

Midfield Defending

Activity #1:

Set Up:

Four players are positioned at each 12x12 yard grid as shown in Diagram (a) below. Repeat setup to accommodate entire team (4 grids accommodates 16 players)

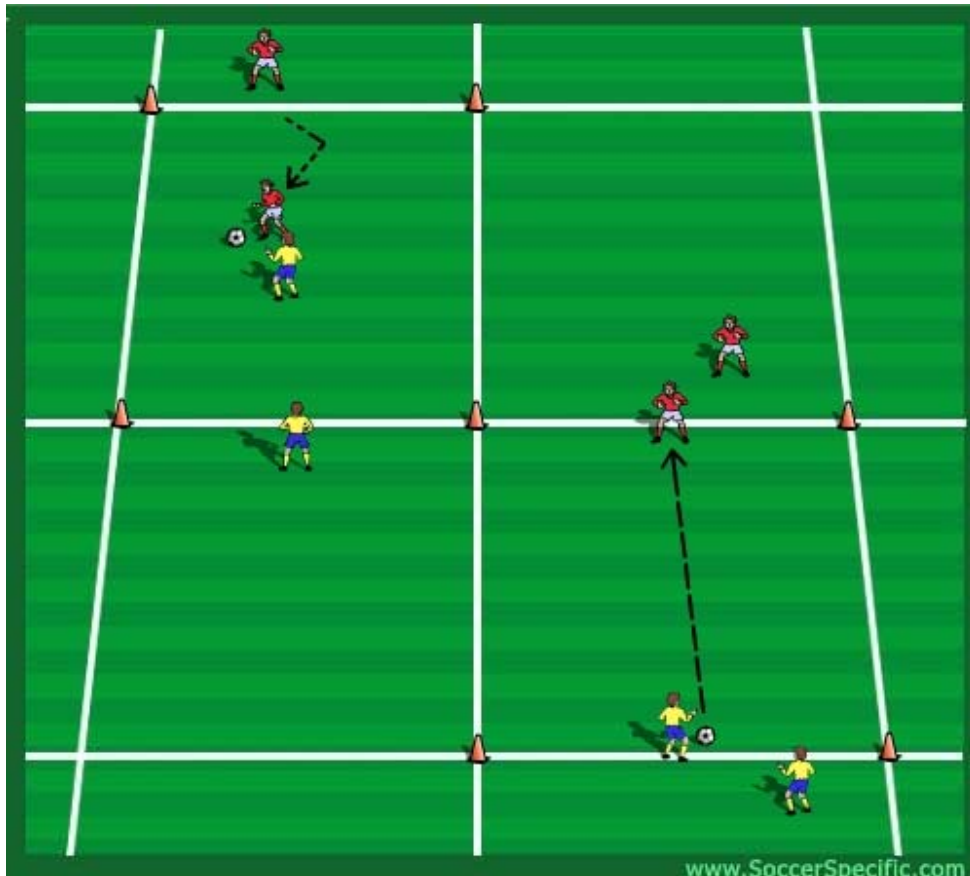


Diagram (a)

Explanation:

Players compete 1v1 and attempt to get over their opponents endline. The ball is passed to the opponent at the opposite end of the grid. The player that made the initial pass must go and defend against the player in possession of the ball. Emphasis is on coaching the defensive techniques/tactics. Switch roles after designated number of reps/points.

Coaching Points:

- Close down the space as quickly as possible.
- "Angle" the run to the ball to force the attacker one way.
- Channel the attacker.
- Don't allow the attacker to "drive" at you.
- Attempt to force the attacker on to his/her back foot.

Progression:

Same setup as above but numbers have been increased to 2v2 as shown below in Diagrams (b) and (c).

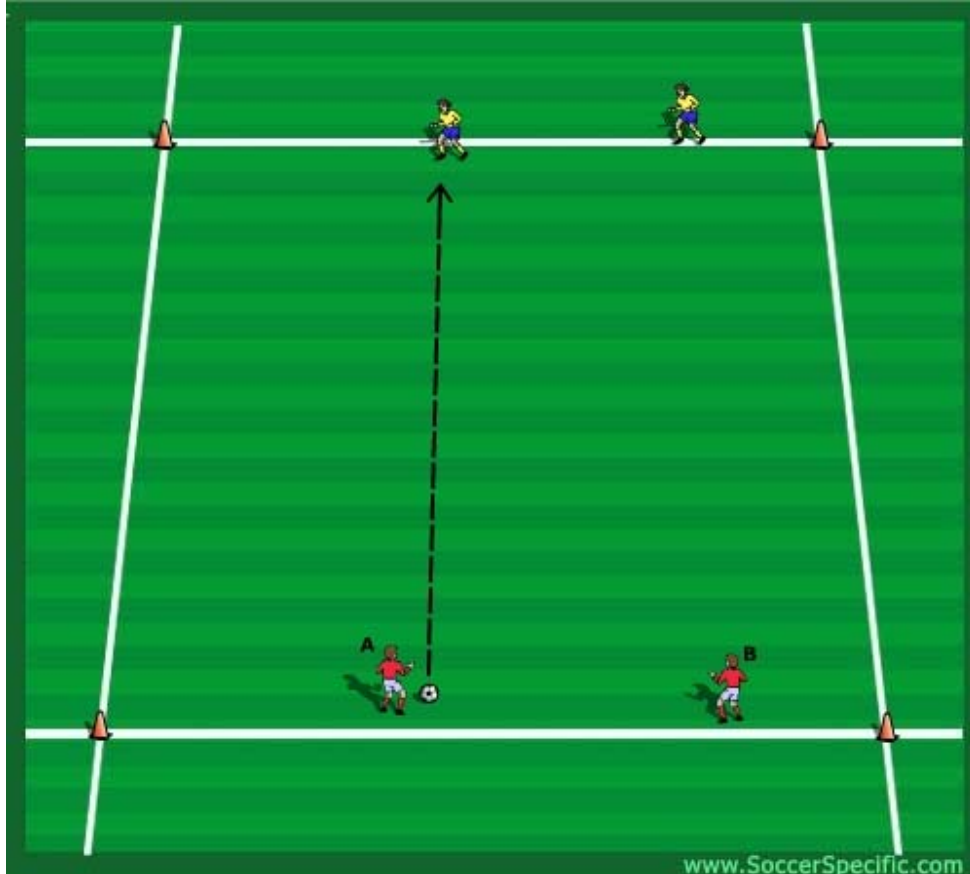


Diagram (b)

Explanation:

Player (A) passes the ball to either attacker at opposite end of the grid. Immediately after passing the ball (A) and (B) must go to defend against the two attackers. Points are awarded for successfully stopping the attack. Alternate roles after each rep.

Diagram (c) below illustrates defenders (A) and (B) working together to prevent any penetration from the attackers. Player (A) is running to apply pressure on the ball while channeling the attacker towards the sideline. Teammate (B) is moving into a good supporting position while still maintaining distance with the other attacker.



Diagram (c)

Coaching Points:

- 1st defender must "press" the ball.
- 2nd defender provides cover.
- Close down the space as quickly as possible.
- "Angle" the run to force the attacker one way.

Activity #3 Game Related:

Set Up:

An 8v8 is organised in a 40x40 yard grid as shown below in Diagram (d) - 4v4 inside grid with 2 players from each team at opposite ends of the grid as shown.



Diagram (d)

Explanation:

The main aim is for the defensive team to gain possession of the ball by closing down the space and working as "a unit". The attacking team (team in possession) can score points by successfully passing to their teammates on the opposite side of the grid. In the above Diagram, the yellow team must stay compact as a unit to prevent penetrating passes through their line while at the same time they must apply pressure to win possession of the ball. Player (C) has stepped to "press" the ball while his/her teammates have shifted their positions to offer support and cut off the passing lanes to the target players. If yellow wins the ball they immediately become the attacking team. Points are awarded for penetrating passes **along the ground**. Game is continuous for the designated period of time. Rotate in perimeter players after each game.

Coaching Points:

- Force attackers back or across the pitch - no penetrating balls forward!
- Don't dive into tackles.
- Get out and "press" the ball quickly.

- Force the attackers to play long balls.

Activity #4 Conditioned Game:

Set Up:

A 7v7 + Gk's is organised on 2/3 of a pitch as shown below in Diagram (e). 3 zones are created as shown - 2 attacking/defensive zones and 1 midfield zone. Formations are 2:4:1 with an emphasis placed on midfield defensive shape.

Note: For illustration purposes a smaller portion of the pitch is diagrammed.



Diagram (e)

Explanation:

Both teams compete for possession of the ball and attempt to score in their opponents goal. Ball must be played through the midfield zone. Emphasis is placed on the midfield maintaining their shape defensively. In the above Diagram, attacker (A) has passed to teammate (B). As the ball is travelling to (B), midfielder (C) has burst forward to apply pressure on the ball. Midfielder (A) has "tucked in" to cut off a passing lane as well as offer immediate support. Midfielders (E) and (F) have also adjusted their positions to prevent penetrating passes as well as offer cover/balance. It is important for the midfield unit to cut off passing lanes into the forwards feet as well as to apply pressure on the ball.

Note: A defender may enter the midfield zone to create an overload in favor of the attacking team - this will put a greater demand on the midfield defensive unit.

Game is continuous - Teams play for the designated period of time or for number of goals.

Coaching Points:

- Apply pressure to force mistakes.
- Travel AS THE BALL TRAVELS!!
- Cut off passing lanes.
- Force the attacking team to play back or sideways.
- Close down the space as quickly as possible.

Progression:

Eliminate zones and restrictions. Free play while continuing to emphasise theme and coaching points.