

## Roles and Responsibilities of Midfielders in a Defensive Unit

### Activity #1:

#### Set Up:

After a thorough warm-up including light aerobic activity and dynamic stretching, midfield unit line up against four opposing midfield players in 44 x 30 area. Yellows transfer ball between each other, and red midfield unit react accordingly.

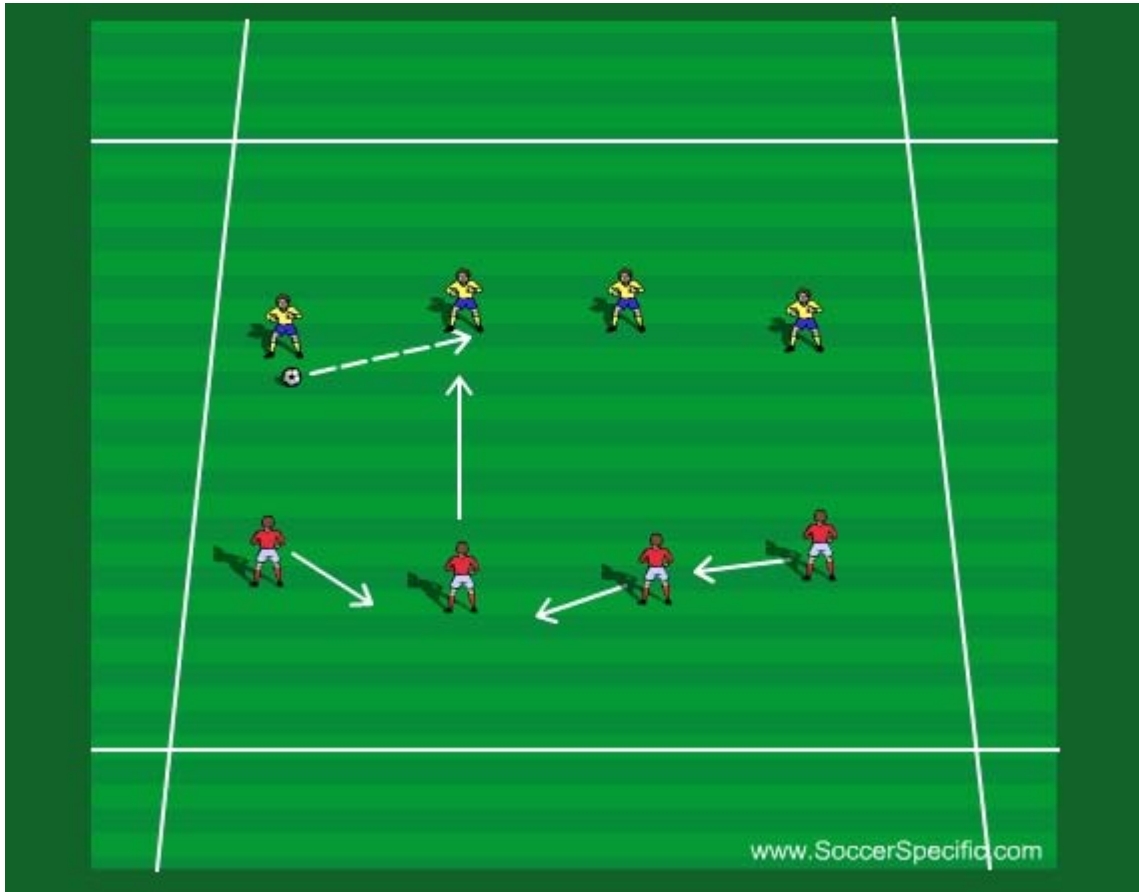


Diagram (a)

#### Explanation:

Progress to yellows having to dribble over the line, or pass through and stop the ball on the line, to score. Ball must be kept below head height. Offside rule applies.

#### Coaching Points:

- Role of each player within the midfield when defending as a unit (pressuring player - angle and speed of approach, body position, quickly in and quickly back out to shape when ball is transferred; other players - angle and distance of cover and balance).
- Shape of midfield unit (how quickly shape is regained when a role-change occurs, and when shape is lost; distance between players).
- Communication.

## Activity #2

### Set Up:

Area - Full width. 4 v 4 in the area shown.



Diagram (b)

### Explanation:

Server plays into yellow midfield unit, who attempt to score by passing through either flagged goal in wide areas. Red midfield unit must prevent an easy pass through either goal. Ball must be kept below head height. If reds win the ball, they can score by passing to server.

### Coaching Points:

- All previous points reinforced. Always trying to force inside. Decision, angle of approach and body position of pressuring player. Shape of midfield as other players react accordingly. Angle and distance of cover. Balance. Distance between all players is crucial.
- As ball goes square or back, unit can squeeze up. Decision making when opponents execute movement (winger coming inside, central player overlapping, etc.; when to pass player on, when to track runners). Track runners until you can see the ball will not be played, then squeeze up and leave them.
- Recovery runs.

### Activity #3

#### Set Up:

Yellow back four and central midfield two vs two red forwards and the midfield unit.

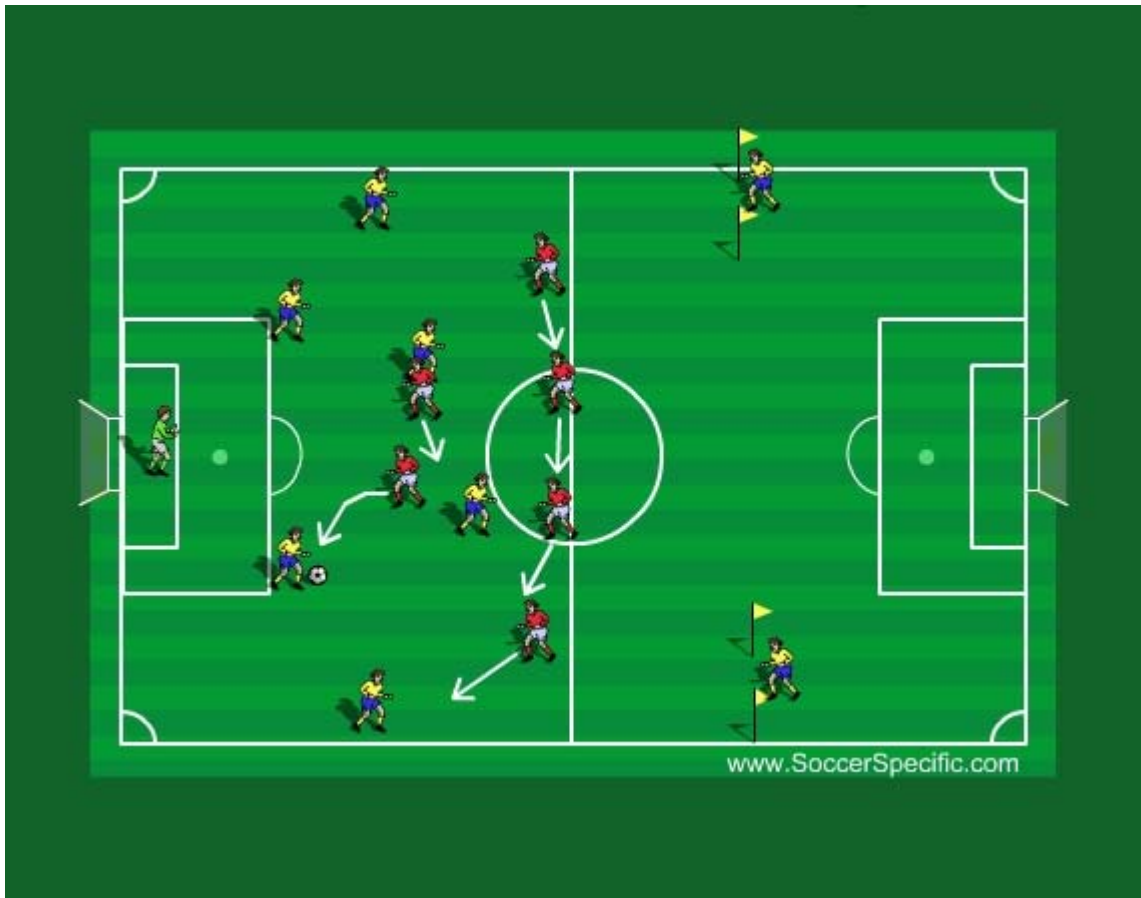


Diagram (c)

#### Explanation:

Starting point - ball is played into GK by red midfielder. Yellows play out from the back and score by passing to either target player in flagged wide areas. Ensure red team retreat to a realistic starting position each time the exercise begins. Red midfield unit and front two must force play inside and prevent the pass to the target player. Ball must be kept below head height. If reds win the ball, they attack to score.

#### Coaching Points:

- Starting positions, decisions, and movement of the front two to make play predictable for the midfield unit. Invite play a certain way and then press.
- As ball travels to C. Defender from GK, red Forward angles his run to invite a pass to the yellow Full Back, also preventing a pass to the other C. Def or into midfield. He must then prevent the ball being switched back across and out the other side. Midfield unit react accordingly. Angle and distance of cover and support. Triggers to press (when and when not to press). Distance between front two and midfield unit. Communication. All previous points reinforced.

## Activity #4 Final Game

### Set Up:

11 v 11. 442 formation vs 442 formation.



Diagram (d)

### Explanation:

Free play - no restrictions

### Coaching Points:

- All previous points reinforced.
- Relationship of the midfield unit to the back four.
- Distance within and between units.
- Defensive balance.  
Horizontal and vertical compactness.
- It is vital that in this part of the practice, the roles and responsibilities of the midfield players when the opposition launch a counter attack before we can get set defensively, or the midfield unit is penetrated, is addressed.  
Recovery runs.
  - Decision of where to make recovery run.
  - Angle and speed of recovery runs.Decision of midfield recovery run based on what the defenders do.
  - Do they step in and try to win it?
  - Do they pressure to delay the play so the midfielders can recover?
  - Do they drop off?
- Scenarios to cover:
  - A pass into the feet of a centre forward.
  - A pass out to their wide midfielder (behind our wide midfielder).
  - A pass to a central midfielder (received behind our midfield unit).
  - A central midfielder running with the ball at the defence.
- Transition to attacking shape when ball is won.
- Cover of all forward moves so recovery is easier when possession is lost again.