

Defending with Flat Back Four

Activity #1: (Warm up phase II)

Set Up:

5 x 5 yard grid. Players are organized in 2 groups as shown in Diagram (a) below.

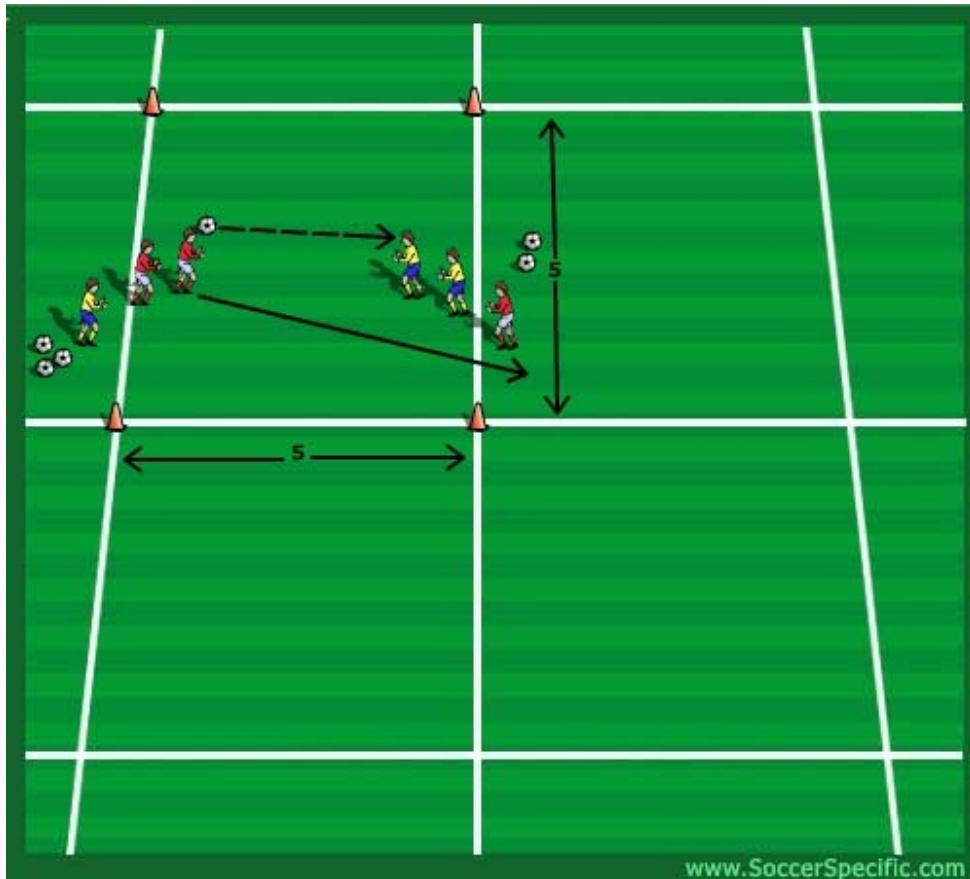


Diagram (a)

Explanation:

Players pass the ball back and forth using one-touch, two-touch passing. After passing, each player follows his/her pass and joins the back of the opposite line. Movement is continuous.

*Can also include heading back and forth.

Coaching Points:

- Communication, concentration, quality of touches.
- Get your first touch out of your feet

Activity #2: (4v3 shadow play)

Set Up:

A "back-four" is positioned as shown below. Two players and the Coach (c) act as three attacking players.

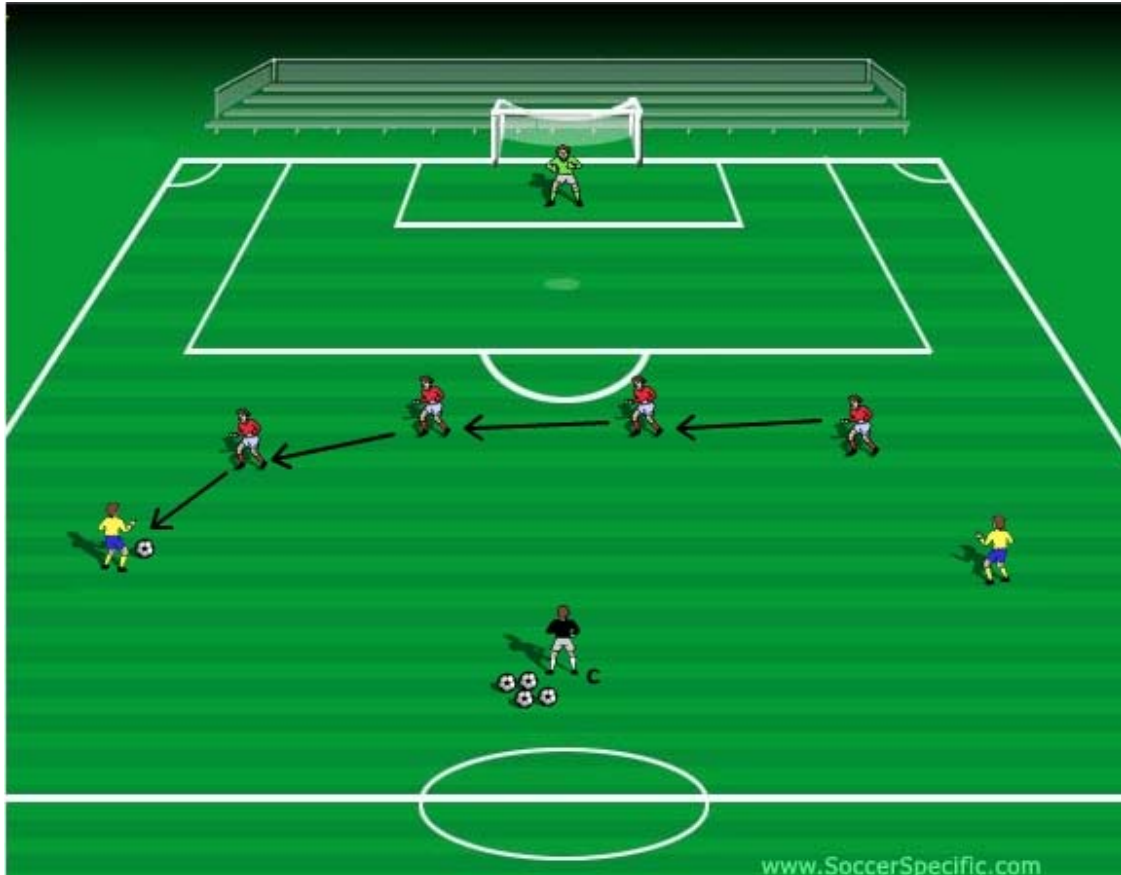


Diagram (b)

Explanation:

The three attacking players must circulate the ball from wide to middle and then back to wide positions – basically they must pass the ball across their line – the back-four must adjust their positions according to the movement of the ball. In the diagram above the back-four are illustrated "shifting" to one side as the ball travels.

Below, in Diagram (c) the central defender is stepping to put pressure on the ball. The other defenders must "pinch in" as shown to offer cover and support and to close up any potential passing lanes.



Diagram (c)

Coaching Points:

- The four defenders must focus on pressure, cover, balance, and shifting side to side as a unit.
- Hold the defensive line just outside the top of the 'D'.
- Travel "as the ball travels" – not after the fact!
- Center backs must step to solve the attacker quickly if the ball is in a central position.
- Who steps and who drops and covers?
- Tackling is not a feature in this exercise.

Activity #3: NOTE: This activity progresses from 4v1 to 4v4

Set Up:

Defenders are positioned around the top of the penalty area as shown below. Attacking players are positioned approximately 35-40 yards from goal. Cones are placed to distinguish the “attacking zone” as shown below.



Diagram (d)

(A) 4v1 – Focus on “Individual Defending”

Explanation:

Four attacking players circulate the ball among themselves without interchanging positions as shown in Diagram (e) above. When an opening occurs, they must attack the goal and go 1v1 with the defender.

The attacking players are not allowed to circulate the ball more than one or two positions at a time and the ball must be played on the ground. Only one attacking player is allowed in the attacking zone at one time .

Coaching Points:

- Stay on your feet – don't dive in!
- Close the space quickly.
- Delay the attack and steer the attacker away from the goal.

(B) 4v2

Explanation:

Same organization as above with the addition of an additional defender as shown below. Only one attacker can drive into the attacking zone and attempt to beat the two defenders.



Diagram (e)

Coaching Points:

- Emphasis is now on defensive support play – can the additional defender offer cover for his/her defensive partner.
- Central attacking players are pushed into supporting defenders.
- Look to double down the attacker as soon as possible.

(C) 4v3

Explanation:

Same organization with the emphasis now on the defensive positioning of the third “balancing” defender.



Diagram (f)

Coaching Points:

- Steer the attacker into defensive support.
- Be patient – delay the attack.
- Balancing defender should NOT drop too deep otherwise the “flat” back-four principle will be undermined.

Activity #4: Final Game (5v5)

Set Up:

A 20 x 20 yard grid is organized as shown below. Two teams of 5 players are positioned inside the grid.



Diagram (f)

Explanation:

10 minute game. A goal is scored by dribbling across the opponents end-lines. The play must be extremely quick and the tackling highly competitive.

Coaching Points:

- Stay compact as a defensive "unit"
- Communicate at all times.
- Emphasis is placed on all previous coaching principles / points.



DEFENDING WITH A FLAT BACK FOUR