



CLUB PLAYING CONCEPT

Player & Team Philosophy

The establishment & guiding principles of a common, club-wide technical program with respect to Player & Team Development

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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of the ASA Playing Concept is to mold the "complete" player by giving all young players an education in the understanding and application of the Principles of Play, as well as training basic and advanced tactical behaviors.

This platform will assist in instilling a solid tactical understanding of the game with the intention of promoting players to reach higher levels of the game.

Implementing a Club Playing Concept will allow the Club to create a clear path for player and team development.

Using a common playing style will also provide a transparent set of training guidelines and objectives for all ASA coaches and players that will allow a seamless transition between age groups, coaching staffs, levels of play and programs.

More importantly, the Club Playing Concept will aid in building a Club culture and identity. Having common training objectives in a club-wide playing style will enable coaches to network and form relationships amongst each other that can be a catalyst for sharing ideas, discussing the game and supporting each other on and off the field.

The Club Playing Concept is designed with a building-block approach and will be implemented for teams in the Under 9 thru Under 18 age groups. The Club Playing Concept will be introduced at the U9 & U10 "Prospects" level. All Super 8 Teams (U11/U12), as well as the U13-U18 "Development" teams (Div1/Div2) will be required to play in this style. Divisional recreation teams (Div3/Div4) will be strongly encouraged to adhere to the Playing Concept, but participation will not be mandatory.

The Club will support the implementation and training of the Playing Concept through team development sessions, delivered with the support of Technical Staff Coaches, along with in-house coaching clinics & seminars led by the Club's Director of Coaching and In-Club Learning Facilitator, Doug Rosenlund.

This is an exciting time for the Club and I thank all of you for your continued support of the Club's programming and initiatives.

Lastly, I thank you for your continued dedication and commitment to the development of our young players.

Sincerely,

Ian Knight

Ian Knight
Technical Director
td@abbotsfordsoccer.com



PLAYING CONCEPT INTRODUCTION

PLAYING CONCEPT - INTRODUCTION

Style of Play

The ASA Playing Concept is an efficient and economical possession-based, attacking-minded, but defensively responsible, style of play. It will stress inter-passing and intelligent and timely support and movement in order to provide goal-scoring opportunities by penetrating from wide positions on the field, if appropriate counter-attacking possibilities are denied.

All U9 (6v6) Prospects teams will play in a 1-3-1 formation, which will begin the process of building the principles of play.

All U10 (7v7) Prospects teams will play in a 2-3-1 formation that will build on the 6v6 game, which will further enhance the principles & foundations leading to the 3-3-1.

All U10-U12 Selects (8v8) teams will play in a 3-3-1 formation that will build on the 7v7 game and will ready the players for transition into the u13 age division and the 4-4-2 formation.

All U13-U18 Development teams will play in a 4-4-2 formation that will build on the 8v8 game and will further enhance the understanding and application of the principles of play and will lay a foundation of overall tactical understanding and behaviors for teams, team units and individual players.

Why the 4-4-2 Formation?

The 4-4-2 is the chosen shape and formation from which players will be trained. Aside from its versatility and ability to create immediate balance, width and depth through its basic shapes, the 4-4-2 formation also offers the following benefits:

- Can operate as either a "direct" or "indirect" play
- Several different tactical schemes can be created through the basic 4-4-2 shape
- Converts easily from 4-4-2 to 4-5-1
- Converts easily from 4-4-2 to 3-4-3
- Converts easily from 4-4-2 to 4-3-3
- Demands understanding and implementation of movement and support
- Protects major supply and scoring areas in defending half of the field
- "Early" and "high" width can be established on gaining possession
- Movement, inter-change and positioning "between" opponents causes marking difficulties for defending teams.
- Four midfield players can be changed (Diamond) to provide marking problems for opponents
- Four midfield players often outnumber opponents for attacking build-ups and defensive responsibilities
- Three of the four midfield players have the freedom to attack leaving "security" behind
- A zonal back 4 covers the width of the field more economically and quickly, and defenders are generally in closer proximity to each other to provide support when and if necessary.

Physical Demands of 4-4-2

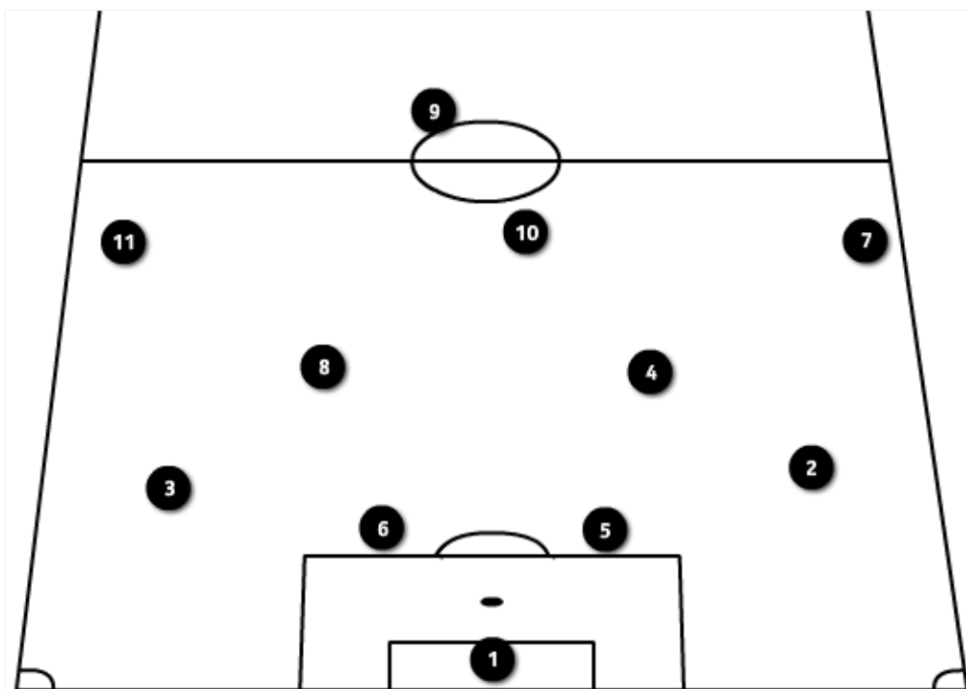
Positional Demands in Match Play

POSITION	WALKING	SLOW RUNNING	SPRINTING	INTENSE RUNNING
Defender	5.04Km 36%	5.47Km 41%	0.84Km 6%	2.38km 17%
Midfield	4.76km 31%	5.32km 38%	1.54km 11%	2.80km 20%
Forward	4.06km 29%	4.90km 35%	1.82km 13%	3.22km 23%

4-4-2 Standard Attacking Shape

The following are general characteristics of the 4-4-2 standard attacking shape:

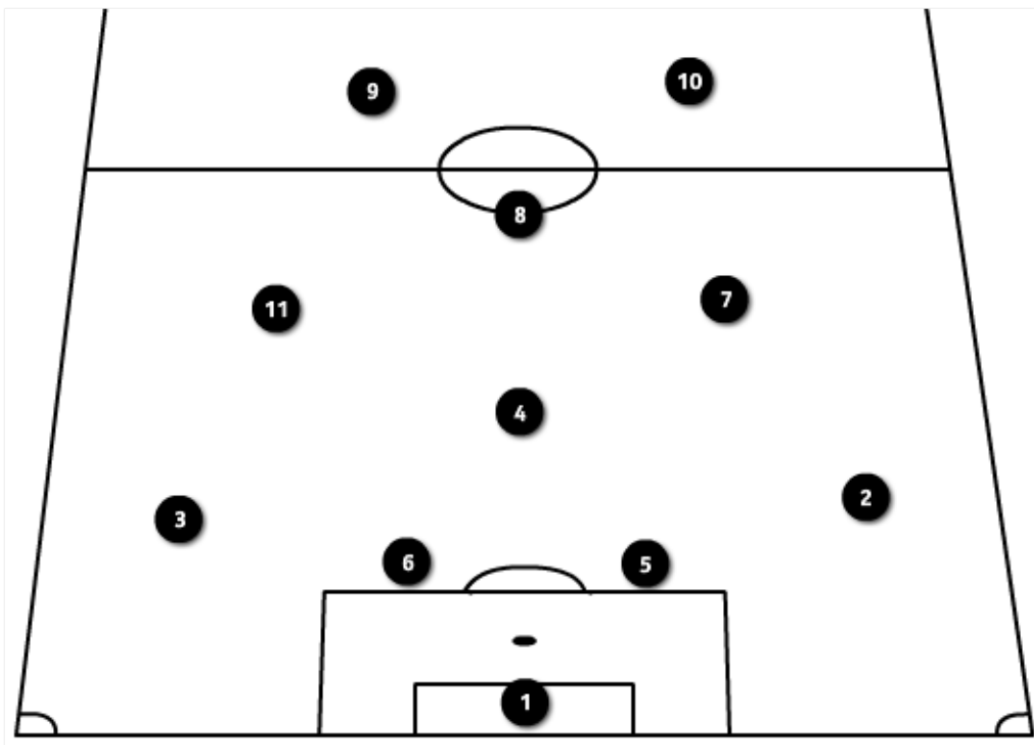
- Zonal back 4 (#2, #3, #5, #6). Play identical to the demands in the other formations/attacking shapes.
- Two "holding" central midfield players (#4, #8) who sit in the central "pockets" to support attacks and acts as "sweepers" in front of the back 4 in defending situations.
- One "shadow striker" (#10) who moves and plays off of the high striker (#9) starting in a deeper midfield position. The "shadow striker" must be a creative attacking player who can effectively play a two-way game.
- Striker (#9) plays primarily as a "target" player to combine with attacking MF players and wingers. The striker should stay high on the last centre back(s) and look to position themselves between the centre backs. In defending situations, the striker is responsible for pressing the opponent's back 4 and doubling down on MF players when necessary.
- Two wingers (#7, #11) play in a lower midfield role where they have more defending responsibilities and need to link quickly and efficiently with the fullbacks (#2, #3) in attacking and defending situations. Wingers will also press the opponents back 4 and will track back/double down in defending situations, as needed.



4-4-2 Diamond MF Attacking Shape

The following are general characteristics of the 4-4-2 standard attacking shape:

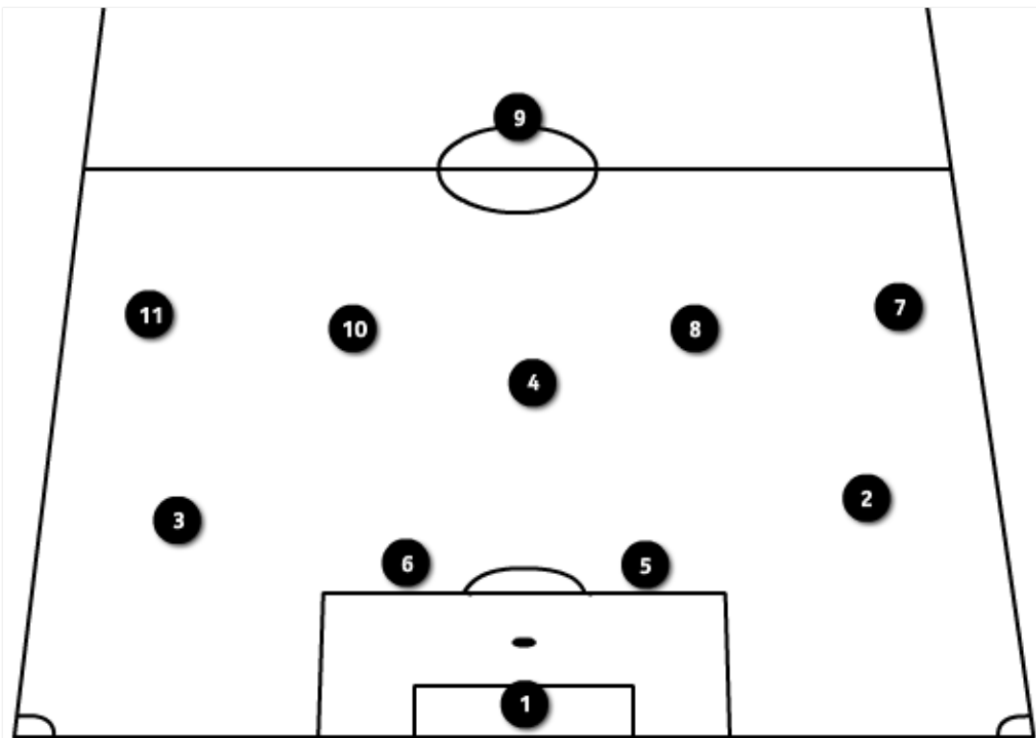
- Zonal back 4 (#2, #3, #5, #6). Play identical to the demands in the other formations/attacking shapes.
- One "holding" central midfielder (#4) who sits in the central "pocket" to support attacks and acts as "sweepers" in front of the back 4 in defending situations.
- One "shadow striker"/attacking MF player (#8) who moves and plays off of the twin strikers starting in a deeper midfield position. The "shadow striker" must be a creative attacking player who can effectively play a two-way game.
- Two strikers (#9, #10) play primarily as high and low "targets" players to combine with attacking MF players and wingers. The "high" striker should stay high on the last centre back(s) and look to position themselves between the centre backs. The strikers should work closely off of each other to move across the width of the field and cycle off of each other during MF build ups to show for the ball.
- Two wingers (#7, #11) drop into a midfield role where they have more defending responsibilities and need to link quickly and efficiently with the fullbacks (#2, #3) in attacking and defending situations... Wingers will also press the opponents back 4 and will track back/double down in defending situations, as needed.



4-5-1 Standard Attacking Shape

The following are general characteristics of the 4-5-1 standard attacking shape:

- Zonal back 4 (#2, #3, #5, #6). Play identical to the demands in the other formations/attacking shapes.
- One "holding" central midfielder (#4) who sits in the central "pocket" to support attacks and acts as a "sweeper" in front of the back 4 in defending situations.
- Two attacking central midfield players (#8, #10) who should look to play penetrating passes in behind the opposition's back 4 to the forwards and should also look to combine with the central striker (#9) in attack. They are responsible for pressing the opponent's back 4 and doubling down on the opponent's MF players in defending situations.
- Striker (#9) plays primarily as a "target" player to combine with attacking MF players and wingers. The striker should stay high on the last centre back(s) and look to position themselves between the centre backs. In defending situations, the striker is responsible for pressing the opponent's back 4 and doubling down on MF players when necessary.
- Two wingers (#7, #11) play in a midfield role where they have more defending responsibilities and need to link quickly and efficiently with the fullbacks (#2, #3) in attacking and defending situations. Wingers will also press the opponents back 4 and will track back/double down in defending situations, as needed.
- This is a defensive-minded formation.





PRINCIPLES of PLAY

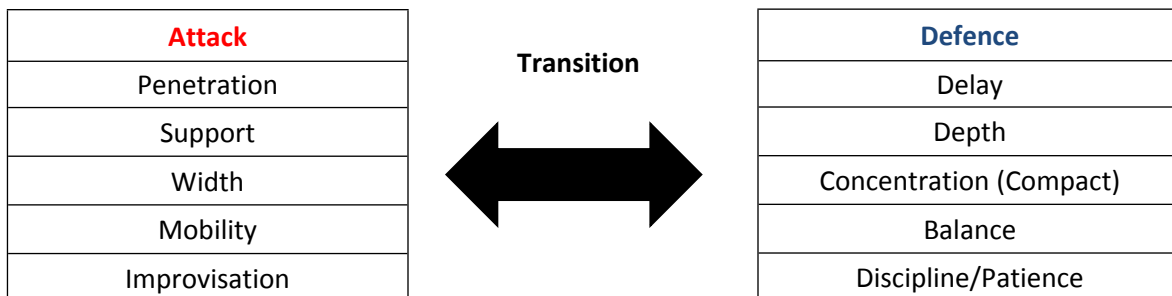
PRINCIPLES of PLAY

The five (5) Principles of Attack and five (5) Principles of Defense were formalized by Allen Wade, Director of Coaching for the English Football Association in 1960, when he wrote "The F.A. Guide to Coaching and Training". Every system of play takes into account these ten (10) principles. The Principles of Play revolutionized the thinking of soccer coaches the world over. These principles of play have since become a world standard in the development of team play. Other sports such as rugby and field hockey adapted the principles of play to their own game. We are summarizing these principles to show just how important they are in developing a system of play.

Some of the terminology from the original book in the 1960's may have changed, but nothing else has! Soccer is a game of 'cat & mouse' and each team changes its persona when the ball changes hands. From being creative, fun-loving skilled attackers the team should become stingy, totally committed, deadly serious, get the job done defenders!

The five (5) principles of Attack & Defense reflect this. For every principle of attack, there is a counter to it, with a corresponding and neutralizing principle of Defense.

Attack	Defense
Penetration	Delay
Support	Depth
Width	Concentration (Compact)
Mobility	Balance
Improvisation	Discipline/Patience



Attacking Principle #1 – Penetration

As soon as the ball is re-possessed, the first thought should be "Can we score?" If a forward player is unmarked and/or available in a 1v1 situation, the question then is "can we play the ball to him/her?" This is not 'kick & hope'. This is the quick counter-attack that so often catches team's off-guard. Even the goal-keeper, after making a save, or catching a cross, should look up field to see if a quick kick or throw could penetrate the opposition.

Defending Principle #1 – Pressure (Delay)

The defending team must do everything possible to prevent quick counter-attack after losing the ball. This may be accomplished by one player going to the attacker with the ball and preventing the ball from being passed forward. However, unless his/her team-mates cooperate, one player delaying will easily be by-passed by the ball being played away from the player applying pressure.

Attacking Principle #2 – Support

To keep possession, and to be able to move the ball down the field, the player with the ball needs support. Forward support, back support and side support will provide the player with the ball 'options' and help to put doubt in the minds of the defending players.

The first 'shape' of the tactical formation is now beginning, with triangles emanating from the player with the ball and his/her immediate playing area.

Defending Principle #2 – Cover (Support in Defence)

As the attacking team seeks to support their team-mate in possession, the defending team supports their first defender – the pressuring / delaying player.

The defending support by the players nearest the pressurizing defender, should offer 'close' support. Their distance of support will depend upon the situation and what part of the field they are supporting the first defender. However, generally speaking, the defensive support is much tighter/closer than the attacking supporting players, as attackers are trying to create space, while the defenders are trying to restrict space.

Attacking Principle #3 – Width

Stretching the defending team is always in the minds of the attacking team. A team can be stretched vertically and laterally. The front players should push the defence back as far as they will go both vertically (down/up the field) as well as stretching the defence by utilizing the width of the field (laterally).

The exploitation of the width of the field pulls the defenders out of position and big holes appear in the back line between players. On the other hand, leaving the wide space clear to allow players to exploit the wide space from deep positions is involved with the principle of width. Wider players on the side away from the ball produce a third attacker, or attacker's.

Defending Principle #3 – Concentration

If attackers are trying to stretch the defence, it forces defenders to concentrate themselves in the most vulnerable areas. Concentration and balance work closely together, as do delay and support. If a defending team is in any way unsure of itself, it should fall back to cover the goal, stay compact and give away space in less dangerous parts of the field.

Players in poor defending positions will immediately recover by funneling back into space. These 'recovery runs' are very important and need to be immediately performed when possession is lost. The players' immediate objective should be to recover as quickly as possible towards the goal in an attempt to get 'goal-side' of the ball. As the player recovers, he/she assesses just how far the recovery needs to be and looks for and listens to advice from their team-mates..."Pick him up", "Come Back", "Hold there!"

Attacking Principle #4 – Mobility

Individual speed and the ability to interchange positions are extremely important in the modern game. As an attacker moves forward, sideways or diagonally, with or without the ball, the opposing team has to adjust and this can unbalance the defence.

Defending Principle #4 – Balance

If mobility is used to unbalance teams, then that principle of maintaining balance must be exercised to counter the attacking runs. Now the picture is becoming more complex as more players are needed to give the team balance.

Attacking Principle #5 – Improvisation

This is the most exciting principle. Improvisation is not exclusively reserved for the attacking third but, this is where it is most effective. Twists, turns, back-heels, dribbles, over-head kicks all have a place here (attacking 3rd) with only limited risks. If the ball is given away in the attacking/final 3rd, the opposition still has to penetrate through two-thirds of the field to create an opportunity to get a shot on goal.

Defending Principle #5 – Discipline/Patience

If a defending team has observed all the previous four principles, it will find itself, for the moment, in good shape to deal with most, if not all, attacks. Defending players should display good control & restraint with their decision-making, in deciding when, if appropriate, to make a challenge or tackle, in order to regain possession.

Transition

The word 'Transition' has become a key 'buzz word' in today's game. What happens usually after possession has been re-gained or after the ball is lost can often determine the result of the game. This is when a quick counter-attack can catch any team off-balance.

As teams attack they look to move out to open up spaces to become more creative and consequently take more chance and therefore, become more vulnerable if they give the ball away.

Thirds of the Field

While the Laws of the Game and field markings split the field into two, the tactical considerations are better viewed by breaking the field into thirds.

Defending 1/3

The philosophy is one of caution. The defending 3rd is the 'no nonsense' zone, where any danger is met by playing for safety – perhaps a long kick/clearance, even playing the ball out of play.

Middle 1/3

The 'battleground' for dominance and the build-up area for most attacks. The middle 3rd is less dangerous and is the build-up zone, but any mistake made in there can also be costly.

Attacking 1/3

Where goals are scored! For that reason the thinking here must be very different than in the defending 3rd. Final 3rd is the 'taking risks' zone. It is what attackers are looking to do with dribbles, fakes, turns, back-heels and anything that is going to create an opportunity for getting a shot at goal, either for themselves or a team-mate.



POSITIONAL PROFILES

POSITIONAL PROFILES

The positional profiles serve as a framework of the competencies that players will have to demonstrate in order to advance to the highest levels of play. This is a combination of technical ability and tactical behaviors that need to be trained in the ASA Player from a young age.

The following profiles will provide a break-down of player qualities that are needed to best suit specific positions with in the 4-4-2 formation:

Defenders (#2, #3, #5, #6) Who...

- Receive and play in and from the defending third.
- Run with the ball into MF and beyond with speed and control.
- Are able to combine play with MF players intelligently on entering the MF areas.
- Can deliver passes with both feet and any surface over a variety of distances with deception and spin if necessary.
- Know how and are able to, release appropriate passes into MF located players.
- Are able to provide forward placed players with appropriate passes behind and in front of the defense.
- Understand the priorities of defending and the concepts of defensive safety and risk.
- Can read and anticipate the play and are then decisive on making decisions.
- Are able to defend in 1 v 1 situations from static and fluent circumstances e.g. counter-attacks.
- Understand the priorities in individual defending circumstances e.g. Intercept, close space, etc.
- Can defend with composure and accuracy.
- Have explosive speed over 5 - 15 yds.
- Have "pace" and explosiveness in their general movement.
- Have "spring" if not height when competing in aerial challenges.
- Are mentally "adaptable" in a variety of defending circumstances.

Central Midfield Players (#4, #8,) Who...

- Show and offer to receive the ball in all circumstances.
- Receive and 'hide' the ball under pressure.
- Turn with the ball in a variety of ways as often as possible.
- Have one - touch skills with both feet and all surfaces over a varied pass range.
- Eliminate immediate MF opponents alone or in combination plays.
- Retain possession for the team by using efficient and orthodox passing skills on demand.
- Deliver appropriate passes to forwards or forward moving players with sensitivity and accuracy, aerially or on the ground over a variety of distances with deception.
- Move into goal scoring positions inside the penalty box as required by the play and score with varied techniques.
- Strike accurate shots at goal from distances of up to 25yds from goal from varied angles.
- Press, track and mark as necessary.
- Endure a 90 minute game period with unflagging aerobic and anaerobic resources.
- Possess explosive speed over short range distances in both defending and attacking phases of play.

Wide Midfield players (#7, #11) Who...

- Support and "show" for passes behind the defence as a first priority in flank positions.
- "Elude" tight marking opponents in order to receive passes in front of the defence in wide and central positions.
- Eliminate immediate opponents with "0 or 1 touch" contacts on receiving the ball in front of flank defenders.
- Turn on receiving the ball to "confront" pressing defenders in flank positions.
- Combine with support players to eliminate immediate wide defenders.
- Attack opponents with the ball with the intention of eliminating them individually.
- Read and interpret opponents defending circumstances in order to "beat" them with varied dribbling skills.

- Produce considered, accurate and measured crosses and passes into team-mates in goal-scoring positions, on the move at optimum speed.
- Attack to central areas with and without the ball to contribute to penetrative attacking play in and around the penalty box.
- Score goals with varied surfaces and skills.
- Press, support and track in defensive roles as required.
- Display "explosive" acceleration and pace both in and out of possession
- Display agility with and without the ball.
- Have speed endurance resources over a 90 minute period.

Central Strikers (#9, #10) Who...

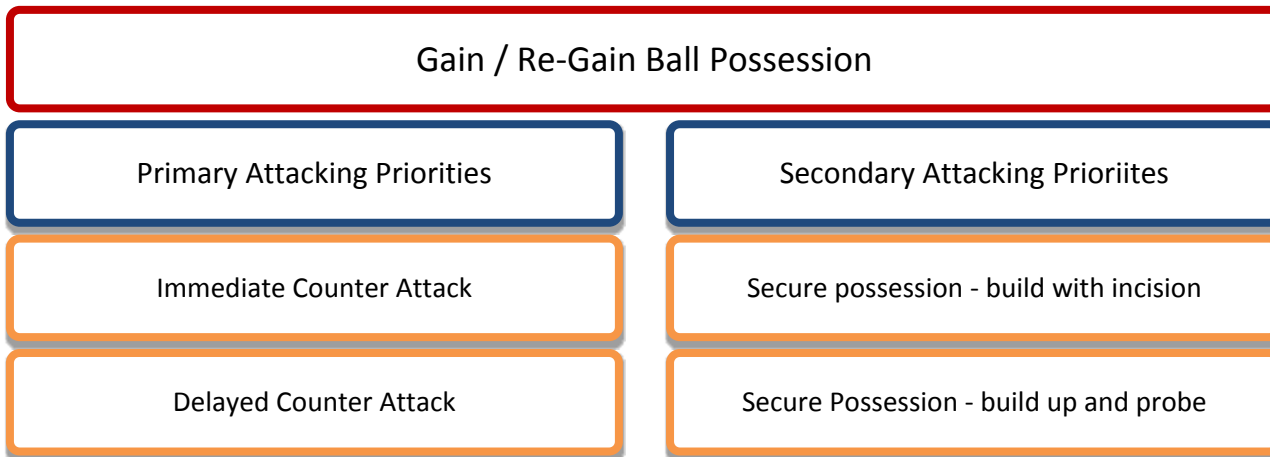
- "Show" as passing outlets from players in defending third and deep MF areas.
- Understand how to position against / around opponents to cause maximum disadvantage.
- Make calculated movements and adopt positions that raise doubts in the minds of defenders as to how to counteract these individual tactics.
- Understand and exploit the spaces between and behind defences to receive passes in goal-scoring and goal-creating positions.
- "Hold up" and retain the ball whilst awaiting support.
- Can link/connect with support players with a variety of 1 and 2 touch passes.
- Escape man-markers with timely individual movement.
- Understand how to "move" opponents from good to poor defending positions to allow others to exploit the space created.
- Turn with the ball as frequently as possible.
- Are "proficient" in 1 v 1 circumstances.
- Score at the rate of 1 goal per 1.5 games played.
- Score instantly with 1 and 2 touches with a variety of skills from any incoming service or 'loose' ball in scoring positions.
- Can accurately read and attack crosses
- Possesses good heading technique off of crosses into the penalty area
- Can "usher", trap and contain opponents in possession of the ball in their DF 1/3rd.
- Can press and track opponents as appropriate.
- Have explosive speed over short to medium distances. 5 - 20 yds.
- Have "pace" over longer distances.
- Have speed endurance over a 90 minute period.
- Have "spring" if not height to contest aerial challenges for the ball.



ATTACKING TACTICS

GENERAL ATTACKING GUIDELINES

Attacking Priorities



First Priority: Counter Attack

Seek to counter attack as a first priority when appropriate

Second Priority: Build Up

Based on ball possession and calculated/patterned/inter-changing player movement

Attacking Methods

- Forward and penetrative passing that are calculated and measured.
- Play out from the defending third as a primary option
- Progress through the MF third as first priority
- Rotation and inter-change of players as appropriate
- MF players forward runs and support play
- Create optimum marking problems for opponents
- Utilize wide attacks to out-number opponents on the flanks and attract opponents from central areas.
- Use central striker as focus in penetrating the opposition back line.
- Enter the penalty box from varied angles and positions

Team Attacking Shape/Player Movements

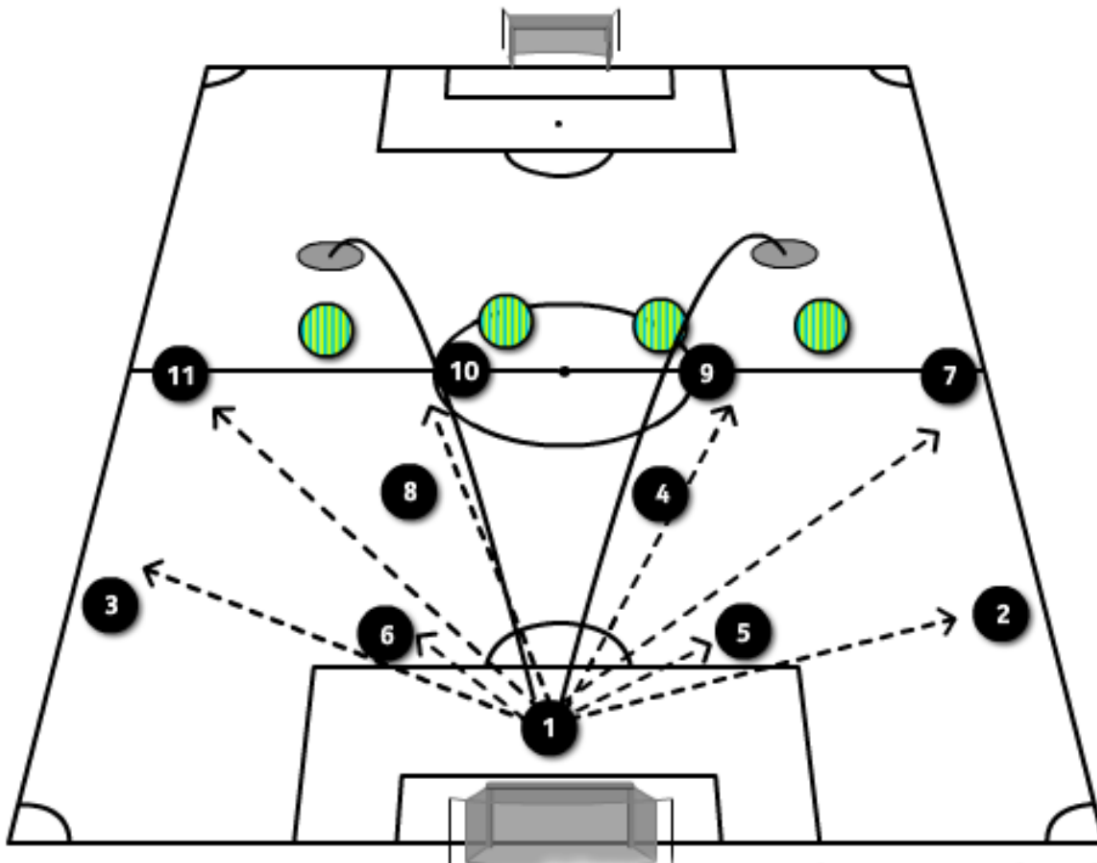
Upon gaining/re-gaining possession, the following player movements should occur in order to transition into the appropriate team attacking shape:

<i>Goalkeeper (#1)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Push up-field and stay linked to the back 4 as a "sweeper"
<i>Fullbacks (#2, #3)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Look to quickly get wide and move into forward flank positions
<i>Centre Backs (#5, #6)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Split" to wide positions in order to balance off full-back movements
<i>Centre Midfield Players (#4, #8)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Look to get in "half-turned" attacking positions • The strong-side MF player (#8/#10) can get into a supporting position to possibly link with the forwards. • The weak-side MF player (#8/#10) can push high into a supporting position to penetrate through the opposition's back 4 • Holding MF player (#4) to sit in the central "pocket" in a supporting position - always supporting the ball
<i>Wide Midfielders (#7, #11)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Get "High", "Wide" and "Inline" with the last defender.
<i>Central Strikers (#9, #10)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Get as "high" as possible and play between and behind the centre-backs in a "half-turned" position.

Attacking Options & Patterns

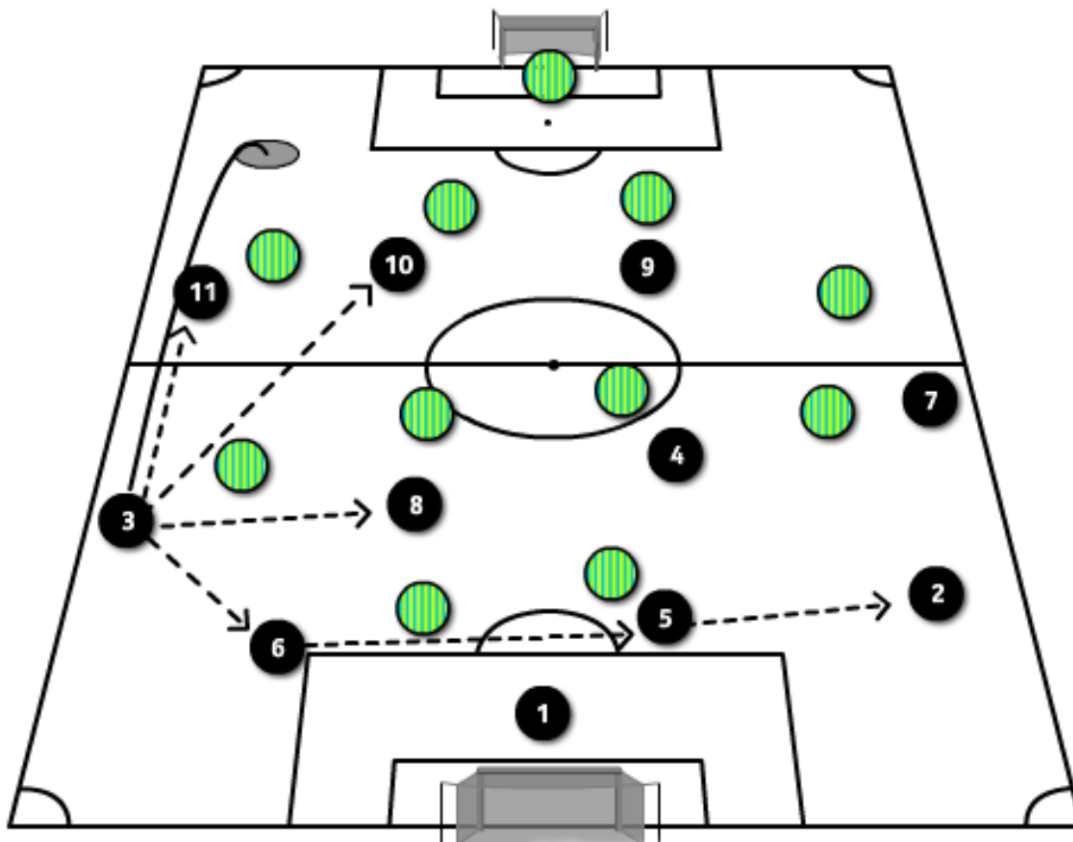
Goalkeeper in Possession

- Immediate long diagonal pass/throw to wingers (#7, #11), or striker (#9, #10) in depth - **first option for quick counter attack!**
- Quick roll out to centre-back who can connect with a fullback, forward or midfielder to attack
- Pass to full back in a wide position who can connect with a forward or midfielder to attack
- Pass, roll or throw to a MF player who can be looked to get rightly turned and start the attack



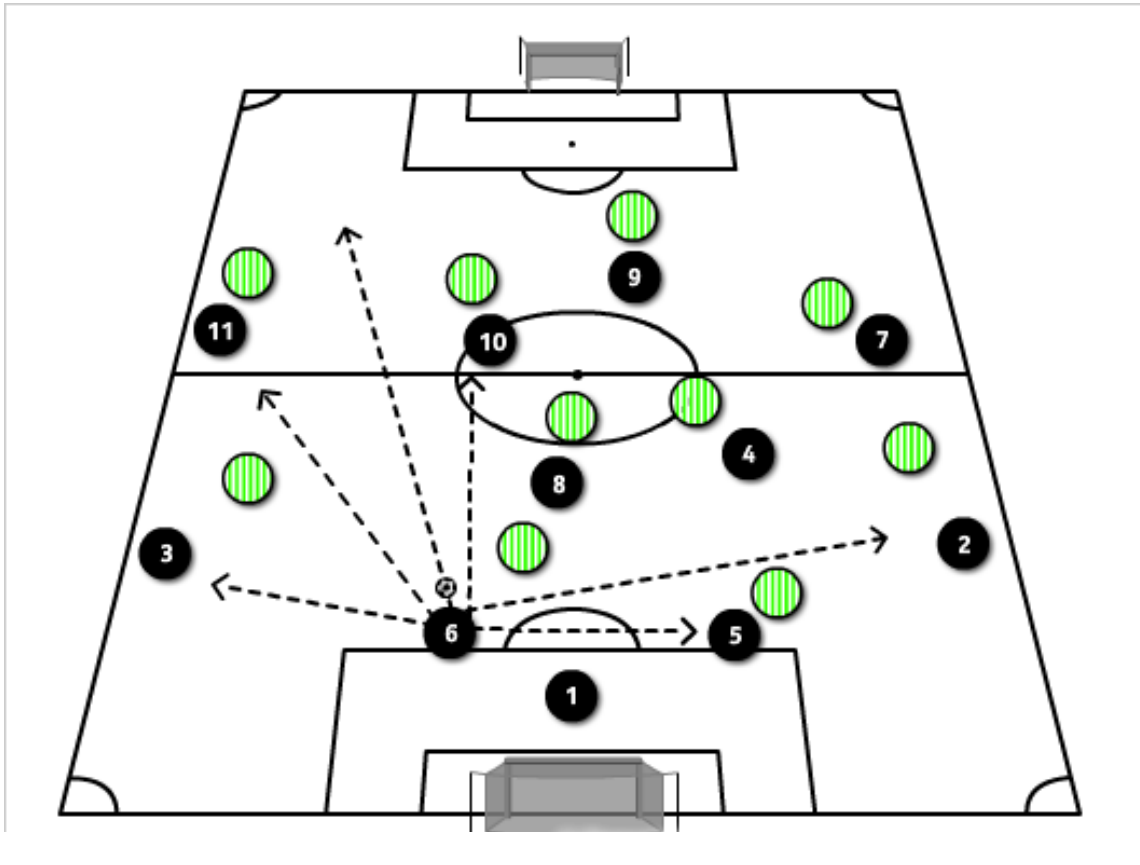
Full Back in Possession (#2/#3)

- Play forward ball to the wide winger into the space between the FB and CB, or the winger can come back to the ball and get it into feet. The FB can also combine with the winger to overlap
- Combination play with central midfield players
- Play forward ball to strikers' feet, or play through/over the CB-CB, or FB-CB spaces
- Switch around back to either centre back or far full back
- Use goalkeeper in deep supporting position



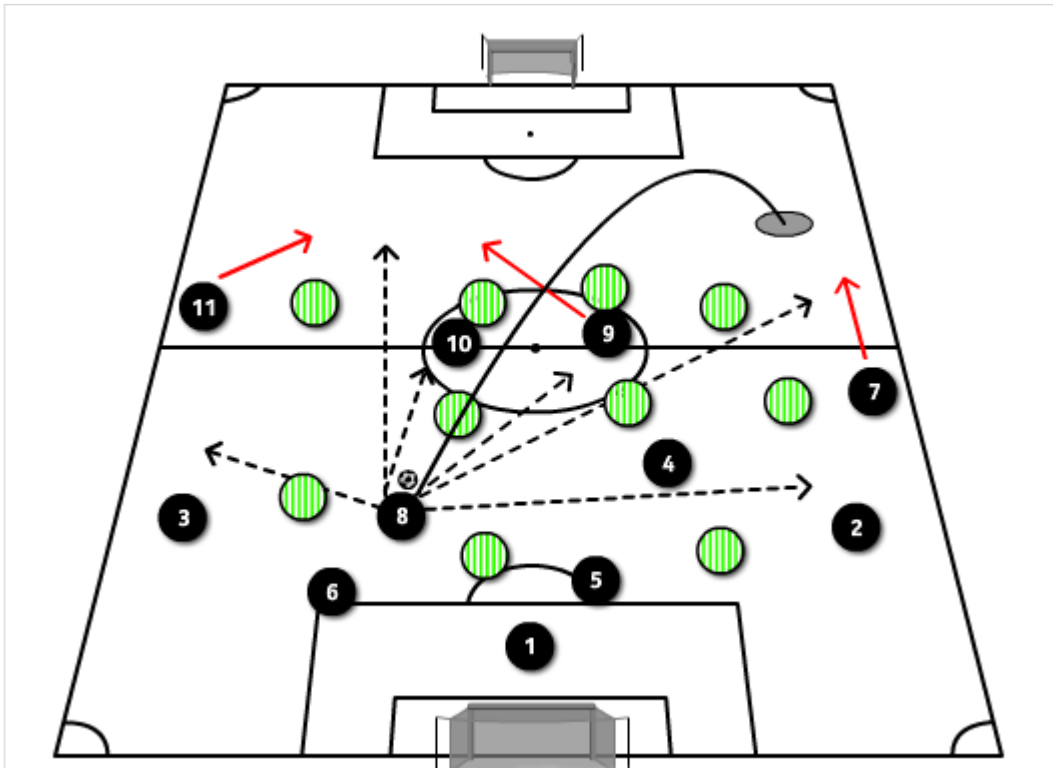
Centre Back in Possession (#5/#6)

- Play forward ball to the wide winger into the space between the FB and CB, or the winger can come back to the ball and get it into feet.
- Play wide to either full back to get forward
- Play forward ball to strikers' feet, or play through/over the CB-CB, or FB-CB spaces
- Use goalkeeper in deep supporting position
- Look to switch the point of attack immediately (receive from the strong side of the field and connect to players on the weak side)



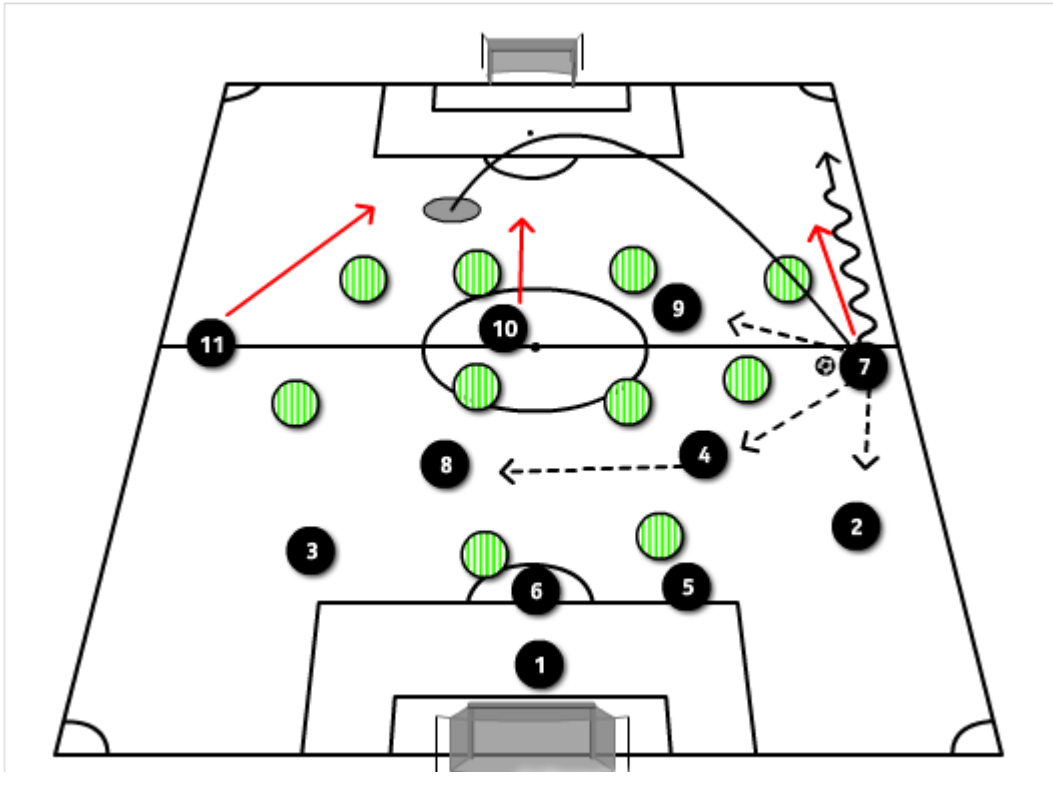
Central Midfield Player in Possession (#8/#4)

- Penetrating ball to wingers between/behind the back 4 spaces (CB-CB; CB-FB)
- Play into striker's feet and run off for combination play, or play a penetrating ball between/behind the back 4 spaces
- Play wide to full backs who are releasing on forward attacking runs
- Combine with another midfield player to get forward
- Look to switch the point of attack immediately (receive from the strong side of the field and connect to players on the weak side)
- Make penetrating runs with the ball at the back 4



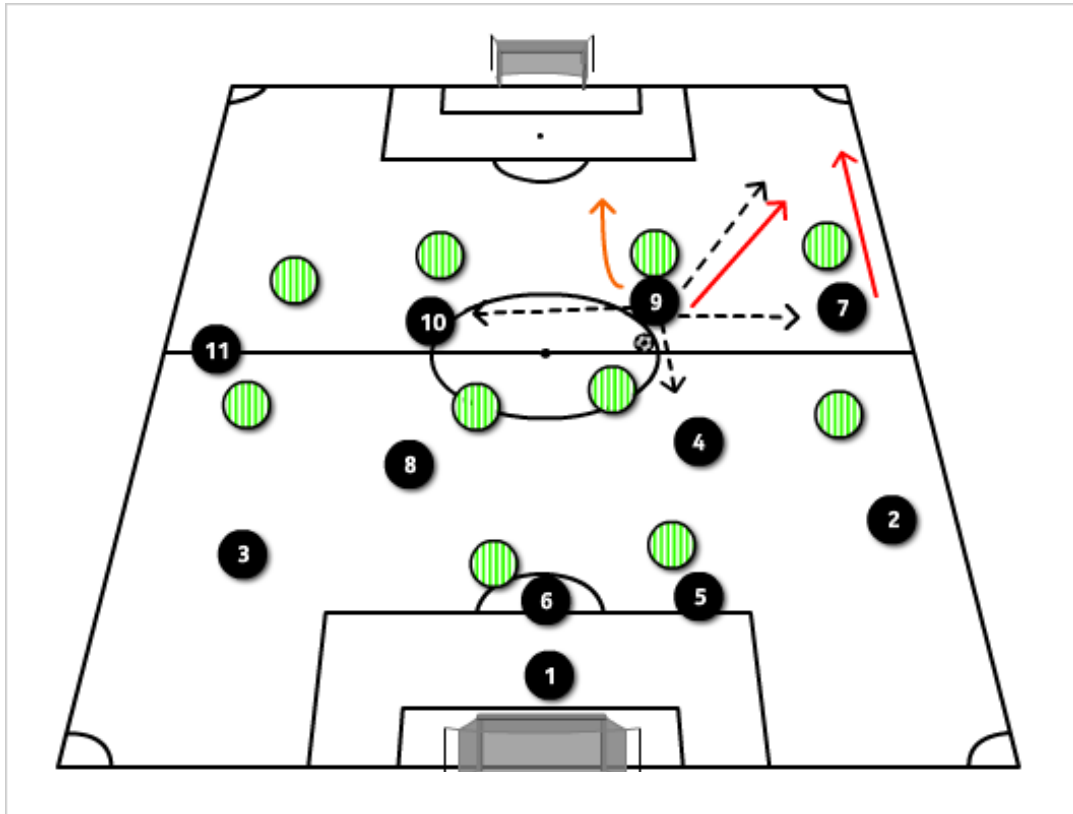
Wide Midfielder in Possession (#7/#11)

- Play back to supporting full back and make a penetrating run in behind the back 4
- Play back to supporting midfield player to change the point of attack - if the winger cannot get forward
- Drive down the touch line to get a cross into the penalty area, or cut to goal for a shot at goal
- Play diagonal ball over/between the back 4 spaces for the weak-side winger
- Combination play with the striker (playing into the strikers feet and making a penetrating run in behind the FB)



Striker in Possession

- Turn on CB's and drive to goal
- Play to supporting midfielder and "spin out" to make a movement in behind the back 4
- Play to wide midfielder and move to area of support
- Combination play with midfield - hold the ball up and play into a MF player who is making a penetrating run (make a movement after the combination to get to goal for rebounds, etc.)
- Combination play with wingers, for either a return penetrating pass, or get into the penalty area to attack a cross
- "Flick" or pass the ball through the back 4 spaces for a winger to run onto
- Combination play with strike partner (give 'n' go, underlaps etc)

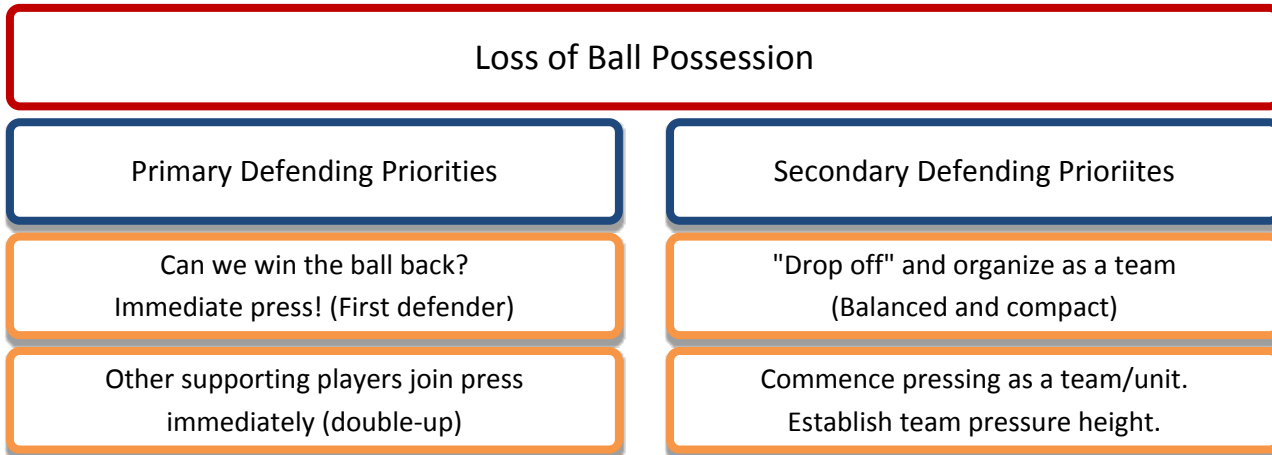




DEFENDING TACTICS

GENERAL DEFENDING GUIDELINES

Defending Priorities

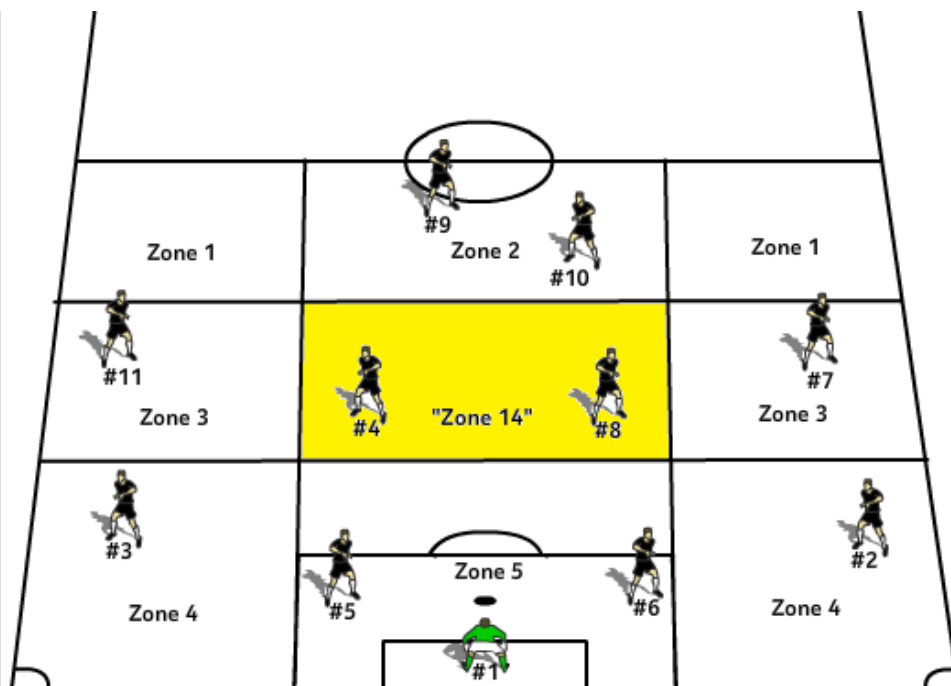


Team Defending Methods / Responsibilities

- EVERY player on the field has defensive responsibilities.
- Controlled and aggressive defending. Pressing, as much as possible to win the ball back early, if possible.
- Players are to recover back behind the line of the ball once possession is lost.
- Regain ball possession as "early" as possible when appropriate.
- Concede possession only when opponents establish composed possession in their defending half of the field and we are out-numbered.
- Recover and regain "shape" on losing possession if pressing is not tactically appropriate.
- Compact defensive unit before "team" pressing commences and continues.
- Team needs to be a compact unit in defence.
- Back 4 are responsible to pushing the defending lines forward.
- Establish a first defending line around the attacking third of the field - pressure height
- Allow no un-coverable space behind the back defending line (back 4)
- Prevent wide and central entries into the penalty area as a priority.
- Establish as many defending lines (depth) as possible.
- Defending as individuals, groups/units and as a team.

Defending Major "Supply Areas"

It is critical that we understand that it is impossible to take away all attacking options from an opponent. The best defending teams are able to force opponents to attack in areas that they do not want to attack from/in. The zones below represent the major creating, delivering and scoring areas that threaten teams most.



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Zone 1

- Zone from which goals will least likely be created and scored.
- Tight and desperate defending is not required in this zone.
- Attackers should be forced to play inside.

Zone 2

- This zone is a bit more dangerous than Zone 1 due to its central proximity to goal, but is still a fairly non-threatening area to defend.

Zone 3

- Dangerous zone for build up and balls played in behind the back 4
- Must be patient and delay the attack in this zone.

Zone 4

- Major supply area for crosses into the penalty area.
- We must protect this zone by aggressively attacking any ball/opponent in this area and ensuring that direct attacking and crossing opportunities are eliminated.

Zone 5

- This is the most dangerous zone to be defending in. We must protect this zone by aggressively attacking any ball/opponent in this area and attempting to clear the ball away.
- 80% of all goals are scored in this zone.

Zone 14

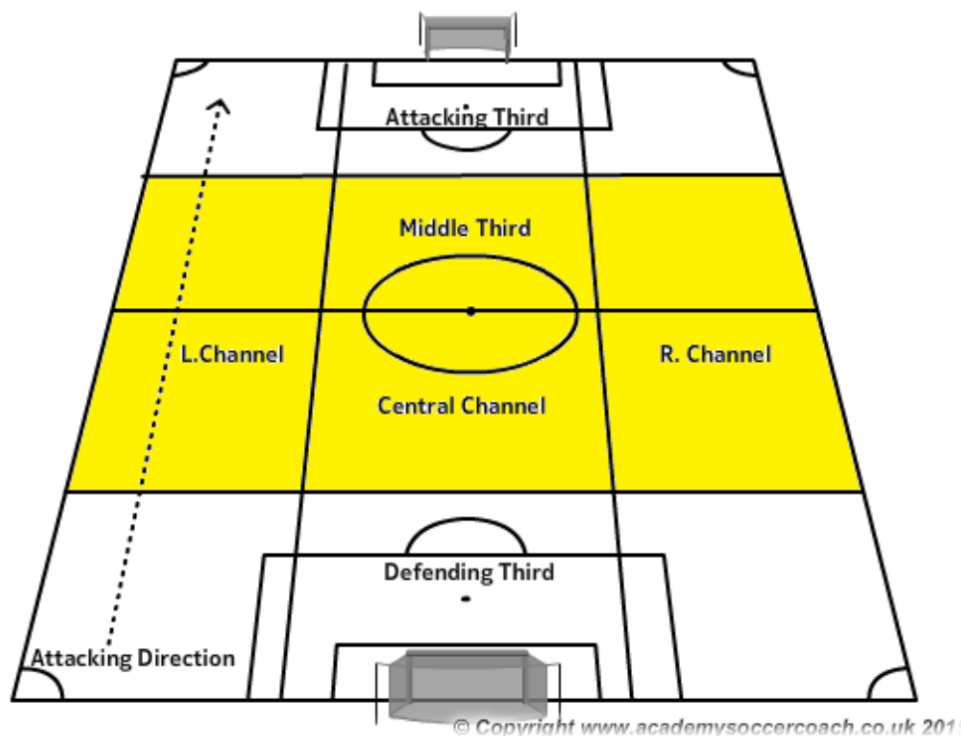
- This is the most critical zone in which to stop attacks and entries into the penalty area.
- Euro 2004 - 49% of attacking entries into the penalty area came from here.
- World Cup 2002 - most important zone for goal creation "assists".
- World Cup 1998 - 50% of all tournament goals came from this area

Zonal Defending Organization / Terms of Reference

Zonal defending is based on the idea that each defender has a (more or less) definite position in the overall team defensive formation. Defending players are responsible for "zones" and are not to man-mark (follow players all over the field). Essentially, the formation's shape remains the same while the players might shift around. Zonal defending is a very energy-efficient way of pressing the ball and allows team to organize themselves defensively in a more structured, efficient and timely manner.

The following team shape guidelines should be applied in defending situations:

- Team is to defend a maximum 2/3 of the width of the field (2 channels).
- Pressing to commence in attacking third or high in the middle third
- "Sitting back", or compacting, as a team should occur in the high defending third and low middle third.
- Zonal defending should occur from the top of the defending third and forward. In our penalty area, defenders should look to mark within their "zone" - **"Players score goals, not spaces"**
- The team should strive to keep play in front of them at all times. It is better to give up space in front of us than it is to give up space behind us.



Defending Wide Attacks

Quickly regain shape to defend two channels of the field:

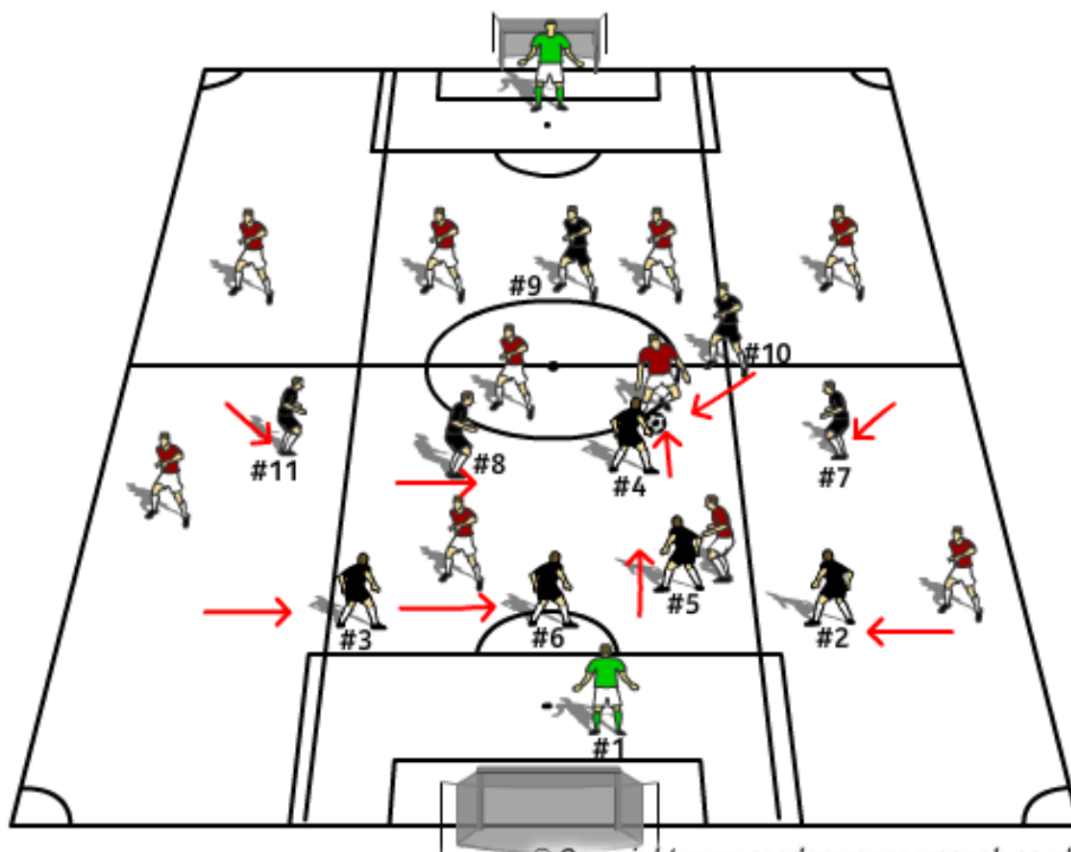
- Winger and full back on weak side need to "tuck in" to create compactness in width.
- Strong side full back presses the ball, and strong side winger applies immediate back pressure and tries to "double down".
- Centre backs and weak full back establish a defending line as high as possible to take away as much room for the attacking team as they can.
- Midfield players recover centrally and "slide" as a unit to apply pressure to the wide attacking player.
- Goalkeeper should play as far out as appropriate to act as a "sweeper" and communicate as much as possible with the back 4.



Defending Central Attacks

Quickly regain shape and compact the centre channel of the field:

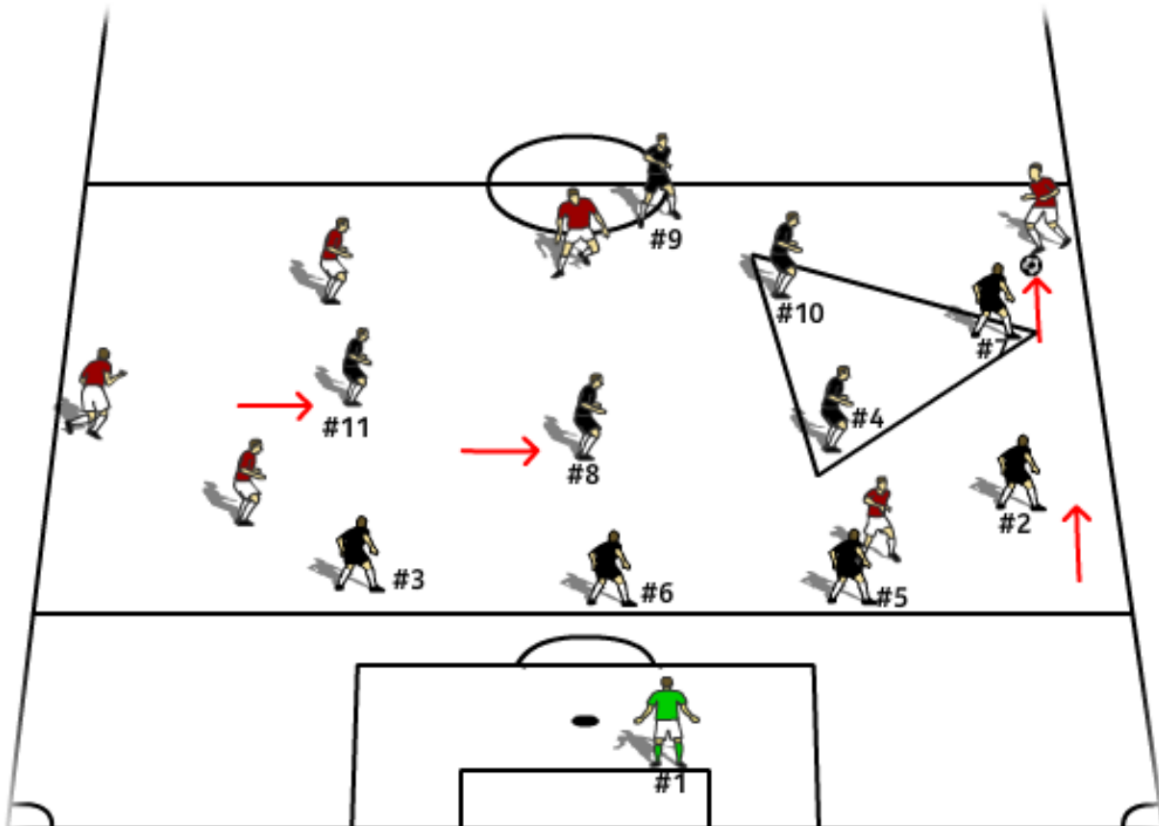
- Winger and full back on BOTH sides need to "tuck in" to create compactness in the centre.
- Back 4 compact to the centre channel and hold a line as high as possible.
- Midfield players recover to the centre channel and apply immediate pressure to the attacking player.
- Wingers recover back as appropriate and as needed to double down if in close proximity to the first attacker.
- Goalkeeper should play as far out as appropriate to act as a "sweeper" and communicate as much as possible with the back 4.



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Defending a Wide Attack

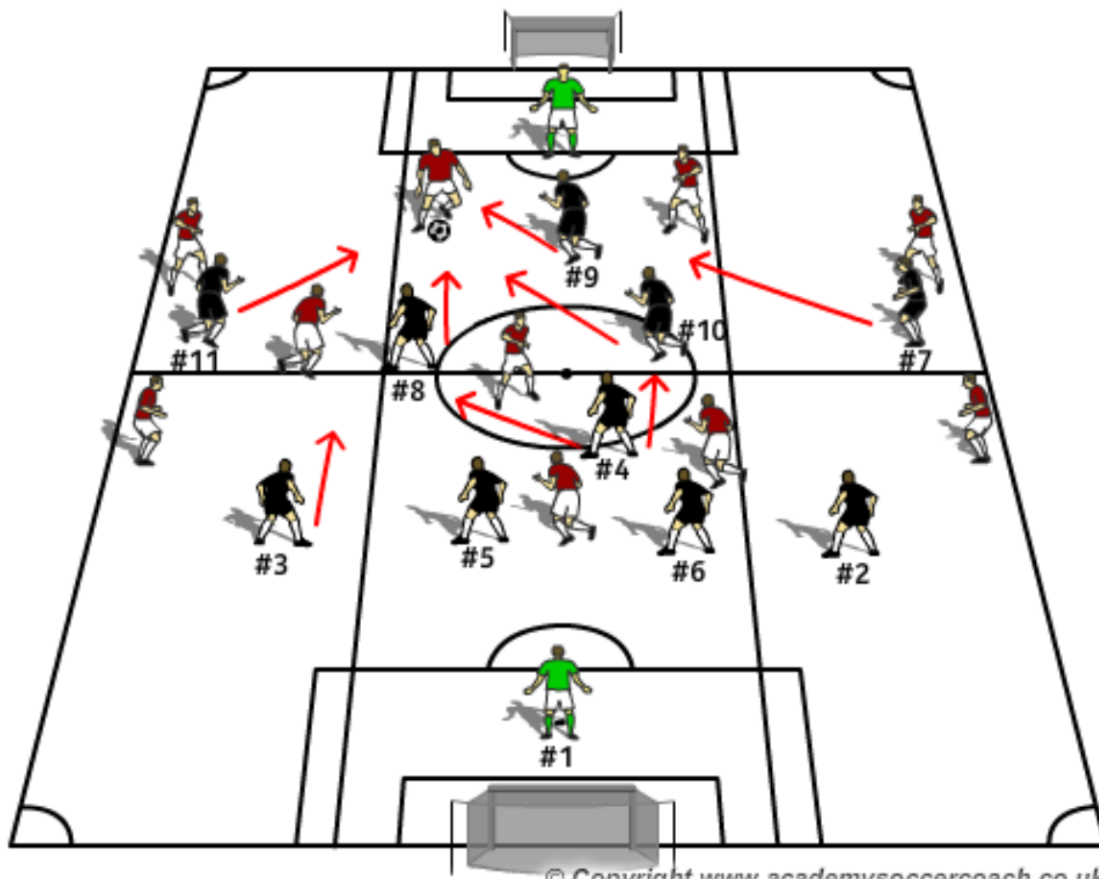
- Maintain a compact triangle shape defensively.
- The triangle will "slide" over to the side of the ball.
- The midfield player closest to the ball will supply immediate pressure on the attacker with the ball (first or second defender dependent upon what the full back has done)
- The holding midfield player(s) will be the second defender. They provide balance and cover and act as a second defender to either support the first defender, or cut-off any central passing lanes. The MF does not need to "win the ball" to be effective. Good shape and patience from these players will force the attacker to play wide, or play a negative pass to re-start the attack.



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"Pressing" in the Attacking/Middle Third

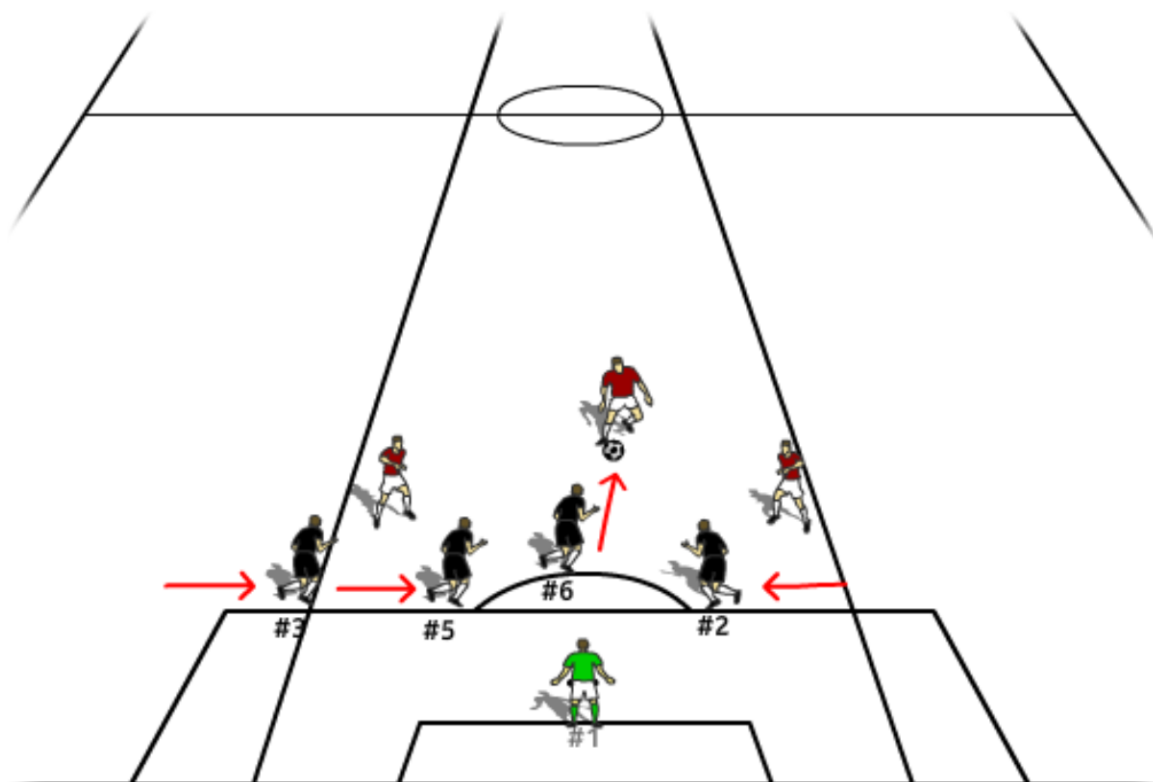
- Wingers and striker work together to force the attacking team to play through the middle (eliminate the wide option).
- Midfield players "slide" to the side of the ball.
- Attacking midfield players position themselves in the "hole" to intercept and pass or apply immediate pressure on the ball.
- Holding midfield player(s) needs to "sit" in the space behind the other midfield players and adjust according to how the attack develops.
- Back 4 hold a line and need to take into consideration whether the ball is "open" or "covered" when deciding when to push the line or drop off. This is to prevent a long ball from being played in behind you.
- Goalkeeper should play as far out as appropriate to act as a "sweeper" and communicate as much as possible with the back 4.



Group Defending – Back 4

Shape When Defending a Central Attack

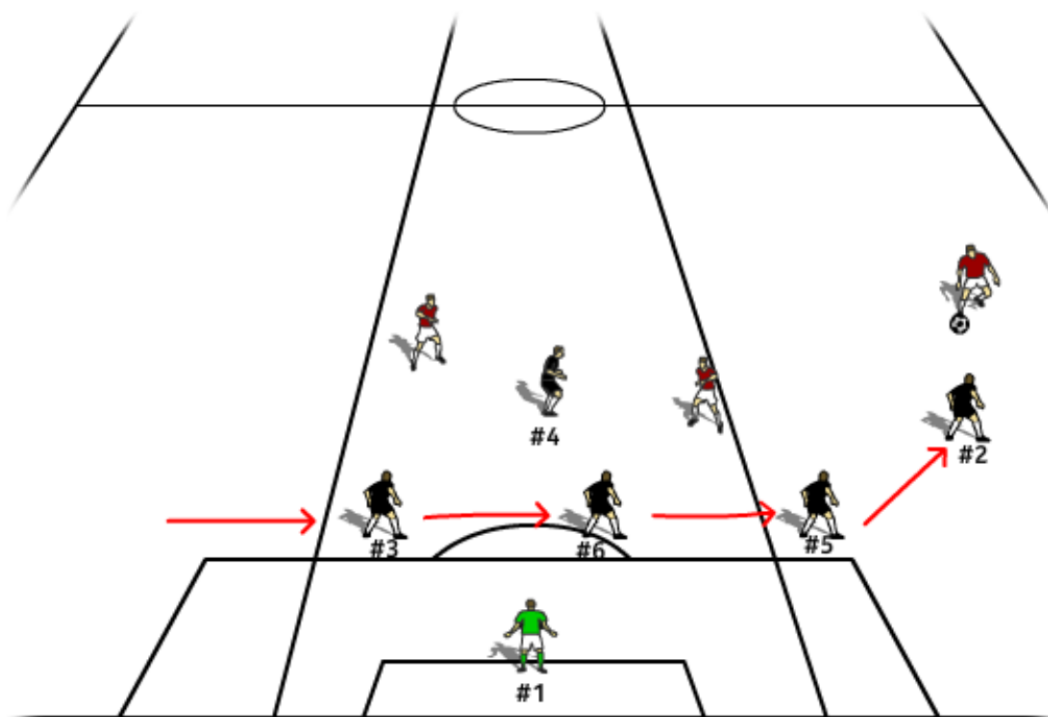
- Back 4 compact centrally.
- The centre back closest to the ball pressures the attacker and is the first defender.
- The other three defenders hold a line approximately 5 yards off of the first defender.
- The other centre back and strong full back become second defenders.
- Priorities are to force the attacker to play a negative pass (backwards), be forced to turn, or play a negative pass to a wide supporting player.
- Defenders should look to win the ball if possible as the first priority and then look to contain and slow down the counter attack to allow for MF support to arrive.



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Shape When Defending a Wide Attack

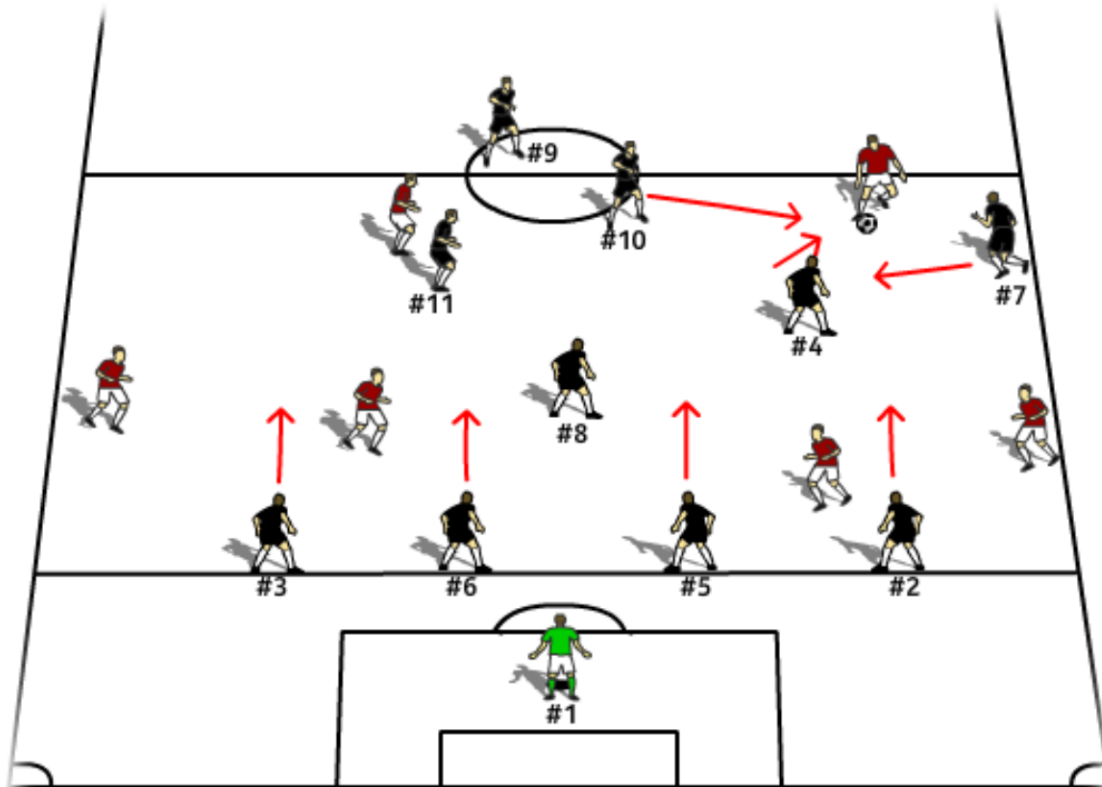
- Back 4 slide over to the side of the ball covering the wing and centre channel.
- The fullback pressurizes the attacker immediately. If MF players are in close proximity and the FB is able to confront the attacker in the middle third of the field, the FB (#2) should force the attacker inside where CB's and MF players can double up to win the ball. Any wide attackers in the defending third should be forced to wide positions to minimize threats.
- The centre back closest to the ball becomes the second defender.
- Back 4 create a "hockey stick" shape. The spacing should be approximately 2/3's of the width of the field, but never less than half of the width of the field (depending on age and field size).
- The other three defenders hold a line approximately 5 yards off of the first defender.
- Holding MF player (#4) should slide over to support the pressing FB and CB and act as a "sweeper" in front of the back 4.
- Wingers and strikers (#7 #9, #11) should work hard to apply back pressure and double down



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Defending a "Covered Ball"

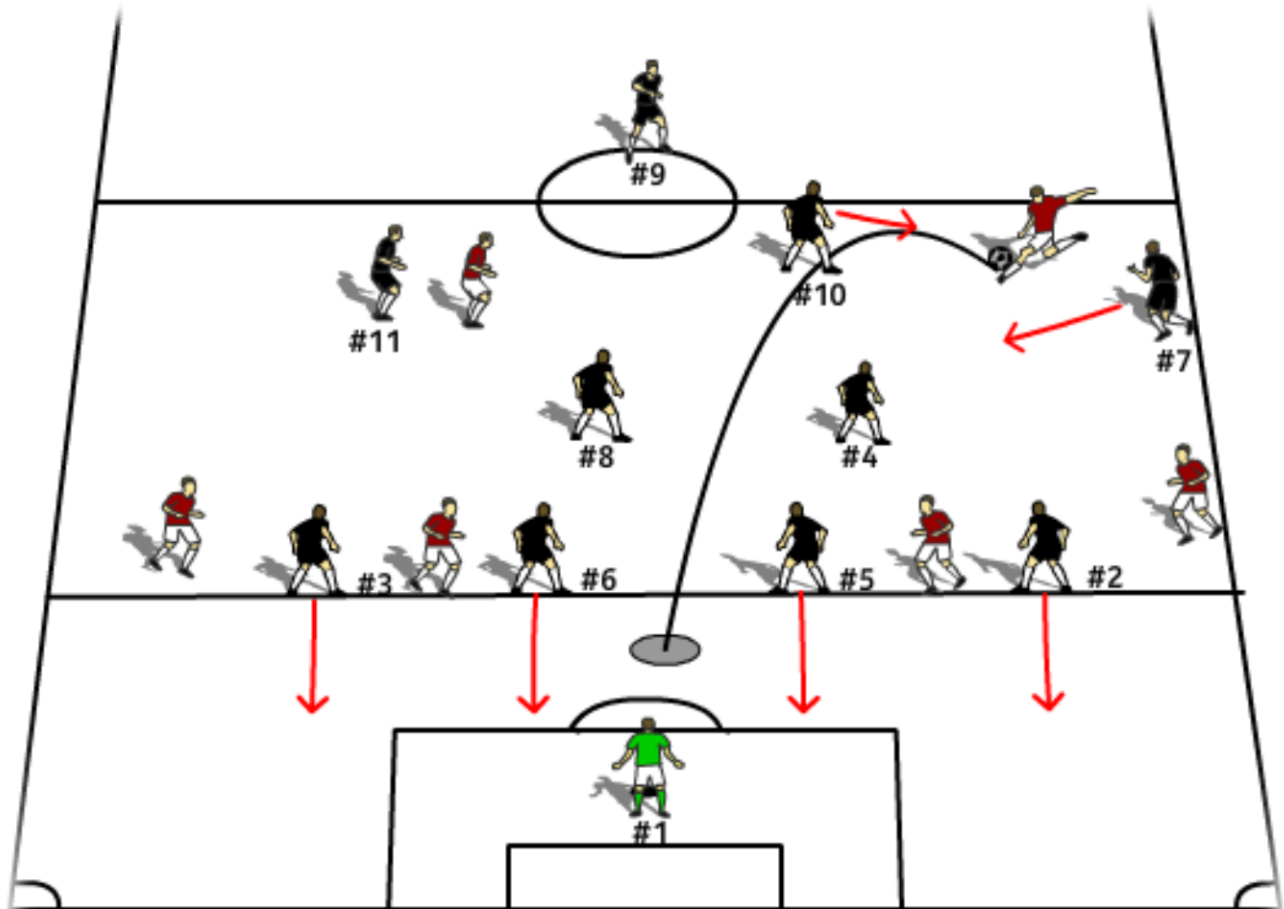
- "Covered Ball" refers to the situation when an attacking player has the ball down field and is UNABLE to send a long ball forward because of pressure from the forwards and an early confrontation from a MF player (the attacker is not in a position to play a forward pass).
- The defensive line of the Back 4 can either close space by moving forward or stay as they are depending on their current shape. They should look to keep the space in front of them small in order to quickly press and/or win any short passes that may be played forward.



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Defending an "Open Ball"

- "Open Ball" refers to the situation when an attacking player has the ball down field and IS ABLE to send a long ball forward because they have the time and space to do so due to a lack of pressure and a delayed confronting defending player
- The defensive line of the Back 4 needs to drop off and all backs should be ready for a ball to be played over top of them. Dropping off to the appropriate depth should allow for any forward pass to be played in front of the Back 4. This will allow them to "attack" the ball moving forward to clear it away.
- The GK needs to ensure that he/she is in a position to "sweep up" behind the Back 4 in case any ball does make it through or over the Back 4.



Group Defending – Midfield

Defending a Central Attack

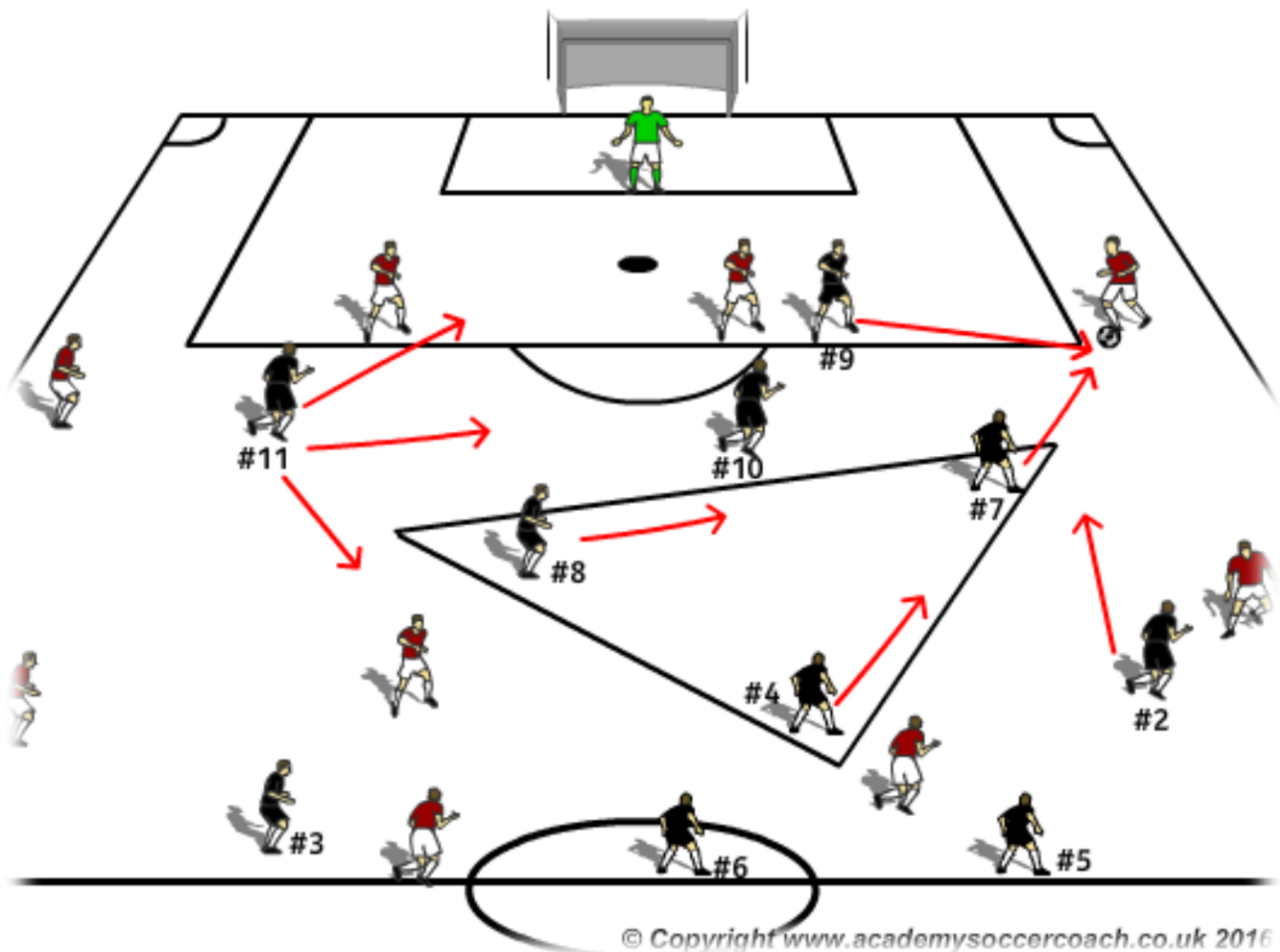
- Maintain a compact triangle shape defensively.
- First defender will be the attacking midfield player closest to the ball. With an inverted midfield, the "shadow striker" will be the first defender.
- The holding midfielder(s) will be the second defender. They provide balance and cover and act as a second defender to either support the first defender, or cut-off any central passing lanes. The MF does not need to "win the ball" to be effective. Good shape and patience from these players will force the attacker to play wide, or play a negative pass to re-start the attack.



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Support of "Pressing" in the Attacking Third

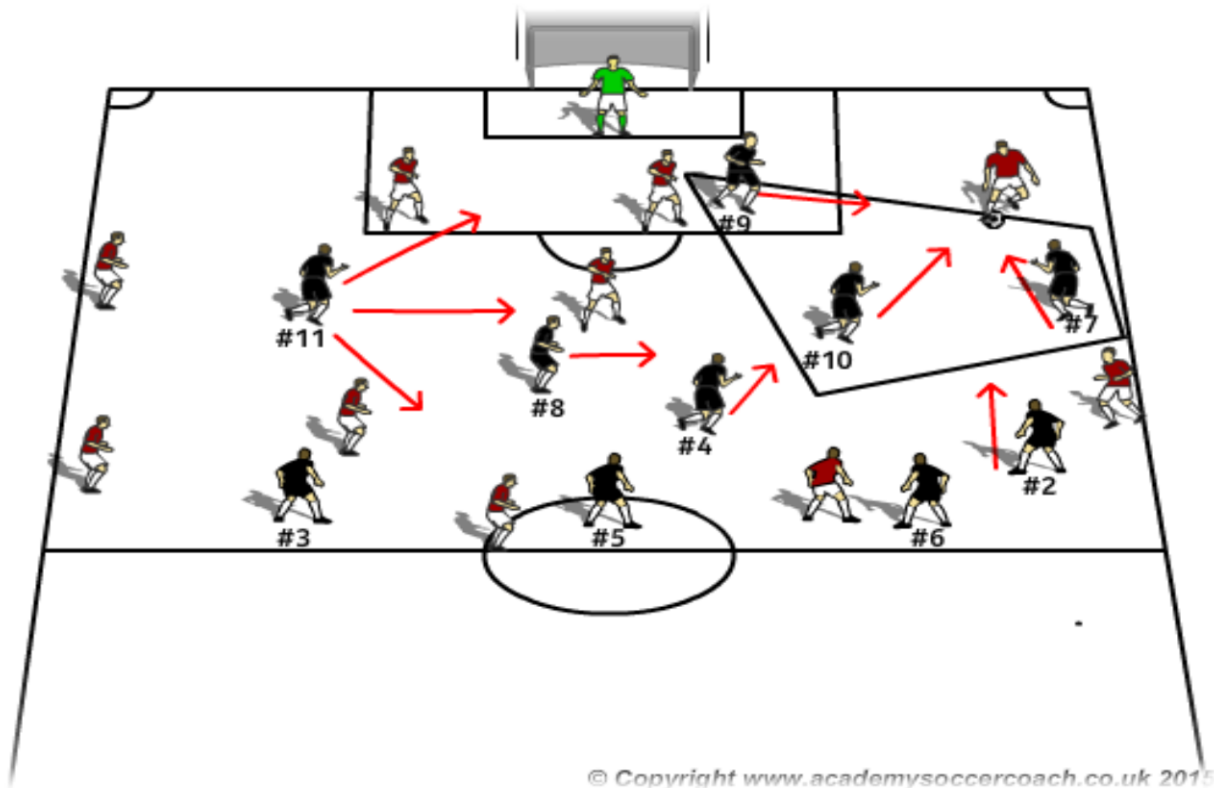
- When the forwards are pressing the Back 4 once possession is lost, they are going to force the defender(s) to play the ball into the central channel.
- The midfield players need to maintain their triangle shape and slide over to the side of the ball (if necessary).
- Look to cut off any passes or press the defender in possession immediately.
- If done quickly and efficiently, this can lead to quick counter attacks and goal scoring opportunities
- If pressing is not an option (not enough players in the vicinity of the ball to press), MF players should immediately drop off and regain their shape to prevent any penetrating passes/counter attacks from happening through the MF.



Group Defending - Forwards

Pressing the Back 4

- It is essential that when possession is lost to the opposing Back 4 or Goalkeeper that the forwards go to work defensively IMMEDIATELY.
- The strong side winger needs to completely take away the wide option and force play into the middle.
- The striker must eliminate the ball being switched across the field by angling themselves in a manner that forces a pass into the middle.
- The weak side winger needs to slide across to a more central position to eliminate any switched or diagonal pass.
- MF players will bump into deeper positions in the channels created by the striker and winger to intercept any passing/clearing attempts.
- Body position is essential to guarantee that defenders cannot play to wide outlets



Tracking Back to "Double Up"

- Once the ball is lost either behind you or is successfully passed behind you, it is essential that ALL forwards fight to get back behind the ball, or put back pressure on the first attacker.
- The forward closest to the ball should attempt to "Double Up" (1 attacker vs. 2 defenders) on the attacker with the ball.

INDIVIDUAL DEFENDING QUALITIES

Goalkeeper:

- Must be an excellent shot-stopper.
- Take command of defending third of the field (Zone 4 and 5!!!).
- Must be an excellent communicator (especially with the Back 4).

Defenders:

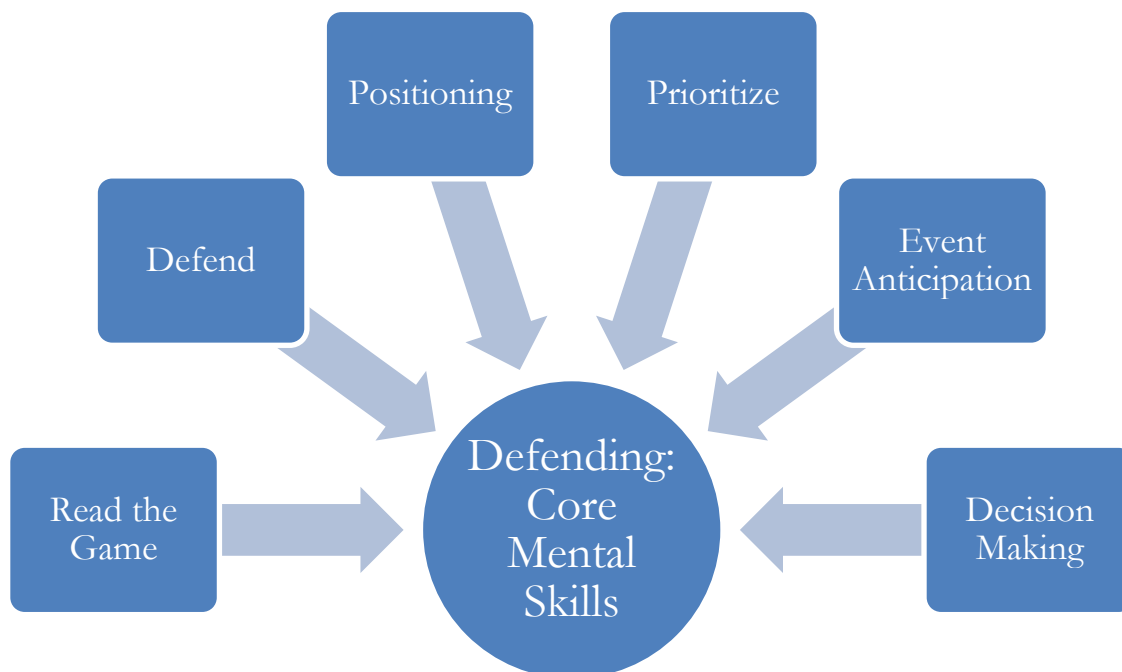
- Must "live" to defend - with intensity!
- Have pace and agility
- Have "spring", if not height.
- Be an excellent ball winner.
- Must be technically good, strong and confident in the air.
- Must possess proficient 1v1 defending skills.
- Can cope 1v1 in ALL defending situations.
- Can read and anticipate the attack.
- Able to tactically operate anywhere on the back line.
- Are positionally astute.

Midfield:

- Must possess proficient 1v1 defending skills.
- Can cope 1v1 in ALL defending situations.
- Must have a "work horse" defensive mentality.
- Must want to win EVERY ball.
- Must have excellent aerobic/anaerobic fitness capacities

Forwards:

- Ability to "read the play" and force defenders into poor decisions.
- Willingness to track back and support the MF.
- Willingness to fight tenaciously to win balls in the attacking third.



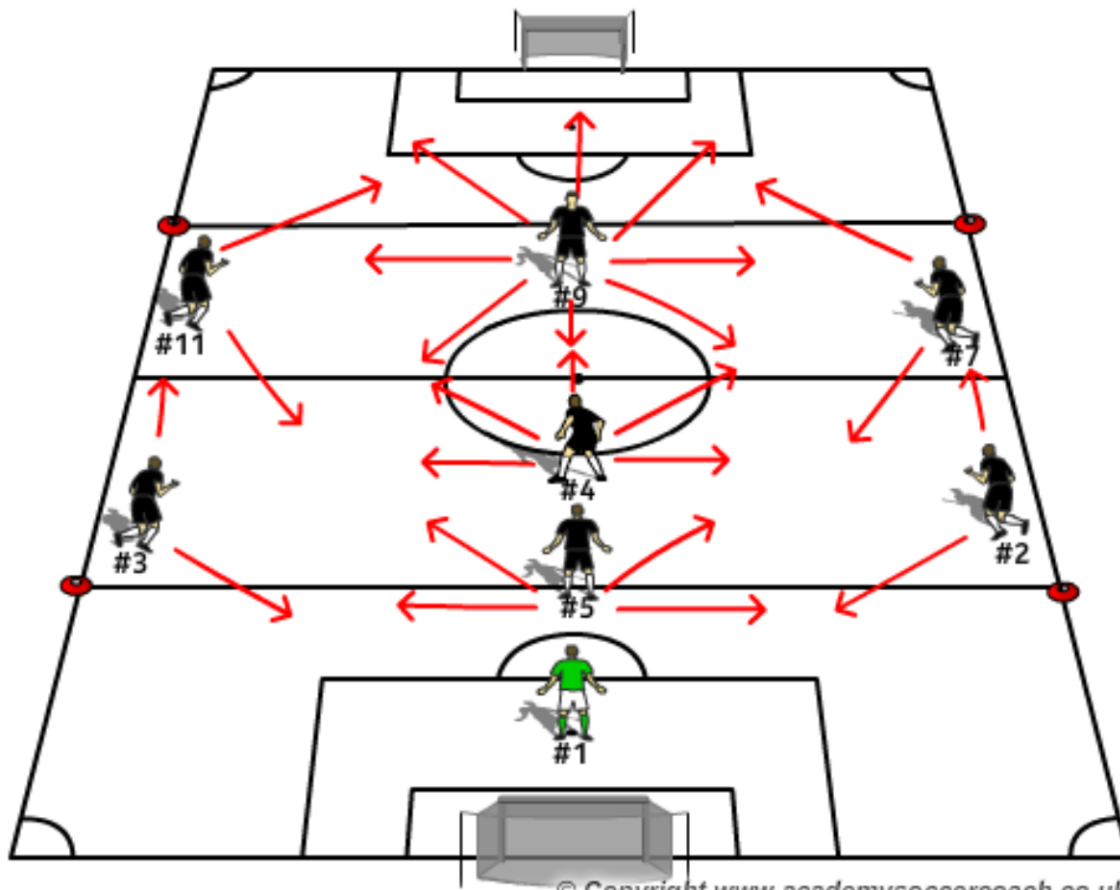


UNDER 11/12
8 V 8 OVERVIEW

3-3-1 STANDARD ATTACKING SHAPE

The following are general characteristics and basic tactical behaviors of the 3-3-1 standard attacking shape for 8v8 soccer:

- One centre back (#5). In attacking situations, he/she should be encouraged to get forward and support the central midfielder and should be encouraged to get into wide positions to receive passes.
- Two full backs (#2, #3)
- One central midfielder (#4) who sits in the central "pocket" between the centre forward and the defenders. This player can drop between the defenders to become a "centre back" and can also join attacks to support the striker.
- Striker (#9) should be encouraged to stay high on the defenders and stretch the opposition to the off side line when his/her team is in possession of the ball. This player should be encouraged to "try to score goals" at every opportunity.
- Two wingers (#7, #11) who immediately get "High", "Wide" and "In-line" with the last defender in attacking situations. At this age these players should be taught to come back and defend and also to get high in support attacks. They can be coached as "defensive-minded wingers".
- Keep all instruction SIMPLE. Encourage players to be brave and creative in attack.
- Stress the importance of support - always connect to the player with the ball to form "triangles".

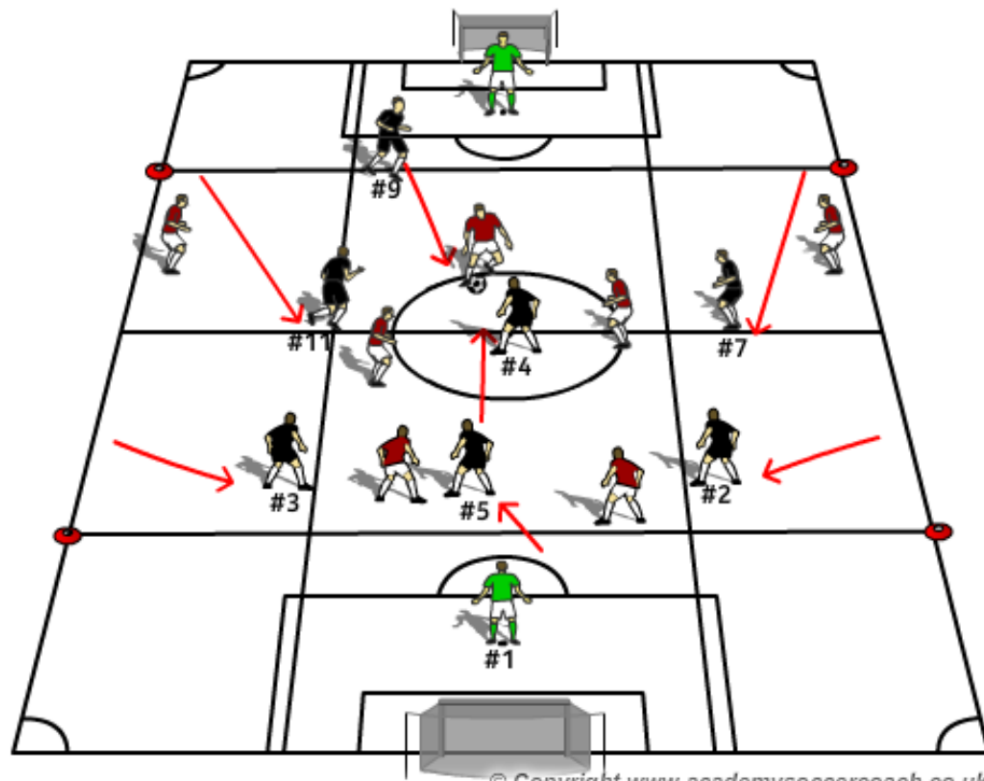


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3-3-1 STANDARD DEFENDING SHAPE

Defending Central Attacks

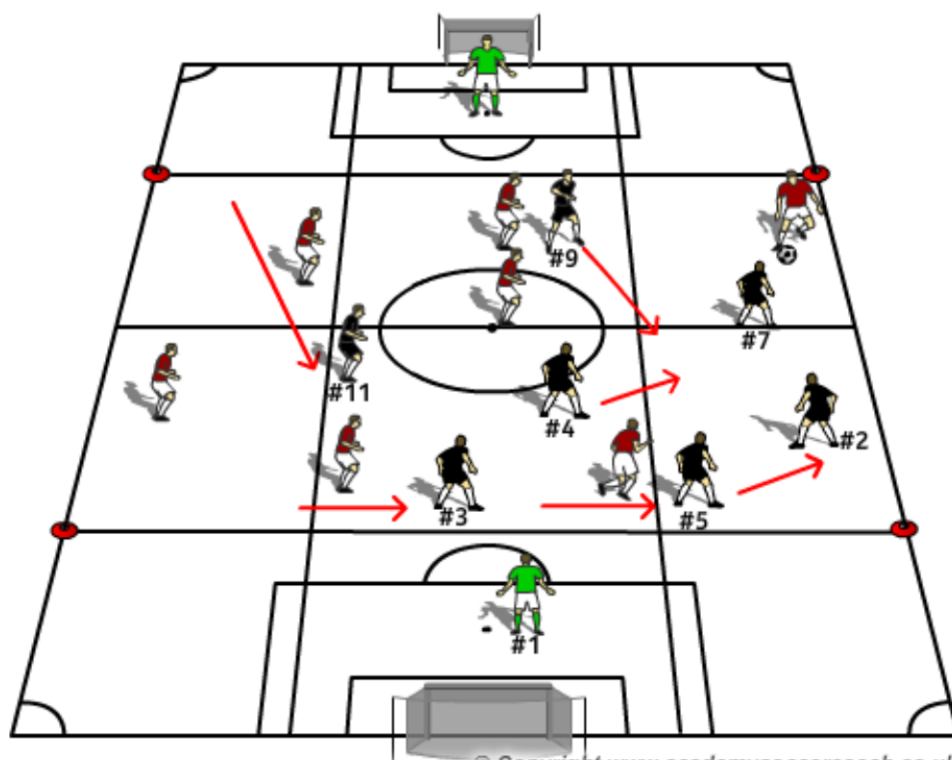
- Wingers (#7, #11) on BOTH sides need to "tuck in" to create compactness in the middle of the field. They should also be encouraged to "double down" and try to help win the ball if possible.
- Defenders (#2, #3, #5) should get tight with each other to protect the middle channel.
- Fullbacks (#2, #3) on BOTH sides need to "tuck in" to create compactness in the middle of the field.
- Midfield player recover to the centre channel and should be encouraged to apply immediate pressure to the attacking player if possible and try to win the ball back.
- Centre back (#5) should act as the second defender to support the central midfield player.
- The striker (#9) should track back and try to join the team in defending. He/she should be encouraged to "double down" and try to win the ball if in close proximity.
- Goalkeeper should play as far out as appropriate to act as a "sweeper" and communicate as much as possible with the back 4.
- Players should be taught to defend in tight triangles as a basic "shape".



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Defending Wide Attacks

- Wingers and defenders should "tuck in" to create compactness in width (clog the middle of the field)
- The strong side fullback pressurizes the attacker immediately. If MF players are in close proximity and the FB is able to confront the attacker in the middle third of the field, the FB (#2) should force the attacker inside where CB and MF players can double up to win the ball. Any wide attackers in the defending third should be forced to wide positions to minimize threats.
- The centre back closest to the ball becomes the second defender.
- Back 3 create a "hockey stick" shape. The spacing should be approximately 2/3's of the width of the field, but never less than half of the width of the field. The other two defenders hold a line approximately 5 yards off of the first defender.
- Winger on the side of the attack should look to "double up" on the attacker and try to win the ball back.
- Midfield player should try to recover centrally into the "hole" between the defenders and forwards.
- Striker should come back to join the team defending effort and "double up" if possible.
- Goalkeeper should play as far out as appropriate to act as a "sweeper" and communicate as much as possible with the back 4.
- Players should be taught to defend in tight triangles as a basic "shape".





**8v8
PLAYER PROFILES**

8v8 PLAYER PROFILES

Assessing Your Players

It is very important for coaches to take the time at the beginning of the season and throughout, to assess each player on their team from an individual standpoint. Understanding what every player has to offer will not only assist in building a team for success, but will also optimize a player's learning potential and ability to contribute to the team.

Especially at the beginning phase of the season, coaches should experiment with their players and give them a taste of some different roles and positions. This process will greatly assist in the coaches understanding of his/her players.

Coaches should approach their team as a puzzle with each player representing a different piece to the puzzle. It is up to the coach(es) to complete the puzzle with all of the pieces fitting properly together.

Once you have a good understanding of what your players can offer, you can use them like tools in a tool box. If there are specific things in the game that need to be fixed to better balance your team then you can draw upon the right tool to make the repair.

The following points are questions that coaches should be able to answer about EVERY player prior to deciding the role(s) that an individual player may play on the team:

- Is the player more attacking or defending minded?
- Does the player look more comfortable on the flanks (outside of the park), or in a more central position?
- What does the player say he/she likes to do?
- What kind of role "sparks" the players interest in the game?
- What are the players playing tendencies? What do they like to do? What do they not like to do?
- Can the player use BOTH feet competently and on a consistent basis?
- Does the player possess quickness and pace, or is the player slower?
- Is the player able to cross the ball and hit long passes?
- Does the player like to tackle and win balls (aggressive)?
- Is the player "active" (always busy in defending situations and is quick to join attacks - always wants the ball), or "static" (tends to work when ball is in close proximity) in the flow of play?
- Any "specialty" characteristics (left foot, strong in the air, very strong ball winner, etc.)?

Positional Characteristics

The following positional profiles have been created to assist coaches in identifying the positions/player types required for 8v8 play and assigning their players to the appropriate roles.

It is essential that at this age, coaches need to be careful to not "pigeon-hole" players into one set position (GK's *may* be an exception). The following guidelines will aid coaches in identifying the appropriate roles for each individual player.

Position / Role	Player Characteristics
Goal Keeper - #1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Should have a desire/interest/passion to be a goalkeeper - Must take pride in "defending" and preventing goals - Should receive GK-specific training - MUST possess a good first touch - MUST be able to receive and pass the ball with BOTH feet - MUST be able to hit long passes
Centre Back - #5, #6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Technically sound player - Able to make an accurate first connecting pass - Should be able to hit long passes - Excellent 1v1 defending skills - Should love to defend - Aggressive and assertive ball winner - Athletic (strong, quick and powerful) - Good in the air?
Fullback - #2, #3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Technically sound player - Able to make an accurate first connecting pass - Should be able to hit long passes - Excellent 1v1 defending skills - Possesses excellent dribbling and 1v1 skills - Is very quick and has a lot of pace - Can cross the ball (preferably with both feet) - Should be comfortable getting forward
Central MF - #4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Most technically sound player on the team - Always "busy" and wants the ball - Is an aggressive ball winner - Has a good "engine" and can cover a lot of ground - Is comfortable passing and receiving the ball on BOTH sides of body - Possesses attacking and defending qualities - Has good vision and is a good play-maker
Winger - #7, #11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Is able to be a threat every time he/she has the ball - Possesses excellent dribbling and 1v1 skills - Is very quick and has a lot of pace - Can cross the ball (preferably with both feet) - Can strike the ball (preferably with both feet) - Has a fearless and daring desire to attack and score - Has a good first touch - Has an attacking mentality
Striker - #9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Is able to be a threat every time he/she has the ball - Possesses excellent dribbling and 1v1 skills - Can strike the ball with accuracy and power using both feet - Has a fearless and daring desire to attack and score - Has a good first touch - Can competently shield/hold the ball - Willing to compete for balls in the air (heading skills) - Works hard defensively to press the ball and wants to tackle - Should be athletic (quick, strong and powerful)

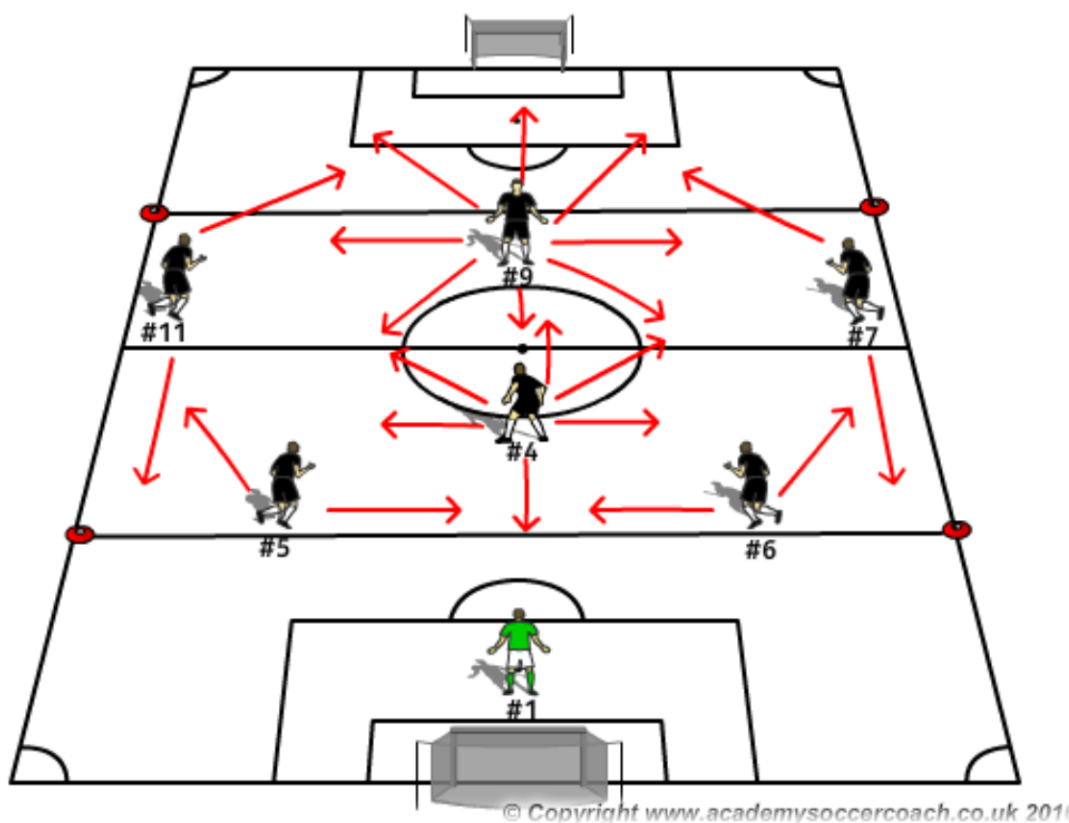


UNDER 10
7v7 OVERVIEW

2-3-1 STANDARD ATTACKING SHAPE

The following are general characteristics and basic tactical behaviors of the 2-3-1 standard attacking shape for 7v7 soccer:

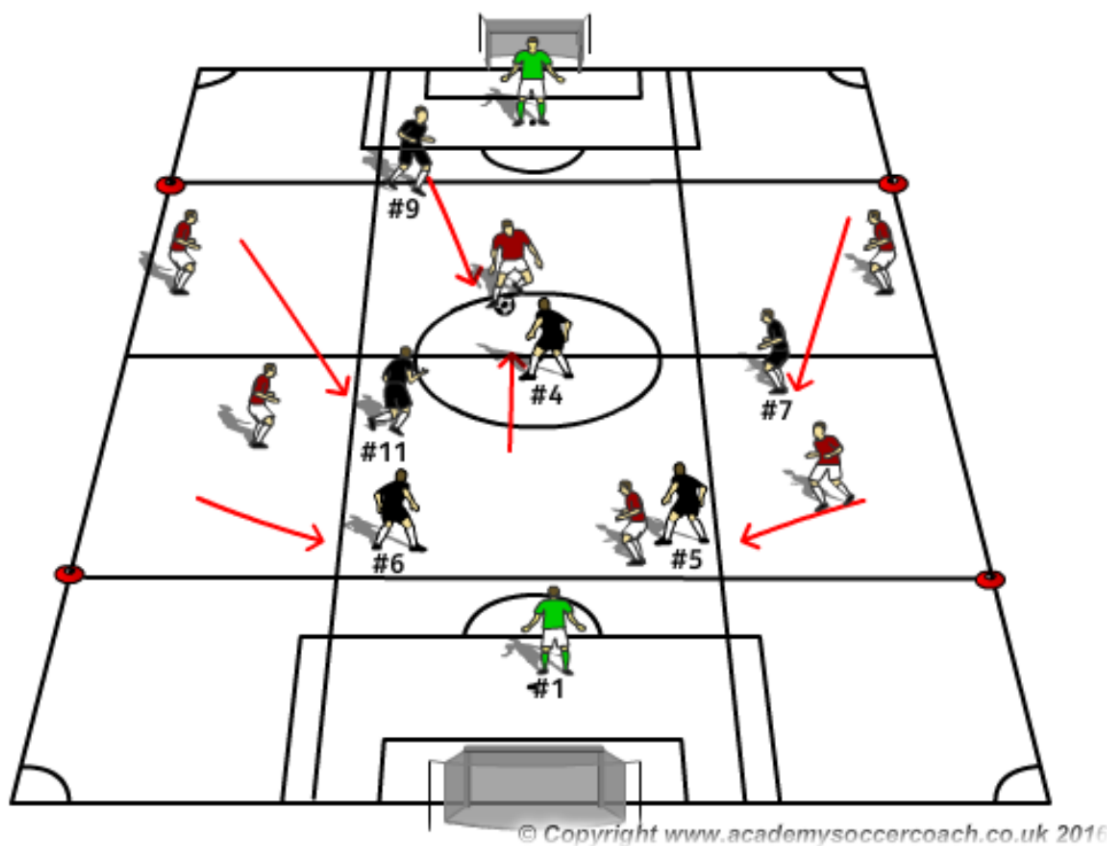
- Two defenders/centre backs (#2, #3/ #5, #6). Work together to move forward, and backwards as well as sliding across the field. In attacking situations, they should be encouraged to get forward and support the central midfield player and should be encouraged to get into wide positions to receive passes.
- One central midfield player (#4) who sits in the central "pocket" between the centre forward and the defenders. This player can drop between the defenders to become a "centre back" and can also join attacks to support the striker.
- Striker (#9) should be encouraged to stay high on the defenders and stretch the opposition to the off side line when his/her team is in possession of the ball. This player should be encouraged to "try to score goals" at every opportunity.
- Two wingers (#7, #11) who immediately get "High", "Wide" and "In-line" with the last defender in attacking situations. At this age these players should be taught to come back and defend and also to get high in support attacks. They can be coached as "defensive-minded wingers".
- Keep all instruction SIMPLE. Encourage players to be brave and creative in attack.
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2-3-1 STANDARD DEFENDING SHAPES

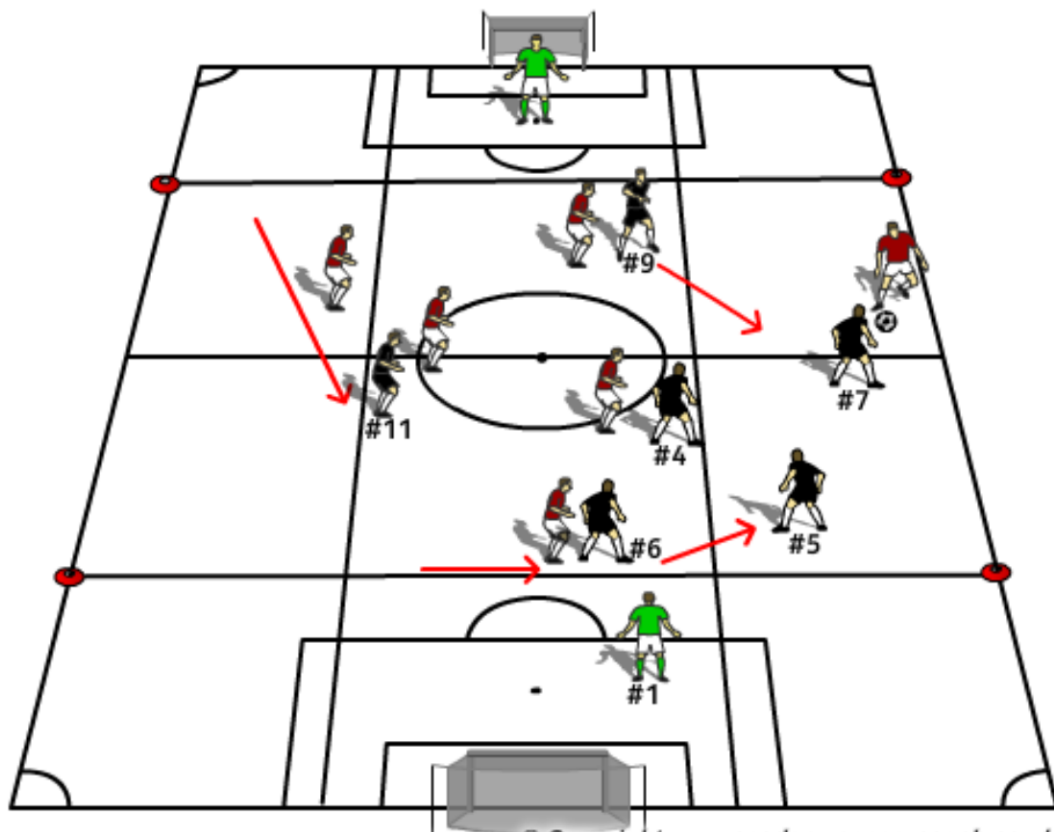
Defending Central Attacks

- Wingers on BOTH sides need to "tuck in" to create compactness in the middle of the field. They should also be encouraged to "double down" and try to help win the ball if possible.
- Defenders should "squeeze" together to clog up the middle channel.
- Midfield player recover to the central channel and should be encouraged to either drop between the defenders if they are caught too far apart or, be encouraged to apply immediate pressure to the attacking player, if possible and try to win the ball back.
- Goalkeeper should play as far out as appropriate to act as a "sweeper" and communicate as much as possible with the back 4.
- Players should be taught to defend in tight triangles as a basic "shape".



Defending Wide Attacks

- Wingers and defenders should "tuck in" to create compactness in width (clog the middle of the field).
- Defender on the side of the attack should close space quickly and try to win the ball if possible.
- Winger on the side of the attack should look to "double up" on the attacker and try to win the ball back.
- Midfield player should try to recover centrally between the two defenders, or apply pressure to the ball if in close enough proximity.
- Striker should come back to join the team defending effort and "double up" if possible.
- Goalkeeper should play as far out as appropriate to act as a "sweeper" and communicate as much as possible with the back 4.
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7v7
PLAYER PROFILES

7v7 PLAYER PROFILES

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Especially at the beginning phase of the season, coaches should experiment with their players and give them a taste of some different roles and positions. This process will greatly assist in the coaches understanding of his/her players. Coaches should approach their team as a puzzle with each player representing a different piece to the puzzle. It is up to the coach(es) to complete the puzzle with all of the pieces fitting properly together.

Once you have a good understanding of what your players can offer, you can use them like tools in a tool box. If there are specific things in the game that need to be fixed to better balance your team, then you can draw upon the right tool to make the repair.

The following points are questions that coaches should be able to answer about EVERY player prior to deciding the role(s) that an individual player may play on the team:

- Is the player more attacking or defending minded?
- Does the player look more comfortable on the flanks (outside of the park), or in a more central position?
- What does the player say he/she likes to do?
- What kind of role "sparks" the players interest in the game?
- What are the players playing tendencies? What do they like to do? What do they not like to do?
- Can the player use BOTH feet competently and on a consistent basis?
- Does the player possess quickness and pace, or is the player slower?
- Is the player able to cross the ball and hit long passes?
- Does the player like to tackle and win balls (aggressive)?
- Is the player "active" (always busy in defending situations and is quick to join attacks - always wants the ball), or "static" (tends to work when ball is in close proximity) in the flow of play?
- Any "specialty" characteristics (left foot, strong in the air, very strong ball winner, etc.)?

Positional Characteristics

The following positional profiles have been created to assist coaches in identifying the positions/player types required for 7v7 play and assigning their players to the appropriate roles.

It is essential that at this age, coaches need to be careful to not "pigeon-hole" players into one set position (GK's **may**, be an exception). The following guidelines will aid coaches in identifying the appropriate roles for each individual player.

Position / Role	Player Characteristics
Goal Keeper - #1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Should have a desire/interest/passion to be a goalkeeper - Must take pride in "defending" and preventing goals - Should receive GK-specific training - MUST possess a good first touch - MUST be able to receive and pass the ball with BOTH feet - MUST be able to hit long passes
Centre Back - #5, #6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Technically sound player - Able to make an accurate first connecting pass - Should be able to hit long passes - Excellent 1v1 defending skills - Should love to defend - Aggressive and assertive ball winner - Athletic (strong, quick and powerful) - Good in the air?
Central MF - #4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Most technically sound player on the team - Always "busy" and wants the ball - Is an aggressive ball winner - Has a good "engine" and can cover a lot of ground - Is comfortable passing and receiving the ball on BOTH sides of body - Possesses attacking and defending qualities - Has good vision and is a good play-maker
Winger - #7, #11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Is able to be a threat every time he/she has the ball - Possesses excellent dribbling and 1v1 skills - Is very quick and has a lot of pace - Can cross the ball (preferably with both feet) - Can strike the ball (preferably with both feet) - Has a fearless and daring desire to attack and score - Has a good first touch - Has an attacking mentality
Striker - #9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Is able to be a threat every time he/she has the ball - Possesses excellent dribbling and 1v1 skills - Can strike the ball with accuracy and power using both feet - Has a fearless and daring desire to attack and score - Has a good first touch - Can competently shield/hold the ball - Willing to compete for balls in the air (heading skills) - Works hard defensively to press the ball and wants to tackle - Should be athletic (quick, strong and powerful)

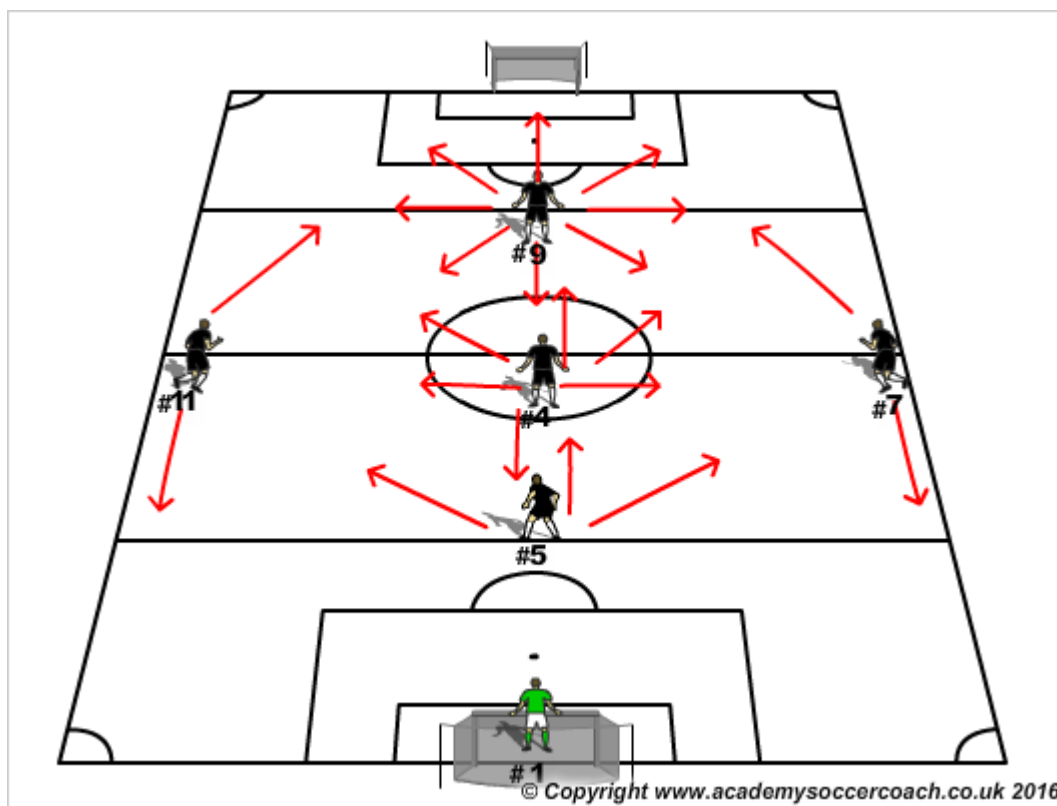


UNDER 9
6v6 OVERVIEW

1-3-1 STANDARD ATTACKING SHAPE

The following are general characteristics and basic tactical behaviors of the 1-3-1 standard attacking shape for 6v6 soccer:

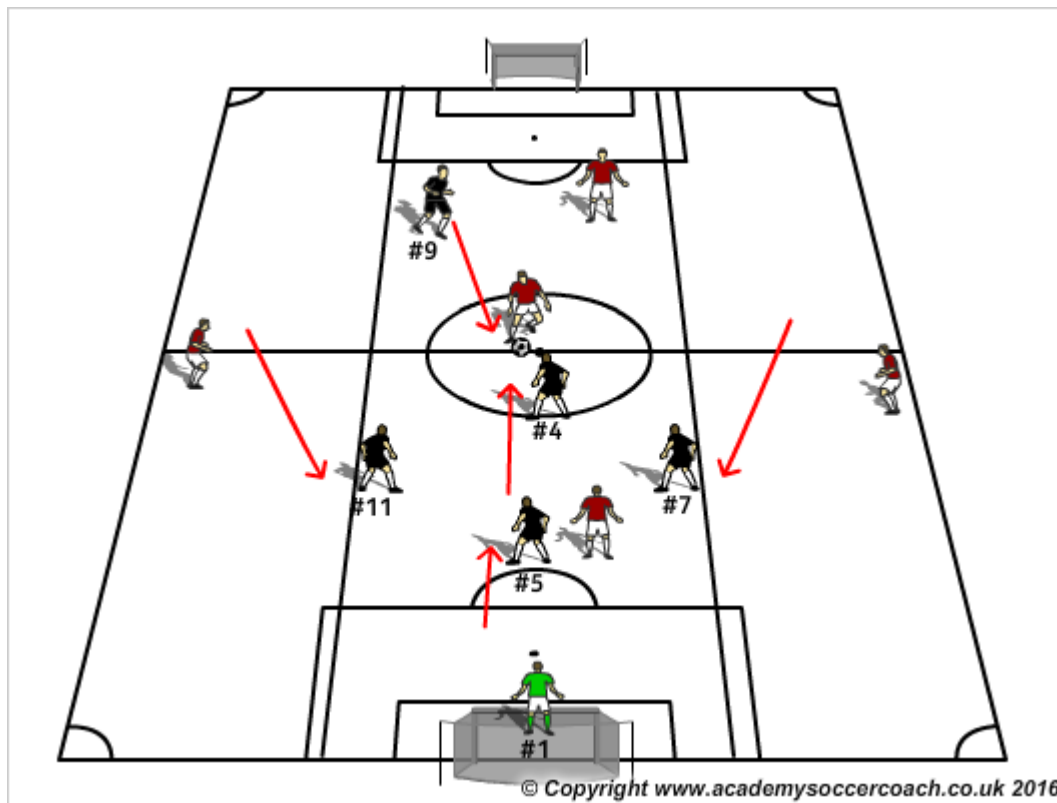
- One defender/centre back (#5) is responsible for providing depth to all phases of possession, by 'sliding' across the field, from side to side, in support of his/her teammates. In attacking situations, they should be encouraged to get forward and support the central midfield player and should be encouraged to get into wide positions to support & receive passes from the wide midfielder.
- One central midfield player (#4) who sits in the central "pocket" between the striker and the defender. This player can drop deep to receive a pass from the GK or to act as a 2nd defender. He/she can also join attacks to support the striker.
- Striker (#9) should be encouraged to stay high on the defenders and stretch the opposition to the off side line when his/her team is in possession of the ball. This player is the 'Target man' and should be encouraged to "try to score goals" at every opportunity.
- Two wingers (#7, #11) who immediately get "High", "Wide" and "In-line" with the last defender in attacking situations. At this age these players should be taught to come back and defend and also to get high in support attacks. They can be coached as "defensive-minded wingers".
- Keep all instruction SIMPLE. Encourage players to be brave and creative in attack.
- Stress the importance of support - always connect to the player with the ball to form "triangles".



1-3-1 STANDARD DEFENDING SHAPES

Defending Central Attacks

- Wingers (#7 & #11) on BOTH sides need to "tuck in" to create compactness in the middle of the field. They should also be encouraged to "double down" and try to help win the ball if possible.
- Defender (#5) should hold a central position whenever possible, in order to block a direct route to goal.
- Midfield player (#4) should recover to the central channel and be encouraged to apply immediate pressure to the attacking player, if possible and try to win the ball back.
- Goalkeeper should play as far out as appropriate to act as a "sweeper" and communicate as much as possible with the all teammates.
- Players should be taught to defend in tight triangles as a basic "defensive shape".





6v6
PLAYER PROFILES

6v6 PLAYER PROFILES

Assessing Your Players

It is very important for coaches to take the time at the beginning of the season and throughout, to assess each player on their team from an individual standpoint. Understanding what every player has to offer will not only assist in building a team for success, but will also optimize a player's learning potential and ability to contribute to the team.

Especially at the beginning phase of the season, coaches should experiment with their players and give them a taste of some different roles and positions. This process will greatly assist in the coaches understanding of his/her players. Coaches should approach their team as a puzzle with each player representing a different piece to the puzzle. It is up to the coach(es) to complete the puzzle with all of the pieces fitting properly together.

Once you have a good understanding of what your players can offer, you can use them like tools in a tool box. If there are specific things in the game that need to be fixed to better balance your team, then you can draw upon the right tool to make the repair.

The following points are questions that coaches should be able to answer about EVERY player prior to deciding the role(s) that an individual player may play on the team:

- Is the player more attacking or defending minded?
- Does the player look more comfortable on the flanks (outside of the field), or in a more central position?
- What does the player say he/she likes to do?
- What kind of role "sparks" the players interest in the game?
- What are the players playing tendencies? What do they like to do? What do they not like to do?
- Can the player use BOTH feet competently and on a consistent basis?
- Does the player possess quickness and pace, or is the player slower?
- Is the player able to cross the ball and hit long passes?
- Does the player like to tackle and win balls (aggressive)?
- Is the player "active" (always busy in defending situations and is quick to join attacks - always wants the ball), or "static" (tends to work when ball is in close proximity) in the flow of play?
- Any "specialty" characteristics (left foot, strong in the air, very strong ball winner, etc.)?

Positional Characteristics

The following positional profiles have been created to assist coaches in identifying the positions/player types required for 6v6 play and assigning their players to the appropriate roles.

It is essential that at this age, coaches need to be careful to not "pigeon-hole" players into one set position (GK's **may**, be an exception). The following guidelines will aid coaches in identifying the appropriate roles for each individual player.

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PRACTICE PRIORITIES

PRACTICE STRUCTURE DEFINITIONS

The following definitions have been developed to ensure that you have an understanding of how to plan and deliver a variety of practice sessions. Functional Practices, Small-Sided Games, Phase of Play Practices and Eleven-a-side games will be used to deliver the contents of the Club Playing Concept.

Technical Practice:

A technical practice is an unopposed practice with the emphasis on the development of a game technique. Challenges to the development of the technique may be gradually introduced and will be in the form of increased or decreased time, area, target or degree of difficulty in practice depending on the rate of improvement in the players' performance.

Skill Practice:

Is an opposed practice with the emphasis on developing the bond of technique and decision-making. The practice contains objectives for all players which are derived from the technical theme being practiced. Appropriate areas, the number of player's involved and imposed "conditions" will vary around the skill theme for development.

Functional Practice:

Is a practice situation in which a player or small group of players develop an understanding of their attacking and/or defending roles, responsibilities and accompanying skills. Practice will be best sited in the area of the field where the player operates in a game and only players who are primary and secondary in the development of role understanding are involved in the practice.

Small Sided Game:

Is a directional game-practice situation involving Goalkeepers playing in teams less than eleven-a-side. It can be utilized for the coach to work technically or tactically and is ideal for developing the principles of play and team understanding. Working areas are adapted to suit the reduced numbers of players and official game rules are applied although some may be modified. The coach will usually work with one team and on one theme of work.

'Squad' Practice:

Is a directional, game-type practice situation in which the playing area may be appropriately divided or zoned to suit the numbers and the needs of the activity. Goals or targets of some design are employed to signify the successful end of attacks and squad practices can be used for the development of either individual, group or unit technical or tactical elements of the game.

Phase of Play:

Is a practice situation utilizing the full width of the pitch but with a reduced length. Involves team units of players attacking or defending against opponents and is ideal for developing group, unit and team tactical understanding.

Eleven-a-Side Practice (11v11):

Is the final progression in practice and is utilized to develop team tactical understanding and takes place on a full sized pitch with game rules applied. Practice seeks to establish understanding of player role and responsibility and group and team tactical understanding in attacking or defending situations and is often best employed when work is conducted in the different thirds of the pitch. The coach usually works with only one team around one theme.

U13 - U18 PRACTICE PRIORITIES

General Practice Content

Teams should look to address the following components in practice on a consistent basis. Heavy emphasis is to be placed on possessing the ball (inter-passing and supporting movements) in different scenarios (counter-attacking, playing out of dangerous areas, slow build-up's, etc.), as well as positioning (tactically and body position to receive/pass the ball). Patterned passing sequences and attacking sequences also need to be introduced to players at young ages, and built on as they become older and more experienced.

Possession - keeping possession of the ball (inter-passing and movement).

Position - passing/receiving a pass; positioning in attacking and defending situations.

Pattern - reading, creating and playing out of patterns in attacking and defending situations.

Protection - protecting major creating, delivering and scoring areas that pose the greatest threats.

Penalties - attacking and defending set pieces (free kicks, corner kicks, etc.).

Attacking Tactical Play

1. Counter Attack from the MF 1/3rd and defending half regains of possession.
2. Developing Play from the GK's possession.
 - Playing out from the defending 1/3 from a throw.
 - Counter attack from GK's collecting the ball.
 - Dribble & Drive on the diagonal.
3. Developing play from back players' possession in the defending 1/3 and defending 1/2 to supply and / or break into MF areas.
4. Receiving and movement skills & "understanding" from MF players.
5. Supplying forward players as a priority.
6. Interchanges and movement amongst players ahead of the CB's.
7. MF runs up to and ahead of forward players.
8. Flank attacking to produce crossing opportunities.
9. Playing with three forwards.
 - Wing play with #7 / #11.
 - Flank play with the #7 / #11 / #2 / #3 players combining.
 - Wide players linking play with #9.
 - Wide players vacating the flanks (Why / When / How?).
 - Playing with a "lone striker".
10. Playing with a "shadow striker".
 - Linking into MF play.
 - Linking with the #9.
 - Receiving and releasing forward players.
 - Running at defences.
11. Attacking Set Plays in central and flank areas in the attacking half.

Attacking Technical Content

1. Development and retention of possession (opposed directional practice).
2. "Fast", quick and early ground passing (foot surface variety).
3. Passing with side and backspin over varied distances in the air and ground passes.
4. "Switching play " passing skills (20-60yd passes-ground and aerial).
5. One-touch passing skills - all distances.
6. Measured "through" passes.
7. Clever, un-orthodox, un-expected passes over 10 - 40 yds.
8. Receiving on the move at speed -ground and aerial passes.
9. Personal and group "ball retention" skill (1st touch and "bodywork" skills).
10. Individual space & time making skills.
11. Understanding of "movement" necessity and capability.
12. Group and team interchange and movement skills.
13. Player combination skills. (Wall passes ,take-overs ,"foot-ons" etc).
14. Running with the ball-away from and at opponents and spaces.
15. Releasing and combining with others on a run with the ball.
16. Crossing & Finishing Skills in context.
17. POSITIONAL AND "TACTICAL- TECHNICAL" BALL WORK. (e.g. FB advancing down flanks, Back 4 changing play, MF overlap).

Defensive Tactical Play

1. Pressing with three forwards in attacking ½.
2. Pressing with three forwards and a "shadow striker".
3. Team pressing / compression of the play.
4. Recovering, and defending from a deeper line - how deep?
5. Defending in the defending half- early and deeper.
6. "Sliding and squeezing" as a team.
7. A "compact" defensive unit- "narrow and shallow".

8. Defending in the defending1/3.
9. "Unit" defending.
10. Whole team 11 v 11 defending.
11. Defending set plays in the defending 1/3 -"zonal orientation".
12. Read, anticipate, prioritize and act decisively.

Defensive Technical Content

1. Defending alone in a counter attack context.
2. Showing both "infield and outside".
3. "Screening" opponents preferred pass options.
4. Pressing (from front and rear).
5. Interceptions, Spoiling, Challenging, Blocking - Passes, crosses and strikes.
6. "Shifting" and "turning" in "tight" defending situations.
7. Heading from a variety of ball trajectories.
8. One touch clearance / "directing" skills (head, volley, etc.).
9. Bodywork - receiving and protecting the ball.

13-14 Years Old

Have Acquired

1. Efficient, orthodox ball-control skills.
2. Efficient short range passing skills (10-25 yds).
3. Receive and release with surface variety.
4. Basic understanding of support play.
5. Effective 'turns' with ball - limited variety.
6. Basic ball manipulation / maneuver skills.
7. Basic ball - retention understanding and skills.
8. Some players - some dribbling skills.
9. Basic running with the ball abilities.
10. Basic heading skills.
11. Pressing and marking skills.

Need to Learn

1. Increased range of controlling skills (Surfaces-flight, height, speed).
2. Extended variety of short range, medium range, passing skills.
3. Pass and combination play with others - e.g. wall pass, overlap play.
4. Development of 'feel' for ball on contact skills, e.g. control, pass, shoot, cross, etc.
5. Appropriate disguise / deception to all contact skills.
6. Ability to protect and maneuver the ball under pressure.
7. Improved head skills.
8. Support play with 'movement' appreciation.
9. Safety, risk in possession skills.
10. Running with the ball.
11. Marking, tracking and challenging skills in co-operation with others.
12. Reading of the game defensively - for interceptions, challenges, etc.

15-16 Years Old

Have Acquired

1. Coping 1v1 (attacking and defending) as appropriate to self, situation and opponent.
2. Assured and efficient basic control, passing and support skills and developing the ability to disguise intention as appropriate.
3. Basic ball retention skills (Screening and maneuvering the ball).
4. Extended, though not comprehensive range of passing skills (increased range, repertoire, sensitivity).
5. Basic movement skills and resultant effect (Small numbers of players).
6. Knowledge and selection of wall-pass, overlap, take-over (combined play).
7. Knowledge of circumstance and the value of running with the ball.
8. Improved dribbling skills and application where 'appropriate'.
9. Improved "feel" on all contact skills.
10. Changing of ball position and of 'play', personally and for benefit of team.
11. Improved heading skills.
12. 1 v 1 defending skills - press, mark and track etc.
13. Basic understanding of cover and defensive positioning.
14. How, when, if to intercept, spoil or challenge for the ball.
15. Ability to read the game and begin to prioritize decision making and actions.

Need to Learn

1. Escaping man-markers and operating when man-marked.
2. Using body on receiving ball and in possession of ball; to protect possession.
3. Clever personal and positional - specific movements.

4. Movement and benefits of simple interchanges of position.
5. Increased variety of pass and control skills with appropriate disguise.
6. Increased, improved heading skills.
7. Increased understanding of safety, risk and the use of team possession for tactical reasons.
8. Movement in to space and movement of defenders from good defending positions for team attacking advantage.
9. Increased understanding of group and team defending 8v8 into 11v11.
10. Defending when outnumbered and against combination play.
11. Recognition and employment of counter-attack option.

17-18 Years Old

Have Acquired - Attacking

1. 'Clean' extended range and varied contact skills - controlling touch, distribution skills, shooting, crossing etc.
2. All aspects of support and movement fully understood.
3. Ability to respond appropriately to other players' movement.
4. Create space for self and team and effectively use the space created in possession.
5. Appropriate application of feint / dummy on receiving the ball.
6. Ability to play 1 and 2 touch effectively.
7. Know how to cope 1v1 - dribble, combine, simple pass according to situation and individual skill/characteristics.
8. Operating if man-marked.
9. Changing direction of play.
10. Understanding of priorities in use of possession according to personal and team play requirements.

Have Acquired - Defending

1. Marking and how to 'man-mark'.
2. 'Pressing' skills and 'splitting' opponents.
3. Tracking opponents.
4. Defending when not "immediately" involved against the ball e.g. sliding, covering, squeezing out.
5. Defending in units, e.g. back 4, mark, cover, etc.
6. Defending against combination play.
7. Handing over opponents to team-mates.
8. Reading and anticipating the developing play.

U11 - U12 PRACTICE PRIORITIES

General Practice Content

Technique - developing all techniques on BOTH sides of the body, using multiple contact surfaces.

Technique on Demand - technique under pressure of time, space and an opponent.

Possession - keeping possession of the ball (inter-passing and supporting movement).

Speed of Play - moving the ball, supporting and attacking quickly.

Position - body shape when receiving a pass; positioning in attacking and defending situations.

Pattern - reading, creating and playing out of patterns in attacking and defending situations.

Protection - protecting central attacking areas and preventing entries into the penalty area.

Technical Skills

- Passing (long, short, inside of foot, crosses).
- Proper technique for instep, inside and outside. Work on short and long.
- Receiving - Body behind ball, cushion balls that are on the ground, bouncing, and in the air. All surfaces from partner on the move.
- 1v1 attacking behaviors (courage in beating challenges from front, behind, side).
- Finishing (instep, inside of foot, volleys, half volleys, headers).
- Proper striking of the ball, plant foot, "toe down; heal up", and ankle locked, strike ball with instep and follow through. Hitting moving balls.
- Heading (basic introduction to proper technique).
- Self serve to Partner serve jumping to head and partner juggling.
- Introduction to Individual Defending.

Tactical

- Basic principles of play.
- Promote attacking soccer.
- 1v1 - 3v3 games to develop technical skills.
- First defender (role of pressure) and Second Defender (role of cover).
- Combination play (wall pass, takeover, overlap).
- Angles of Support.
- Possession (small games 2v1, 3v1, 4v2).

Psychological

- Create fun practice environment.
- Introduce competition to training environment.
- Encourage decision -making.
- Increase demands.
- Discipline.
- Begin to create students of the game. Encourage players to attend professional games, or watch them on TV; take your team to college games or to watch older teams in the club.

Physical

- All fitness is done with the ball or is agility based.
- Focus on developing player coordination and balance with ball.

Training Focus

- All training should be fun.
- Sessions should be devoted to 1v1, 2v2, 3v3 games to develop technique with the main focus on attacking.
- All training should involve transition.
- Players should be going to goal as often as possible.

U9 - U10 PRACTICE PRIORITIES

General Practice Content

Technique - developing all techniques on BOTH sides of the body, using multiple contact surfaces.

Technique on Demand - technique under pressure of time, space and an opponent.

Possession - very basic inter-passing and supporting movement - playing away from defenders.

Speed of Play - moving the ball, supporting and attacking quickly.

Position - body shape when receiving a pass; positioning in attacking and defending situations.

Technical Skills

- Passing (long, short, inside of foot, crosses).
- Receiving (balls on ground, balls in air).
- Dribbling (beating challenges from front, behind, side).
- Finishing (instep, inside of foot, volleys, half volleys).
- Individual Defending (very basic introduction).

Tactical

- 1v1 - 3v3 games to develop technical skills.
- First defender (role of pressure) and Second Defender (role of cover).
- Combination play (wall pass, takeover, overlap).
- Angles of Support.
- Possession (small games 2v1, 3v1, 4v2).

Psychological

- Create fun practice environment.
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- All fitness is done with the ball or is agility based.
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