



DEFENDING

50+ Practices shared by The Coaching Family




**THE
COACHING
MANUAL**

In Association With
**The Coaching Manual &
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DEFENDING

50+ Practices shared by The Coaching Family

COACHING POINTS & TIPS

Welcome to the latest @coachingfamily games sharing book. This book concentrates on practices designed to help you develop young defenders, both individually and collectively.

The games you see in the book are designed by grassroots coaches, soccer school coaches, community coaches and academy coaches from locations across the globe.

As always, we encourage you to look at the content, play with it, adjust it and adapt it to suit your players and the environment/venue you coach in.

Enjoy the book and feel free to share amongst your clubs and other coaches.

Ben & Liam, The Coaching Family

Cover Image : UFO Pilot <http://www.flickr.com/photos/ufopilot/2703730845>



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COACHING POINTS & TIPS

Ben & Liam (@coachingfamily)

COACHING POINTS & TIPS

1v1 Defending

- ✓ Low body position, bent knees, eyes on ball.
- ✓ Delay opponent.
- ✓ Look for opportunity to win ball, quick reactions.

2v1 Defending Outnumbered

- ✓ Low body position, bent knees, a good view of both attackers.
- ✓ Delay.
- ✓ Deny space.
- ✓ React quickly, try to intercept passes/shots.

Recovering Defender

- ✓ Communication with lone defender.
- ✓ Speed.
- ✓ Quick decision in relation to where the ball is.

Team Defending

- ✓ Organisation amongst defensive line: communication and communication from GK (Big picture).
- ✓ Recognising pressing triggers then hunting in packs (3's) while maintaining team shape and balance.
- ✓ Decisions: When to press high? When to defend space behind?

THE PRACTICES



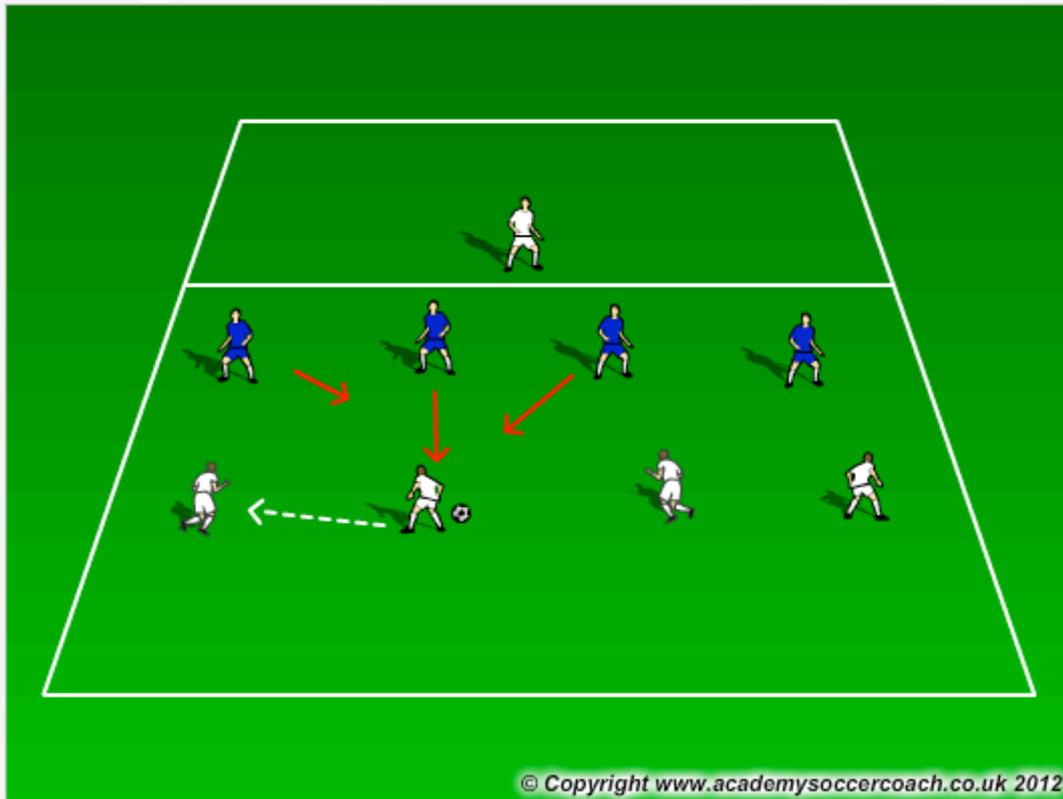
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DEFENSIVE ORGANISATION

John Johnstone



SET-UP

- Game set up as shown in the diagram 5v4.
- The 4 play as defenders against 4 players in front and 1 in an end zone behind.
- Defending team must try to stop the attackers finding a pass through to their player in the end zone.
- Encourage players to Press, Support and offer balance, working in three's to force play in one direction.



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DEFENDING OUTNUMBERED

John Johnstone



SET-UP

- Set the practice up as shown with two defenders facing three attackers.
- The goalkeeper starts play, rolling or throwing the ball to any of the attackers.
- The attackers first touch is the trigger for the recovering defenders to get back in and help the others.
- Encourage the defenders to communicate and work together to force play out wide.



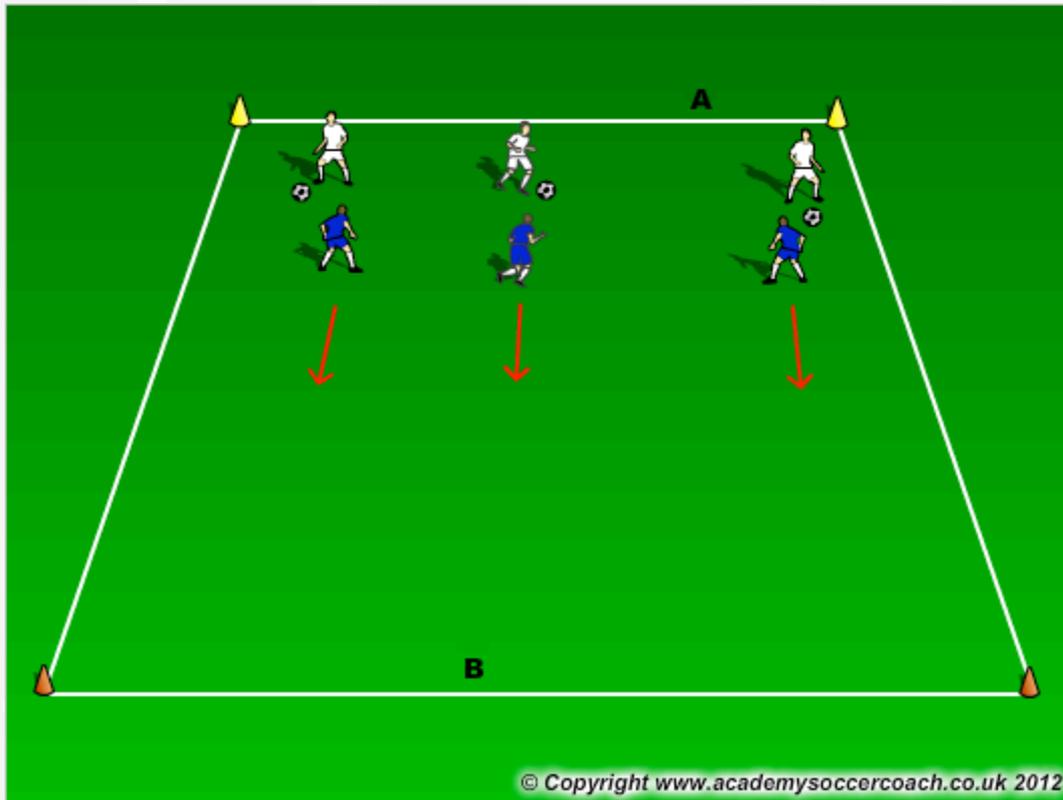
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DEFENSIVE BODY STANCE

Matt Hammond



SET-UP

- Pair up the players in your session. 1 player is the attacker, the other defends.
- The attacker dribbles at a slow speed from line A to line B.
- The defender works on staying low, knees bent and in line with the ball.

PROGRESSIONS

- Attackers can go across the area forcing the defender to constantly adjust his/her body position.



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REACTING & DEFENDING 1V1

Dan Thomas



SET-UP

- Players set up 25 yards from goal with a ball each.
- Player 1 dribbles in and scores. He then turns to defend against Player 2.
- Once a goal is scored or the ball goes dead, P2 then defends against P3 and so on.

PROGRESSIONS

- 8 seconds to score - time attack
- 2v2 (wider area)
- 3v3 (widen area)



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REACTING & DEFENDING 1V1

Dan Thomas



SET-UP

- Defenders arranged on cones and given a number 1-4.
- Coach plays into attacker and calls out a number – defenders must listen carefully and react quickly if their number is called.
- Defenders can score points by winning the ball and playing back to the goalkeeper or to a waiting defender.

PROGRESSIONS

- Time limited attacks.
- 2v1, 3v2 in favour of attackers.
- Competition between white and blues.



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DEFENDING OUTNUMBERED

Dan Thomas



SET-UP

- (7v9) Defending side arranged with 1 GK, 4 DF, 1MF & 1 CF
- Attacking side have freedom to roam.
- Give players a scenario – e.g defending side are 2-0 up with five minutes to play.
- Allow teams to have 2 or 3 minutes discussing tactics.
 - Do they drop & defend edge of area?
 - Do they press high and use offsides?
 - Where/who is the danger?



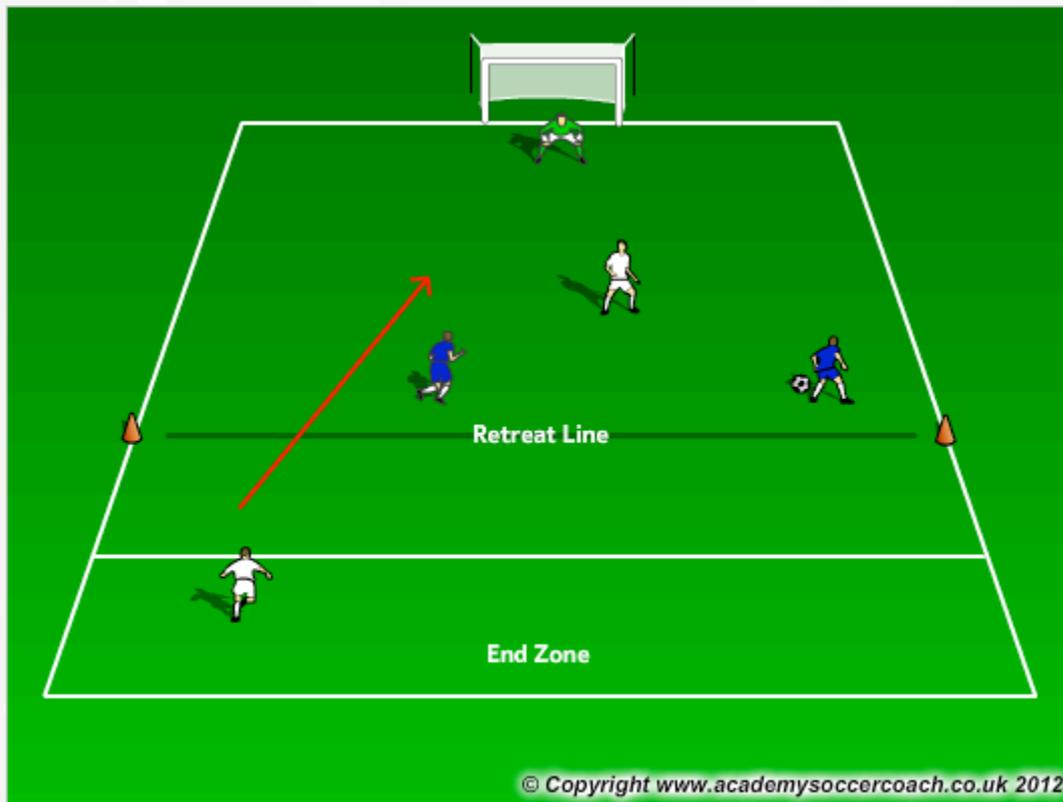
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DEFENDING OUTNUMBERED

Defending Outnumbered



SET-UP

- Game starts with keeper throwing the ball to one of the attackers starting in the end zone.
- 1 defender starts on the Retreat Line and attempts to delay and deny spaces.
- The recovering defender can start anywhere in the end zone, but cannot run until the attacker has his first touch.
- Attackers aim to score a goal while defenders attempt to win the ball and dribble to the End Zone.



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DEFENDING AS A UNIT

Stefan Lowes



SET-UP

- 3 defenders (+GK) play against 4 attackers.
- The defensive unit try to stop the attackers breaking through 1 on 1 with the goalkeeper. Defenders cannot retreat past the 18 yard line.
- If defenders win the ball they can play to the server in the centre circle.
- Progressions can include allowing defenders to defend inside the 18 yard box.



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DEFENDING 1V1 : JOCKEYING

Ashley Civil



SET-UP

- In pairs – one player dribbles, the other jockeys.
- Work with defenders on their distance from the dribbler and body position.
- Change roles on coaches shout.

PROGRESSIONS

- Try to force dribbler one way.
- If defender can get foot on the ball he/she gets a point.
- Try to stop dribblers going through gates.



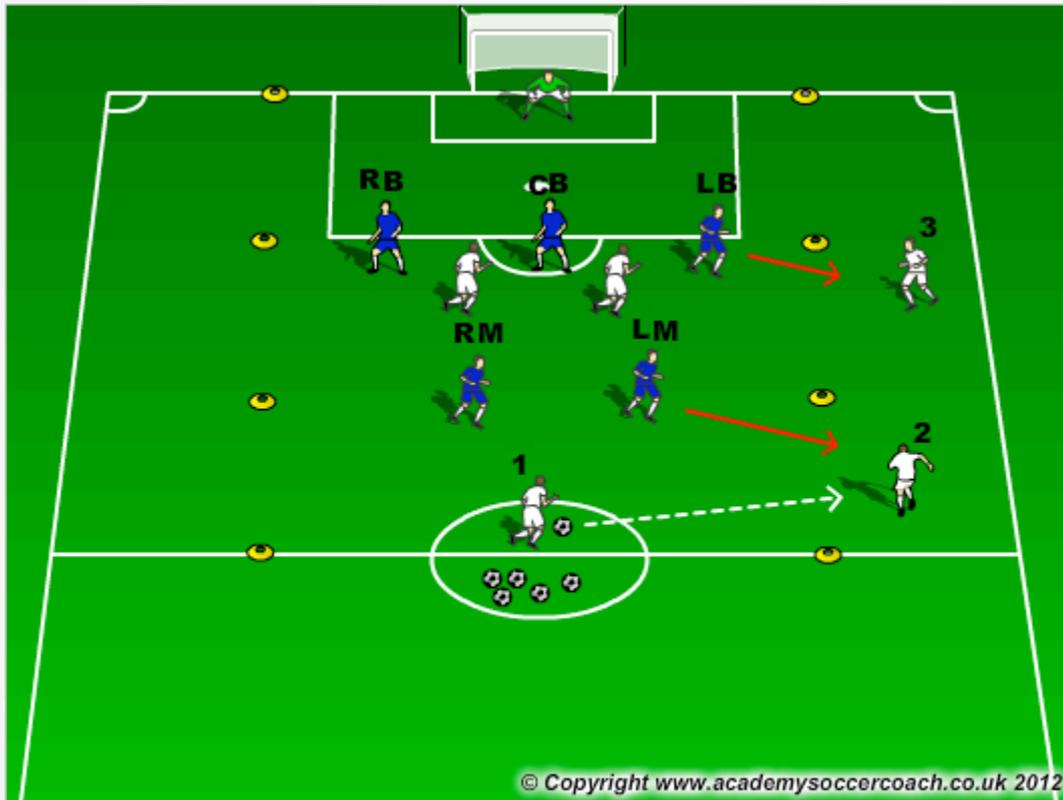
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DEFEND ATTACKS FROM WIDE AREAS

Paul Simms



SET-UP

- Use 2 zones at one time and arrange players as shown in the diagram.
- Player 1 starts the practice with a pass to Player 2 who immediately attacks the wide area.
- Player 2 works with Player 3 to deliver a cross.
- The defending team must work on instructions from the goalkeeper to stop crosses and defend the wide area.
- Pressure, Cover and Balance around the ball.



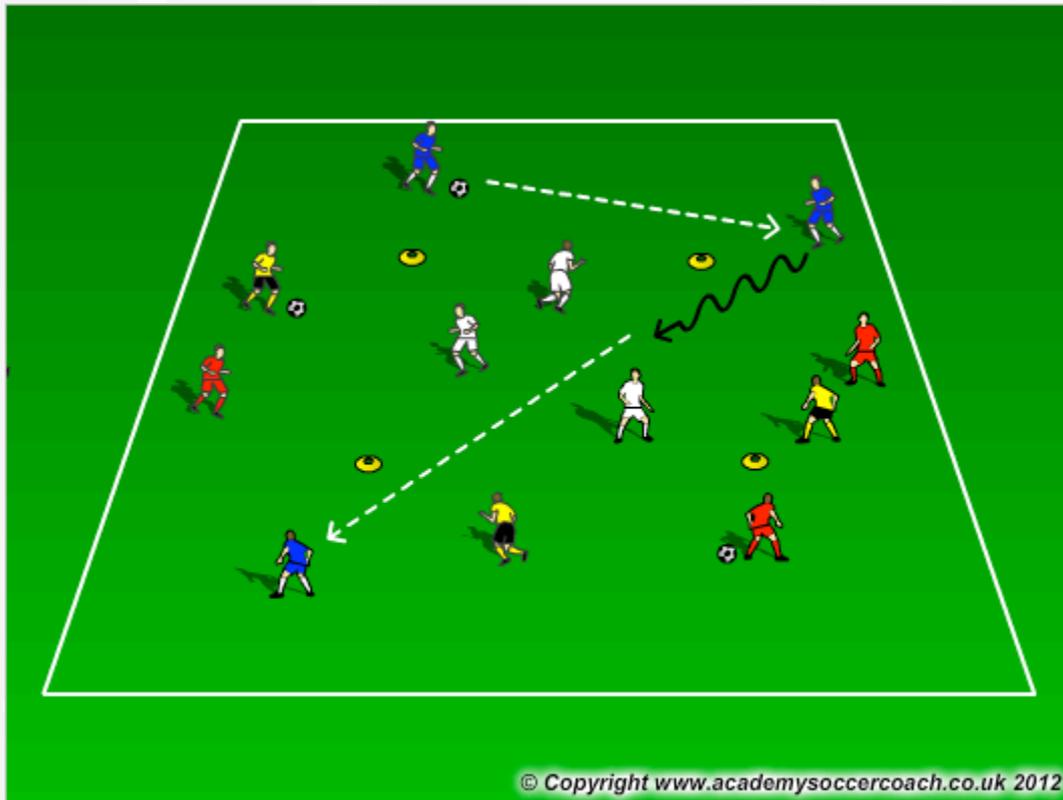
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DEFENSIVE REACTION

Lee Fielden



SET-UP

- 30x30 area with a 10x10 square in centre. Four teams of 3 players .
- One team plays in centre square, as defenders.
- The team of defenders must try to stop dribblers and passes into the box. They must also track runs into the box from other teams.
- The 3 other teams try to score as many points as possible – 1 point for each time they get into the box.
- Switch roles after 3 minutes. The team who concedes the least points wins.



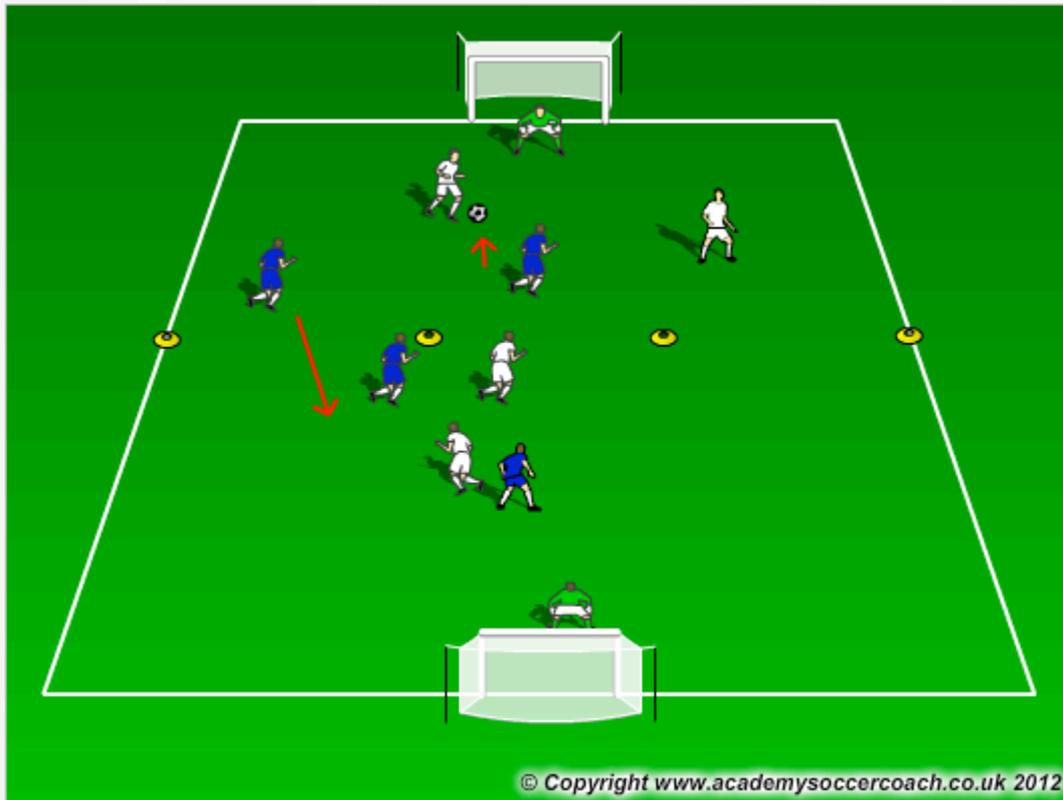
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DEFENDING : SMALL-SIDED GAME

Lee Fielden



SET-UP

- Play a normal Small Sided Game with GK's.
- Mark out a clear halfway line.
- If a team loses possession 1 player can press, while everyone else drops back into their own half.
- Play for a while then allow 2 players to be in opposing half, one to press and the other to support.



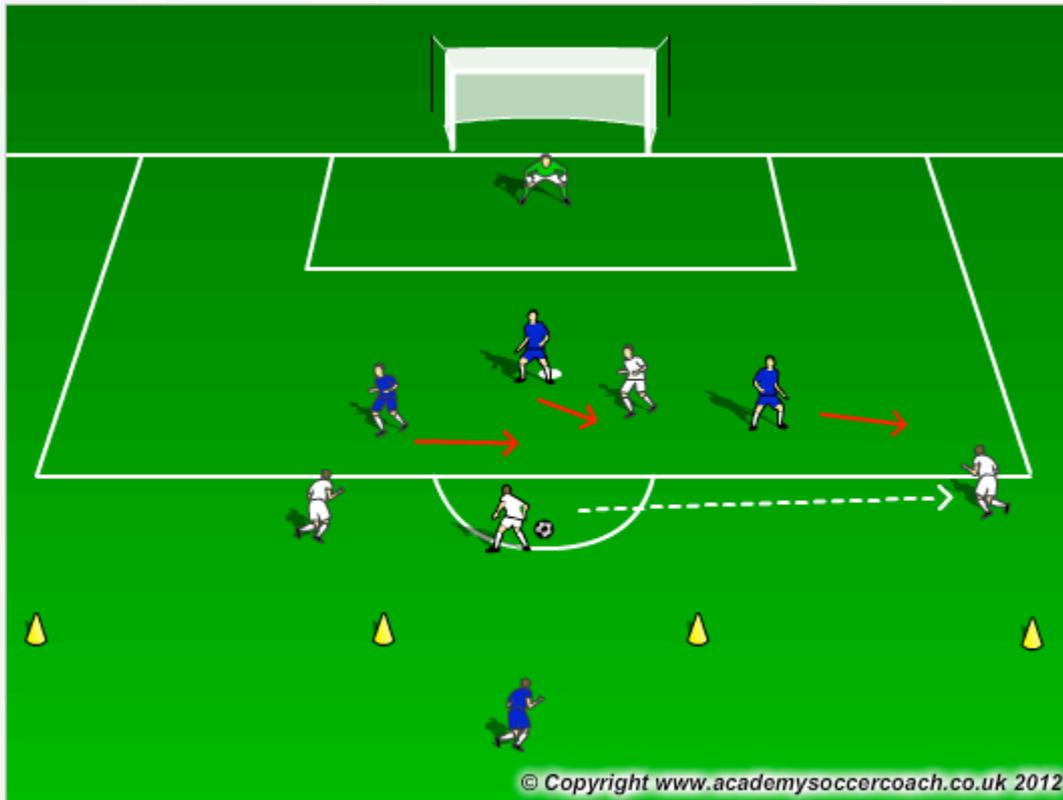
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DEFENDING OUTNUMBERED

Lee Fielden



SET-UP

- Two teams of four plus a GK.
- Defending team arrange themselves 3v4 with a target player in an end zone.
- Attacking team try to use their extra player to create a goal scoring chance.
- The defending side look to win the ball, keep possession and play out to their target player.
- Rotate teams after 5 attacks.



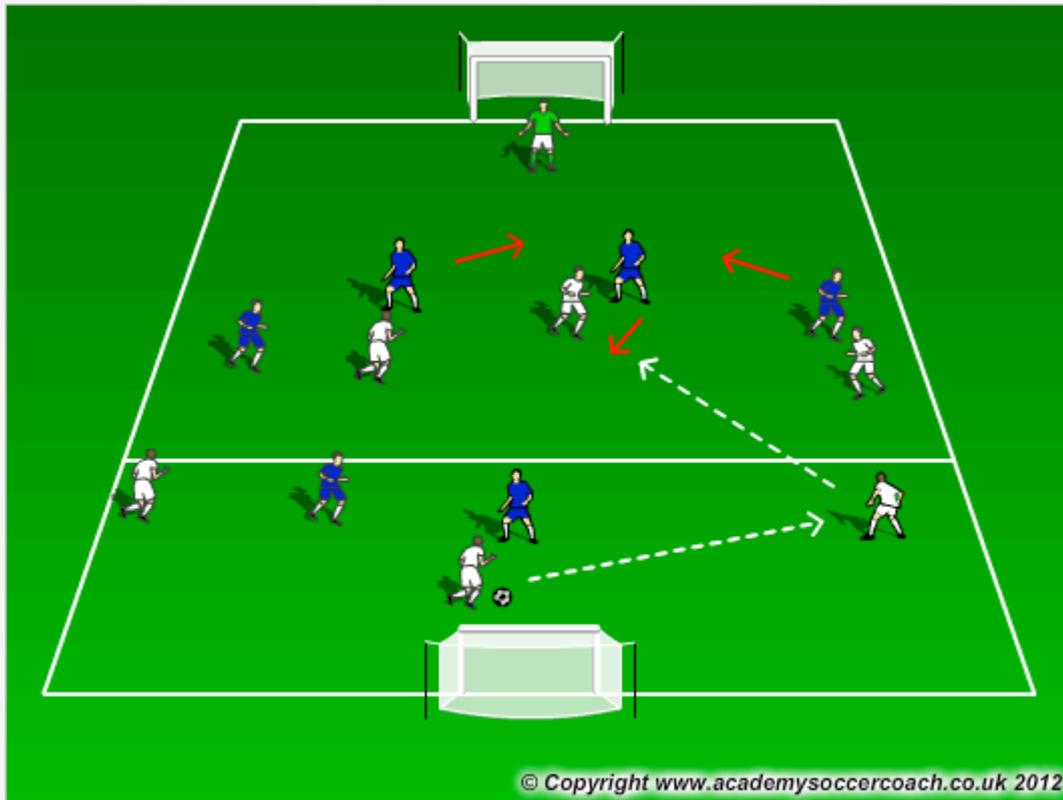
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BACK FOUR DEFENDING

Ben Bartlett



SET-UP

- 2v3 in midfield
- 4v3 in defensive area
- Play starts with midfielders trying to play into their attackers. Defenders must keep shape and decide when to press the ball.
- If defenders gain possession they can break to score in the opposite goal.
- Both teams try to keep one player in the midfield area at all times.

www.integritysoccer.co.uk



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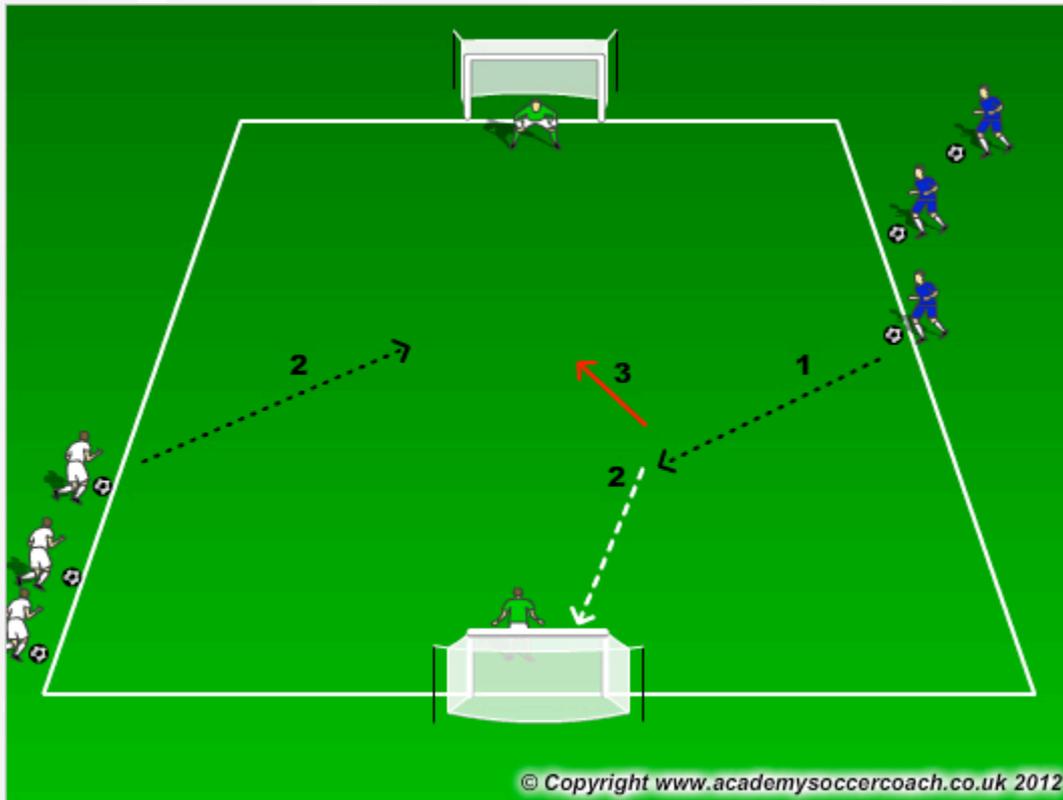
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BREAKING & RECOVERING

Ben Bartlett



SET-UP

- Blue team start the practice by dribbling (unopposed) to have a shot at goal.
- As the blue player shoots, he/she turns to defend the goal behind them.
- The white team can attack as soon as their opposition has had a shot at goal.
- Encourage quick reactions and accelerating quickly to put the attacker under pressure.

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DEFENDING AS A BACK FOUR

Michael Worthington



SET-UP

- Teams set up 4v4
- Defending team start with the ball and play into the attacking team to start the practice.
- Defenders try to recognise when to press and when to narrow off – working as a unit communicating with each other.
- If ball goes wide they press. If the ball comes central the defensive unit must be compact to force play wide again.
- Progress to 6v6

www.worthingtonsoccercoaching.com



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DEFENDING AS A UNIT

Tony Taylor



SET-UP

- 3 teams of four players organised in a grid as shown. Central team are the defenders.
- Coach passes ball to one outside team who then look to pick a pass through to the opposite side.
- Coach pressure on the ball, when? How? Cover and Balance.

PROGRESSIONS

- Attackers limited to two touches.
- One defender is allowed to leave their zone.



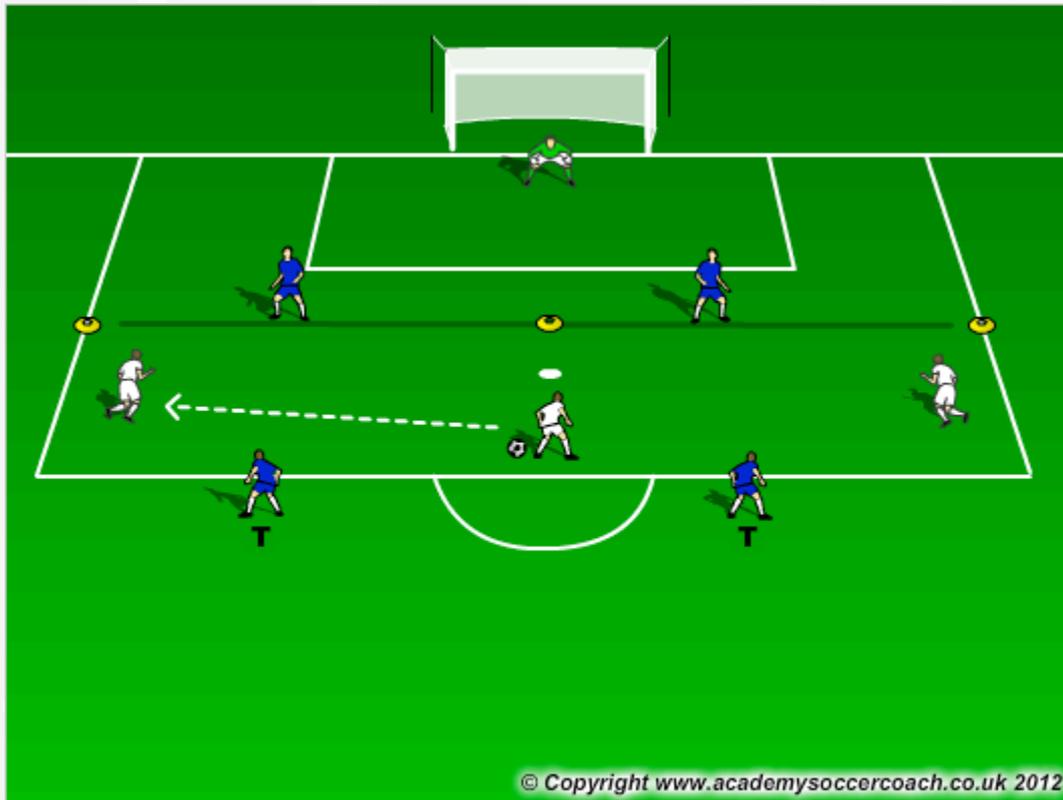
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WINNING THE BALL & WHAT'S NEXT

Ricky Clarke



SET-UP

- 3 Attackers play 2 defenders. 2 Target players line up on the edge of the area.
- Practice starts with attacking team playing to goal, trying to score.
- The defenders need to work together to try and win the ball – If they win it they must try to play to a target player and then make supporting runs.
- Defenders should be encouraged to use the offside line to their advantage.

www.rickymastercoach.com



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TIGHT MARKING

Billy McEvoy



SET-UP

- Three teams of four players – two teams start inside the 18 yard box – one defending & one attacking.
- The other team of 4 are bounce players for the attacking team to play off.
- Bounce players limited to 3 touches and cannot score.
- If attacking team score, they stay on. If the defending team win the ball and pass to the coach the attacking team switch with Bounce players.



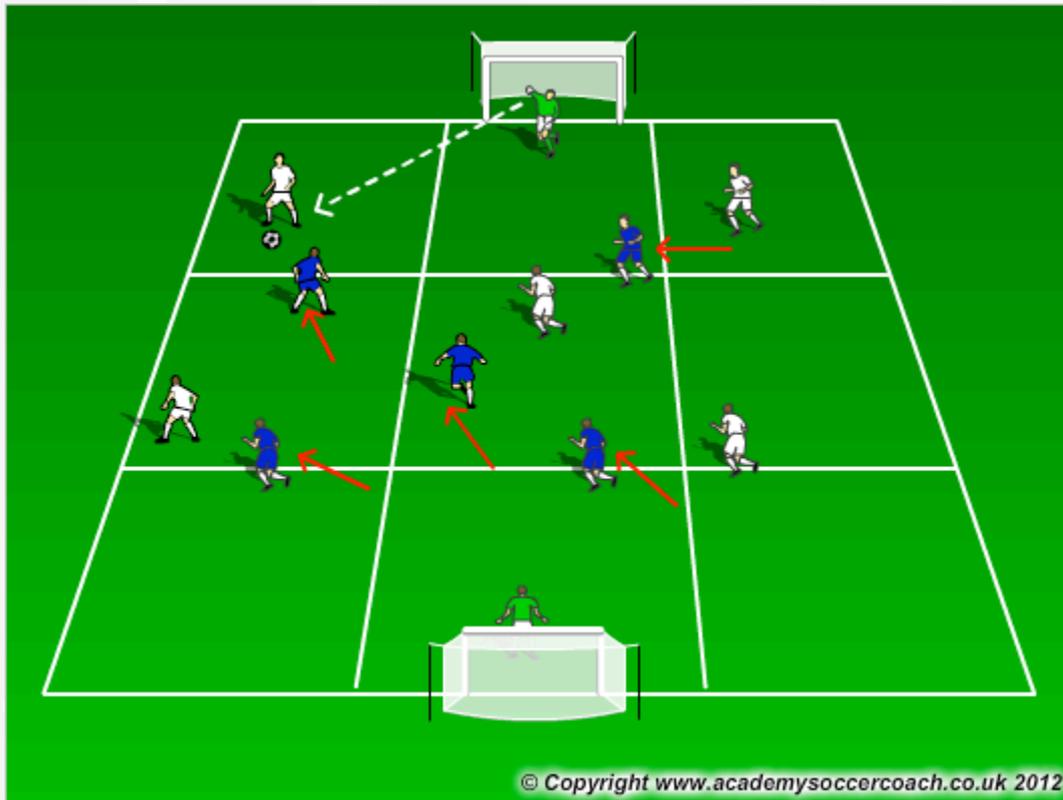
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TEAM COMPACTNESS

Neil Winskill



SET-UP

- Equal teams and suitable playing area for the age group. Pitch marked into thirds length ways and width ways.
- Defending team try to get compact and deny space as a unit.
- Defending team try to compress the play by always defending two thirds of the length of the pitch and two thirds of the width of the pitch.
- Deny space, get compact early.
- Players away from the ball react quickly to recover/deny space.

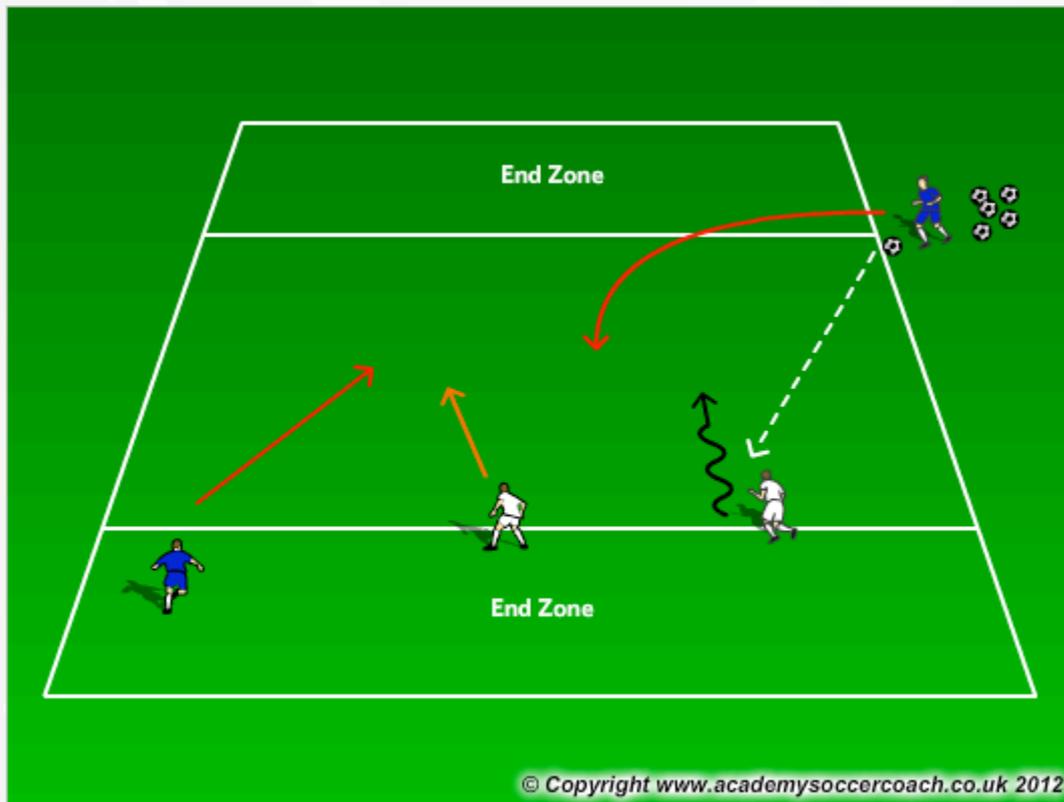


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DEFENDING & RECOVERY RUNS

Dan Wright



SET-UP

- Players set up as the diagram shows.
- Defender starts the practice by playing the ball to one of the attackers. The defender must then get out quickly, arching his/her run to cut off a pass to the other attacker.
- On the attacker's first touch, the recovering defender starts to make a run to support the lone defender.
- Communication is vital as the ball will move between the attackers.
- A normal 2v2 (dribble into end zone) is played out until the ball goes dead.

coachdanwright.blogspot.com



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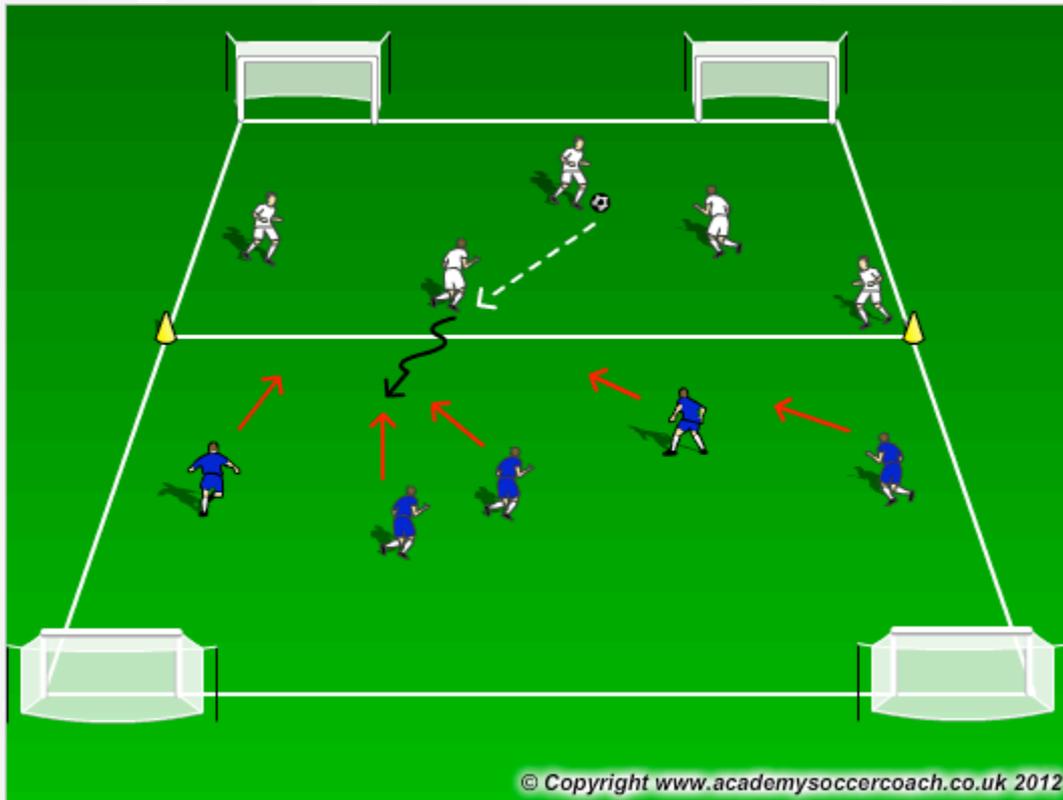
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CLOSING SPACES

Oleg Starinskyi



SET-UP

- Two equal teams of 5 players, defending/attacking two goals.
- The attacking team cannot shoot in their own half. They must work the ball into the opposition half.
- Defenders must then react quickly to stop shots on goal and through passes.
- Recognising skills such as when to press, when to hold and when to offer support will all be tested in this SSG.



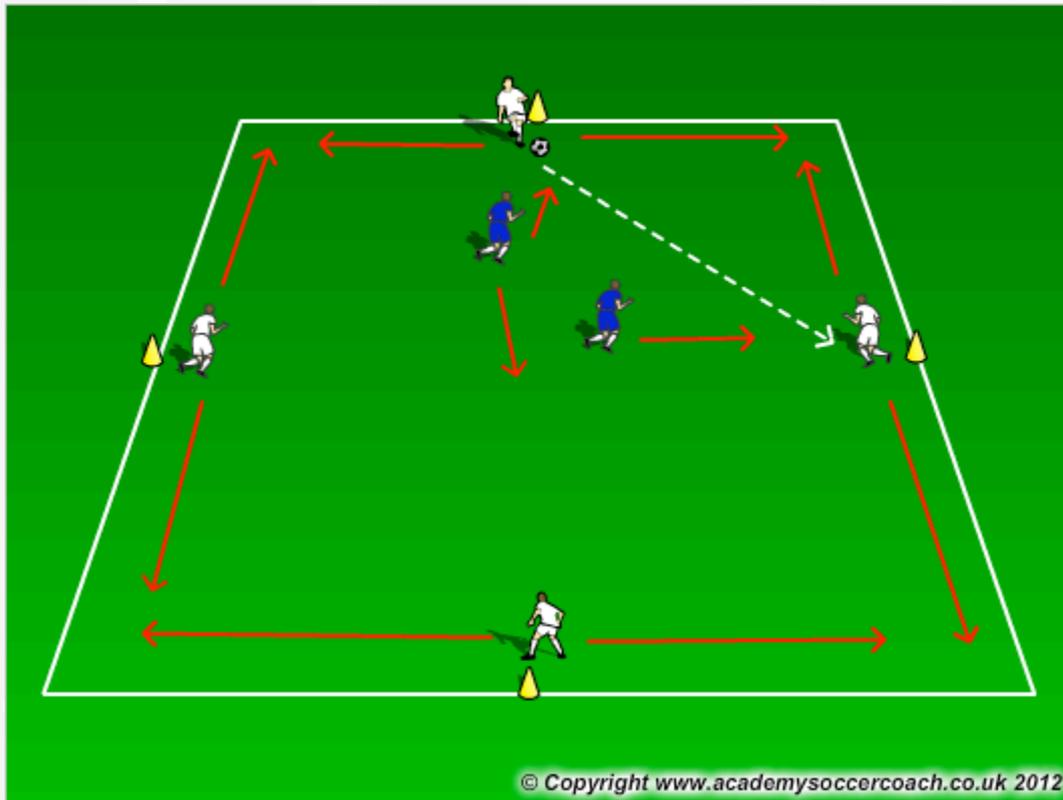
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PRESSURE & SUPPORT

Oleg Starinskyi



SET-UP

- Four passers arranged around the edge of an appropriately sized square.
- Two defenders working in the middle.
- The passers can move up and down their line to create passing angles.
- The defenders must try to work as a team to press and offer support.
- Defender closest to the ball calls "One" while the supporting defender calls "Two".



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DEFENDING SCENARIOS

Ben Trinder



SET-UP

- Play a normal SSG with normal rules.
- One team is chosen to deal with the defending scenario.
- For example:
 - You're 1-0 up with 5 minutes remaining. Defend your lead or go for more goals?
 - You're 2-0 up but you've just had a player sent off with 5 minutes left. How do you deal with it?
- Encourage players to get together in their team and discuss tactics. A perfect end to a session on defending.



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PRESSURE, COVER & BALANCE

Ben Trinder



SET-UP

- 8 players arranged as in the diagram around the square.
- 3 players play in the centre as defenders.
- Technical practice where 3 defenders practice organisation, communication and shape as one unit while also recognising when to press the ball individually.
- Encourage:
 - Pressure on the ball (P).
 - Cover, to force play in one direction and support pressure on the ball (C) .
 - Balance offering depth to the unit (B).



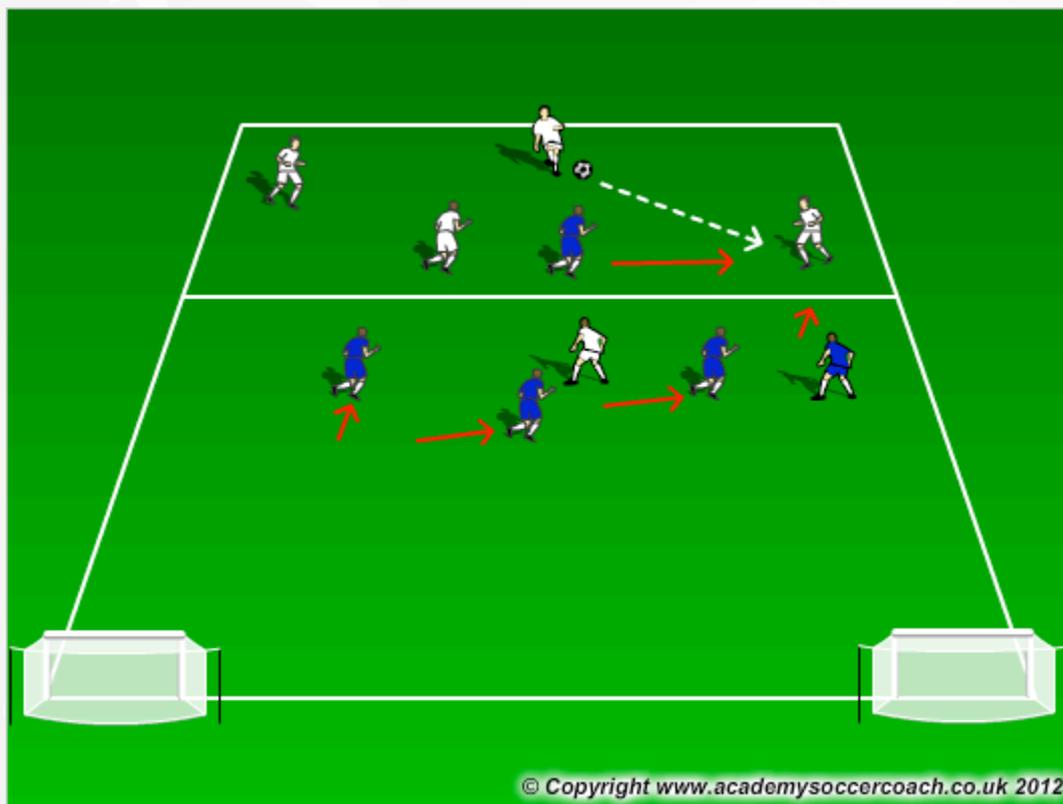
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WHEN TO PRESS, WHEN TO DROP

Ben Trinder



SET-UP

- 5v5 practice – players arranged 4 attackers v 1 defender in small zone. 4 defenders play 1 attacker in the large zone.
- Play starts with 4 attackers making 5 passes then trying to play over the defenders to score in either of the two goals.
- Defenders plus their 1 midfield screen must recognise when to press the ball to stop a ball over the top. They must also keep tabs on the attacker in their zone.



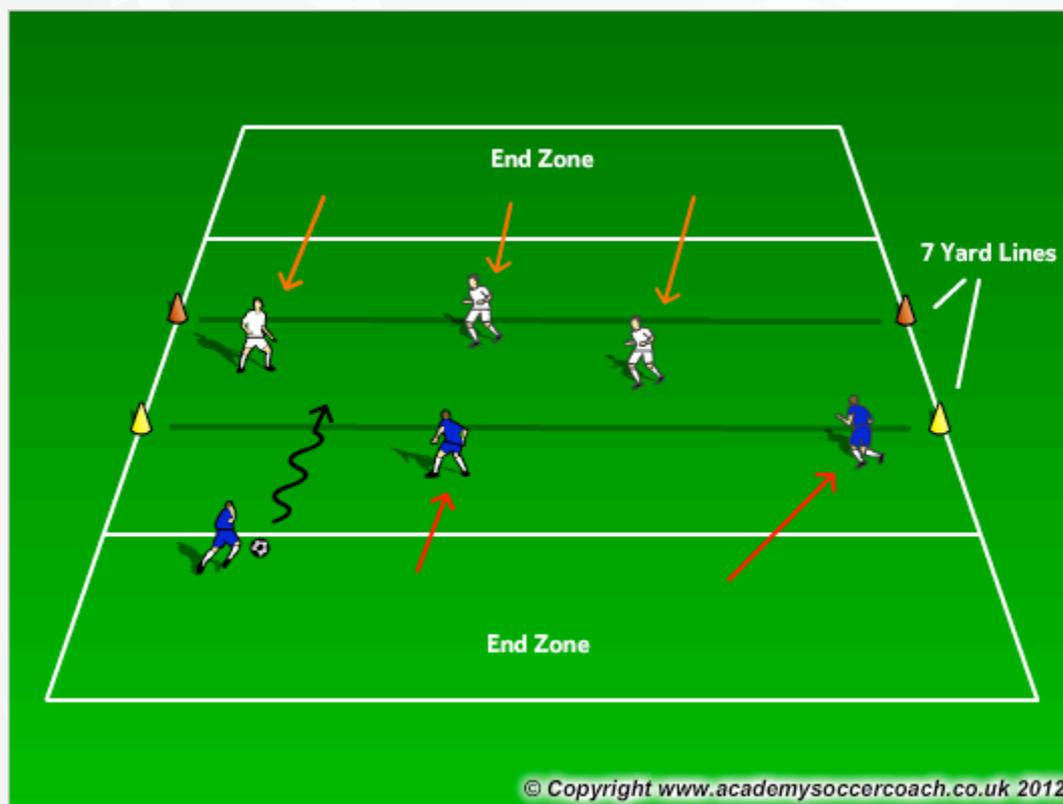
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QUICK PRESSING TO WIN THE BALL

Manraj Sucha



SET-UP

- Two teams playing a 3v3, dribble into the End Zone game.
- Play starts from the attacking teams End Zone – they have 5 seconds to get the ball over their 7 Yard Line. Once over, they cannot retreat.
- The defending team can now press, remembering the defensive principles of play. (Pressure, Cover Balance)
- If the defending team win the ball they can attack as normal. Play always starts from the End Zone – even when the ball goes dead.



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DEFENSIVE SUPPORT

Jamie Harvey



SET-UP

- Two pitches marked to suit players age and ability.
- Players arranged 3v3 across the two pitches – attacking team can move anywhere while defenders need to be disciplined.
- 1 and 3 have to stay on their pitch while the central defender (2) moves between pitches to assist wide defenders.
- Pressure, Cover, Balance.

www.youthtoprosoccer.com



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BACK FOUR ORGANISATION

Jamie Harvey



SET-UP

- Defenders go 2v1 in each zone (8v4 in total).
- The defending players have freedom to move between zones to create 2v2's. Attacking players can't move from their zone.
- Defenders must communicate and recognise cues to press the ball, support and offer depth.
- If defenders win the ball they play into the target men who then feed back to the attacking side. Be sure to rotate players.

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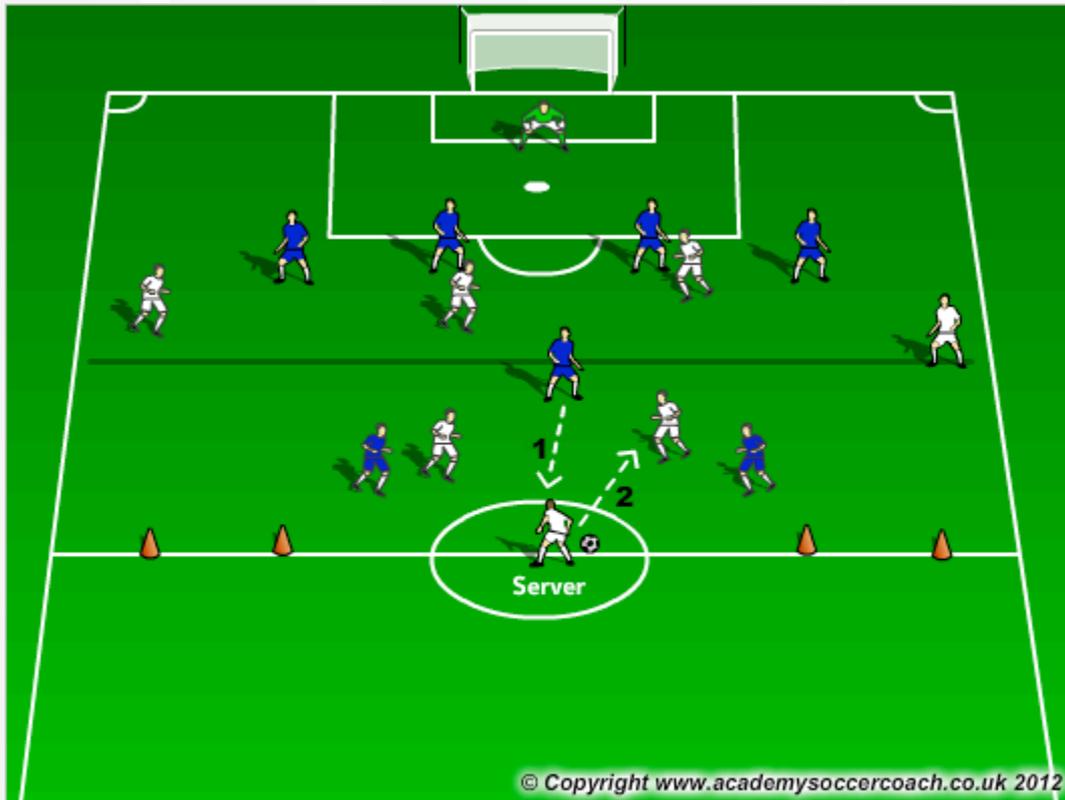
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DEFENDING IN THE FINAL THIRD

John Phelan



SET-UP

- This is a UEFA B Licence PHASE OF PLAY practice.
- 8v7 (in favour of defenders) as organised in the picture.
- Defending MF players starts play by losing possession to the server. The server then plays to a free player on his team.
- Work on:
 - Pressure (where & when)
 - Supporting angles
 - Recovery and tracking runs
 - Compactness, Concentration and Communication



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DEFENSIVE BODY SHAPE

Richard Holmes



SET-UP

- 4v4 SSG - one team attacks a central goal. The other team attacks two wide goals.
- The team defending 2 goals are encouraged to show the attacker inside using their body as a guide.
- The team defending the central goal are encouraged to show players outside into wide areas.
- Change ends after 5-10 minutes.

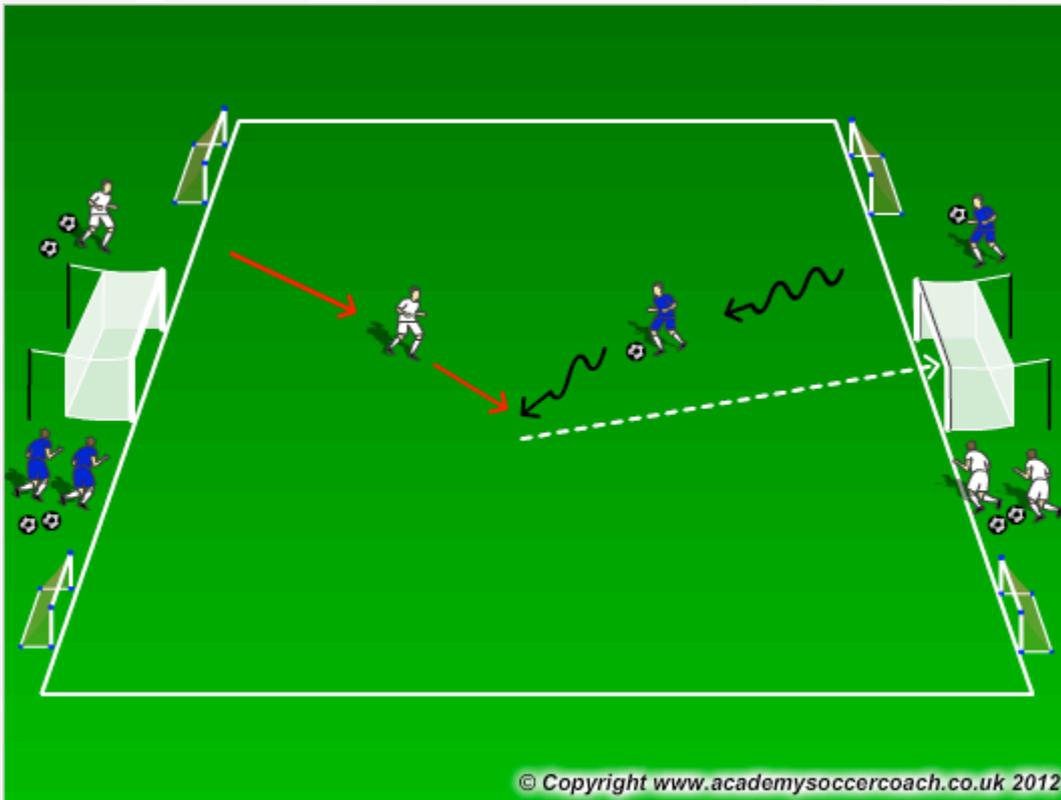


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1V1 CONTINUOUS

Kieran Culleton



SET-UP

- Players set up as shown.
- Play starts alternately from each end so that blue attacks white, white attacks blue, and so on.
- Defender aims to stop attacker scoring in the mini goals. If the defender wins possession he/she may shoot in the large goal.
- Coach to start play each time.
- Progress onto 2v1 possibly with a recovering defender.



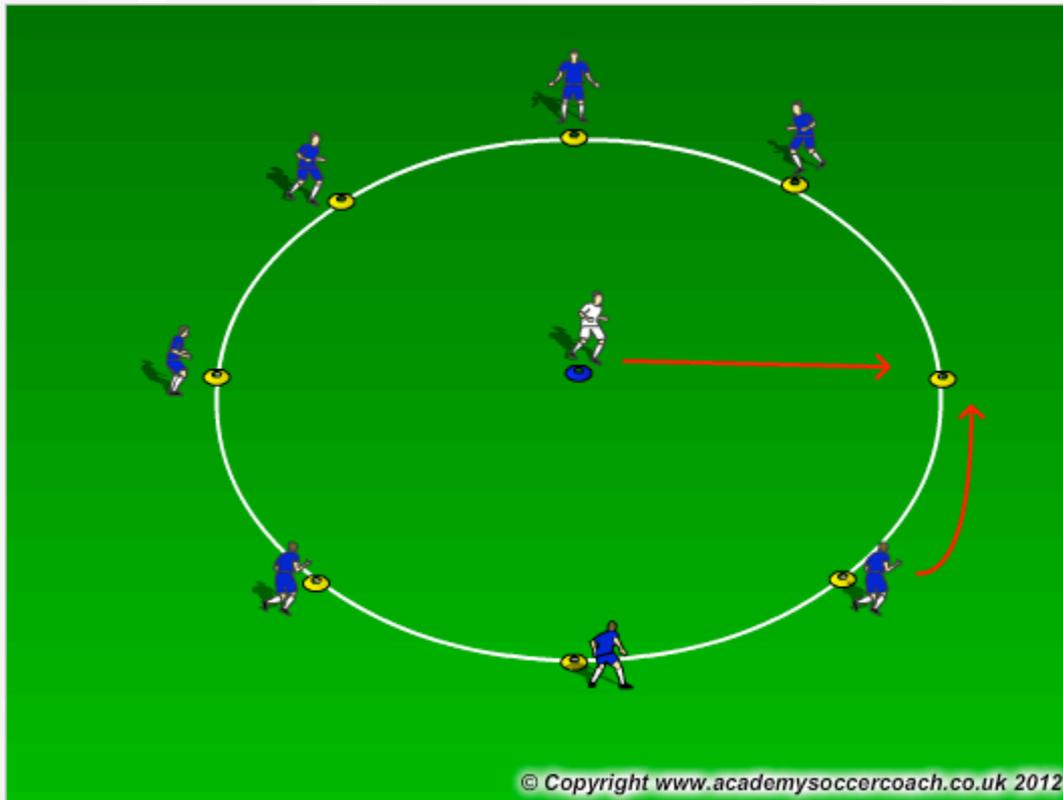
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DEFENSIVE AWARENESS

Andy Brown



SET-UP

- Set out cones in a circle, one for each player in the session. Also, place one cone in the centre.
- Choose one player to go into the centre. He/She will be the attacker.
- The defenders need to protect the space disc by blocking the attacker's runs.
- The player who loses to the attacker is the next player in the middle.

youthsoccerlessonplans.blogspot.com



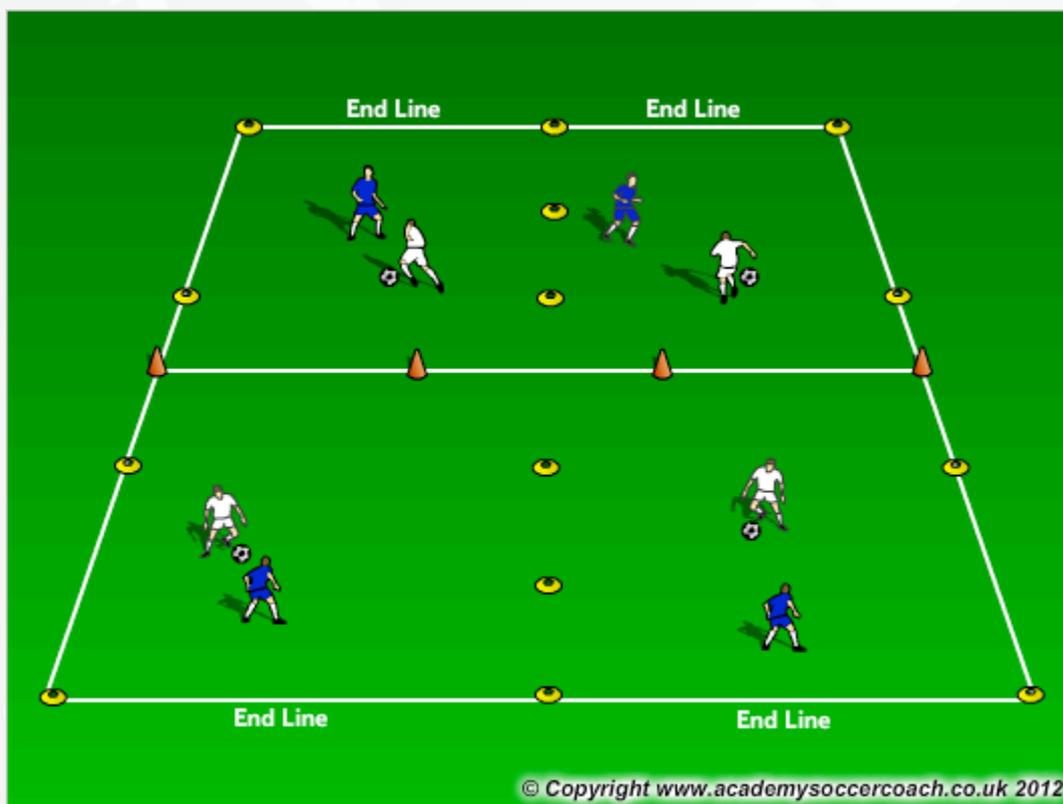
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DEFENDING 1V1

Andy Brown



SET-UP

- Set up 10 x 10 squares. This set up gives lots of repetition for 1v1 defending.
- Attacking player must try to get the ball to the end line. The defender must try to force him/her out one of the other 3 sides.

PROGRESSIONS

- Attacker and defender start back to back.
- Defender starts from an angle.
- Defender starts behind the attacker.

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CLOSING SPACE QUICKLY

Andy Brown



SET-UP

- 4v4 with no goalkeepers
- Both teams can shoot from anywhere on the pitch so defenders must close spaces quickly and cut down options for the player on the ball.
- Poor defensive position will lead to goals being scored.
- Teams will need to communicate and begin to recognise pressing cues and triggers.



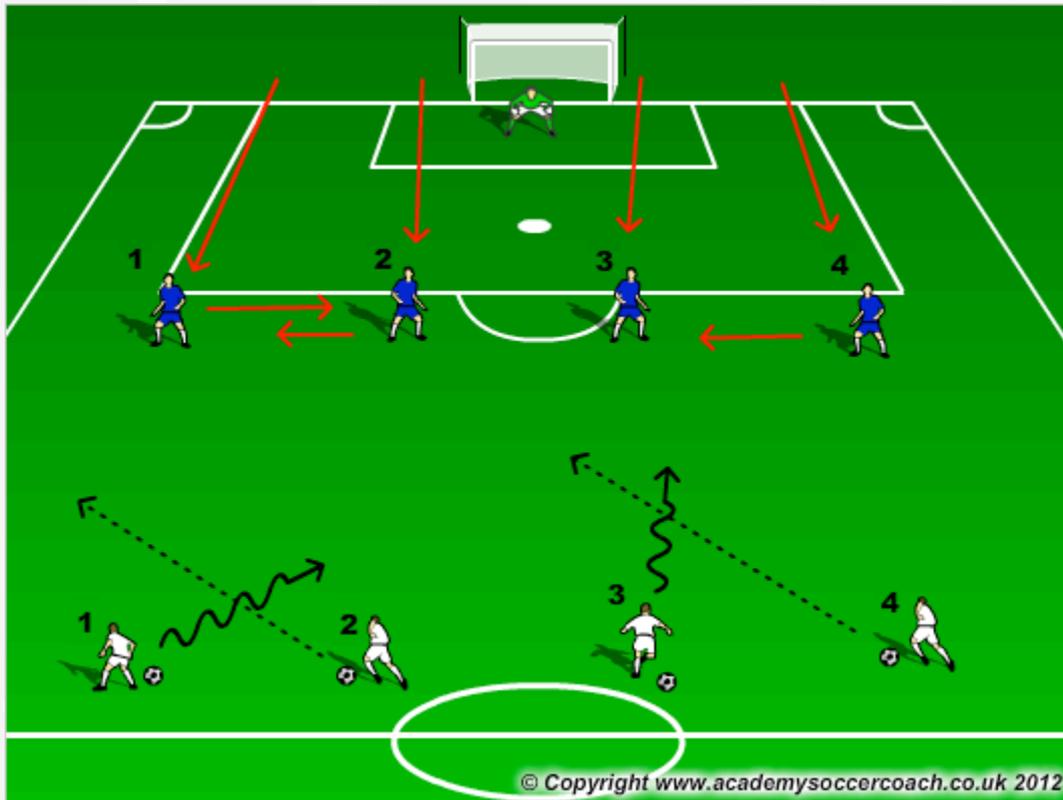
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STAY WITH YOUR MAN

Shane Abery



SET-UP

- Four defenders play against four attackers (plus GK).
- Defenders start on goal line, facing and attacker just inside the half.
- The defender must stay in line with his/her attacker as the coach shouts GO.
- Attackers can dribble across the pitch to confuse defenders. As soon as they reach the 18 yard line the attackers can go 1v1 to score a goal.



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1V1 CONTINUOUS

Ross Chamberlain



SET-UP

- 8 Players, 4 defenders defend a small goal each. The remaining 4 players are attackers and play from the safe zone in the centre.
- Defenders must try to win ball and dribble into the middle “safe zone”.
- The attackers must attack a different goal each time.

PROGRESSIONS

- Add overload in favour of attackers.
- Add/Remove goals.



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3V3 REACTING QUICKLY

Mark Carr



SET-UP

- 3v3 Game playing to four goals.
- The Blue team attack goals 3 & 4 while the White team attack goals 1 & 2.
- Teams must react quickly to a loss of possession and try to win the ball back as soon as possible.
- Rotate players after 3 goals are scored.

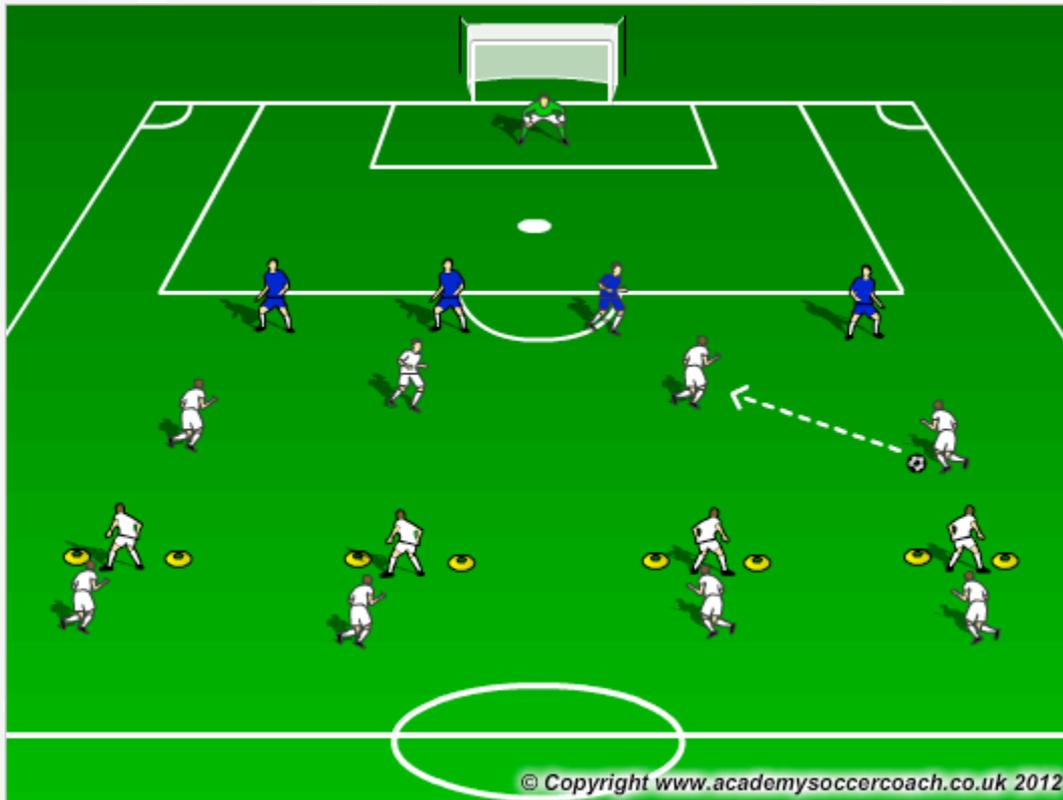


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4V4 DEFENDING

Victor Satei



SET-UP

- Four defenders and goalkeeper defend a goal against four attackers.
- Attackers start between the gates as shown, coach plays them the ball and the game is live.
- Attacking team have 30-45 seconds to score a goal. The back four gain a point if the attackers cannot score in the time limited period.
- Recognise pressing cues and triggers, marking players and tracking runs.



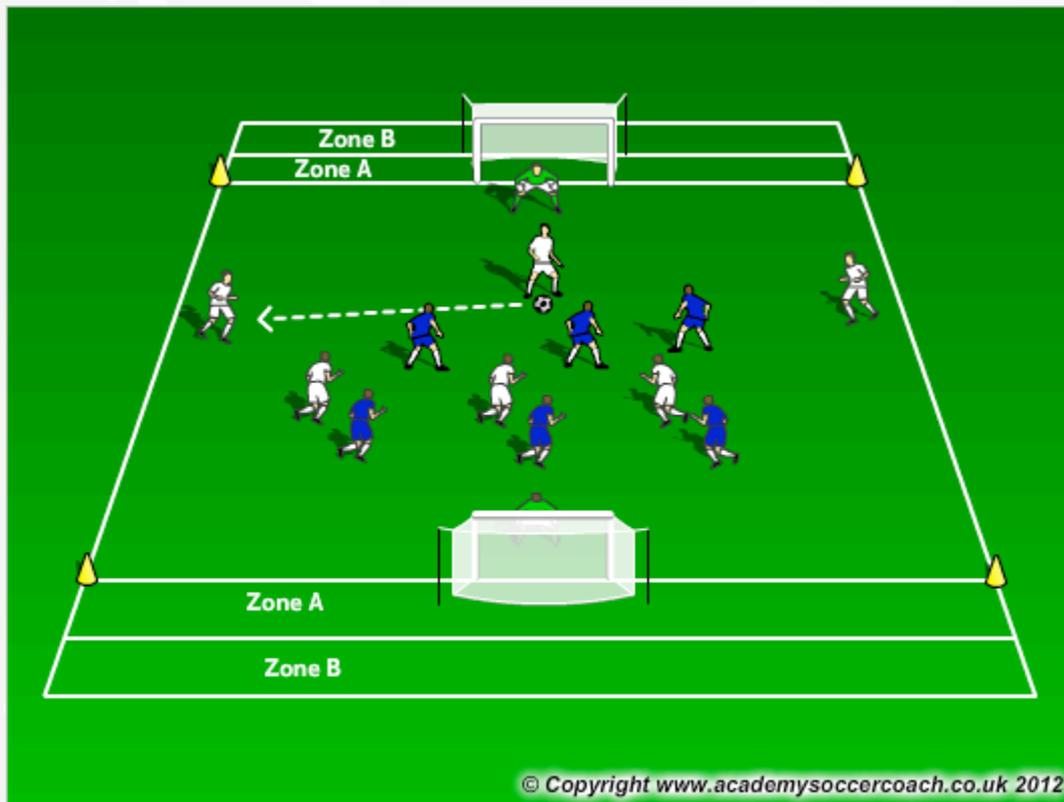
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HIGH PRESSURE TEAM DEFENDING

Victor Satei



SET-UP

- A 7v7 game (6+1 GK) in a small area.
- Both teams set up in a 3-3 formation. Behind each goal there should be two zones – Zone A and Zone B.
- If a team scores a goal, all their players must run immediately back to Zone A – behind their goal.
- The team conceding the goal must run to Zone B behind their own goal.
- The team conceding the goal have to run further. The first team back on the pitch receive a new ball from the coach and play resumes.



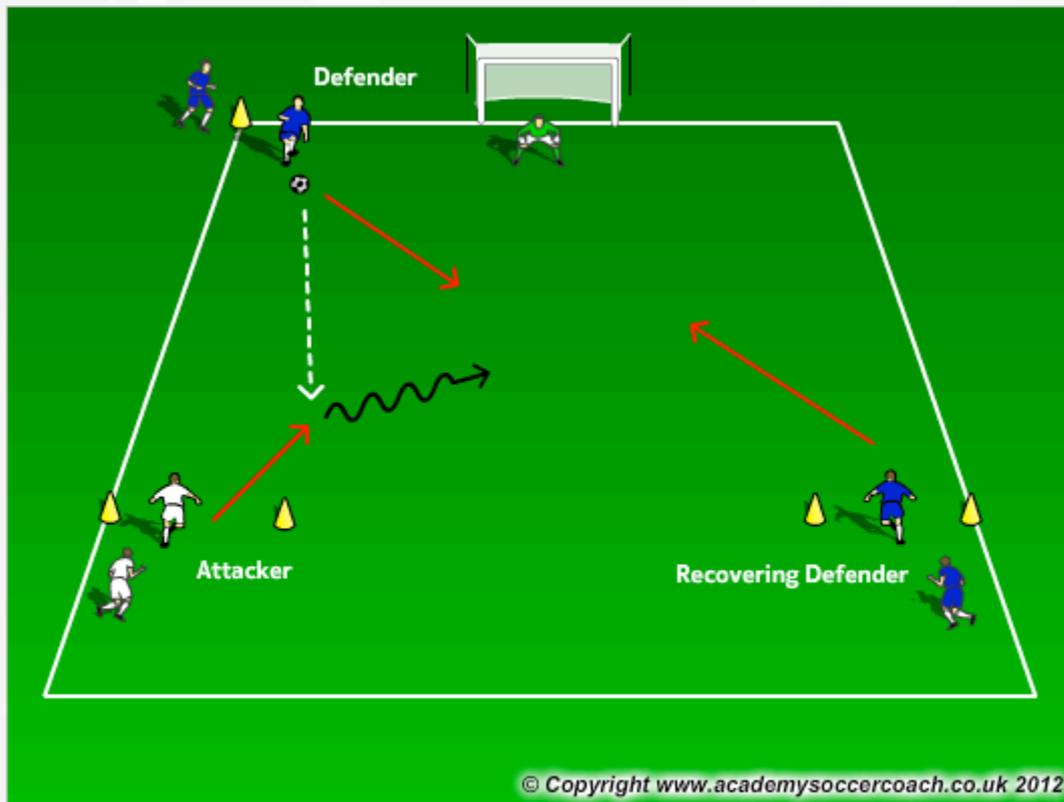
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1V1 WITH RECOVERING DEFENDER

Tom Hunt



SET-UP

- Set up the practice as shown in the diagram.
- The defender starts the practice passing the ball to the attacker.
- The defender must then get in a good position to delay the attacker while the recovery runner gets behind the ball.
- Defender must delay and deny the attacker space. The recovery runner must communicate with the defender e.g go to ball.



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DEFENDING OUTNUMBERED

Martin Pak Soon Chan



SET-UP

- 4 attackers play against 3 defenders, with the aim of scoring in one of the two goals.
- If the 3 defending players win the ball, they are joined by the 2 goalkeepers to create a 5v4 to score in the cone goals.
- Players work on when to Press or Drop off and how to cover and support the players around them.

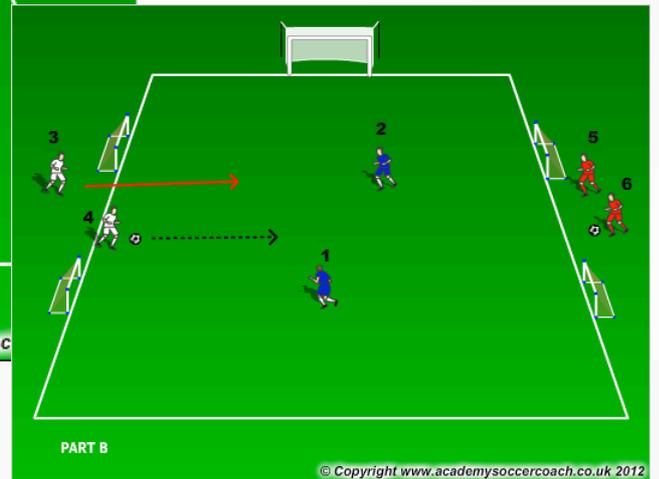


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2V2 ADJUSTING QUICKLY

Paul Lichfield



PART A

- P1 starts practice, dribbles and shoots at goal.
- P2 then plays a one-two with P1 and shoots at goal.
- Both players stay on the pitch.

PART B

- P3 & P4 attack P1 & P2 playing 2v2 into the small goals across the pitch until a goal is scored.
- When ball is dead, P1 & P2 leave the field.
- P5 & P6 now attack P3 & P4 until a goal is scored.

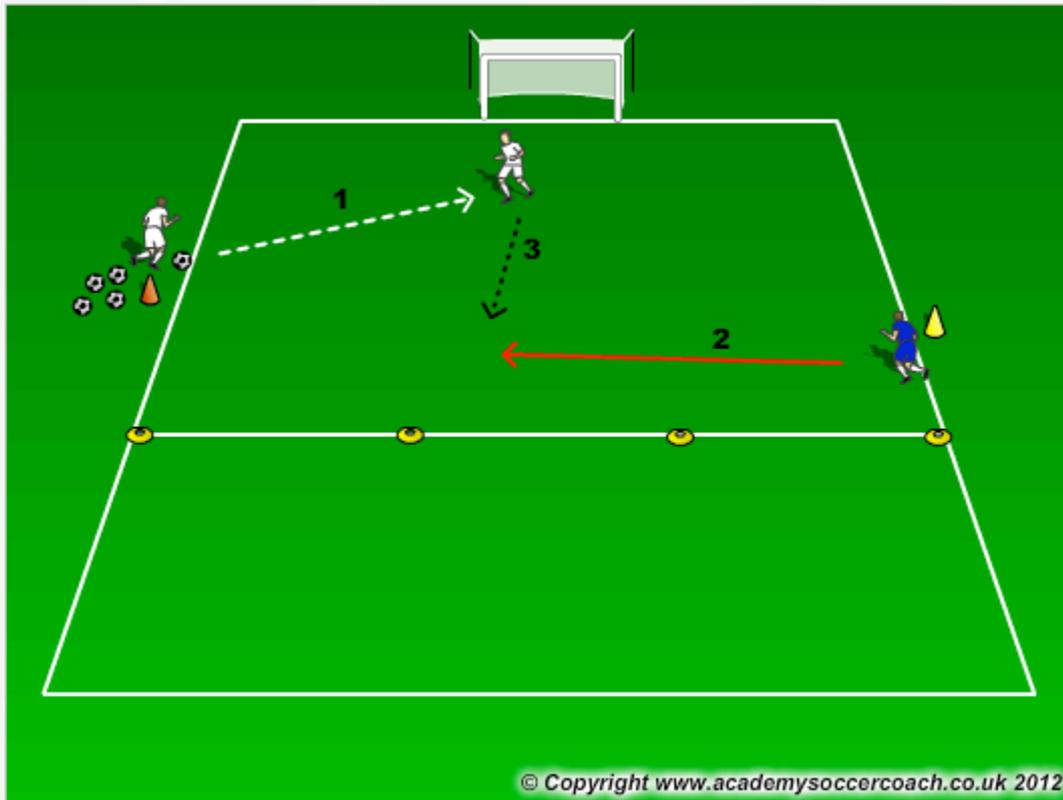


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1V1 DEFENDING

Rob Parker



SET-UP

- The server starts play, passing into the attacking player.
- As the ball is played from the server, the defending player can make a run to get into a position to defend.
- The attacker aims to dribble the ball over the coned line. The defender aims to win the ball and score in the big goal.
- Coach defender on correct body position, side on and bent knees ready to react quickly to a change of direction.

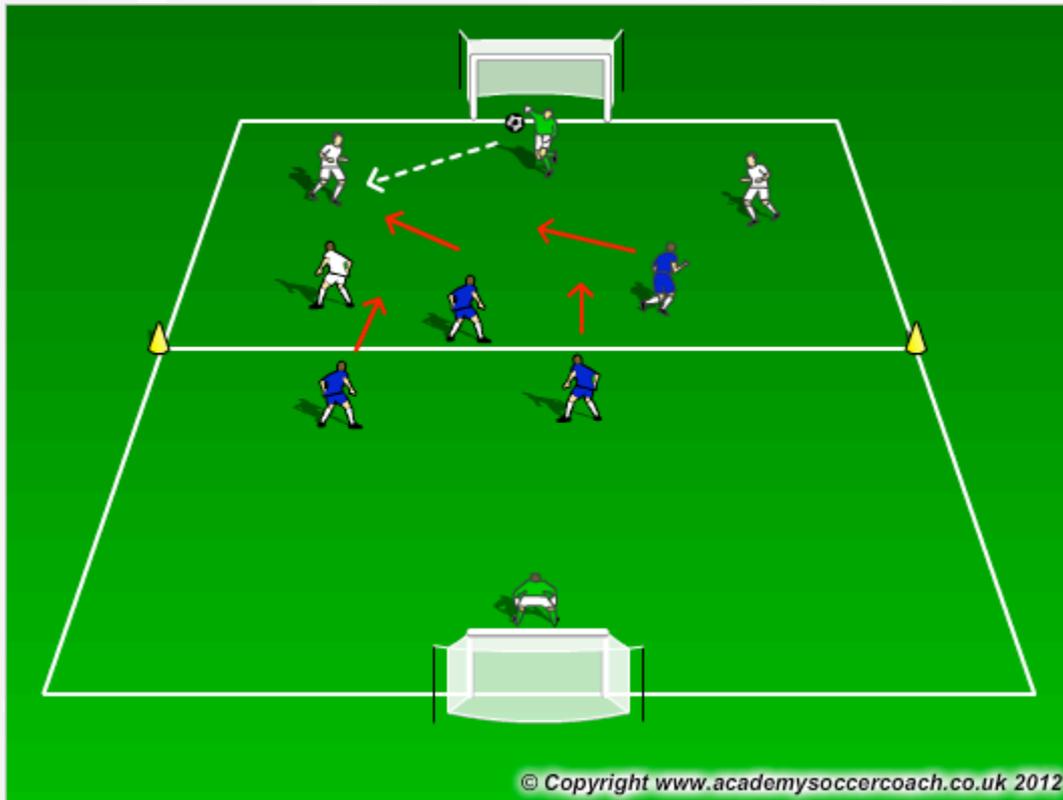


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DEFENDING FROM THE FRONT

Sam Bensley



SET-UP

- Two equal teams playing to goals or End Zones.
- A conditioned game where the defending team try to press high up the pitch in an attempt at stopping the attacking side crossing the halfway line.
- Normal rules apply otherwise.
- Coaching points or challenges:
 - Win the ball as soon as possible
 - Don't let attackers past halfway line
 - Make play predictable



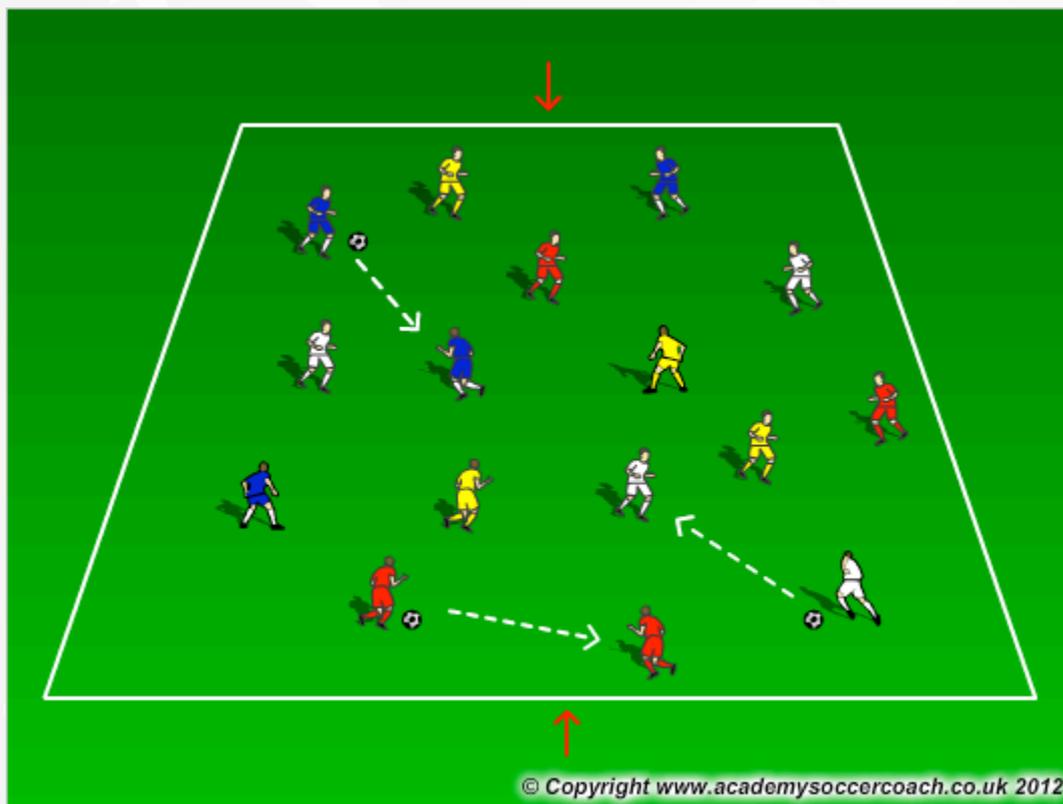
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WIN IT, KEEP IT

Sam Bensley



SET-UP

- Four teams of four players, three teams with a ball, one team without a ball – this team are the defenders (Yellows in the picture)
- The attacking teams try to get to the end lines – marked with an arrow.
- Once they reach one they must attack the other.
- Defending side must hunt in groups to try and cut off passing angles for a player in possession. They must also try to stop attacking sides passing through them.



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MAN MARKING : SMALL-SIDED GAME

David Kwiatek



SET-UP

- A normal SSG with equal teams.
- Condition the game so that both teams have a sweeper and a Goalkeeper.
- The other players identify a player from the opposition – They must try to man mark this player.
- The game will help players identify how and when to press and when to cover.
- The sweeper offers cover and an option for the GK to play out.

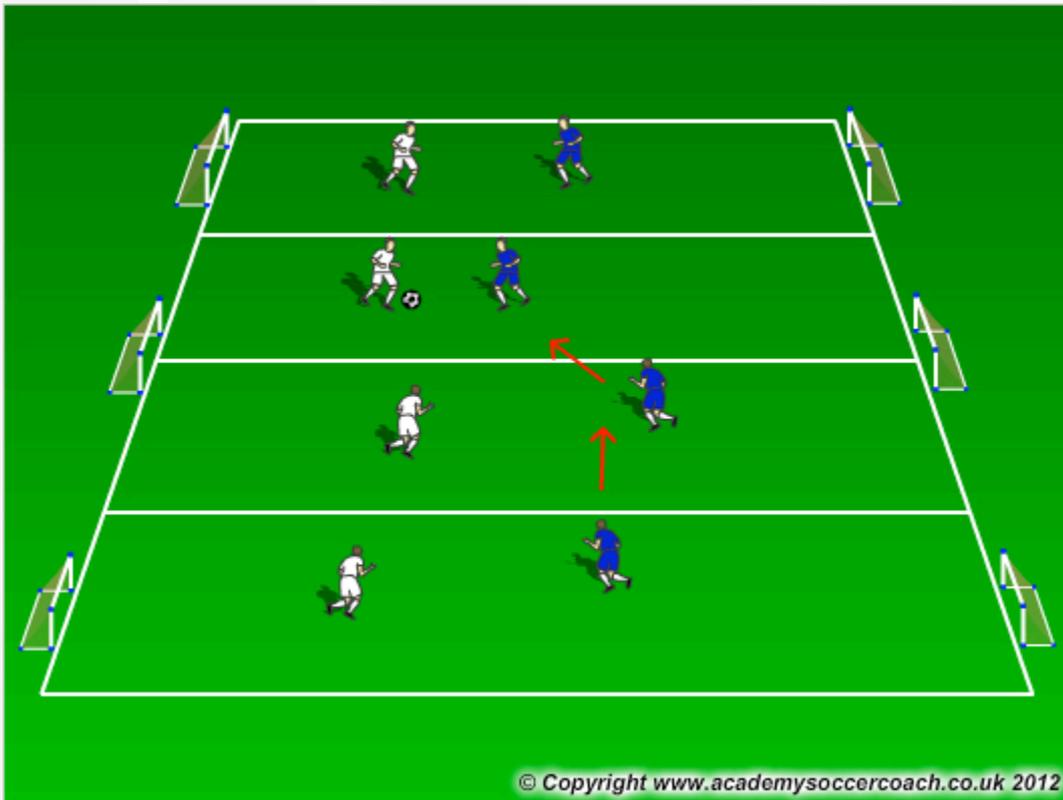


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PRESSURE, COVER & BALANCE

Matt Tranter



SET-UP

- Two teams playing 4v4 – Attacking side get 1 point for scoring in either of the wide goals and 3 points for scoring in the middle goal.
- Attackers are limited to their lane/zone. The defenders can move 1 lane laterally to offer cover and balance to the defender pressing the ball.
- If defenders win the ball the players must quickly return to their lane as the attack happens.



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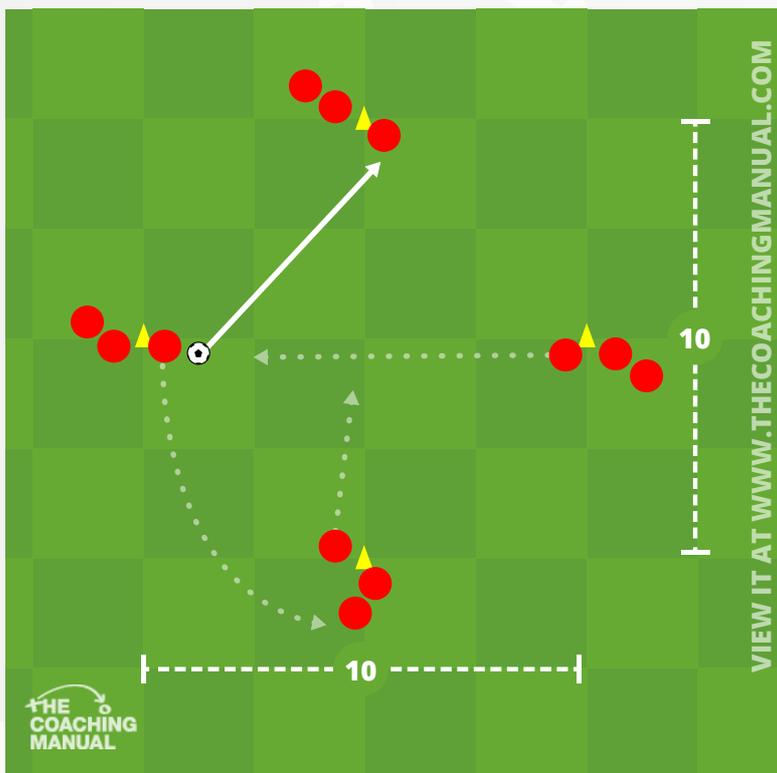
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PRESSING : WARM-UP

The Coaching Manual (@CoachingManual)

TIME 5-10 Mins
PLAYERS 12+
AGES 12-16 Years



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- See expert youth coach from @OfficialSaints deliver the practice.
- See how the practice really looks and how kids really adapt to the challenges.
- See progressions and coaching points.

SET-UP

- 4 Teams of 3 players. Each team stands behind a mannequin (or cone). Only when the player is next in line to be involved can he step in front of the mannequin.
- Only 1 ball is in play. The coach begins the sequence by passing the ball to any player.
- The receiving player must make a pass to the team to his right. At the same time he is being "pressed" by a player from the team on his opposite mannequin.
- After releasing the ball to his right, the passer must then run to the mannequin to his left.
- The trigger/cue for closing down the receiving player is when the passer releases the ball.

PROGRESSION

- Introduce the option to play in whichever direction the player chooses. If they play right they must move to the group on the left and vice versa.

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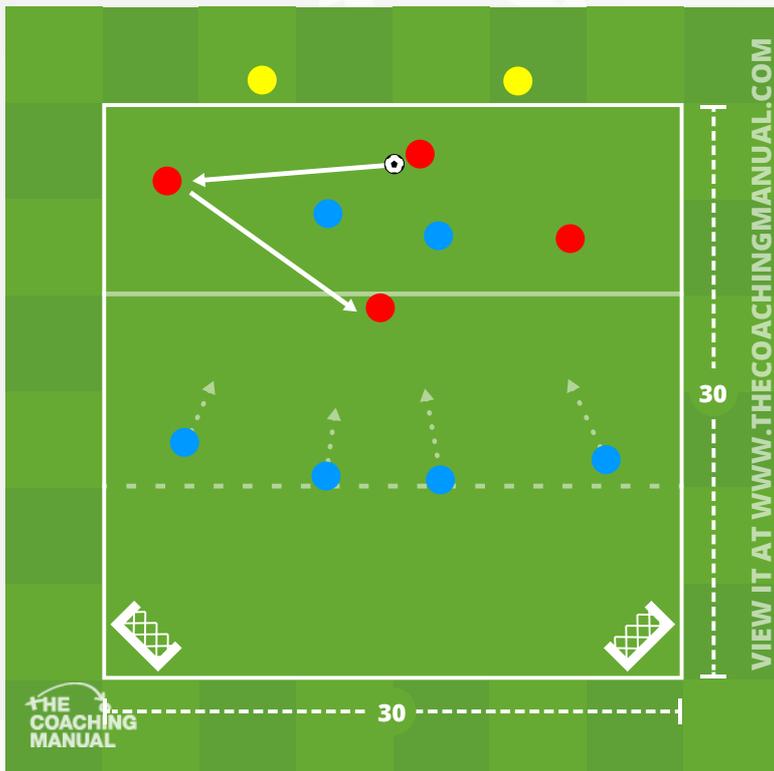
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PRESSING : CUES & TRIGGERS

The Coaching Manual (@CoachingManual)

TIME 20-30 Mins
PLAYERS 12+
AGES 12-16 Years



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- See expert youth coach from @OfficialSaints deliver the practice.
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SET-UP

- 1 team of 6 players and 1 team of 4 players. Split the pitch into 2 areas (1 large/1 small) with the team of 6 defending 2 small goals. In the larger area have a line to act as guidance for the defenders. At the opposite end of the pitch to the goals have 2 target players.
- Only 1 ball is in play. Begin the practice with a 4v2 in the smaller area nearest the bounce players. The team of 4 must exchange a minimum of 3 passes (using target players if required) before they can attack the defenders in the larger area. They can also have a long shot at the goals if they have space.
- The aim for the defenders, and the 'back 4' in particular, is to win the ball back; looking out for the triggers of when to press the ball and when to drop off and protect the goals. Triggers to press may be a backwards pass, a bad pass or a bad touch. Triggers to drop off may be that the opposition has a lot of space and is going to shoot.

PROGRESSION

- Attackers can score 1 point by getting into the larger area, 2 points by getting over the line in the larger area or 3 points if they score in either goal. Defenders can score points by winning possession and playing to target players.

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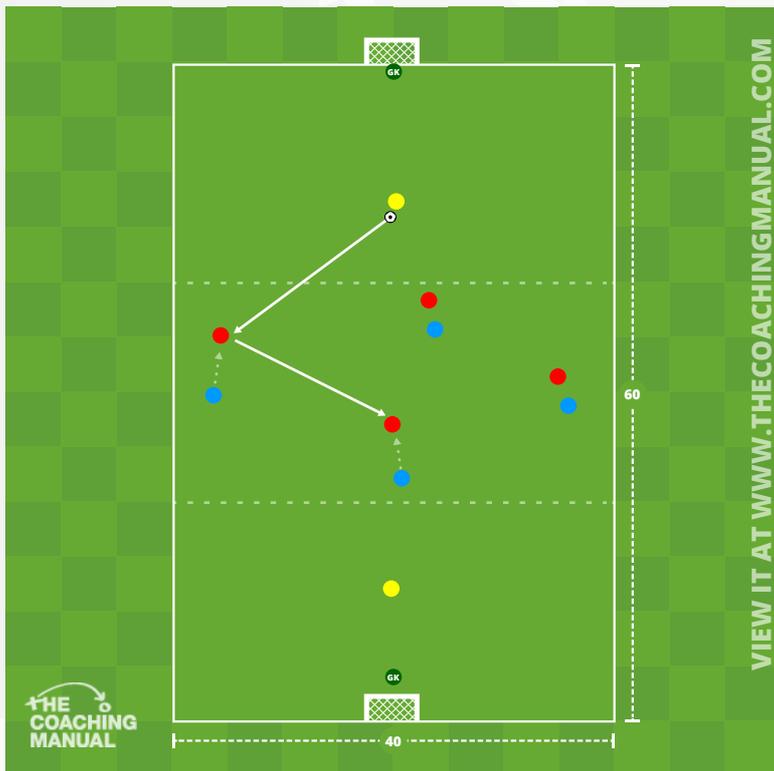
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PRESSING : GAME

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TIME 20-30 Mins
PLAYERS 12+
AGES 12-16 Years



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- See progressions and coaching points.

SET-UP

- Divide the pitch into equal 3rd's.
- In each end (final) 3rd with the GK is a sweeper. Each sweeper is allowed only 3 touches on the ball and must remain in his 3rd of the pitch. Players are not allowed to tackle the sweepers.
- In the middle 3rd play 4v4. Each player is matched 1v1 against a player from the opposition. They can only tackle this player. These players can move into any third of the pitch.
- If the ball goes out of play it starts from the keeper.

COACHING POINTS

- Recognise the triggers and cues, such as the sweepers 2nd touch/ players playing away from goal/ sloppy passes. Try not to let the opposition turn towards goal. Press as a unit. Move as the ball travels. If you can't get pressure on the ball, drop off.

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