Knock-down	54	Spare Man		
41	Shoot on Sight	57	Three-Two-One		