



## Defending as a Unit

Category: Tactical: Switching play

Difficulty: Moderate

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### Description

Objective: improve defending the final third and preventing penetration, opportunity creation, and goals

### General practice

#### Objective: improve players ability to defend in pairs

coaching points:

- Narrow: no gap to allow ball to travel between / through pair of defending players;
- Compact: provide cover and support the teammate who is nearest the ball
- Put pressure on the ball: balance tenacity and aggression
- Decision making about when to try to win the ball: balance risk and reward

Defensive transition: quickly retreat and get narrow and compact to deny opponent space.

Blue team starts in possession. Red defends

One yellow player stands at either end on the "goal line"

The yellow player on the line behind the red players is the "target player" for the blue team. Blue team scores a "goal" when they complete a pass to the yellow target player.

Red team works to prevent a pass to the yellow "target player" (behind them) and to regain possession.

The other yellow player stands on the other goal line and is a "support player" for the blue team who can support with passes but cannot move off the goal line.

Targets:

Each team starts with 10 points and loses a point whenever they concede a "goal".

When possession is regained by the red team:

- they attack and attempt to score by passing to the yellow player standing on the goal line behind the blue players.
- the yellow player who was blue team's target player now becomes the red team's support player (but can't move off the goal line)

Conditions:

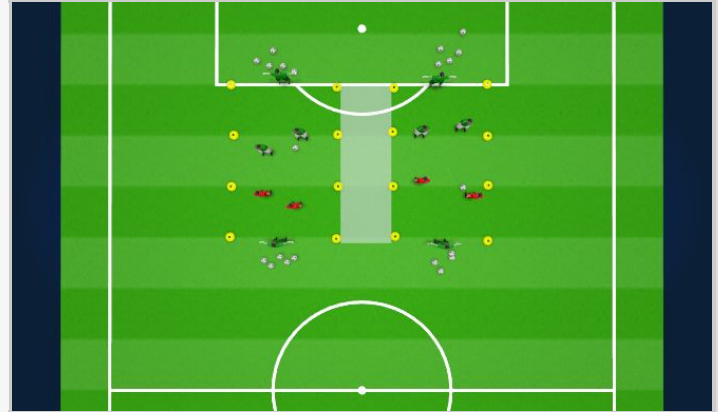
- 1) All 3 players in the possession team must touch the ball before they can score (do this to avoid fast attacking transitions and to enable defending team to retreat and get narrow and compact).
- 2) If ball goes out play, play is restarted at the defensive end of the team in possession (same intent as above)

Progressions:

- 1) Allow supporting yellow player to come off goal line to support the team in possession
- 2) Make practice area wider
- 3) Remove condition #1

Regressions:

- 1) Make practice area narrower
- 2) Restrict the movement of the target player to only the central portion of the goal line (use cones to mark a small area that he can move in).



## Small sided game

### Objective: improve ability to defend in the final third

coaching points:

- Narrow: no gaps to allow ball to travel between pairs of players;
- Compact: If you are not the closest player can you provide cover and support a teammate
- Make pitch small: retreat to deny opponent space to attack
- Show attackers outside and away from goal not inside and toward goal.
- Put pressure on the ball: balance tenacity and aggression
- Decision making about when to try to win the ball: balance risk and reward

Defensive transition: quickly retreat and get narrow and compact to deny opponent space.

Prepare for defensive transition: don't commit too many players ahead of the ball when in possession.

Reds v blues; both teams attack the goal in front of them and defend the other.

When possession is won/lost, yellow (neutral) players join the team in possession.

Conditions:

1 player from attacking team remains in own final third (marked with red cones) when in possession.

Targets:

Each team starts with 10 points and loses a point whenever they concede a "goal".

Progressions:

Add an extra neutral player to play with attacking team

Remove condition that one player must remain in own defensive third when in possession.

Regressions:

Remove a neutral player.

Remove both neutral players.

Attacking team has two touches.

