

DEFENDING AND PRESSING IN A 1-4-2-3-1

AGE PHASE: U12+

SESSION OVERVIEW

DEFENDING AND PRESSING IN A 1-4-2-3-1

LEVEL

- U12-First team

SESSION OBJECTIVES

To develop a team's ability to defend effectively by:

- 'Shaping' a medium-high press and forcing play one way.
- Being set up to win the ball on the second line of pressure.
- Improving individuals' defending detail in 1v1 situations.

PART 1: POSSESSION TRANSFER PRACTICE

- This practice requires a minimum of 16 outfield players. Three teams of four combine to retain possession while a further team of four defends.
- The practice is set up so quick transitions from one phase of play to another must take place by both the in and out-of-possession players.

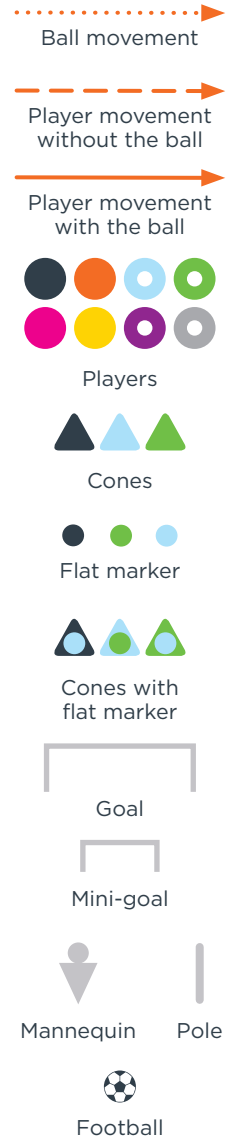
PART 2: TRANSITION-BASED RONDO

- In this practice, 18 outfield players are split into three teams of six. In 6v2 possession situations, the in-possession team must attempt to transfer the ball from one end of a grid to another.
- Should they lose possession, focus turns toward their ability to react quickly to a loss of possession as they become the defensive team.

PART 3: 11v11 GAME

- This is an 11v11 full-scale game in which the players are asked to put into context the principles of defending that have been developed over the course of the first two practices.
- Focus remains on 'shaping the press' and 'winning the ball on the second line'.

KEY



POSSESSION TRANSFER

DEFENDING AND PRESSING IN A 1-4-2-3-1

FUNCTION

- This practice sees a group of 16 players split into four teams of four.
- The practice area is a square split into four quadrants. A smaller, central square houses the non-active defenders.
- In **Diagram 1**, the four members of **Team B** play 4v1 against one defending player from **Team A**. On accumulating **4 passes**, **Team B** transfer the ball to a player from one of the two other in-possession teams – here, **Team C** and **Team D**.
- As a new team receives possession – in this example, **Team C** – the rest of the players from that team must join the ball-carrier in their respective box.
- If the defender wins possession, they should play the ball out of the area, prompting the coach to serve a new ball into the grid.
- **Diagram 2** shows the pitch when **Team C** are in possession. The remaining two in-possession teams – **B and D** – have split themselves in a way in which they are represented in each of the three inactive quadrants.
- As the ball moves quadrants, a new defender enters. The initial defender moves back into the central square, becoming inactive.
- Each team spends a predetermined amount of time as the defending team before changing roles with one of the attacking teams.

PROGRESSION

- To progress the activity, permit two defenders to enter each box should the in-possession team accumulate **3 passes**.

DIAGRAM 1

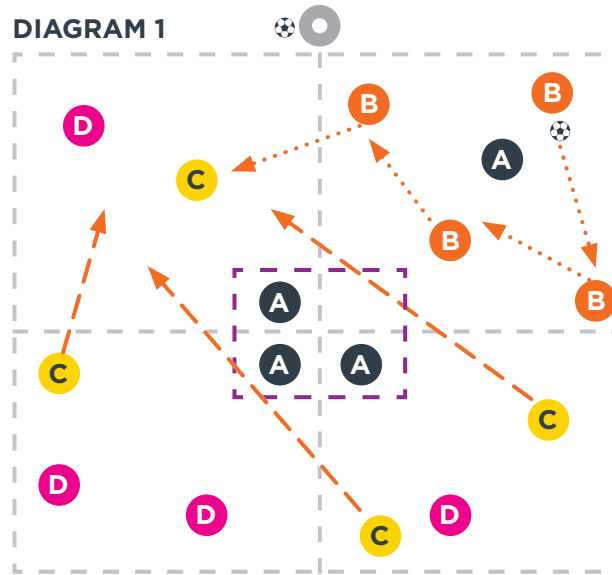
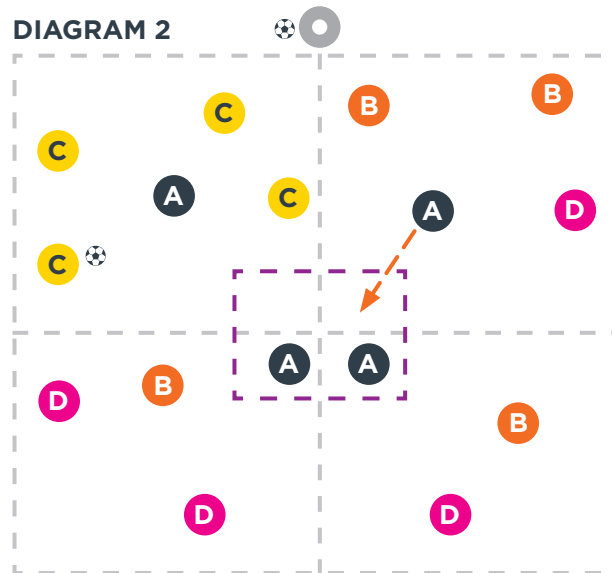


DIAGRAM 2



COACHING DETAIL: OUT OF POSSESSION

SHAPE THE PRESS

- The pressing player should attempt to force the opposition's play to one box in particular so that the next defender is able to anticipate the direction of their play.

ARRIVE ON THE FIRST TOUCH

- If the first pressing player is successful in forcing play into one box in particular, the next defender should aim to arrive on the receiving player's first touch. This should allow them to win possession.

SHADOW PRESSING

- The pressing player should consider how the 'shadow' of their pressing angle influences another opposition player.
- Their shadow should block a passing line and therefore make the opposition's play more predictable for the following pressing player.

COMMUNICATION

- Communication should come from the inactive defenders in the central box as to where the pressing player(s) should force play.
- This becomes particularly important when two defenders are able to be active at once.

COACHING DETAIL: IN POSSESSION

QUICK TRANSITIONS

- As the ball changes grids, players in the receiving team should move quickly to connect with one another in the new box.

FUNCTION

- This practice involves a group of 18 players split into three teams of six.
- The practice area is a rectangle split into three even thirds.
- Two in-possession teams – here, **Team A** and **Team C** – occupy each end third of the grid, while a defending team (**Team B**) operates from the middle third.
- **Diagram 1** shows two players from **Team B** defending 2v6 against **Team A** in one of the end thirds.
- The in-possession team must make **4 passes** before transferring the ball to the opposite end of the grid.
- When this happens, the two **Team B** defenders return to the middle third while two of their teammates move from the middle third to defend 2v6 against **Team C**.
- **Diagram 2** shows the transition when the defending team wins possession or the ball goes out of play. Here, **Team B** become one of the in-possession teams while **Team A** – who have lost the ball – assume the role of the defensive team in the middle third. The ball starts again with **Team C** at the opposite end, where they are pressed by two **Team A** defenders.

PROGRESSION

- To progress the practice, allow the defending team to defend both the middle zone and the end zone in which the ball is active as they see fit (players can move freely in both thirds). The opposition accumulating **4 passes** could be the cue for this rule to become active.
- At this point, you could also permit the team receiving possession to operate in the middle third.

DIAGRAM 1

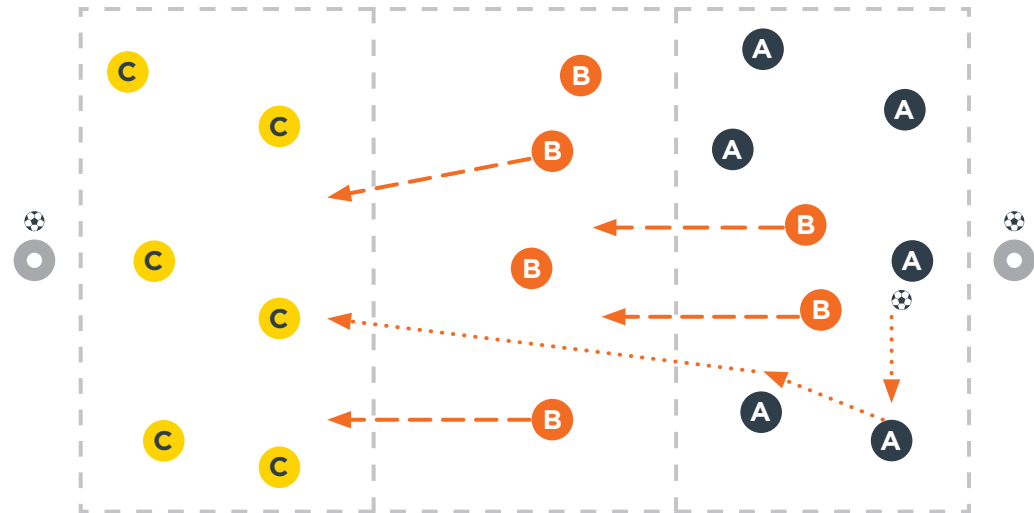
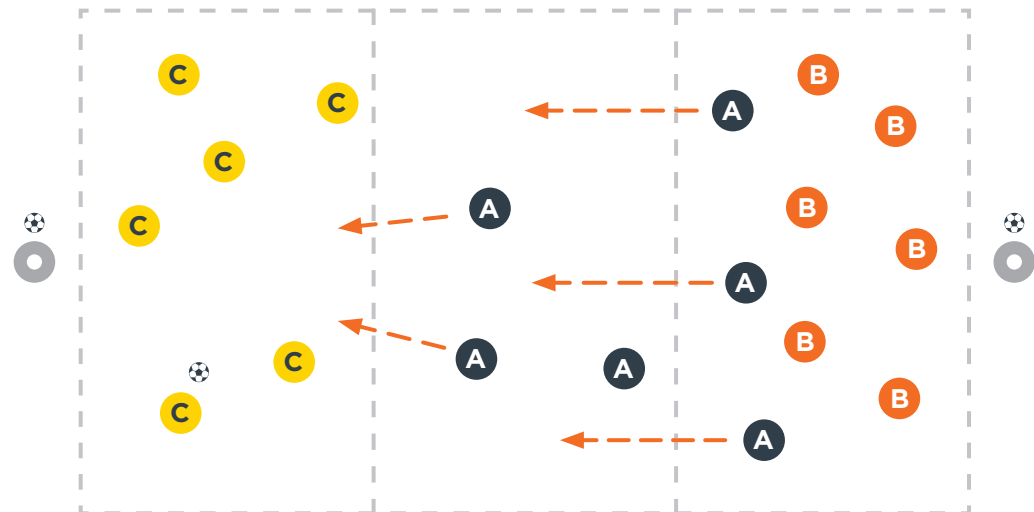


DIAGRAM 2



COACHING DETAIL: OUT OF POSSESSION

SHAPE THE PRESS

- The pressing players should attempt to force the opposition's play to one side in particular, thus halving the pitch. The next line of defenders will then be able to anticipate the direction of their play and intercept.

EFFECTIVE INDIVIDUAL DEFENDING

- Pressure by the two pressing players should be applied aggressively so that the opposition do not have comfortable possession.
- Players should be conscious of the need to press quickly but slow down early enough in order to not get beaten easily.

SHADOW PRESSING

- The pressing player should consider how the 'shadow' of their pressing angle influences another opposition player.
- Their shadow should block a passing line and therefore make the opposition's play more predictable for the second pressing player and the second line of defenders.

COMMUNICATION

- Communication should come from the second line of defenders in the middle third as to where the pressing player(s) should force play.

'STAY CONNECTED'

- Players in the second line of defence (in the middle third) should 'stay connected' to the two pressing players; the distances between the two units should represent an aggressive approach to defending.
- The second line of pressure should become more conscious of their positions as 'covering' players as the practice progresses to permit offensive players to operate in the middle third.

COACHING DETAIL: DEFENSIVE TRANSITION

AGGRESSIVE DEFENSIVE TRANSITIONS

- As an in-possession team surrenders possession and the ball is transferred to the opposite end of the playing area, they should react rapidly as they become the defensive team.
- Two pressing players should apply early pressure on the team receiving possession, while the second line of defenders should move into positions where they can screen forward passes.

FUNCTION

- There is an 11v11 game in which one team plays in a 1-4-4-2 formation (**Team B**) against an opposition (**Team A**) setting up in a 1-4-2-3-1. **Team A** is the side being worked with by the coach.
- The focus of the practice is on developing **Team A**'s ability to defend effectively using a co-ordinated press in a 1-4-2-3-1.

SETTING THE PRESS

- **Diagram 1** shows the **Team B** goalkeeper playing into the left-sided central defender (**5**). They have been allowed to do so because the pressing team's lone forward (**9**) has started up against the right-sided central defender (**6**).
- As the ball is played, this is the opportunity for the defending **10** to 'shape the press', pressing the attacking **5** from inside to out and forcing play outside.
- **Diagram 2** shows the next stage of the press. With **Team B** forced to the left-hand side by the pressing line of the **Team A 10**, the **Team A 7** is able to anticipate the pass from the **Team B 5** to **3**.
- The **Team A 7** must press this pass by 'arriving' on **Team B 3**'s first touch and stealing possession.
- In doing so, the **7** has also 'shadowed' the line of the **Team B 11**, cutting off this passing option.

DIAGRAM 1

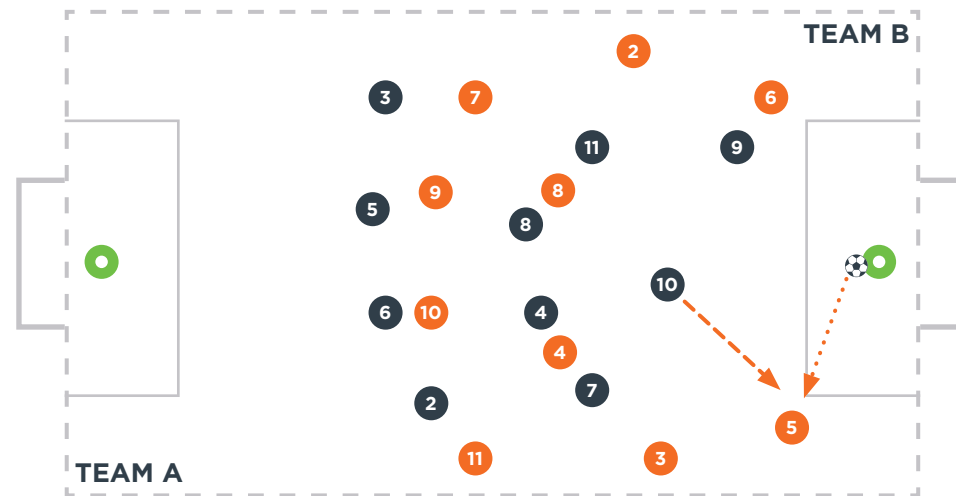
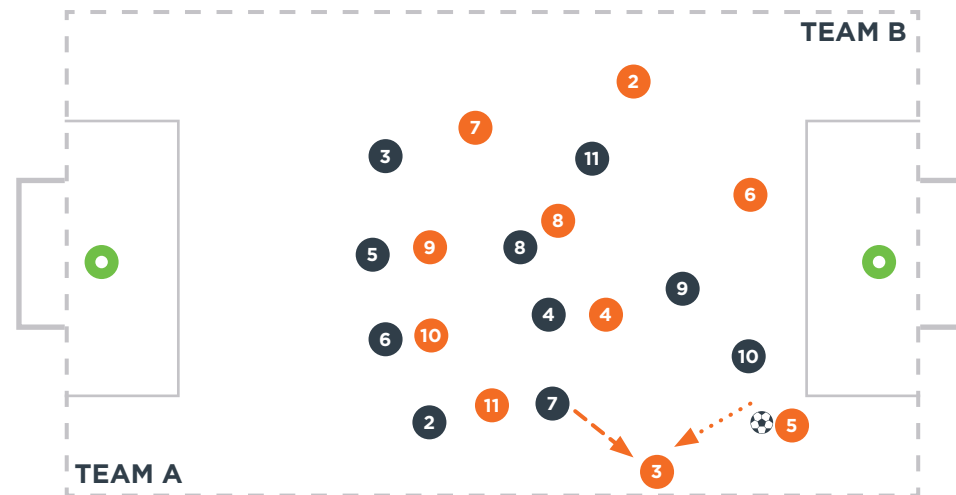


DIAGRAM 2



COACHING DETAIL: OUT OF POSSESSION

SHAPE THE PRESS

- The pressing players in the first line (**9 and 10**) should attempt to force the opposition's play to one side, halving the pitch so that the next line of defenders is able to anticipate the direction of play and intercept.
- Patience is required here. Players should not feel as though they have to engage in a 'high press' at all points in the game.

PRESSING CUES

Players should be encouraged to pick up pressing cues from the state of the game. Indicators that they can press aggressively and 'lock on' include:

- A player being pressured facing their own goal.
- Pressure being applied in a wide area against the touchline.
- Slow or misplaced opposition passes.

ARRIVE ON THE FIRST TOUCH

- If the press is shaped effectively by the **Team A 9 and 10**, the wide players (**7 and 11**) and central midfielders (**4 and 8**) should be able to anticipate the passes played from the opposition into midfield.
- They should aim to 'arrive' on the first touch of the opposition players receiving the ball and steal possession.

COACHING DETAIL: MANAGING THE OPPOSITION

PLAYING THROUGH THE CENTRAL DEFENDERS

- In order to ensure there is sufficient opportunity to practice high pressing, the coach should ensure that the opposition's goalkeeper plays short rather than long passes.

MIDFIELDERS TAKING UP POSITIONS BETWEEN LINES

- In order to cause a problem to the coached team's central midfielders and give them a need to 'scan', the **Team B** midfield players should be asked to play in between the **Team A** defensive and midfield lines.