

# Team Tactics



# Team Tactics

## Introduction



This manual is designed to introduce you to a wide selection of Fundamental and Advanced Tactical principles for effective team performances such as Systems of Play, Attacking Team Tactics, Defensive Team Tactics, Small Group Tactics, Attacking Restarts and Set-Play's, Defensive Restarts and Set-Play's.





# SYSTEMS OF PLAY

## The 4-4-2 System

The 4-4-2 is one of the most common systems played today. The formation provides eight players behind the ball when defending and four players ready to support the two forwards when attacking. The two wide midfielders are used as wingers, providing automatic width to the midfield shape. The use of four defenders adds more compactness and balance in the back. Either the sweeper or the flat back four system can be utilized.



### Role of the Four Defenders

The back four defenders must play as one unit around the entire defensive half of the field. Most often teams will use one central defender (stopper) as a man for man marker and the second as a sweeper or covering defender. Some teams opt for a "flat back four" with both central defenders sharing the responsibility of marking.

This system is often preferred with the "offside trap" tactics. The advantage of a 4-4-2 system is that it also allows more freedom for the two wide defenders to attack.

### Role of the Two Wide Defenders

- Must play as one unit around the entire defensive half of the field.
- Maintain compactness to support each other and avoid being spread out.
- Must play as one unit up and down the wide channel with the midfield and wide forward.

- Provide instant width when building possession from the back.
- Deepest defender acts as the leader for providing information to the other three defenders.
- Disciplined in maintaining defensive responsibility, even when their team is attacking.
- Ability to defend on a 1 v 1 basis. Knowing when to delay and when to challenge an oncoming opponent.
- Support both the middle and wide midfield players by providing an option of an overlap or a supporting position behind the ball.

### **Role of the Two Central Defenders**

- Must play as one unit around the entire defensive half of the field.
- Maintain compactness to support each other and avoid being spread out.
- Must play as one unit up and down the center channel with the midfield and forwards.
- Communicate well with co-center back, knowing when to mark tight and when to drop deeper into a supporting position.
- Provide central cover when building possession from the back.
- Deepest defender acts as the leader for providing information to the other three defenders.
- Disciplined in maintaining defensive responsibility, even when their team is attacking.
- Ability to defend on a 1 v 1 basis. Knowing when to delay and when to challenge an oncoming opponent.
- Support both the middle and wide midfield players by providing an passing option behind the ball.

### **Role of the Four Midfielders as a Unit**

The four midfielders are the link between offense and defense and must operate from penalty area to penalty area. The wide midfielder must act as a fifth defender when the opponents are attacking on the opposite side of the field. He should occupy the space in the fullback position and add cover whenever possible. The two central midfielders should look to keep their position in the middle of the field.

### **Role of the Two Wide Midfielders**

- Must play as one unit across the middle of the field with the two central midfielders.
- Must play as one unit up and down the field with the wide defender and wide forward.
- Must act as a fifth defender when the opponents are attacking on the opposite side of the field, occupying the space in the fullback position and add cover whenever possible.
- Get into advance positions of the ball whenever their team can play forward.
- Look for blind-sided runs behind the defender when their team is attacking on the opposite side of the field.
- Deliver early crosses to forwards.

Deliver a variety of crosses into the far and near post. Use a variety of crossing techniques such as the bent cross, driven cross and lofted cross.

### **Role of the Two Central Midfielders**

- Must play as one unit across the middle of the field with the two wide midfielders.
- Must play as one unit up and down the field with the defenders and forwards.
- Maintain shape in the middle of the field and not become too isolated from each other.
- Team organizers and pace setters. Increase and lower the team tempo when needed.
- Use of cross over runs to create space for open passes when defenders are looking to play from the back.
- Use of deep probing runs into the attacking third to lose markers while attacking.

- Provide defensive cover for wide midfielders.
- Track opponents attacking midfield runs deep into their own penalty area.
- Short quality passes to forwards feet and long well paced passes expose area behind the opponents' defenders.
- Frequent use of "give and go" passes to link up with each other.
- Frequent use of "give and go" passes to link up with forwards.
- Constantly playing with the head up to scan the field and instantly assess the best forward passing option.

### **Role of the Two Forwards**

The two forwards must play as one unit across the front line constantly being aware of each other's movements. It is important to ensure they do not congest the four midfielders by dropping into deep forward positions. Both players should be continually searching for space to receive a pass, create shooting opportunities and score goals. Runs can be somewhat isolated to the center channel due to the automatic width provided by the two wide midfielders.

- Must play as one unit in the attacking third of the field working in close partnership with a co-striker, developing understanding of when and where to move with the ball, pass, dribble or shoot.
- Must interchange with wide midfielders in flank positions.
- Constantly looking to maintain balance to prevent bunching.
- Constantly looking to exploit space created by other forward.
- Constantly looking to create space for other forward to exploit.
- Create space for players coming from deeper positions.
- Press deep onto opponent's defense to create space for midfield play.
- Showing as a presentable target for short and long-range passes.

## The 3-5-2 System

The **3-5-2 System** is normally opted for when coaches have an abundance of midfield players. It can be used both as an attacking or defensive system. Using this formation teams usually defend and attack in two units, the back three and midfield five when defending, or the midfield five and the two forwards when going for goal.



### Role of the Three Defenders

The back three must be out and out defensive players. There is little freedom to go forward from the back due to the minimum number of defenders. Most often teams will use two of the defenders as man for man markers with the third defender acting as a sweeper or covering player. Team may also opt to play a zonal system where each player is responsible for an area and marks any player within that area. Another possibility is to use the midfield sweeper who sits in front of the defense and cuts out threats early.

- Must play as one unit across the back.
- Use two markers and one sweeping or covering player.
- The sweeper covers the full back and picks up loose balls or attacks opponents who have broken through.
- The sweeper must be able to read the game well, distribute the ball well, play confidently and calmly under pressure and come out of defense with the ball on the break.
- Maintain compactness to support each other and avoid being spread out.
- Deepest defender acts as the leader for providing information to the other two.

### **Role of the Five Midfielders as a Unit**

The five midfielders are the link between offense and defense and must operate from penalty area to penalty area. The wide midfielder must act as a fourth defender when the opponents are attacking on the opposite side of the field. They should occupy the space in the fullback position and add cover whenever possible.

The three central midfielders should look to keep their position in the middle of the field. If both wide midfielders attack and are in advanced positions, one of the midfield players may have to remain in a deep position to stop any swift counter attack if possession is lost.

### **Role of the Two Wide Midfielders**

- Must play as one unit across the middle of the field with the three central midfielders.
- Must play as one unit up and down the field with the wide defender.
- Create width in attack.
- Must act as a fourth defender when the opponents are attacking on the opposite side of the field, occupying the space in the fullback position and add cover whenever possible.
- Get into advance positions of the ball whenever they can play forward. Insurance of having three central defenders should provide encouragement to attack at any and every opportunity.
- Look for blind-sided runs behind the defender when their team is attacking on the opposite side of the field.
- Carry the ball forward and deliver crosses to forwards and midfielders.
- Deliver a variety of crosses into the far and near post.
- Use a variety of crossing techniques such as the bent cross, driven cross and lofted cross.

### **Role of the Three Central Midfielders**

- Must play as one unit across the middle of the field with the two wide midfielders
- Must play as one unit up and down the field with the defenders and forwards.
- Maintain shape in the middle of the field and not become too isolated from each other.
- Team organizers and pace setters. Increase and lower the team tempo when needed.
- Use of cross over runs to create space for open passes when defenders are looking to play from the back. Getting possession of the ball from defense and carrying it forward.
- Use of deep probing runs into the attacking third to lose markers while attacking.
- Provide defensive cover if both wide midfielders attack and are in advanced positions. One midfielder may have to remain in a deep defensive position to stop any swift counter attack if the ball is lost.
- Track opponents attacking midfield runs deep into their own penalty area.
- Short quality passes to forwards feet and long well paced passes expose area behind the opponents' defenders.
- Frequent use of "give and go" passes to link up with each other.
- Frequent use of "give and go" passes to link up with forwards.
- Constantly playing with the head up to scan the field and instantly assess the best forward passing option.

### **Role of the Two Forwards**

The two forwards must play as one unit across the front line constantly being aware of each other's movements. It is important to ensure they do not congest the five midfielders by dropping into deep forward positions. Both players should be continually searching for space to receive a

pass, create shooting opportunities and score goals. Runs can be somewhat isolated to the center channel due to the automatic width provided by the two wide midfielders.

- Must play as one unit in the attacking third of the field working in close partnership with a co-striker, developing understanding of when and where to move with the ball, pass, dribble or shoot.
- Must interchange with wide midfielders in flank positions.
- Constantly looking to maintain balance to prevent bunching.
- Constantly looking to exploit space created by other forward.
- Constantly looking to create space for other forward to exploit.
- Create space for players coming from deeper positions.
- Press deep onto opponents defense to create space for midfield play.
- Showing as a presentable target for short and long range passes.
- Ability to loose a man for man markers in and around the penalty area through intelligent runs.
- Ability to make intelligent runs and decisions on where and when to receive passes into feet and into space.



## The 4-3-3 System

When playing a **4-3-3 System** the team will generally play a narrow game through the middle, although the fullback and wide midfielder man should be encouraged to play wide when the ball is on their side of the field. The two full backs provide automatic width when possession is built from the back. Using this formation teams usually defend and attack in two units, either the back four and midfield three when defending and one forward, or one defender, plus the midfield three and the three forwards when going for goal.



### Role of the Four Defenders

The back four defenders must play as one unit around the entire defensive half of the field. Most often teams will use one central defender (stopper) as a man for man marker and the second as a sweeper or covering defender. Some teams opt for a "flat back four" with both central defenders sharing the responsibility of marking.

This system is often preferred with the "offside trap" tactics. The advantage of a 4-3-3 system is that it also allows more freedom for the two wide defenders to attack.

### Role of the Two Wide Defenders

- Must play as one unit around the entire defensive half of the field.
- Maintain compactness to support each other and avoid being spread out.
- Must play as one unit up and down the wide channel with the midfield and wide forward.
- Provide instant width when building possession from the back.
- Deepest defender acts as the leader for providing information to the other three defenders.

- Disciplined in maintaining defensive responsibility, even when their team is attacking.
- Ability to defend on a 1 v 1 basis. Knowing when to delay and when to challenge an oncoming opponent.
- Support both the middle and wide midfield players by providing an option of an overlap or a supporting position behind the ball.

### Role of the Two Central Defenders

- Must play as one unit around the entire defensive half of the field.
- Maintain compactness to support each other and avoid being spread out.
- Must play as one unit up and down the center channel with the midfield and forwards.
- Communicate well with co-center back, knowing when to mark tight and when to drop deeper into a supporting position.
- Provide central cover when building possession from the back.
- Deepest defender acts as the leader for providing information to the other three defenders.
- Disciplined in maintaining defensive responsibility, even when their team is attacking.
- Ability to defend on a 1 v 1 basis. Knowing when to delay and when to challenge an oncoming opponent.
- Support both the middle and wide midfield players by providing an passing option behind the ball.

### Role of the Three Midfielders

The three midfielders are the link between offense and defense and must operate from penalty area to penalty area. It is important to keep the shape in the midfield because of the minimum numbers. The support play should be more in behind the three forwards rather than runs beyond them.

- Must play as one unit across the middle of the field and interchange positions with each other.
- Understanding of "when" and "where" to use cross-over plays, diagonal runs versus straight runs, playing to feet or space and running with or without the ball.
- Must play as one unit up and down the field with the defenders and forwards.
- Maintain shape in the middle of the field and not become too isolated from each other.
- Team organizers and pace setters. Increase and lower the team tempo when needed.
- Use of cross over runs to create space for open passes when defenders are looking to play from the back. Getting possession of the ball from defense and carrying it forward.
- Use of deep probing runs into the attacking third to loose markers while attacking.
- Provide defensive cover if both wide midfielders attack and are in advanced positions. One midfielder may have to remain in a deep defensive position to stop any swift counter attack if the ball is lost.
- Track opponents attacking midfield runs deep into their own penalty area.
- Short quality passes to forwards feet and long well paced passes expose area behind the opponent's defenders.
- Frequent use of "give and go" passes to link up with each other.
- Frequent use of "give and go" passes to link up with forwards.
- Constantly playing with the head up to scan the field and instantly assess the best forward passing option.

## Role of the Three Forwards

Due to the bonus of having an extra attacking player there is more freedom for the interchanging of positions. The wide forward should exchange runs with the central striker to create space in the flank areas. Moreover, the wide player will have more opportunities to interact with the wide midfielder.

- Must play as one unit in the attacking third of the field.
- Must interchange with wide midfielders in flank positions.
- Constantly looking to maintain balance to prevent bunching.
- Constantly looking to exploit space created by other forward.
- Constantly looking to create space for other forwards to exploit.
- Press deep onto opponent's defense to create space for midfield play.
- Showing as a presentable target for short and long range passes.
- Understanding and appreciation for near and far post runs.
- Holding up the ball under pressure.

## The 3-4-3 System

The **3-4-3 system** of play is an attacking minded formation when in possession of the ball and lends to a high-pressure style of defending without the ball. Using this formation teams can easily attack and defend with a group of seven players, either the back three and midfield four when defending, or the midfield four and the three forwards when going for goal.



### Role of the Three Defenders

The back three must be out and out defensive players. There is little freedom to go forward from the back due to the minimum number of defenders. Most often teams will use two of the defenders as man for man markers with the third defender acting as a sweeper or covering player.

- Must play as one unit across the back.
- Use two markers and one sweeping or covering player.
- Maintain compactness to support each other and avoid being spread out.
- Deepest defender acts as the leader for providing information to the other two.
- Disciplined in maintaining defensive responsibility, even when their team is attacking.

### Role of the Four Midfielders as a Unit

The four midfielders are the link between offense and defense and must operate from penalty area to penalty area. The wide midfielder must act as a fourth defender when the opponents are attacking on the opposite side of the field. He should occupy the space in the fullback position and add cover whenever possible. The two central midfielders should look to keep their position in the middle of the field.



### Role of the Two Wide Midfielders

- Must play as one unit across the middle of the field with the two central midfielders.
- Must play as one unit up and down the field with the wide defender and wide forward.
- Must act as a fourth defender when the opponents are attacking on the opposite side of the field, occupy the space in the fullback position and add cover whenever possible.
- Get into advance positions of the ball whenever their team can play forward.
- Look for blind-sided runs behind the defender when their team is attacking on the opposite side of the field.
- Deliver early crosses to forwards.
- Deliver a variety of crosses into the far and near post.
- Use a variety of crossing techniques such as the bent cross, driven cross and lofted cross.

### Role of the Two Central Midfielders

- Must play as one unit across the middle of the field with the two wide midfielders.
- Must play as one unit up and down the field with the defenders and forwards.
- Maintain shape in the middle of the field and not become too isolated from each other.
- Team organizers and pace setters. Increase and lower the team tempo when needed.
- Use of cross over runs to create space for open passes when defenders are looking to play from the back.
- Use of deep probing runs into the attacking third to lose markers while attacking.
- Provide defensive cover for wide midfielders.
- Track opponents attacking midfield runs deep into their own penalty area.
- Short quality passes to forwards' feet and long well paced passes expose area behind the opponent's defenders.
- Frequent use of "give and go" passes to link up with each other.
- Frequent use of "give and go" passes to link up with forwards.

Constantly playing with the head up to scan the field and instantly assess the best forward passing option.

### Role of the Three Forwards

Due to the bonus of having an extra attacking player there is more freedom for the interchanging of positions. The wide forward should exchange runs with the central striker to create space in the flank areas. Moreover, the wide player will have more opportunities to interact with the wide midfielder.

- Must play as one unit in the attacking third of the field.
- Must interchange with wide midfielders in flank positions.
- Constantly looking to maintain balance to prevent bunching.
- Constantly looking to exploit space created by other forward.
- Constantly looking to create space for other forwards to exploit.
- Press deep onto opponent's defense to create space for midfield play.
- Showing as a presentable target for short and long range passes.
- Understanding and appreciation for near and far post runs.
- Holding up the ball under pressure.

## The 4-5-1 System

The **4-5-1 system** is predominantly a defensive style of play. The nature of the positioning of players makes it a very difficult system to break down, particularly if your opponents are disciplined and well organized. The burden of support in attack from the midfielders is greater due to the lone striker up front. Playing five in the midfield provides instant width in attack and good coverage defensively from flank positions.



### Role of the Four Defenders as a Unit

The back four defenders must play as one unit around the entire defensive half of the field. Most often teams will use one central defender (stopper) as a man for man marker and the second as a sweeper or covering defender. Some teams opt for a "flat back four" with both central defenders sharing the responsibility of marking. This system is often preferred with the "offside trap" tactics.

### Role of the Two Wide Defenders

- Must play as one unit around the entire defensive half of the field.
- Maintain compactness to support each other and avoid being spread out.
- Must play as one unit up and down the wide channel with the midfield and wide forward.
- Provide instant width when building possession from the back.
- Deepest defender acts as the leader for providing information to the other three defenders.
- Disciplined in maintaining defensive responsibility, even when their team is attacking.
- Ability to defend on a 1 v 1 basis. Knowing when to delay and when to challenge an oncoming opponent.
- Support both the middle and wide midfield players by providing an option of an overlap

or a supporting position behind the ball.

### **Role of the Two Central Defenders**

- Must play as one unit around the entire defensive half of the field.
- Maintain compactness to support each other and avoid being spread out.
- Must play as one unit up and down the center channel with the midfield and forwards.
- Communicate well with co-center back, knowing when to mark tight and when to drop deeper into a supporting position.
- Deepest defender acts as the leader for providing information to the other three defenders.
- Disciplined in maintaining defensive responsibility, even when their team is attacking.
- Ability to defend on a 1 v 1 basis. Knowing when to delay and when to challenge an oncoming opponent.
- Support both the middle and wide midfield players by providing a passing option behind the ball.

### **The Role of the Five Midfielders as a Unit**

The five midfielders are the link between offense and defense and must operate from penalty area to penalty area. The wide midfielder must act as a fifth defender when the opponents are attacking on the opposite side of the field. They should occupy the space in the fullback position and add cover whenever possible.

The three central midfielders should look to keep their position in the middle of the field. If both wide midfielders attack and are in advanced positions, one of the midfield players may have to remain in a deep position to stop any swift counter attack if possession is lost.

### **Role of the Two Wide Midfielders**

- Must play as one unit across the middle of the field with the three central midfielders.
- Must play as one unit up and down the field with the wide defender.
- Create width in attack.
- Must act as a fifth defender when the opponents are attacking on the opposite side of the field, occupying the space in the fullback position and add cover whenever possible.
- Get into advanced positions of the ball whenever their team can play forward. Insurance of having three central defenders should provide encouragement to attack at any and every opportunity.
- Look for blind-sided runs behind the defender when their team is attacking on the opposite side of the field.
- Carry the ball forward and deliver crosses to forwards and midfielders.
- Deliver a variety of crosses into the far and near post.
- Use a variety of crossing techniques such as the bent cross, driven and lofted cross.

### **Role of the Three Central Midfielders**

- Must play as one unit across the middle of the field with the two wide midfielders.
- Must play as one unit up and down the field with the defenders and forwards.
- Maintain shape in the middle of the field and not become too isolated from each other.
- Team organizers and pace setters. Increase and lower the team tempo when needed.
- Use of cross over runs to create space for open passes when defenders are looking to play from the back.
- Getting possession of the ball from defense and carrying it forward.
- Use of deep probing runs into the attacking third to lose markers while attacking.

- Provide defensive cover if both wide midfielders attack and are in advanced positions. One midfielder may have to remain in a deep defensive position to stop any swift counter attack if the ball is lost.
- Track opponents' attacking midfield runs deep into their own penalty area.
- Short quality passes to forwards feet and long well paced passes expose area behind the opponents' defenders.
- Frequent use of "give and go" passes to link up with each other.
- Frequent use of "give and go" passes to link up with forwards'.
- Constantly playing with the head up to scan the field and instantly assess the best forward passing option.
- Interchange of players between the midfield and forwards needs to be highly developed.

### Role of the Forward

The forward must play as target player. It is important to ensure not to congest the five midfielders by dropping into deep forward positions. The forward should be continually searching for space to receive a pass, create shooting opportunities and score goals. Runs can be somewhat isolated to the center channel due to the automatic width provided by the two wide midfielders. The forward must be a player who is competent at holding the ball under pressure to provide enough time for support play.

- Must continually be presentable as a moving target in the attacking third of the field.
- Must interchange with wide midfielders in flank positions.
- Constantly looking to exploit space.
- Constantly looking to create space for midfield players to exploit.
- Press deep onto opponent's defense to create space for midfield play.
- Ability to make intelligent runs and decisions on where and when to receive passes into feet and into space.
- Ability to make intelligent runs and judgments on where and when to receive passes in front of the opposing defense and behind the opposing defense.
- Holding up the ball under pressure.



# ATTACKING TEAM TACTICS

**Attacking Principles** - “One touch play is an extremely important attacking tactic as the opposition cannot pressurize”



Attacking tactics are all concerned with creation and exploitation of space by individuals and by the team. They are as follows:

## **Creating Space by spreading out side-to-side.**

A crucial fact in trying to create space both in between and behind defenders, if stretching the opposition is done quickly then they will have problems man marking and covering for each other. If possible, as soon as the ball is won, a team should stretch out side-to-side as quickly as possible, making sure the players can see everything that is happening on the field by their body position, and should try to go forward as quickly as possible having stretched the opposition.

## **Spreading out end-to-end.**

This means that furthest player away from the ball should come towards it, thus creating space behind him to be exploited by other players running off the ball. Overlapping runs create space, both end-to-end and side-to-side. They can take place on the flanks and in central positions.

Every "play" in soccer has a "cue" - the cue in an overlap for a player to go in advance of the ball is (1) is there space to run into? and (2) Can the man on the ball play forward into that space. The same one occurs in central positions, the player on the ball also has the possibility of using the overlapping run as a "dummy" and goes in the opposite direction.

### **One Touch Play.**

One touch play is an extremely important attacking tactic as the opposition cannot pressurize you if this occurs. If one touch play is to be effective then an excellent understanding of support on and off the ball is needed. Defenders react to movement of players and quick one touch play which obviously requires good movement unhinges them in their positions, both in zone defense and obviously in man-for-man marking.

### **Changing the direction of play.**

Can be achieved with long diagonal passes from flank-to-flank, with crossover runs which have the purpose of drawing defenders together to create space either flank. Reverse passing - a skill that involves running with the ball in one direction, and passing it the opposite direction should also be used.

### **Dribbling.**

Dribbling is the most exciting attacking tactic. When a crowd sees a good dribbler it excites them. A player who can take on and beat others or draw defenders to him creates space if the ball is delivered at the right time for his teammates to exploit. It also creates an advantage to his team in terms of numbers once he beats and passes a defender.

### **Wall Pass.**

Giving the ball to a teammate who plays it back to you one-touch to enable you to go forward. The "cue" to tell the receiver that the pass is "on" is a fast ball played in which tells the receiver there is space behind him which can be exploited.

### **Third Man Running.**

Third man running is a tactic which best describes pass and move football. As the description of the tactic implies, it involves three players - a passer, a receiver and a runner. Again, to be effective, there must be space for the runner to move in to. The ball is played up to a receiver, laid off at an angle to the passer and played one touch into the path of the runner.

# **Attacking Width** - Good, wide players who have pace and who can dribble are invaluable to a team.

Obviously since defenders wish to deny the opposition space and attackers wish to exploit space, then the principle of width is used. Width needs to be analyzed as being important in the defensive third of the field, midfield third and the attacking third.



## **Defensive Width**

When the goalkeeper has received the ball it is vital that the two full backs quickly move out wide to the touchlines and up. The center backs can go to each corner of the penalty area so that the opposition forwards cannot cover the back 4 (or back 5 if you include the goalkeeper). We should, therefore, be able to play out from the back to arrive at the halfway line uncontested.

## **Midfield Width**

A ploy, which can be used, is to draw players on to one side of the field and then quickly move the ball to the opposite side, hoping to gain a quick numerical advantage.

## Attacking Width

Good, wide players who have pace and who can dribble are invaluable to a team. A team with good players in wide positions will tactically seek to involve them in 1-1 situations, knowing that, if their player is successful, space will be available behind the fullback to exploit, and either be used to shoot for goal, or be used for a cross into the danger area. Width is also the space, which exists between defenders, and if the ball can be passed between defenders to a receiver then a dangerous situation exists for the defending team.

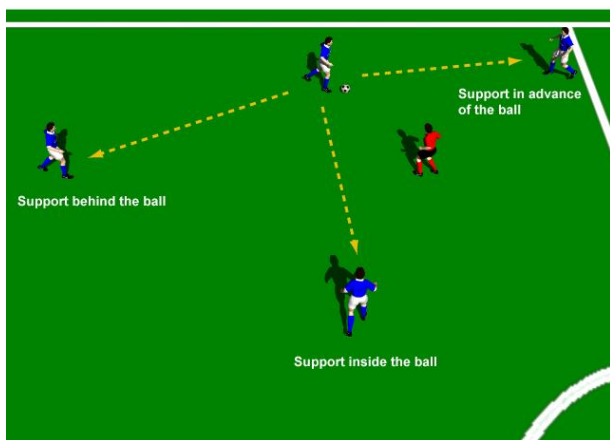
Players must always be aware and alert enough to use and exploit width in all the relevant thirds of the field, especially in today's game where the players are very fit and can travel from penalty area to penalty area quickly, sealing off space in the attacking third of the field.

## Attacking with Depth - Two factors that matter most of all, are angle and distance.

It is stated that in most games the ball is out of play or at rest for around 30 minutes. In an even game each side has an average of 30 minutes ball possession. The rest of the time you are either trying to win the ball back from opponents or trying to support and retain possession of the ball to attack. The more we have the ball, the better chance we have of winning the game.

It is a fact that when attacking defenders will generally outnumber you. Players must appreciate it is a vital quality to understand **How**, **Where** and **When** to support the man on the ball and the only two factors that matter all over the field are **Angle** and **Distance**.

With an increase in the pace of the game and the physical demands made on players, the ability of one team to control the ball becomes a major factor and can be looked at in different ways. With good possession we dictate how much running our team and individuals do.



Good possession means having players on our team to pass to. We always need:

1. A man behind the man on the ball.
2. A man "inside".
3. A man in front.

We have three passing options, which equal good possession of the ball. Angles of support vary according to the position of opponents; distances of support vary according to which third of the field we are in. In the back third we will need to be closer.

The man on the ball has two possibilities if he can play forward:

1. To a player's feet supporting in front of the ball or
2. Into space behind defenders.



Players, therefore, need to know when to go in advance of the ball when support is already there, or when the player with the ball can pass the ball forward.

Questions our team has to determine are, do we attack quickly on the break (counter attack) or build up more slowly and have a breather after being under pressure? In the latter case our strikers may have been worked very hard over a period of a few minutes, so we have to keep the ball to give them a breather.

Players obviously must master the techniques fundamental to good possession football, namely passing techniques over long and short distances, an ability to swerve and chip the ball, correct weighting and timing of passes, one and two touch play. Good ball control and the ability to see the pass and touch before the ball comes, to know how to create space as an individual and as a team.

To achieve good support to attack all over the field needs the combination of all the above mentioned techniques, good understanding of the principles of attack e.g.: width and mobility especially, and the greatest understanding of the angles and distances you must be from the ball in the relevant third of the field. The importance of these aspects cannot be overstated in the modern game, and if employed with flair and imagination, good supporting attacking play excites the whole crowd.

## **Playing Direct – It is a fact that 85% of goals are scored from 5 passes or less.**



Tactics alone will not win soccer matches. Teams who wish to be successful must possess individuals with good technique and understanding of the principles of play. When playing direct, meaning as few passes as possible to get into the opponents defensive third and produce a strike on goal, quality long range passing is crucial. It is a fact that 85% of goals come from 5 passes or less (Charles Hughes study 1990).

1. Direct play involves getting as many entries into your attacking third as possible. Sometimes even playing for opposition throw-ins to lock them into a quarter of the field.
2. Having got into the attacking third, try to get your team to retain a good shape, close together, compact.
3. We must get more strikes on goal, get more set plays than our opponents, and deliver more passes into the danger area. If we win the ball at the edge of our attacking midfield third the odds are that we can produce a strike on goal with five passes or less.

## **Setting Up Play - Players must learn to accept balls with their backs to goal or on the half-turn.**



A very important part of attacking play is the ability to "set up" play. Setting up play means the development of a move with particular techniques, such as turning, spinning and combining quickly on the ball, where the team will be able to create a position to penetrate from.

Players must learn to accept balls with their backs to goal or on the half-turn. These particular skills are vital in setting up play, as it helps to combat tight marking and high pressure by defenders.

Players need to get into a half turned position so that they can see the defender behind them and the position that he takes up to defend the particular ball that is played in. He will be able to see if he can turn, or play the ball off first time. Receiving on the half-turn therefore gives the player options.

To summarize we need to develop techniques which enable players to set up and shoot, set up and cross, set up through inter-passing to cross or shoot, set up to cross over, set up to spin and pass or shoot.

## **Beating the Offside Trap – Teams need to be drilled in the art of breaking down an offside trap.**

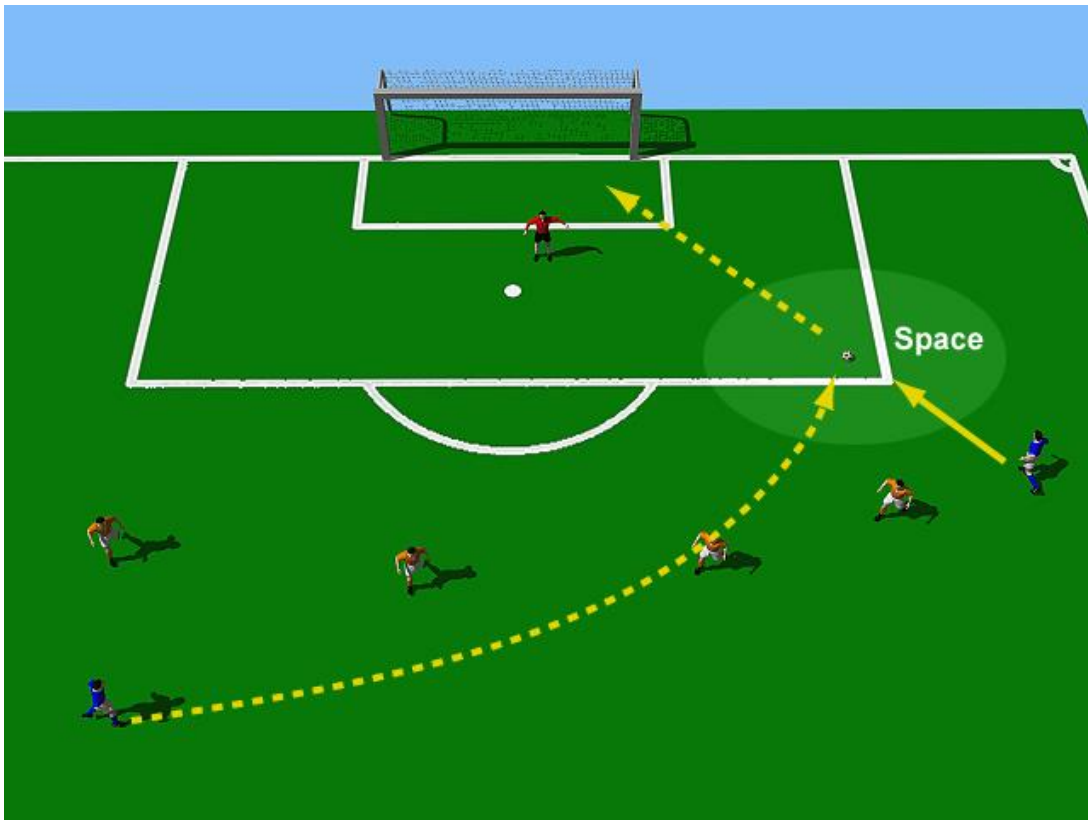
There are two basic approaches to beating the offside trap. The first approach is to dribble the ball through the defense, and the second approach is to play the ball in behind the defense into the space, which they have left behind on moving out. The ball played in is generally for a runner from deep positions, either from the flank or a central position.

Today the game is played at a very fast pace so a team needs to practice and be drilled in the art of breaking down an offside trap. Only players who can think and act quickly in combination with their colleagues will be able to execute the correct technique on demand.

An important fact to remember in forcing a team to adjust its tactics is, if the offside trap is breached easily, the defense will be forced to readjust and play more "off the cuff" soccer, which will be to the opposition's advantage.



**Dribbling through the defense:** Midfield players in particular should look for gaps between the opponents defense when they play the offside trap.



**Playing a diagonal ball behind the defense:** Teams should look to capitalize on the space behind their opponents defense as they play the offside trap. Wide midfield players can use blind sided runs to exploit the space and receive the ball behind the defense.



# Building from the Defensive Third

This section will prove you with alternative passing options when playing from the defensive third of the field. Below are a variety of options for wide and central defenders.

## Passing Option (1) for the Wide Defender



## Coaching Points

As the right full back receives the ball from the goalkeeper, the other defenders move across the field to maintain balance and defensive support.

The wide midfielder (# 7) moves away from the ball and checks back to receive the ball wide. (# 2) right fullback, passes the ball to feet then supports (# 7).

## Passing Option (2) for the Wide Defender



## Coaching Points

If (# 7) wide midfielder is facing (# 2) right fullback, then (# 2) provides support in a deep position behind the ball. If the wide midfielder (# 7) is able to turn with the ball and move inside, (# 2) provides support by means of an overlapping run.

A good indicator to gauge where to support is by watching the midfielders head. If the wide midfielder have their head down or facing the fullback, the fullback should hold in a deep supporting position behind the ball. If the wide midfielder has turned and has their head up scanning the field, then the fullback should look for the overlapping run and support in advance of the ball.

### Passing Option (3) for the Wide Defender



### Coaching Points

The nearest central midfielder (#8) moves away from the ball and checks back to take the pass, preparing to hold or turn with the ball.

### Passing Option (4) for the Wide Defender



### Coaching Points

Near side forward (# 9) moves across the field and then attacks the available space. The wide defender (#2) plays an in-swinging passing down the flank to meet the forwards run.

## Passing Option (5) for the Wide Defender



### Coaching Points

If the near-sided forward (# 9) is marked the forward can still make the same run across the field and then back towards (# 2) to receive the pass into feet.



## Passing Option (6) for the Wide Defender



### Coaching Points

The near-sided forward (#9) shows for the ball to feet, the far sided forward (#10) exploits the space created for a pass over the top into space. The pass from the wide defender (#2) should be an in-swinging pass.

Timing is crucial for the delivery of the space. The sequence should be (1) space created by the first forward (2) ball delivered by the fullback (3) run into space from the second forward. If the second forward runs too early they will kill the space created by the first forward.

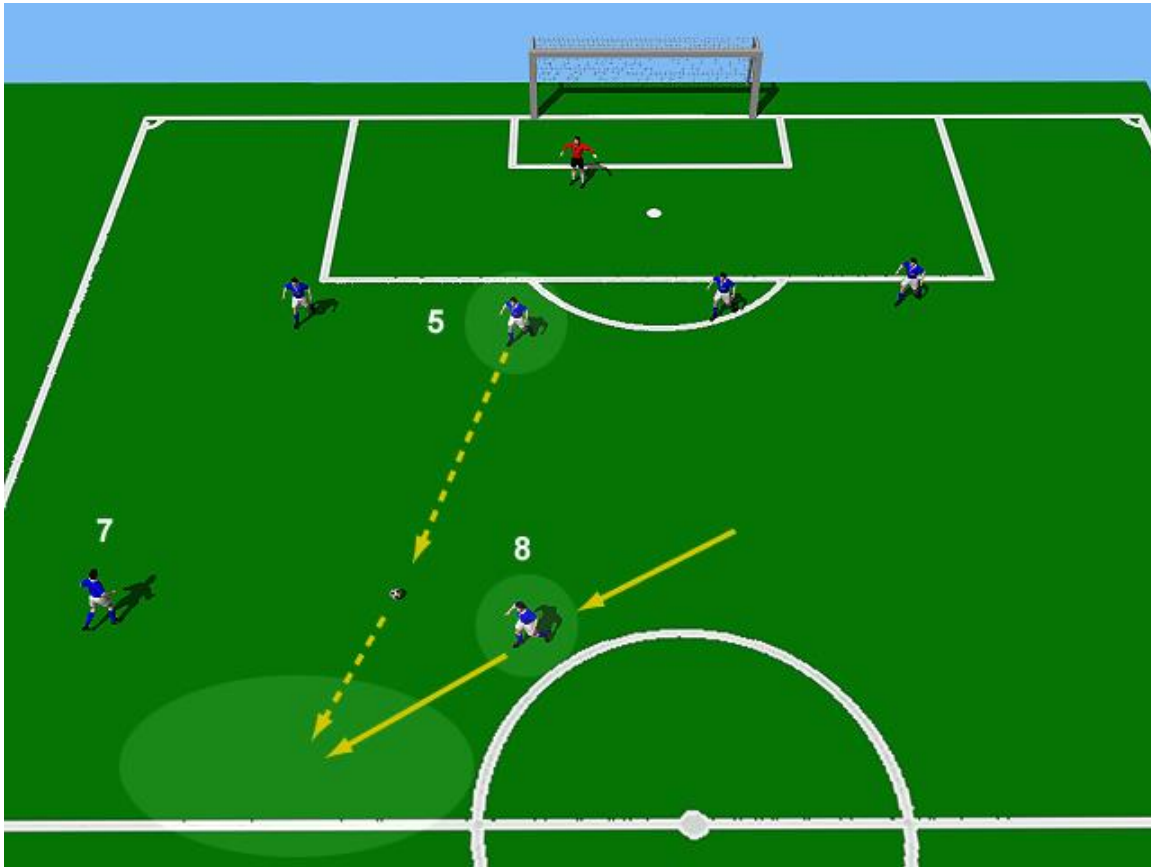
## Passing Options (1) for the Central Defender



## Coaching Points

Based on the central defender receiving possession of the ball, the options will be the same for the other central defender. The wide midfielder (# 7) takes the marker away from the ball and checks back to receive the pass to feet from (#5) central defender, enabling the (# 2) right full back to support or overlap.

## Passing Options (2) for the Central Defender



### Coaching Points

The wide midfielder (# 7) makes a decoy run for a pass to feet. The central defender (#5) makes a long pass into the space created behind the right midfielder (# 7) for an inside to outside diagonal run by the central midfielder (# 8).

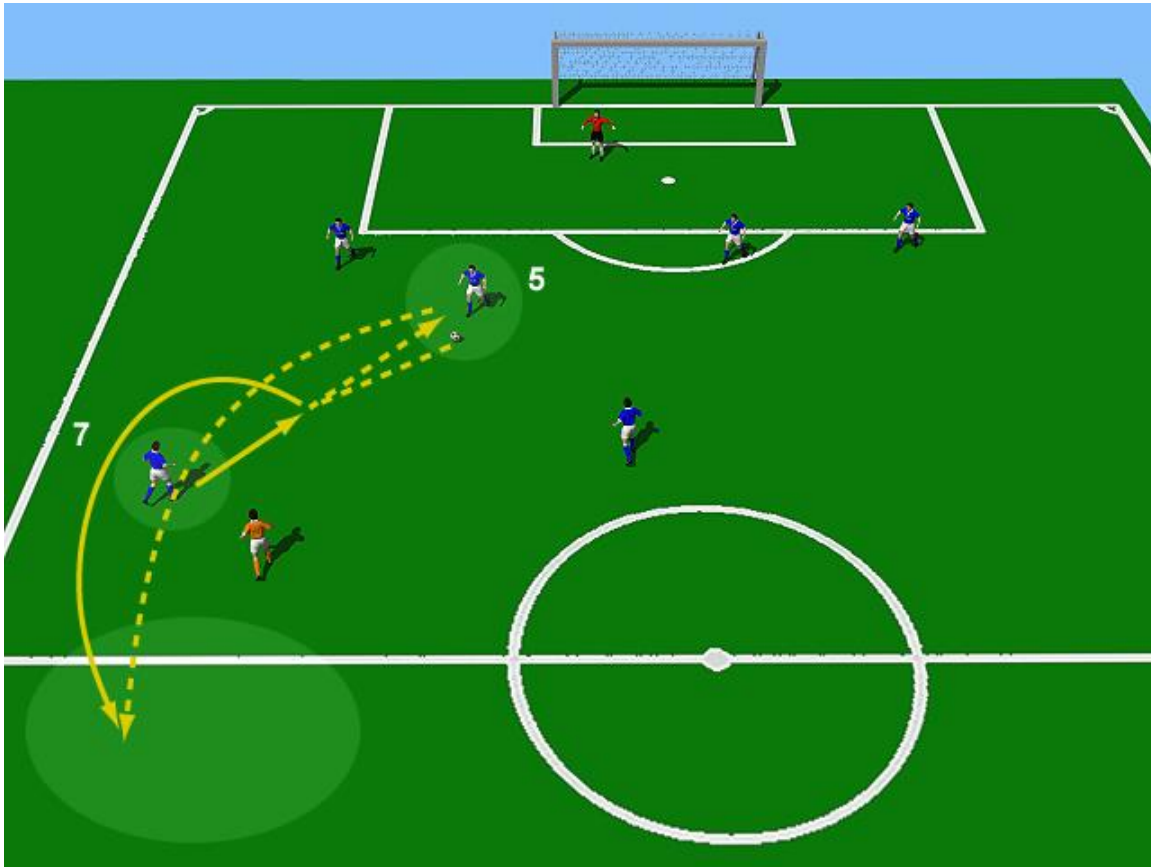
### Passing Options (3) for the Central Defender



### Coaching Points

The central midfielder (# 8) takes the defender away from the ball and then checks back to receive a pass to feet, then either holds or turns with the ball.

## Passing Options (4) for the Central Defender



### Coaching Points

If the wide midfielder (# 7) is marked tight, the player may be able to come short for the ball then turn and exploit the space created by the initial run to the ball. The central defender plays the second pass over the top and into space.



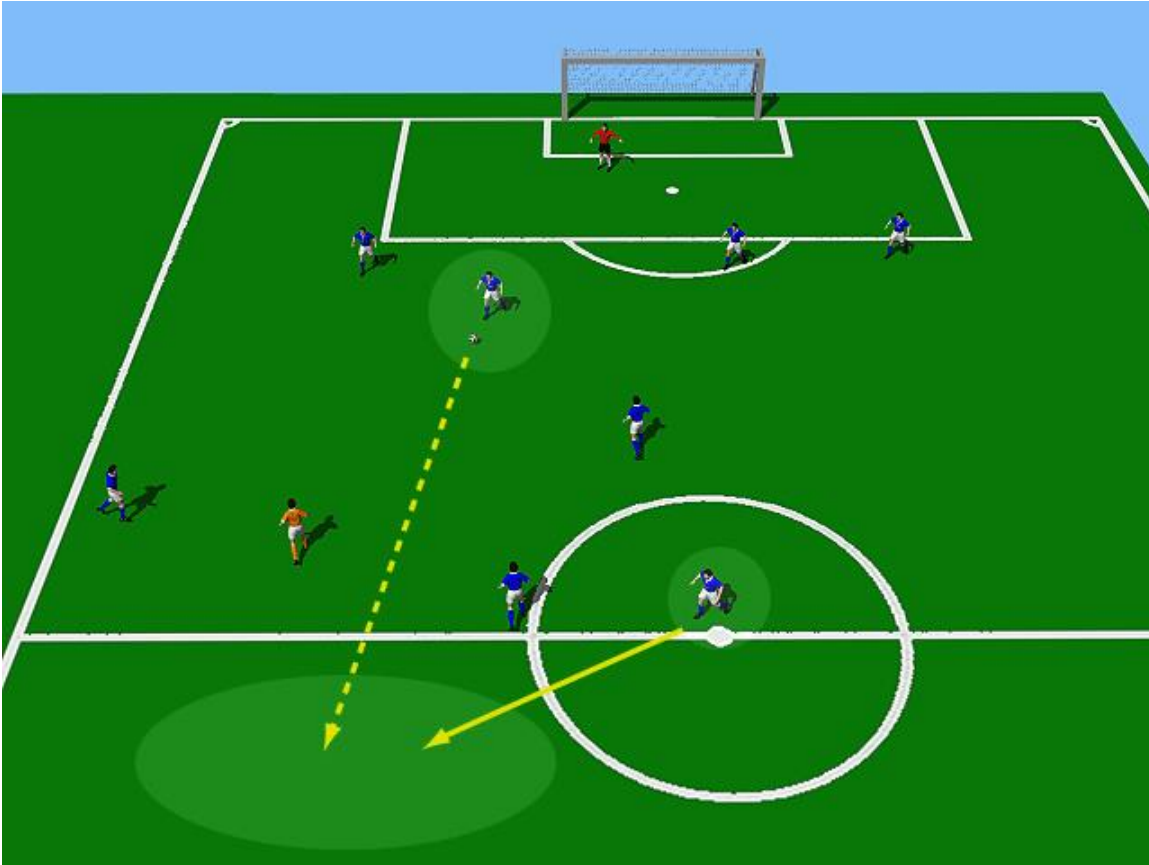
## Passing Options (5) for the Central Defender



## Coaching Points

Near forward (# 9) takes the defender away from the ball and checks back to take the pass into feet.

## Passing Options (6) for the Central Defender



### Coaching Points

The near forward (# 9) creates space behind by inviting a pass into feet. At the same time the second forward (#10) exploits the space created by the run of (# 9). Forward (#9) should make at an angle to create a passing lane on the ground for the central defender. If he makes a run directly towards the central defender, he will close off the ground passing channel and an aerial pass will be the only option.

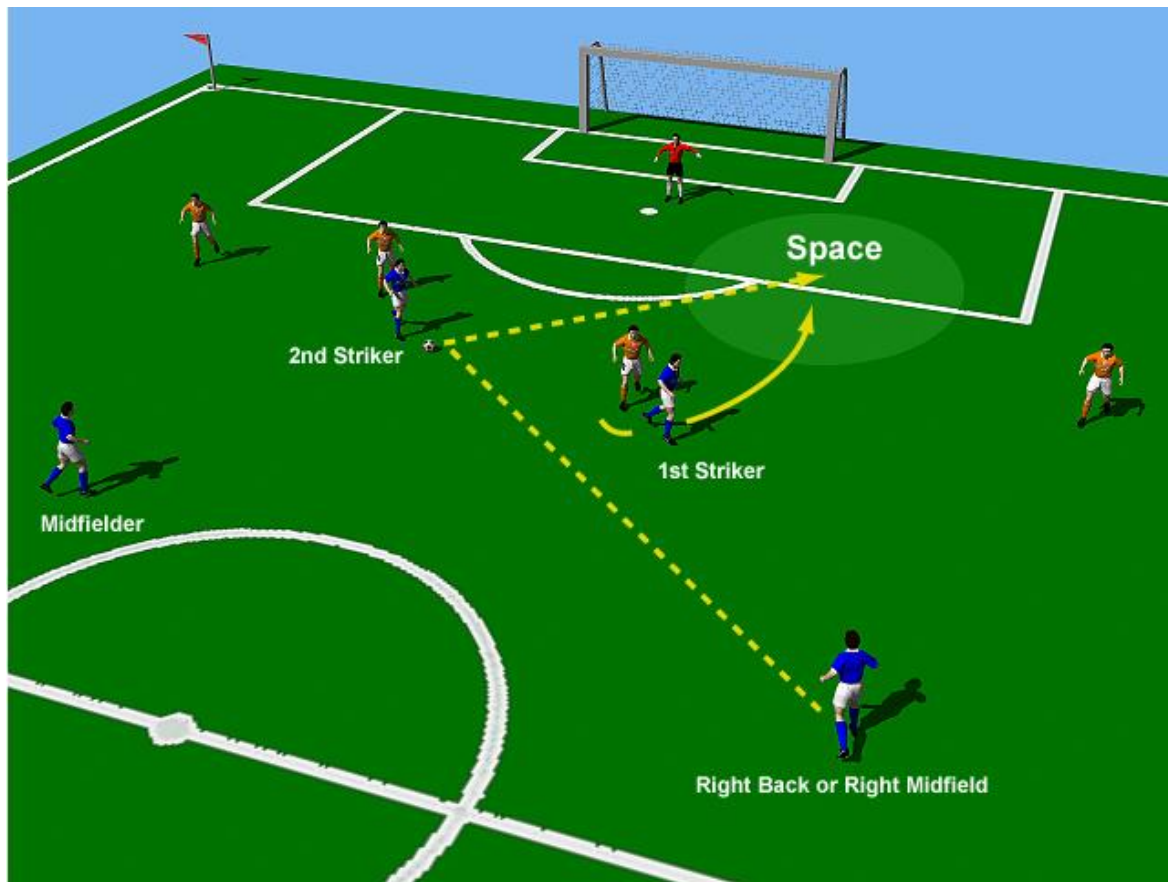
## Attacking Runs 1



## Main Coaching Points

- Both Forwards must push up against back four when team brings the ball up the field.
- 1<sup>st</sup> Forward makes run towards ball, receives the pass and set's up supporting player with a "one touch" pass whenever possible.
- As ball is being passed back the 2<sup>nd</sup> striker makes his run across defender and looks for ball in behind the back four.
- Supporting player delivers a quality pass for 2<sup>nd</sup> Forward behind the back four. Does it need to be ground or aerial? Straight or in swinger (bending in)?
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Forward must look for "cue" when ball is laid back start run. Timing is crucial. If he makes the run too early he runs the danger of being caught in an offside position, attracting the attention of the defender or killing the space before the ball is delivered.
- Players must develop a forward THINKING, forward RUNNING and forward PASSING attitude.
- Remember - Space created, ball delivered, then the run.

## Attacking Runs 2



## Main Coaching Points

- Both Forwards push up against back four when the team brings the ball up the field.
- 1<sup>st</sup> Striker makes run towards ball to create space behind him. He turns and explodes quickly into to created space behind him.
- Supporting player delivers a quality pass for 2<sup>nd</sup> Striker to pass “one touch” into the path of the 1<sup>st</sup> Striker.
- Timing is crucial.
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Striker also attacks the box after passing the ball.
- Remember - Space created, ball delivered, then the run.

## Attacking Runs 3



## Main Coaching Points

- Both Forwards push up against back four when the team brings the ball up the field.
- 1<sup>st</sup> Forward makes run towards ball, receives the pass from the right back and plays a “one touch” pass behind the fullback and into space. After passing the ball the 1<sup>st</sup> Striker turns and attacks the back post area of the box.
- The wide midfielder attacks the space behind the fullback and crosses the ball or attacks the goal.
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Striker looks to attack the front post area of the box.
- Right back must support wide midfielder and be the “release valve” if he is under pressure.
- Timing is crucial.
- Remember - Space created, ball delivered, then the run.



## Attacking Runs 4



## Main Coaching Points

- Both Forwards push up against back four when the team brings the ball up the field.
- Wide midfielder creates space and opens up a passing channel by taking his marker inside the field. He times his run the attack the back post.
- Right back plays an “in-swinging” pass down the wide channel for the 1<sup>st</sup> Striker to run onto. Ball must be “curled” into the path of goal.
- 1<sup>st</sup> Forward makes run across the defender and into space in the wide channel. He can either cross the ball, shoot or lay ball back to right back if he is under pressure.
- Right back must support wide midfielder and be the “release valve” if he is under pressure.
- Timing is crucial.
- Remember - Space created, ball delivered, then the run.

# Facts about the Game



- 1 Each team has an average 240 possessions per game.
- 2 2/3 (66%) of the game is 'O' passes?
- 3 Each match on average lasts around 55-60 minutes of playing time.
- 4 There are approximately 110 set piece situations per game.
- 5 On average, a stoppage occurs every 80 seconds for a set-piece situation.
- 6 On average, a player has possession for around 2 ½ minutes per game.
- 7 Long ball through the middle is 80% ineffective.
- 8 75% of all goals arise from
  - 1) Set pieces.
  - 2) Crosses.
  - 3) Regained possessions in attacking 1/3
- 9 60% + of all goals come from moves commencing in A 1/3.
- 10 An average of 6.5 reaches is needed to produce 1 shot.
- 11 On average a team needs 9 shots to score 1 goal.
- 12 58% of set pieces are created by dribbling past opponents.
- 13 A gully pass/channel pass into A 1/3 has a 50% possession success.
- 14 "Throughs" produce 20% of goals only.
- 15 30% of all goals come from 'O' pass moves.
- 16 20% of all goals come from '1' pass moves.
- 17 18% of all goals come from '2' pass moves.
- 18 13% of all goals come from '3' pass moves.
- 19 8% of all goals come from '4' pass moves.
- 20 80% of all goals come from '3' passes or less.
- 21 90% of all goals come from '4' passes or less.
- 22 An average of 10 regains in the score box produces 1 goal.
- 23 Passing and controlling the ball are the most used skills in the game.

Copyright, TheICA.com All Rights Reserved

# Facts about the Goalscoring



- 1 60% of all goals are scored from within 12 yards. Of goals (74% 1<sup>st</sup> time strikes)
- 2 94% of all goals are scored from within 25 yes. Of goal.80% of all shots at goal come from moves of 4 or less passes.
- 3 On average it takes 9 strikes to score a goal.
- 4 50% of strikes will be off target.
- 5 75% of all headed goals results from crosses – 21% of all goals are headers.
- 6 10 shots on target will ensure a game is not LOST.
- 7 50% + of all goals (65%/71%) come from 1<sup>st</sup> time strikes.
- 8 40% of goals come from opposition headed clearances.
- 9 50% of goal scoring “assists” are 1<sup>st</sup> time.
- 10 70% of all goals against come from “own-half breakdown”.
- 11 22% of goals are scored at the far post.
- 12 1 in 5 goals are headed.
- 13 16% of goals scored are right foot volleys.
- 14 1 v 1 situations on the goalkeeper produce 5% of all goals scored.
- 15 Finishing from outside the box
  - a). Volleys 11%
  - b). Ground Shots 82%
  - c). Right Foot 70%
  - d). Left Foot 30%
- 16 50% of shots from INSIDE the penalty area are on target.
- 17 35% of shots from OUTSIDE the penalty area are on target.
- 18 Of all shots on target: 28% of all shots from inside the area will be a goal.
- 19 9% of all shots from outside the area will be a goal.
- 20 75% of all goals are scored using 1 touch.



# Facts about Crosses



- 1 33% + of all goals originate from a cross.
- 2 65-70% of all goals are scored in the HOT SPOT.
- 3 82% of all goals from crosses are scored in the 2<sup>nd</sup> 6 yard box.
- 4 Crosses produce 80% of all “hot-spot” possessions.
- 5 To score, from crosses it needs 35 hot spots per game – the aim should be 45 crosses per game.
- 6 Fast, low crosses produce more goals than any other crosses – 26% of goals.
- 7 75% of crosses, if avoiding the goalkeeper will be successful in terms of:
  - a.goals
  - b.shots
  - c.RP’s A 1/3
  - d.Set-pieces
- 8 6/8 crosses will be beneficial for us – strikes, regains, set pieces etc.
- 9 92% of all the goals scored from crosses, results from moves of 5 passes or less.
- 10 On average, 5 crosses are needed to produce a shot/strike at goal.
- 11 On average, 1 goal results from 27 crosses.
- 12 If attackers have the first touch on the ball, 1 goal will result from every 8 crosses – on average and 1 goal in 5 if a striker can ‘strike’ at goal from the cross.
- 13 37/38 goals in World Cup 1986 were scored from crosses delivered BEHIND the defense.
- 14 64% of all goals from crosses are ‘headed’.
- 15 65% of headers from crosses are below head height.
- 16 22% of goals from crosses are scored at the far-post area.
- 17 Approximately 57% of goals are scored from right-sided crosses, 4% - left.
- 18 80% of goals from crosses are delivered either 5 yards. Inside or outside the penalty box sideline.
- 19 94% of goals from crosses are delivered with the foot nearest the touchline.
- 20 Crosses delivered 1 touch produce 50% of all goals from crosses.

Copyright, TheICA.com All Rights Reserve

# DEFENSIVE TEAM TACTICS

**Defensive Team Tactics** - It is the psychologically tougher team in tight matches, which gets the result.



All defenders should consider their roles with the following in order of priorities:

## **Intercept**

- 👁️ Read the game in order to anticipate the intended pass.
- 👁️ Position yourself in order to win the ball. Be well balanced to move quickly, keep low and disguise your intentions and deceive the man with the ball? Judge the speed of the pass.
- 👁️ Decision as to what to do having made the interception, first time clearance? Hold the ball? What kind of pass? Where to release the ball? How to deliver it? When to deliver it?

## **Pressure**

- 👁️ Stop him turning.

## **Jockey**

- 👁️ Get his head down.
- 👁️ Position yourself between the ball and the goal - 2 yards away.
- 👁️ Stop the ball being played past you.
- 👁️ Be close enough to stop any shot.
- 👁️ Tackle if you are able to win the ball.

Keep on your toes, sideways movements when close to the ball. If you must give space, where will you force the player? - Away from goal if possible - can you direct him to where your teammates are?

### **Balance/Cover**

- 👤 Position to cover any colleague.
- 👤 Assess the direction of the next pass.
- 👤 Move in to pressure if teammate beaten.
- 👤 When to mark men, when to cover space?
- 👤 Communicate instructions to man in front. Tell him inside or outside.

### **Marking especially from crosses.**

Be aware of man and ball; get your shoulder in front. Make sure you are marking in normal play on the ball side, keep your feet moving. When moving and adjusting your position move your head first as it is the heaviest part of your body. The first yard is vital. Be aware of all movements to the side and behind and in front.

**Communicate - Know your role when the opposition has the ball.**

### **Recovery Runs**

Know how to recover when the ball is played past you e.g. lines of recovery flanks and middle of the field. Do not recover too far. Recover to where you can put pressure on the ball, cover teammates or cover space.

### **Defending in and around the Penalty Area**

Be first to the ball, clear high, wide and long if possible. This gives us time to adjust our position. **Communicate; Be mentally strong.**

It is the psychologically tougher team in tight matches, which gets the result.  
Here is an interesting exercise:

Each player has to list two positive facts about every team member. In this way we all develop a positive outlook with and for each other on a united team front.

Don't forget when you lose the ball you all defend and generally it starts with the front players.

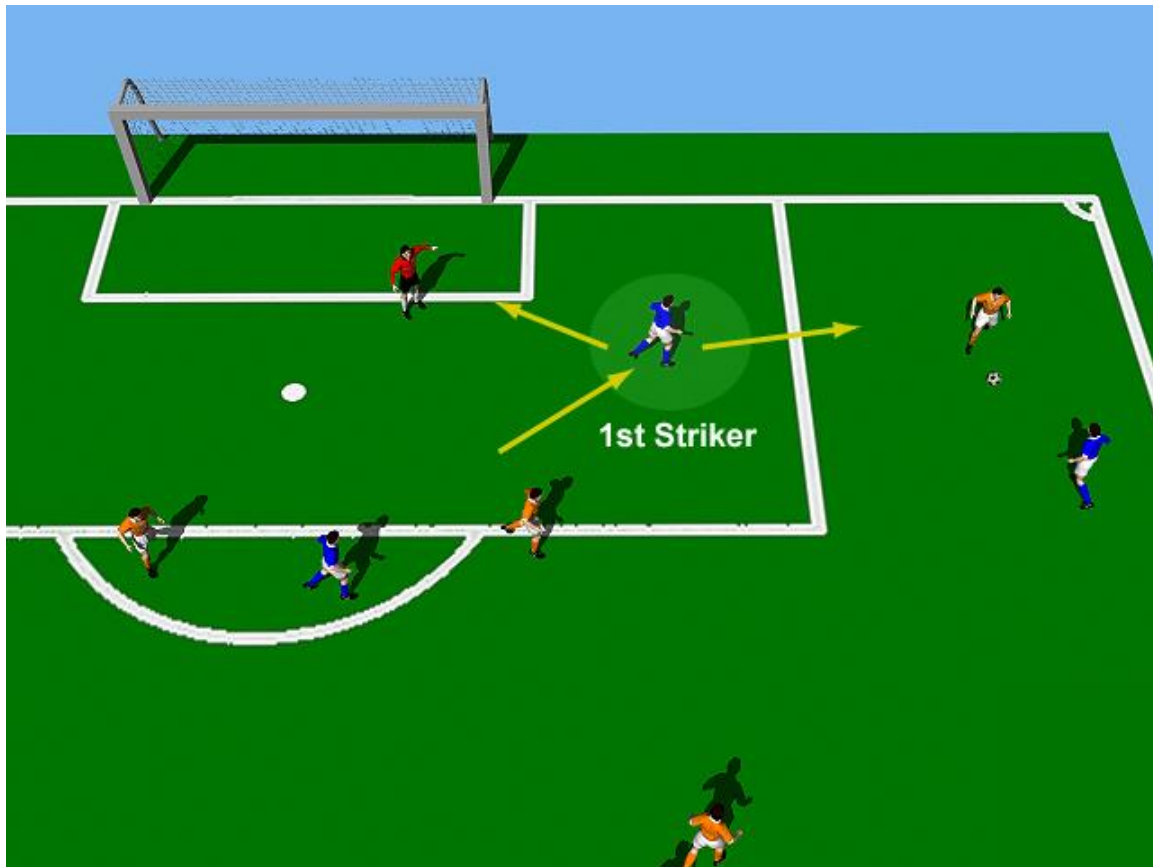


# **High Pressure Defending** - Players must work hard to reduce the space and time their opponents have on the ball and make play as predictable as possible.

High Pressure defending tactics are used to win the ball back as close to the opponent's goal as possible. Every player must be committed to defending and have a high work rate. Players must work hard to reduce the space and time their opponents have on the ball and make play as predictable as possible.

This example is based on when the opposing goalkeeper receives possession of the ball.





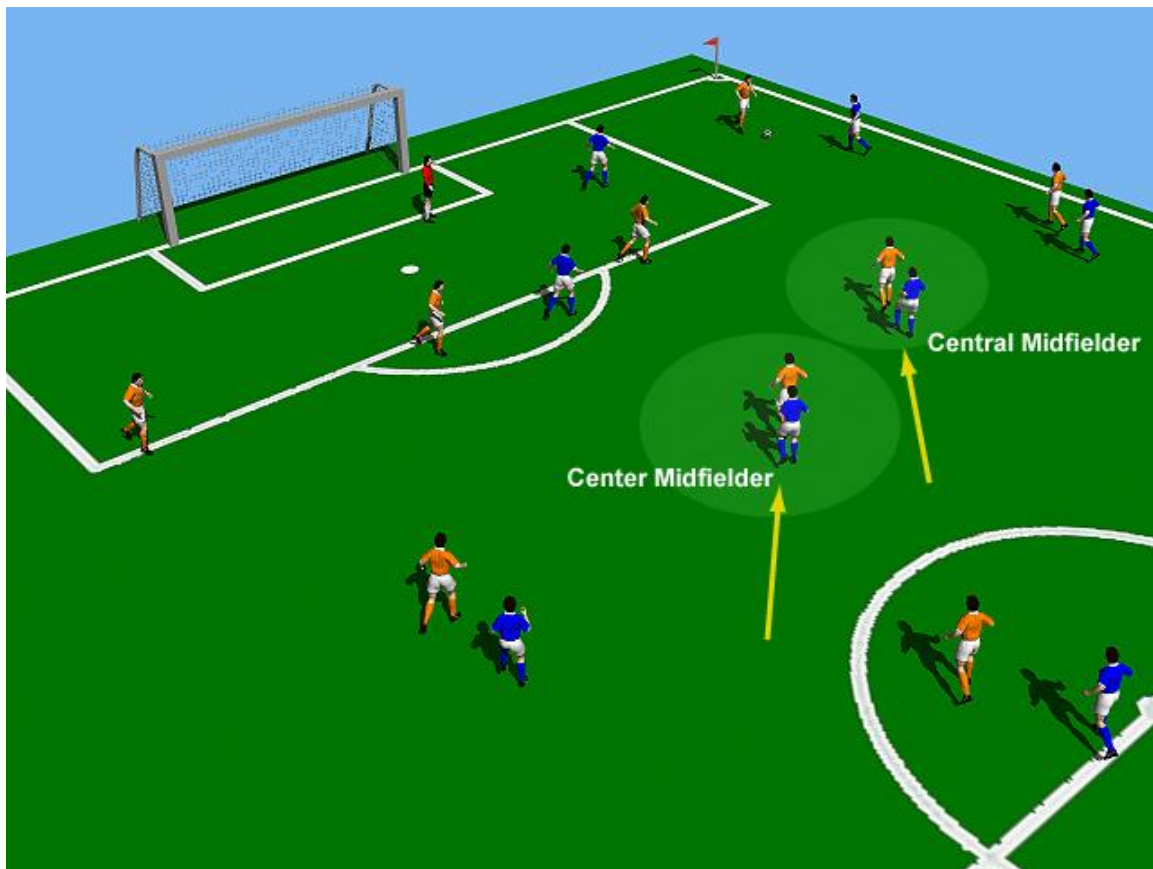
- Must drop off to encourage the goalkeeper to play the ball to the fullback.
- Runs must be timed to start as soon as the ball leaves the goalkeepers glove.
- The run must be fast, aggressive and arced to discourage any back pass to the goalkeeper.
- Be alert for any bad control by the fullback.



- Must split the stopper and the sweeper back until one makes a move for a pass.
- If a player is looking for the ball inside, mark tight to discourage the pass.
- Must chase any ball that is played square into the center.



- Must be alert the moment the goalkeeper has the ball. Don't close down too early; this will discourage the goalkeeper from distributing the ball to the fullback.
- Make an "arced" run to discourage the fullback from playing down the sideline.
- Must force the fullback into a pressure situation and do not dive into tackles.
- Try to force fullback to play square passes inside.



- Must push onto central mid-field players and get "touch" tight.
- Keep opponents mid-field facing their goal.
- Must follow and track down runners.



- Must push onto central mid-field player and get "touch" tight.
- Must organize and add compactness.
- Keep opponents mid-field facing their goal.
- Must follow and track down runners.





- Must mark left sided mid-fielder on the inside, shoulder to shoulder, (not from behind).
- He is responsible for any pass played over the top or dropped in front of the mid-fielder.



- Must push onto forward and be prepared to compete for high lofted passes.



- Accept responsibility for any lofted passes made over the fullback's head.



- Must move into a central position and be available to assist the stopper or central mid-fielders.

# **Low Pressure Defending** - How players defend as individuals is important, but how they defend collectively as a team is vital.

Low pressure defending may best be described as a retreating defense, which moves back towards its own goal in the face of an attack. By retreating slowly one or two players can delay their opponent's progress to an extent, which allows time for more players to reform, and re-align in their defensive positions. It is a very good way of employing the first principle of defense, which is delay.



How players defend as individuals is important, but how they defend collectively as a team is vital. The team must realize the importance of being compact, and not allowing spaces to emerge between and behind players.

Vital to compactness as a team is the principle of being able to recover correctly. Forwards especially are important in this respect as it is a fact that they will often be responsible for losing possession. Every player, immediately the ball is lost, must think in terms of recovery ball-side to retain our compactness as a team. The opposite also occurs when we have good possession, it is then that the back and midfield players also move up to retain our compact shape, so if the ball is lost, vast spaces do not occur.

The goalkeeper must also be aware of moving up to stay in touch with his back players and support them.

Players must also be aware of "trapping" the opposition in a section of the field e.g. flank position so that we now move across the field to create a number advantage.

Delaying opponents, without charging in to tackle, is the defensive skill of jockeying, waiting until the time is right to tackle or force him into a meaningless pass. Jockeying in low pressure defending is a defensive skill that each member of the team must possess for the tactic to work well.

A further development of retreating players is for the defense to retreat to the edge of the penalty area, when opponents are building an attack, thus losing ground in midfield. If the ball can be won in midfield then the retreating stops.

To summarize, even the most attack-conscious team finds it necessary to retreat in certain situations and by employing patience, good talking and jockeying a defensive situation can easily be transformed into a strong counter attack.



## The Offside Trap – Don't push out if the player on the ball has their head up.

Many successful teams have utilized the offside trap over the years. In many cases the coach has not labeled them as such, he merely states that we are going to get our back line up field and hold it up there "high" for as long as possible, thus creating compactness in our team, and at the same time restricting the amount of space that the opposition has to play in.



They are effectively leaving a large area of space behind them, but are confident enough in their play to ensure they will not be caught out, as the whole team is drilled in what to do at any given time in a particular part of the field, in relation to where the ball is.

Remember the law itself "A player is offside if he is nearer his opponents goal line than the ball, at the moment the ball is played", unless:

- (a) He is in his own half of the field.
- (b) There are two of his opponents nearer to their own goal line than he is.
- "b" is the crucial part, in that if the player is level he is not offside.
- (c) The ball is last touched by an opponent.

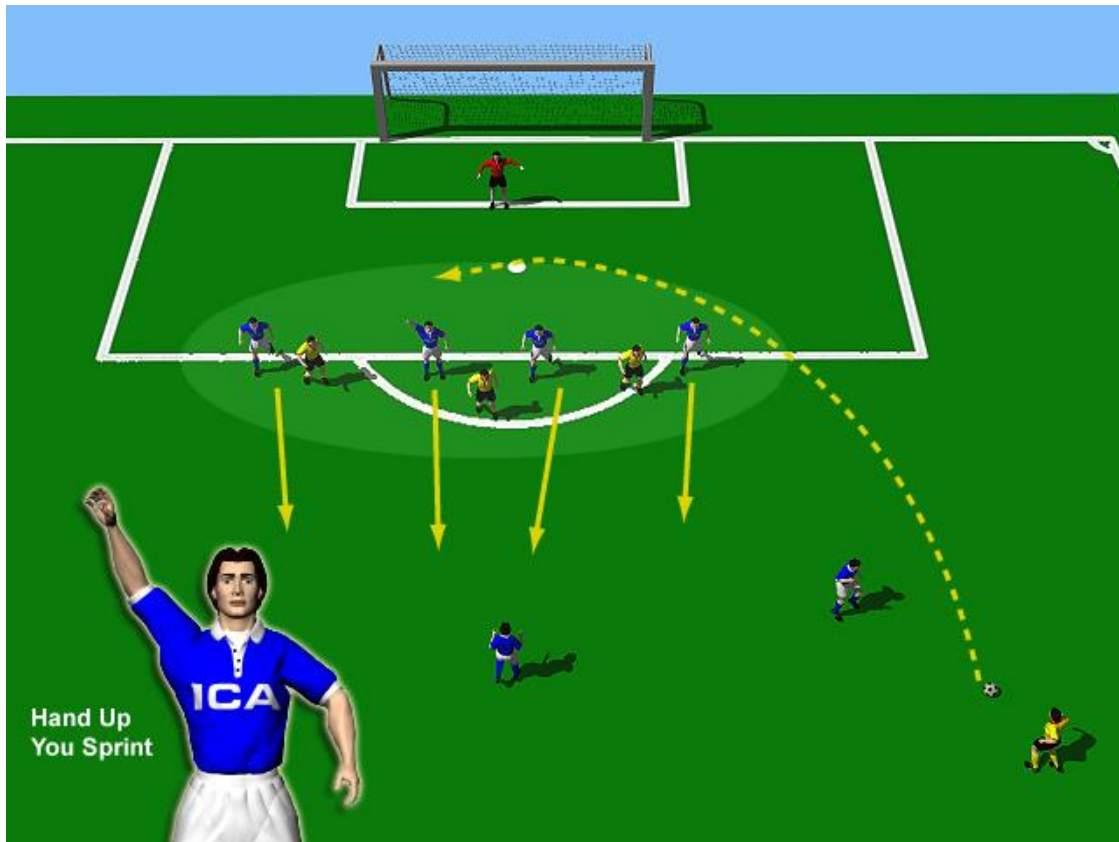
**Key Factors for Defenders** *in catching opponents offside.*

1. When the ball is played back - step up.
2. When the ball is played long - sprint out. Hopefully catching lazy forwards offside if the ball is played straight back.
3. If the defense is coming out, pressure must be put on the man with the ball to:
  - 🕒 Stop him running through the defense,
  - 🕒 Looking up to play balls to runners.
  - 🕒 Especially runners from deep position, both centrally and on the flanks.

A vital fact to remember if a team is going to utilize an offside trap is human error. Every player in the team must thoroughly understand the law and their individual and collective team responsibility in relation to ball position.

The sweeper or libero is a position, which demands excellent technique and understanding of the player concerned. He needs to have very good "all-round" vision and to be comfortable on the ball, knowing when to move forward and support his attack and be an able distributor of the ball, in other words his passing over long and short distances needs to be top quality.

# The Offside Trap on Free Kicks



The offside trap can be used as a defensive strategy for free kicks conceded in the wide midfield positions. This tactic must be rehearsed in training to ensure that all players understand their role completely.

**The Signal:** One player is assigned the duty of deciding when to use the offside trap. The signal is a "raised hand". When the player's hand is raised ALL players must be alert to executing the trap.

**Positioning:** Defensive players line up as close as possible to the attackers on the edge of the penalty area. Their feet must be in the sprint position (one foot behind the other, as opposed to an open stance). In this position players are in the ready position to sprint without having to take a step back. One midfielder player is positioned 15 yards from the kicker to pressure any short free kick that may be taken. Two players are positioned several yards in front of the defenders and must be alert to track back into the penalty area in case a mistake is made by one of the defenders playing a forward inside.

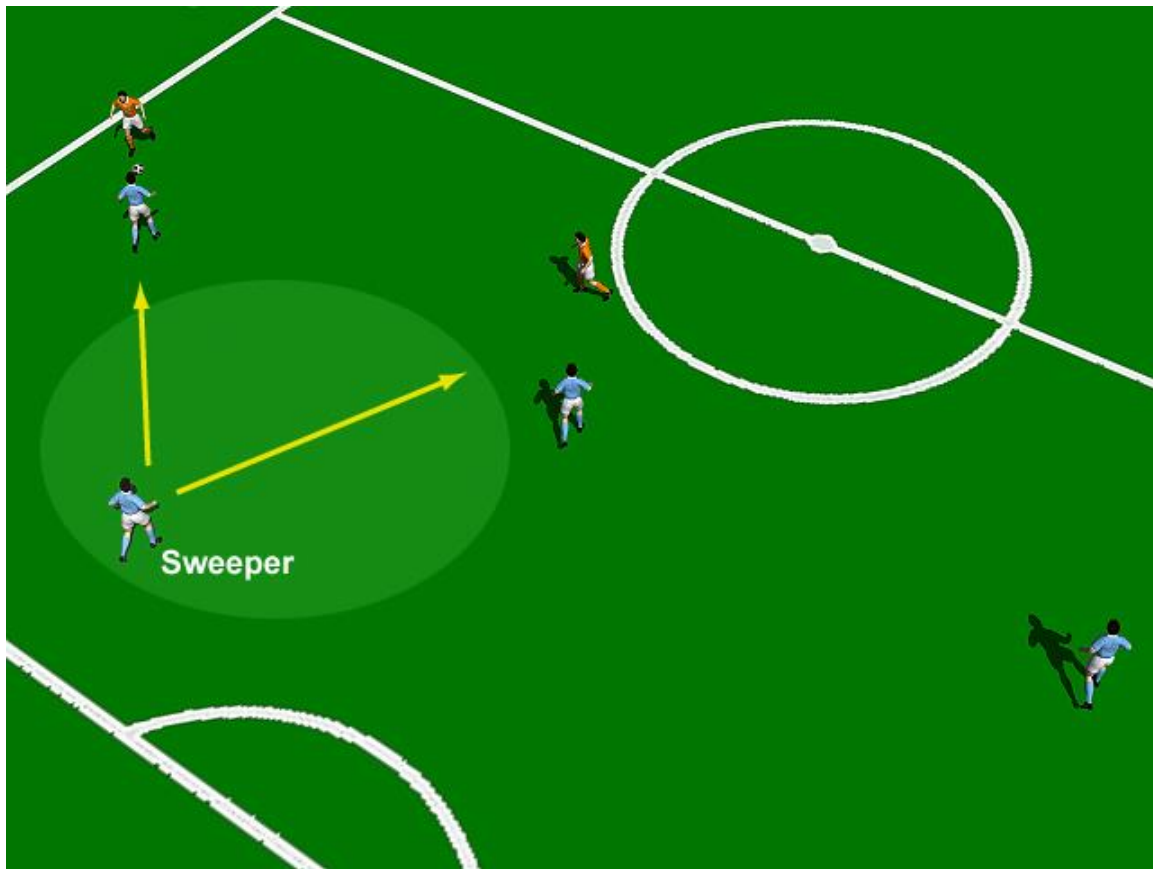
**Time to sprint out:** ALL defensive players must watch the player taking the free kick. The exact time to sprint out is when the player taking the free kick drops his head and starts his approach to the ball. The timing of the "sprint" is vital to the success of the trap. Generally a player taking a free kick will position the ball approximately 2-3 yards in front of them. They will then look up to assess the situation in the penalty.

After they make their decision, their head will drop and focus will be on the ball on their Approach to kicking the ball. It is at that exact moment that their head drops and on the split second they start their approach run to the ball that the defenders MUST SPRINT OUT.

## Playing with a Sweeper

### **Sweepers provide instantly one of the main principles in defending -- depth.**

A good sweeper breeds great confidence throughout the team, knowing he can cover mistakes and also come into attack and create an extra man, or create space which others can exploit. For the sweeper system to be effective you require two very disciplined markers in front of the back man, and the better the marking the better the opposing strikers have to be. Forwards have to work hard on their skills to try and retain the ball or pass well, with one or two touches if their team is to attack effectively. The depth which the sweeper gives his team forces the opponents to look generally for space down the flanks and away from the goal, they also have to be more varied and sophisticated in their passing.



Playing with a sweeper is not defensive; indeed it can be the complete opposite in giving players more freedom in going forward to express themselves in the opponents attacking third.

A sweeper has to be an excellent communicator; if his understanding is good then as a forward you will constantly hear "push him wide", "don't let him turn", "man arriving on your left shoulder", "don't let the ball bounce", "I'll have it back (ball)", "push out fast", "take the near post", etc.

The defensive security, which this deep and central cover provides, means that defenders can constantly try and win balls in front of opponents if possible. Sweepers provide instantly one of the main principles in defending -- depth. They also provide another vital principle in "balance", in other words they plug any "holes" that exist in defense, whilst constantly urging their markers to exert great pressure on the opposition's front players, giving them no time or space on the ball, consequently everything has to be hurried.

To summarize, the sweeper is a three-in-one player, a defender, a midfield player and an attacker. The role has risks proportionate to the advantages. The individual selected must have a great sense of what is required in each third of the field in terms of risk and safety. Above all he needs to be intelligent, clear thinking and composed.



## **Making Play Predictable - What the pressurizing player is trying to do first and foremost is stop the ball from being played forward.**

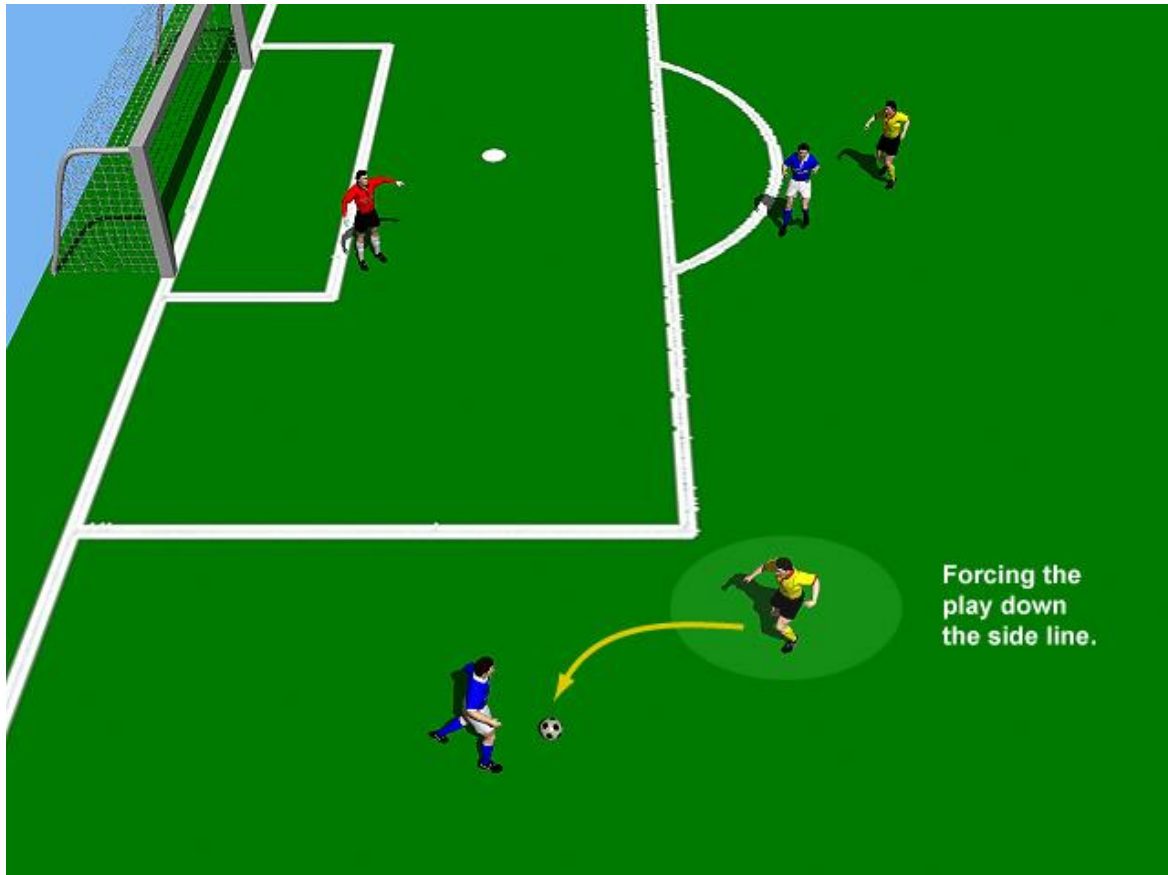
To predict is to say in advance that something will happen, e.g. generally the weather forecasters are right when they state what the weather will be like the next day - rain, wind, sun etc. If in a soccer game our team can predict what the other team will do with the ball in a given area at a given time then we have a big advantage. In making play predictable as a team we must follow certain guidelines.

The basics of defending all over the field are pressure, support and balance. Pressure on the man with the ball, support for the pressurizing player and cover, balance and the plugging of vital space needed by the opposition.



The roles of pressurizing player, supporting player and balancing or covering player switch as the ball is moved and kept by the opposition. Circumstances dictate that the pressurizing player will sometimes be able to prevent his opponent from turning, sometimes he will not, depending on this situation all other players adjust, e.g. supporting and balancing/covering players and other members of the team behind them.

What the pressurizing player is trying to do first and foremost is stop the ball from being played forward. If he cannot stop the ball being played forward can he stop it by his body shape and force the opposition to play a predictable ball, and then the rest of the team can adjust. e.g. ball played out to the right back and forcing the play down the line.



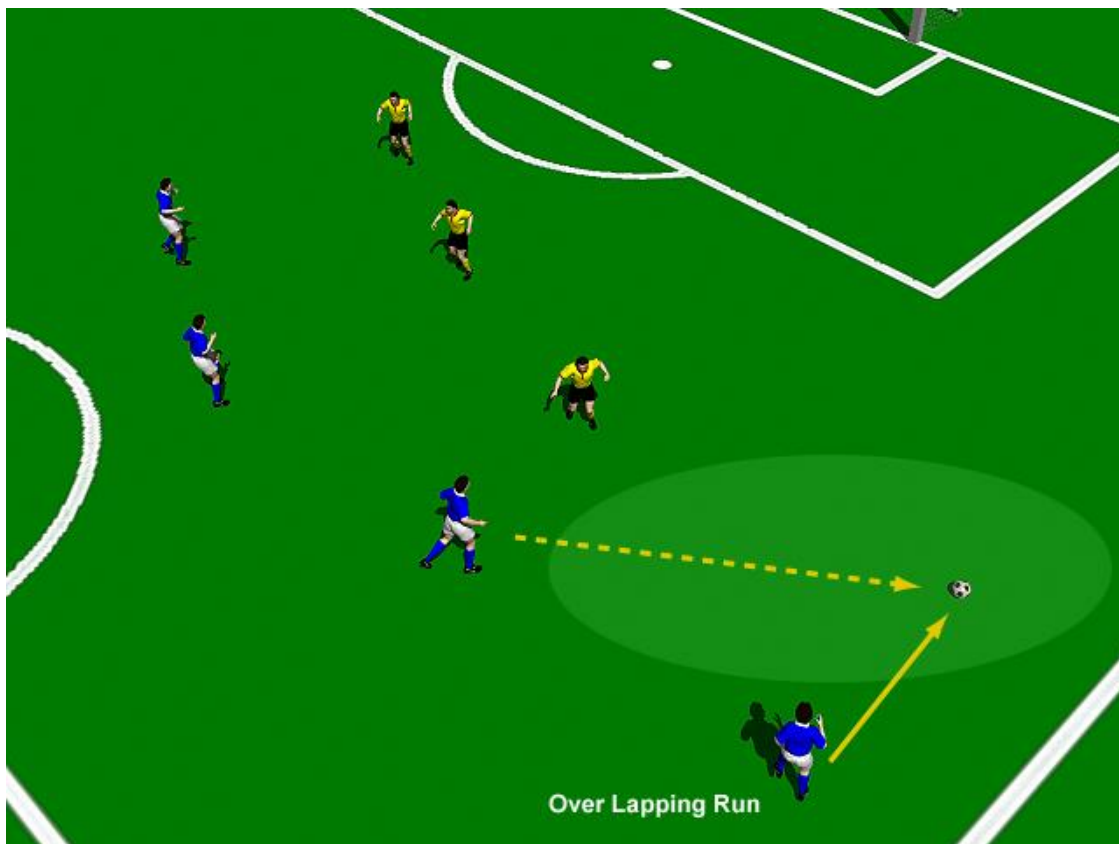
If this happens our rear players can adjust accordingly and try and lock the ball in this area of the field. In other words we are going to commit more defenders to this area to outnumber the attackers and try to win the ball in what will now be restricted space. We also have to be aware of balls being played forward into runners so we must track the players according to their runs or until we can hand them on to our defenders.

There are other ways in which we may want the opposition to play, in other words can we predict what they will do given time and space. If we feel that the opposition are not particularly good at playing out from the back we may drop right off and let them have the ball from their goalkeeper and then pressurize and adjust accordingly and try and win the ball back in their half of the field. Our team in making play predictable must keep very compact. We must avoid being stretched and spaces appearing, we must try to keep the ball in front of our defense. Therefore, our forward player's work hard to exert pressure the moment the ball is lost. Back players move up quickly when the ball is played forward and we try to lock the ball in one quarter of the field when the ball is in a wide position. Attacking teams will always quite naturally strive to make their play unpredictable. So, if we follow the above guidelines they will find it difficult to achieve the objective.

# SMALL GROUP TACTICS

## **Over Lapping Runs** - It is important for the supporting player to understand when to support in advance of the ball

It is important for the supporting player to understand when to support in advance of the ball and when to hold their position. In general, if the player on the ball is facing the opponents' goal with their head up, then the support is needed in advance of the ball. If the player on the ball is facing the supporting player, then the supporting player should offer assistance behind the ball.



Example of an over lapping run from a wide midfield position.

# Cross Over Runs - The interaction of two or more players creating space is an art.

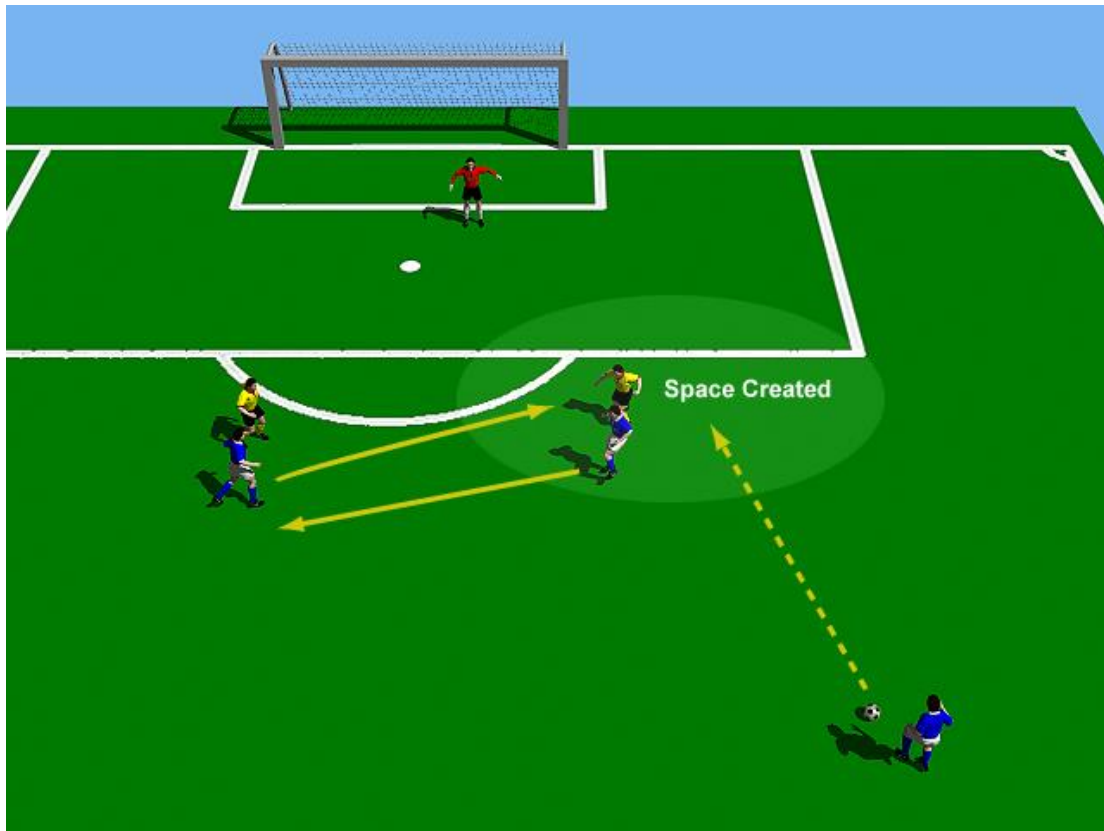
Cross-Over runs are the staple of mobility in attack and midfield. The interaction of two or more players creating space is an art. Cross-Over runs need to be rehearsed and repeated in practice until players understand each others signals and cues.

## There are two main types of runs:

Runs to create space for others to receive the ball. When making a run to create space for a teammate, the run should be loud and in front of the defender to attract attention, making the marker follow the run.

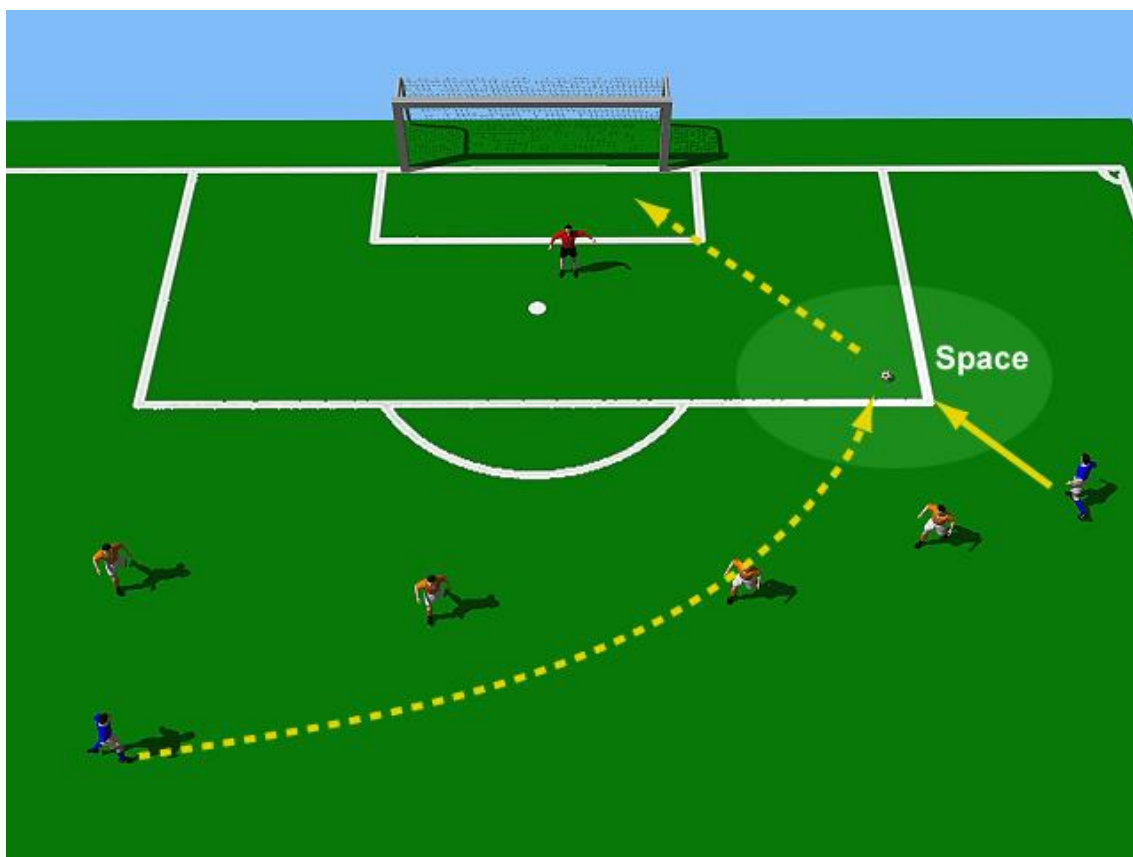
Runs made to receive the ball. When making a run to receive the ball, the run should be quiet and discreet as not to attract attention. The timing of the run is crucial. The run should be as late as possible, taking care not to occupy the space created before the pass is made. As a guideline, look for this sequence, space created, ball delivered then the run.

In the forward positions, it is important for one player to lead verbally. This player will be constantly providing information to his partner on when to exchange runs.



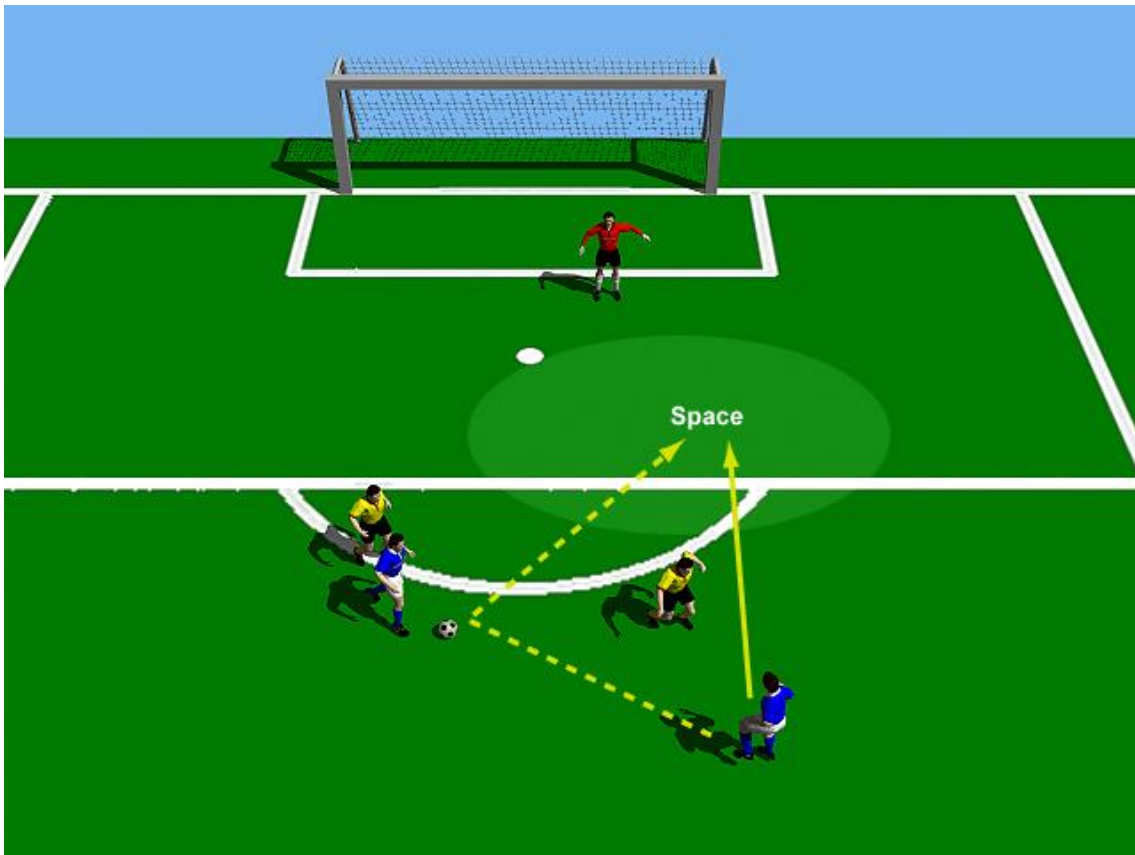
## **Blind Sided Runs – Blind Sided Runs should be quiet and discreet.**

The main function of all forwards when making runs should be to secure possession of the ball behind the defense. Often defenders are guilty of being "ball watchers". When this happens, it provides the ideal opportunity to make a blind-sided run behind the defenders and out of their field of vision. The run should be a quiet, discreet run, shouting for the ball will attract the attention of the defenders. The timing of the run should be as late as possible into the available space.



## **The Wall Pass - The Wall Pass is most effective in tight restricted areas such as the midfield and attacking third.**

The "Wall Pass" is also referred to as the "Give and Go" or "1-2 Pass". It is most often used to exploit a situation where two players are facing one opponent, or one player passes to the feet of a tightly marked teammate who returns the pass through two defenders. The angle at which the ball returns will vary and the execution should be swift and accurate.



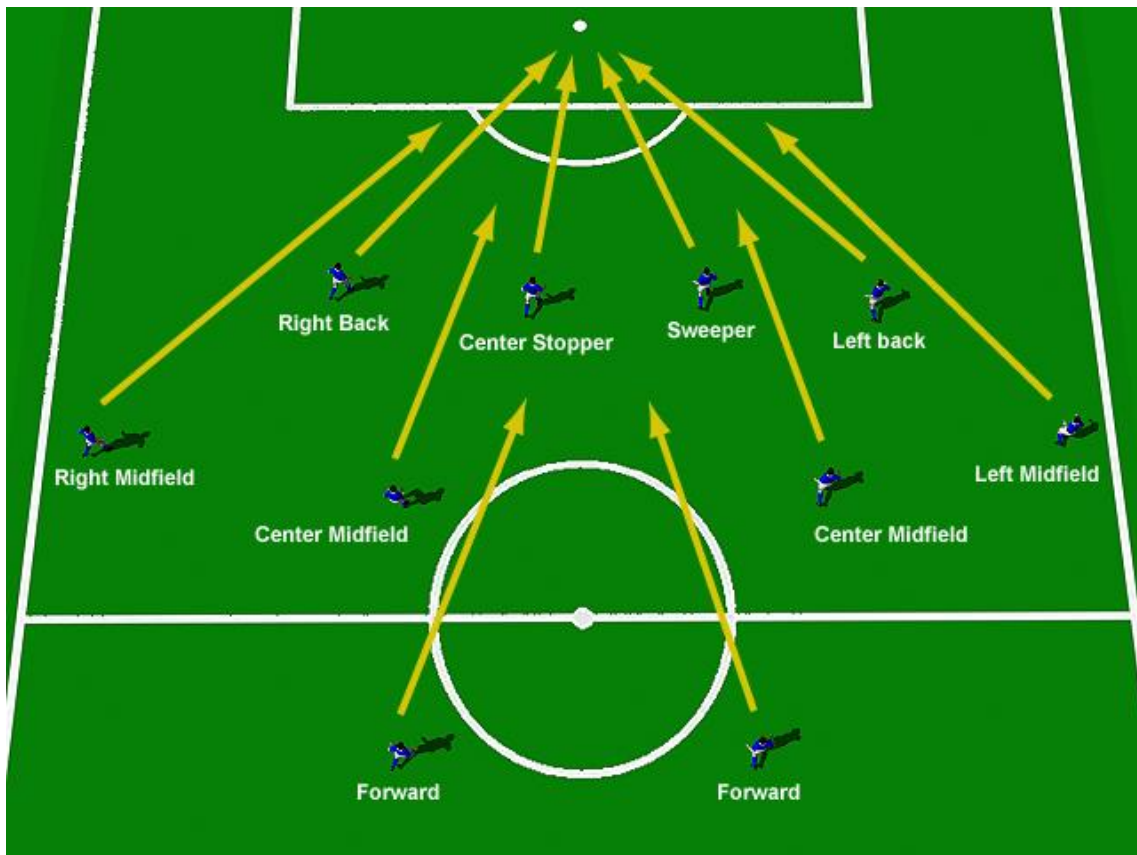
The Wall Pass is most effective in tight restricted areas such as the midfield and attacking third. Consideration should be given to the following when executing the Wall Pass.

- Distance from the receiving player, 15 yards or under.
- Good paced ball to receiving player to enable a "first time" return pass.
- Receiving player should be in a position to be able to return the pass "first time".
- Timing of the support run. Don't over-run the return pass.
- Change of speed after receiving the return pass.



# Recovery Runs - You never recover into a position where you cannot affect pressure on the ball or cover.

Recovery runs are runs that are made when our team loses the ball, we quickly have to get in a position where we are behind the ball - in other words in a position where we can defend effectively. As a general rule if our team loses the ball we should recover in a line with our penalty spot or the center of our goal.



You never recover into a position where you cannot affect pressure on the ball or cover. If you are recovering and you are the nearest player to the ball, then you must put pressure on the ball. If you recover and you can support the pressurizing player, then you recover into this position. Likewise if you can recover into a position where you become the covering or balancing player then you do that. If these 3 roles are filled you pick up a man goal side or you cover a space that you think the opposition may want to use.

In all the above-mentioned situations communication is vital, e.g. force him outside (towards touchline), force him inside (in towards the center of the field). Man on your left shoulder (indicates man making a run). Vision becomes a vital factor in assessing when you will make the above decisions. Speed in making these decisions is vital so a good knowledge of the principles of play, especially defending in this example is very important.

**Once a player is goal-side of the ball, he has these decisions to make:**

1. Pressure the ball.
2. Support pressurizing player.
3. Mark players in dangerous areas of the ball.
4. Be aware of important space.
5. Make sure all opponents who make runs especially to the back of the defense are covered.
6. If he thinks he can intercept a ball then he must do so.

Remember: Communication is vital, Concentrate at all times, Vision is essential.

## Losing Tight Markers

# It is important to pick and choose your times to make explosive runs for the ball.

Throughout a game there will be many occasions when a player is marked tightly, particularly in and around the penalty box and the central midfield area. Many teams will designate a defender as a "man to man" marker to nullify a key player on the opponent's team. Often the defender will try to intimidate the player physically and psychologically and throw them off their game. When this happens, the player must be disciplined and patient. Once the players get into an ongoing argument with his marker, he has lost the battle. It is important to pick and choose your times to make explosive runs for the ball. One should lull the marker into a false sense of comfort by making runs at half pace, then, when the time is right, explode away from the defender for the ball.



### Considerations for making runs when being marked tight:

- ✓ If you want the pass into the space in front of you, take the defender deep and away from the ball, then explode back into the space created.
- ✓ If you want the ball played into the space behind the marker, bring the defender with you towards the ball, then turn and explode into the space you have created behind the defender.
- ✓ Use the marker as a springboard by pushing tight on the defender's chest and force them on their heels as you are ready to run for the ball.

# **Man for Man Marking – The Man for Man marker needs to be quick and brave.**

Man for man marking generally means marking an opponent in our defensive part of the field or in our own half.

Some teams, notably the Germans and the Italians, employ man for man marking as soon as the opponents enter their half. Some man for man marking is only on the two or three strikers with a sweeper in behind them to cover space or take their role if they are beaten. Some teams employ just one man to mark the opposition's most dangerous player.



The factors needed to employ successful man for man marking are a good temperament (especially away from home), good discipline, good communication, and good technical skills, both in defending and when the ball is won. In defending man for man patience is vital. If you can make your opponent play square or back then he is not hurting our team as the ball and men therefore are not going in behind us. The man for man marker needs to be quick and brave. He will need to be good at the techniques of jockeying, shepherding and balancing the defense.

When the man for man marker is beaten then obviously other factors come into play. He should recover quickly. The likelihood is that he will then become the supporting player to the man who is pressing the ball or the covering or balancing player. He therefore needs to know his recovery runs and his understanding of the principles of defending needs to be good - with communication vital.

As an individual the marker needs to be a good reader of the game (can he intercept?), a good tackler, physically strong and knowing relative to the position of his teammates, when to force the ball outside, when to force the ball inside. He will have to know the technique of the crouched position edging towards the attacker, and he will have to know about feinting to tackle, and to be extremely well focused on the ball.

Good defenders react to the ball, not to the body movements of the attackers. He will try to stay on his feet at all times, prevent turners from turning if possible and be excellent at timing his challenges and not giving away unnecessary free kicks in dangerous areas, i.e. in our defensive third.

He needs to be determined and a good passer of the ball. It is of no use being good at winning the ball if he cannot do anything with it. It is an extremely difficult task to be given and the more of the mentioned qualities the defender has the more successful he will be at his given task.

# RESTARTS AND SET PLAYS

## **Defensive Restarts** - Players should be detailed to specific tasks and each set play rehearsed.

Defensive organization at set plays needs to be thought out in detail. It is important that players should be detailed to specific tasks and each set play rehearsed. When players know what task they have to perform they concentrate upon doing it. If every player concentrates 100% in his task, the danger from set plays is immediately reduced considerably.



### **Free Kicks**

- ▶ Threaten the kick.
- ▶ Setting the wall.
- ▶ The position of the goalkeeper.
- ▶ Don't put too many players in the wall.
- ▶ Sealing off vital space.

### **Corners**

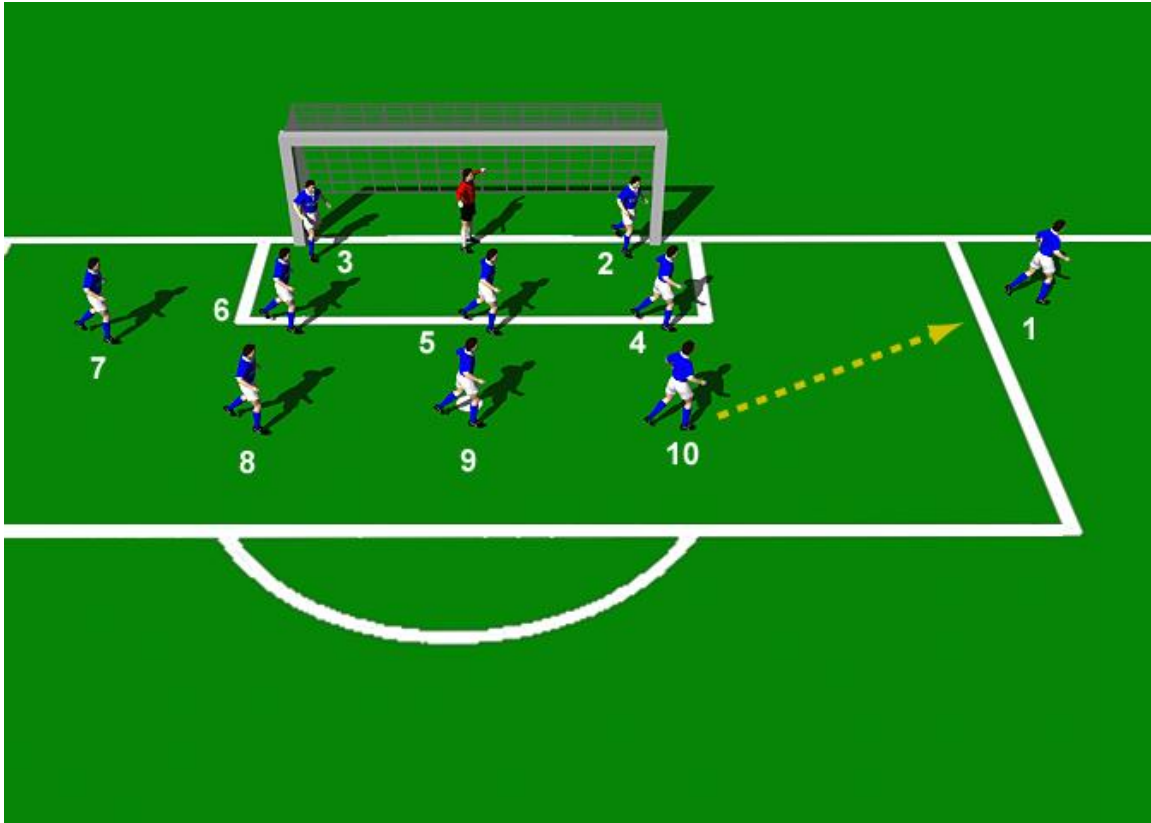
- ▶ How to threaten the kick.
- ▶ How to defend against short corners.
- ▶ The position of the goalkeeper.
- ▶ The position of the fullbacks.
- ▶ Defending the near post.
- ▶ Defending the far post.
- ▶ Defending the space between the six yard line and the eighteen yard line.

### **Throw In's**

- ▶ The importance of concentration.
- ▶ Mark tight in the area of the ball including the thrower.
- ▶ At long throws, mark the receiver from in-front and from behind.



## **Defending Corner Kicks - All defensive clearances should be high, wide and long.**

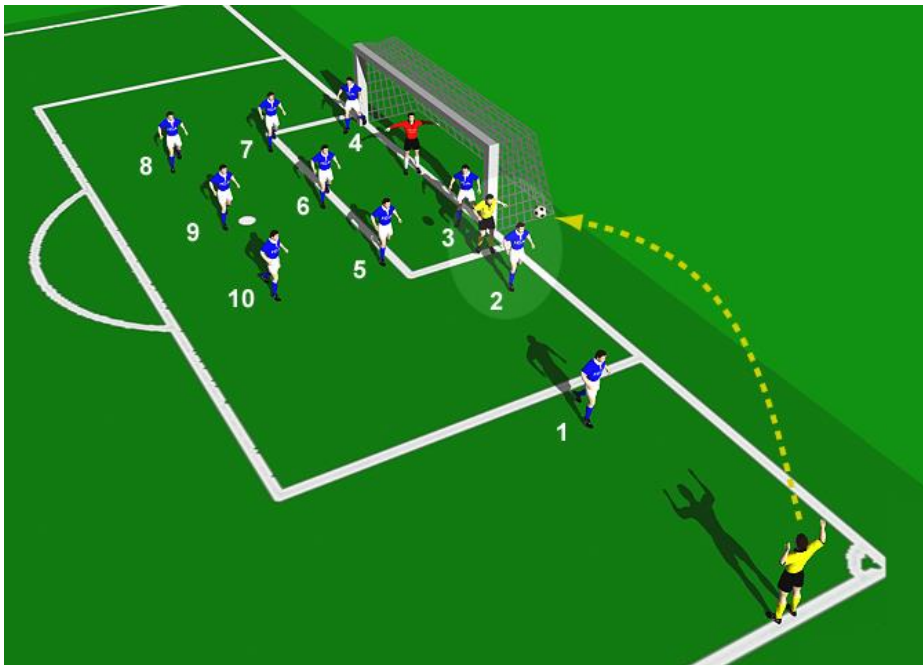


### **Players Responsibilities:**

1. Attack and distract the kicker. Start from end line if in swinging corner.
2. Mark area in front of near post. Tuck inside post if crossed deep.
3. Mark area in front of back post. Tuck inside post if crossed deep.
4. Mark area in line with front post. Attack front post crosses.
5. Mark area in center of goal on 6-yard box.
6. Mark area in line with back post. On 6 yard box line.
7. Mark area at back post on corner of 6-yard box.
8. Mark area in line with back post and in line with penalty spot. Move across to fill space on penalty spot if a short corner is taken.
9. Mark area in center of the goal on the penalty spot. Move across to space in line with front post if a short corner is taken.
10. Mark area in line with front post and in line with the penalty spot.  
Be alert for short corners, move out if there's a 2 v 1 situation.

# Defending Long Throw In's - The vital factor in defending long throw-ins is to kill the flick-on area.

When defending against long throw-ins, one man is positioned in front of receiver, one in behind. The vital factor in defending long throw-ins is to kill the flick-on area. Generally in the front part of the 6 yard box. In general make the players receiving, play square or back and exert pressure on the ball to prevent forward passes as quickly as possible.

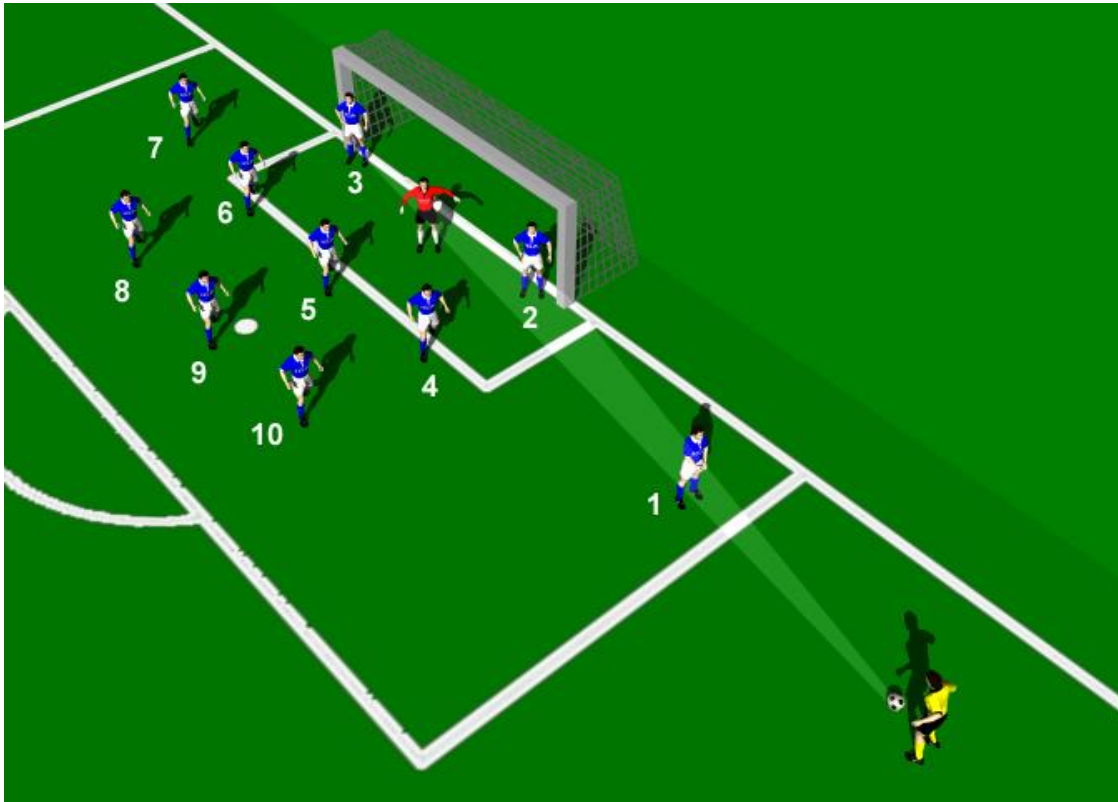


## Players Responsibilities:

1. Get close to thrower to make him throw "high", not low and fast.
2. Mark area in front of the front post receiving player.
3. Mark front post target man from behind, but not too tight. Allow room for attacking the throw.
4. Cover inside area of back post.
5. Mark area in line with front post, on 6 yard box line.
6. Mark area in line with penalty spot, on 6 yard box line.
7. Mark area in line with back post, on 6 yard box line.
8. Mark area in line with back post and in line with penalty spot.
9. Mark area in center of the goal on the penalty spot.
10. Mark area in line with front post and in line with the penalty spot. Be alert for ball played back to the thrower.

# Defending Free Kick - One Man Wall

When defending against long throw-ins, one man is positioned in front of receiver, one in behind. The vital factor in defending long throw-ins is to kill the flick-on area. Generally in the front part of the 6 yard box. In general make the players receiving, play square or back and exert pressure on the ball to prevent forward passes as quickly as possible.

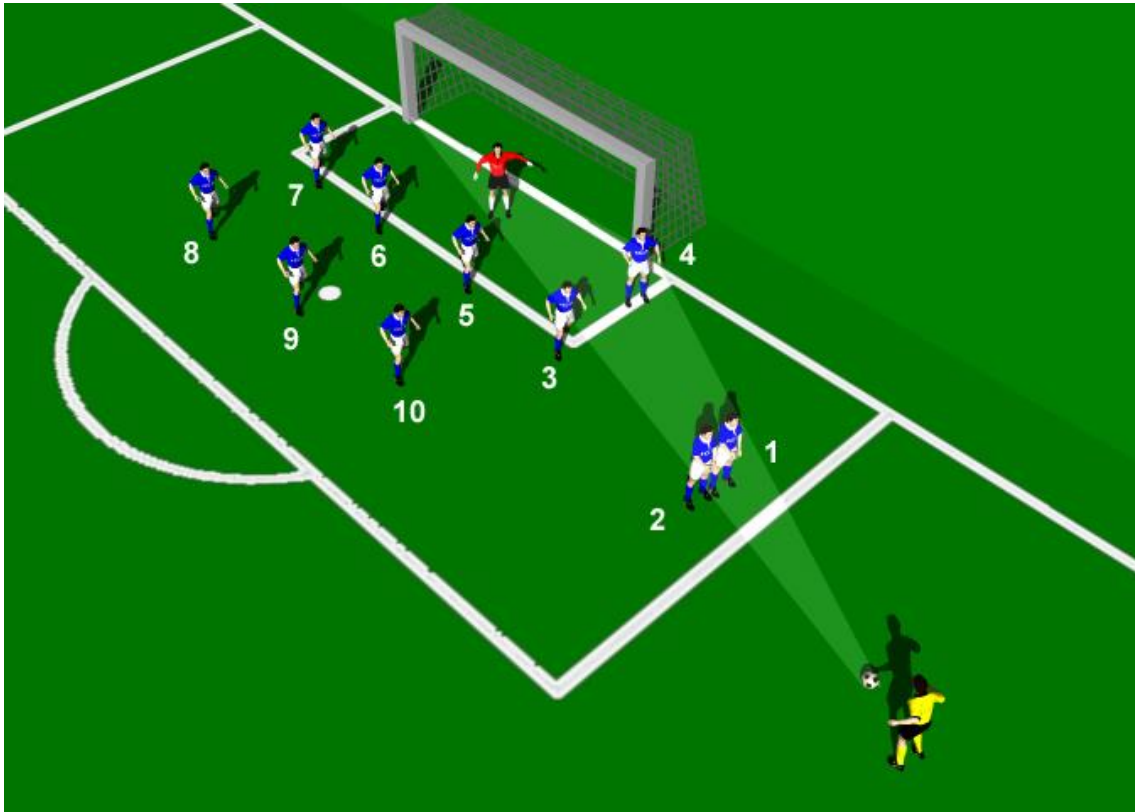


## Players Responsibilities:

1. Line up in-line with near post.
2. Mark area in front of near post. Tuck inside post if crossed deep.
3. Mark area in front of back post. Tuck inside post if crossed deep.
4. Mark area in-line with front post. Attack front post crosses.
5. Mark area in center of goal on 6-yard box.
6. Mark area in-line with back post, on 6-yard box.
7. Mark area at back post on the corner of 6-yard box.
8. Mark area in-line with back post and in-line with penalty spot. Move across to fill space on penalty spot if a short free kick is taken.
9. Mark area in center of goal on penalty spot. Move across to fill space in-line with front post if a short free kick is taken.
10. Mark area in-line with front post and in-line with the penalty spot. Be alert for short free kicks and move out if there's a 2 v 1 situation.

# Defending Free Kick - Two Man Wall

Prior to the game, assign each player a specific role to play when defending against free kicks. The following is a sample of the organizational set up for a **2 Man Wall**.

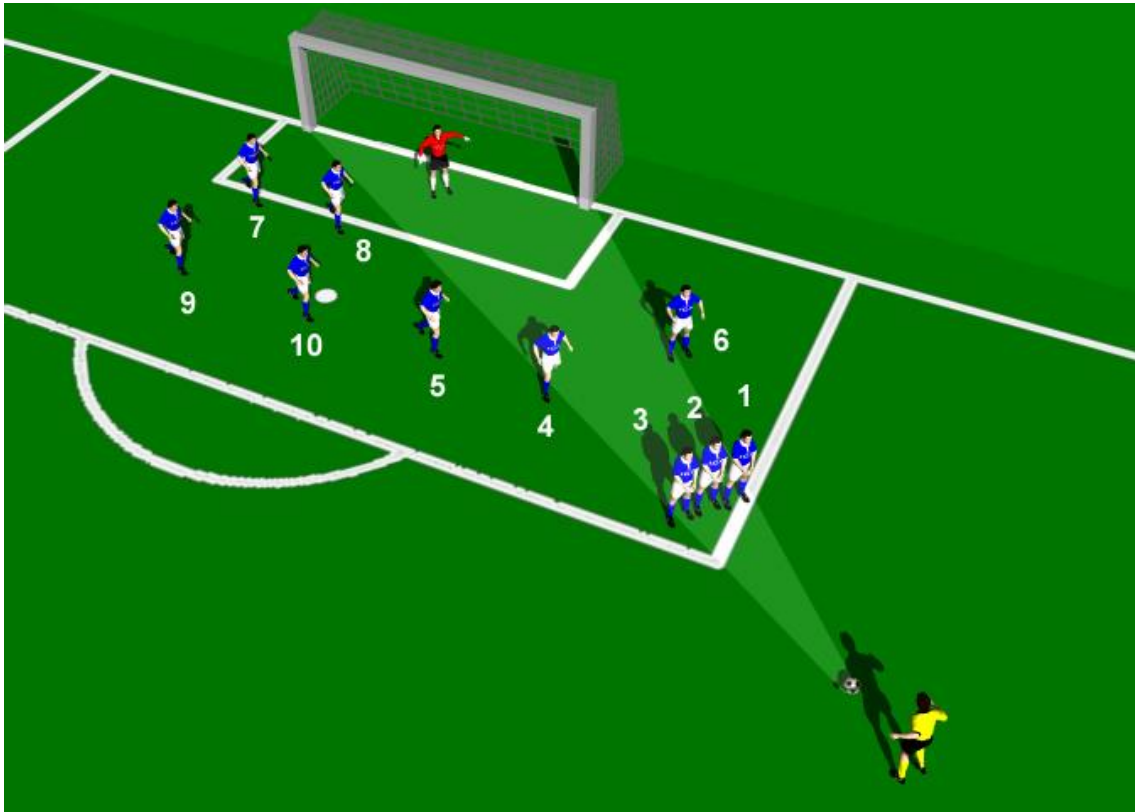


## Players Responsibilities:

1. Line up in-line with near post.
2. Second man in wall.
3. Position 5 yards behind the wall and in line with the inside of the far post.
4. Look for short pass made down the line.
5. Mark area in-line with front post, on 6-yard box
6. Mark area in center of goal on 6-yard box
7. Mark area in-line with back post, on 6-yard box
8. Mark area in-line with back post and in-line with penalty spot.
9. Mark area in center of the goal on penalty spot. Move across to fill space in-line with front post if a short free kick is taken.
10. Mark area in-line with front post and in-line with the penalty spot. Be alert for short free kicks and move out if there's a 2 v 1 situation.

# Defending Free Kick - Three Man Wall

Prior to the game, assign each player a specific role to play when defending against free kicks. The following is a sample of the organizational set up for a **3 Man Wall**.

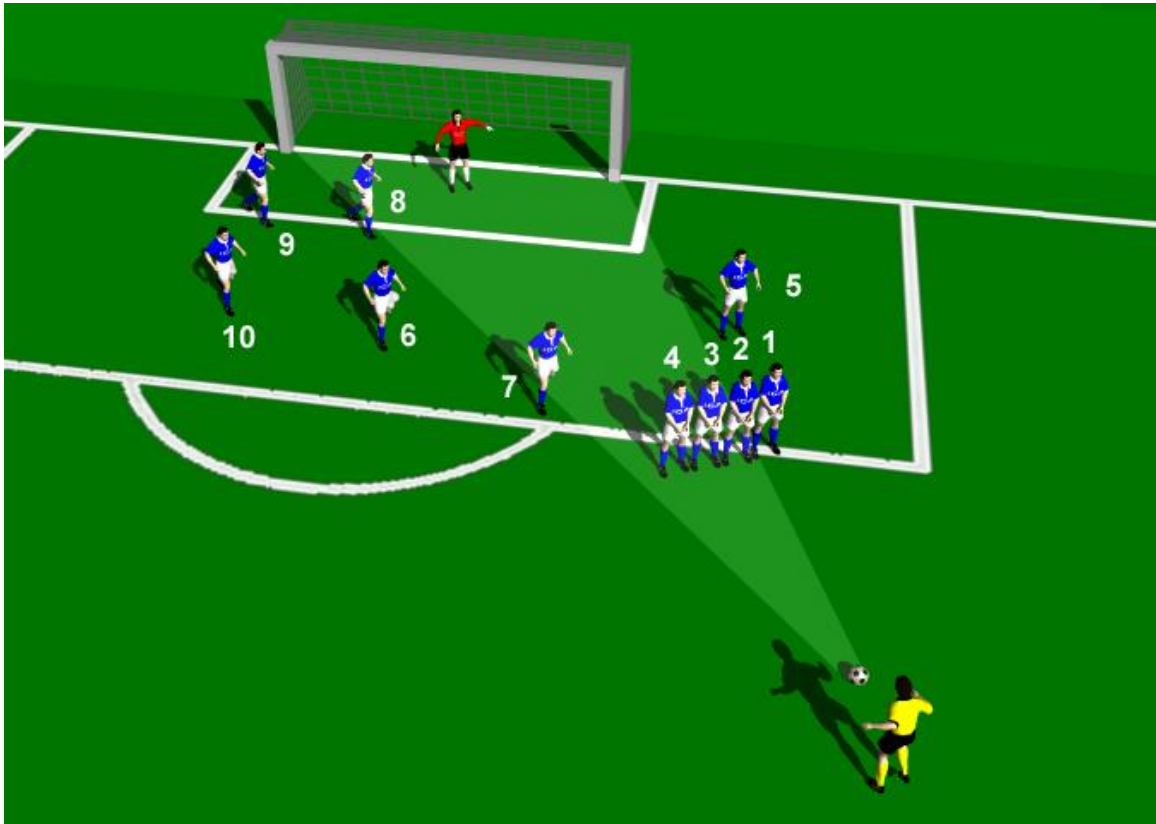


## Players Responsibilities:

1. Line up past the outside of near post.
2. Join wall in middle
3. Join wall on inside.
4. Position 5 yards behind the wall and inside the near post.
5. Attack any short pass played on the inside.
6. Attack any short pass played down the outside.
7. Defend back post on 6-yard box.
8. Defend inside far post area on 6-yard box.
9. Defend back post area in-line with penalty spot.
10. Defend central area around penalty spot.

# Defending Free Kick - Four Man Wall

Prior to the game, assign each player a specific role to play when defending against free kicks. The following is a sample of the organizational set up for a **4 Man Wall**.



## Players Responsibilities:

1. Position outside near post.
2. Join wall as 2nd man.
3. Join wall as 3rd man.
4. Join wall as 4th man.
5. Be alert for short pass played down the line.
6. Position 1 yard behind the wall and inside far post.
7. Close down short pass made inside.
8. Mark area on 6-yard box.
9. Mark area on 6-yard box.
10. Mark area inline with penalty spot.



# Defending Free Kick - Five Man Wall

Prior to the game, assign each player a specific role to play when defending against free kicks. The following is a sample of the organizational set up for a **5 Man Wall**.



## Players Responsibilities:

1. Join wall and position outside the near post.
2. Second man in wall.
3. Third man in wall.
4. Fourth man in wall.
5. Fifth man in wall.
6. Position in line with the wall and inside the far post.
7. Position on the 6-yard box to the right side.
8. Position on the 6-yard box to the left side.
9. Position in line with the wall and rush the ball when kicked.
10. Position in line with the wall, help to close down short pass if needed.

Copyright, TheICA.com All Rights Reserved

# Attacking Restarts - In attacking restarts "failure to prepare" is "preparing to fail".

In attacking restarts "failure to prepare" is "preparing to fail". Each member of the team must now precisely their role for all attacking corners, free-kicks and throw ins. Time should be set aside for rehearsal during practice to ensure a thorough individual and team understanding.



- ▶ Each player has their assigned role and position for all attacking restarts.
  - ▶ Players must be disciplined and honest.
  - ▶ Good communication.
  - ▶ Intelligent decisions by player on the ball.
  - ▶ High degree of technical ability and range by the player on the ball.
  - ▶ Use signals, e.g.; hand raised means back post cross.

## Free Kicks

- ▶ Look for "quick" free kicks when the opportunity arises.
- ▶ Take a few seconds to talk to key players on and around the ball.
- ▶ Direct or Indirect, shoot or pass.

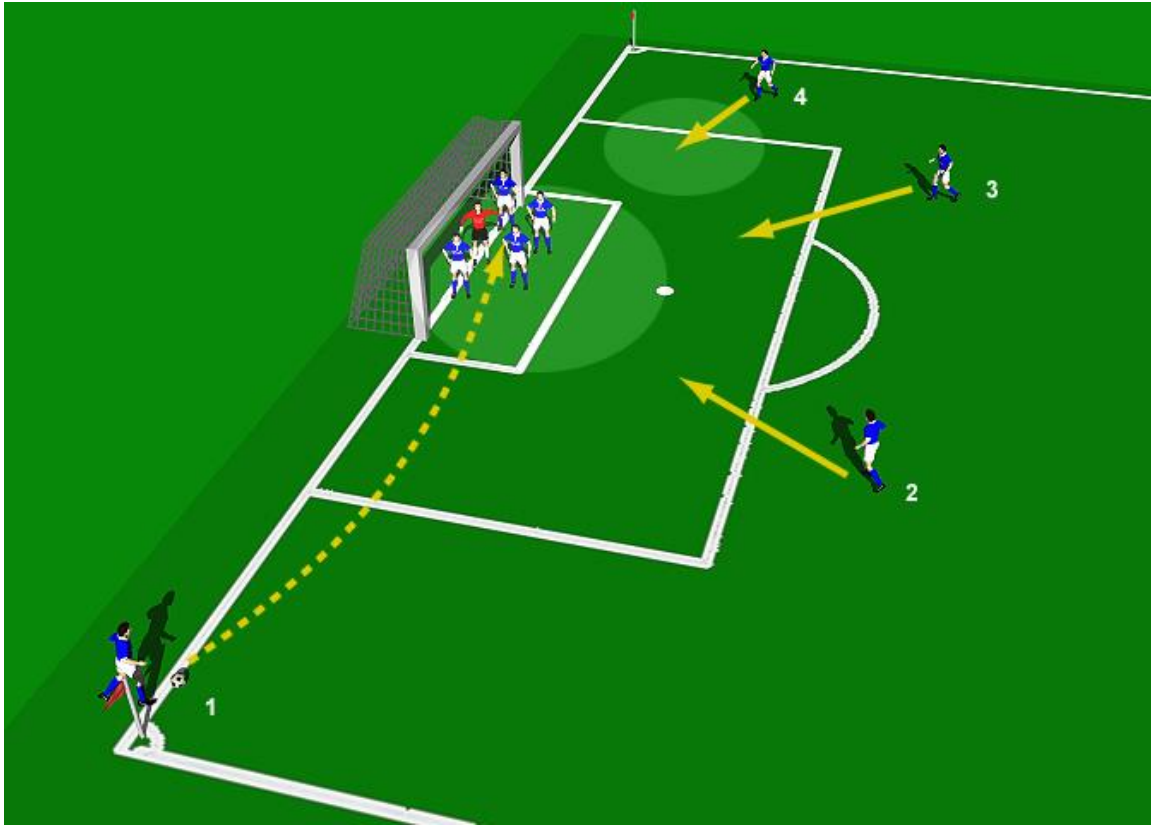
## Corners

- ▶ Look for "quick" corner kicks when the opportunity arises.
- ▶ Always eliminate the first defender and goalkeeper with the cross.
- ▶ Out swinger versus In swinger.
- ▶ Near post, far post.
- ▶ Hitting the space between the six yard line and the eighteen yard line.

## Throw In's

- ▶ The importance of concentration.
- ▶ Lose tight markers in the area of the ball.
- ▶ Long versus short.
- ▶ Retain possession for the thrower.
- ▶ Play down the line and forward whenever in doubt.

## Attacking Corner Kick - Crowding the Goalkeeper



This attacking corner kick is designed to crowd the space in which the goalkeeper can attack the ball.

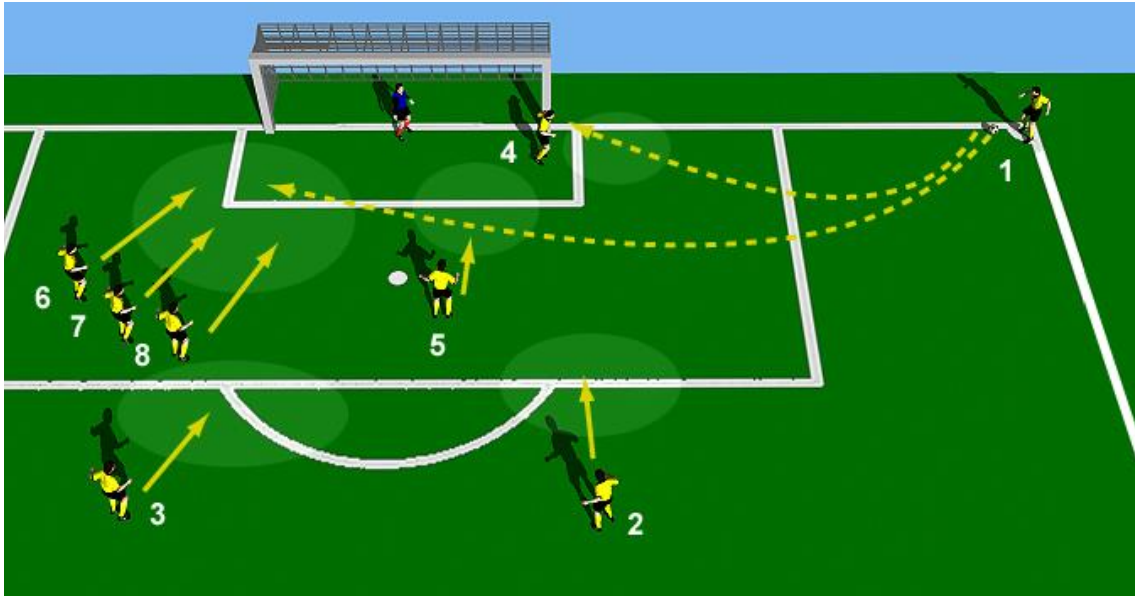
Four big players are positioned around the goalkeeper. Players can raise their arms to show to the referee that they are not infringing the goalkeeper. Generally the opponents four biggest player will mark them. This creates a lot of traffic and a major problem for the goalkeeper. With so many players around the goalkeeper he cannot catch the ball from a one footed take off. The keeper is forced to jump with both feet, thus reducing the height he can obtain to catch the ball. The corner kick is a fast paced "in swinging kick" placed into the crowd around the goalkeeper. Three players are strategically positioned around the outside of the penalty area to look for any rebounds or loose balls.

### Players Responsibilities:

1. Serves a fast paced "in swinging kick" placed into the crowd around the goalkeeper.
2. Right footed player is positioned on left side of penalty area.
3. Left footed player is positioned on right side of penalty area.
4. Attacks back post area, late and fast.

Four big aggressive players are positioned around the goalkeeper.

# Attacking Corner Kick - Attacking the Front or Back Post Area



This attacking corner kick is designed to provide two options; attacking the front post area or attacking the back post area.

Three big players are positioned at the back post area. One player is placed at the front post. One player positioned on the penalty spot attacks the front post area. Two players are strategically positioned around the outside of the penalty area to look for any rebounds or loose balls.

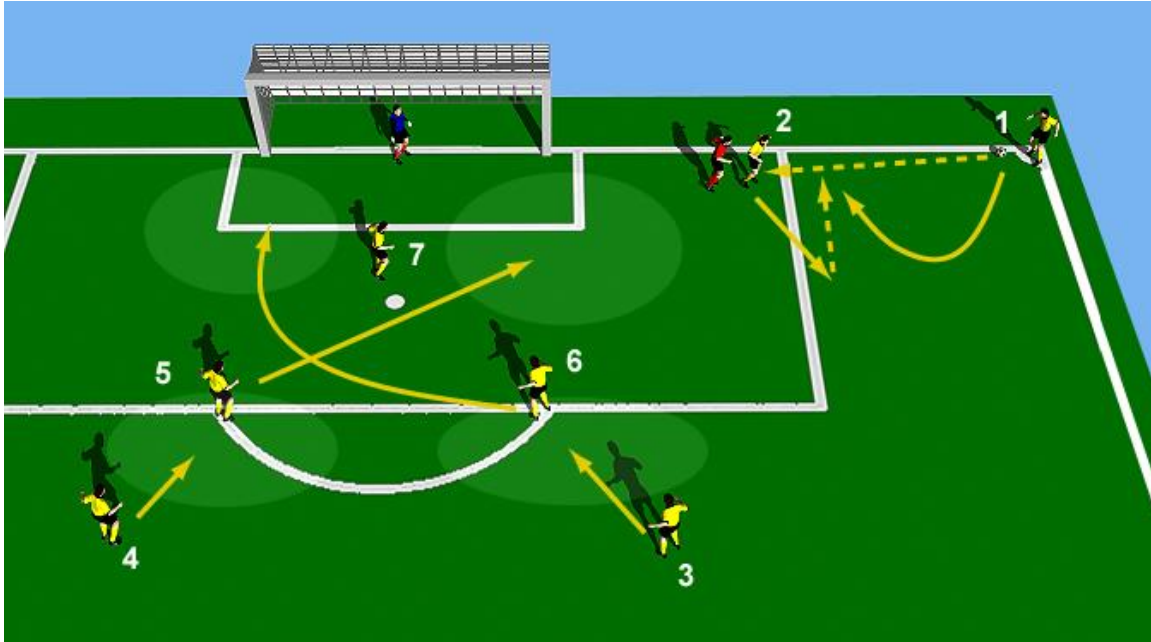
The corner kick is a fast paced "in swinging kick" placed into the crowd around the goalkeeper.

## Players Responsibilities:

5. Serves a fast paced "in swinging kick" placed into the crowd around the goalkeeper.
6. Left footed player is positioned on right side of penalty area.
7. Right footed player is positioned on left side of penalty area.
8. On front post. Looks to redirect the ball on goal or flick on to back post.
9. Attacks front post area, late and fast.
10. Attacks back post area, late and fast.
11. Attacks back post area, late and fast.
12. Attacks back post area, late and fast.

Assign a signal from the corner kicker for near and far post kicks.

# Attacking Corner Kick - Getting behind the first defender

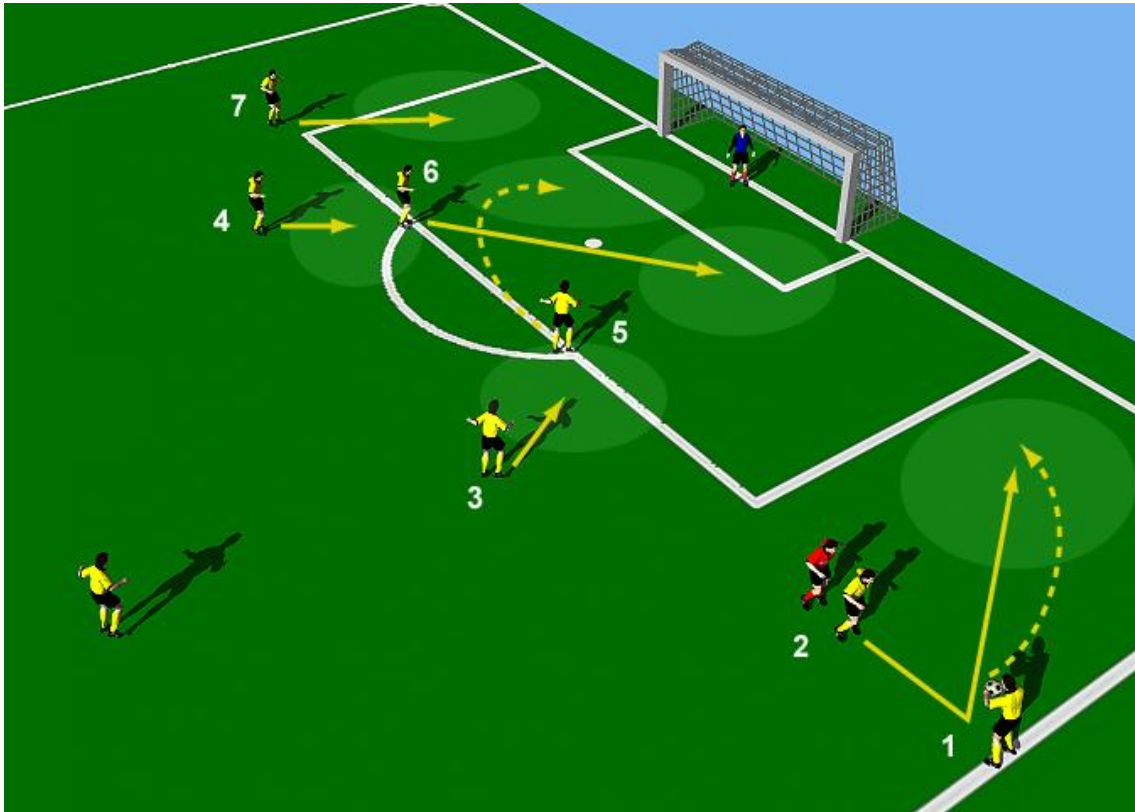


This attacking corner kick is designed to get behind the first defender and cross the ball from the end-line.

One player is placed on the penalty spot. Two players are positioned at each side of the arc. Two players are strategically positioned around the outside of the penalty area to look for any rebounds or loose balls.

A left footed player (the receiver) is positioned on the side of the six yard box. The player moves towards the kicker. The defender will follow. The ball is passed to the receiver who drags the ball using the left foot. While shielding the ball he creates space by move up the field. The kicker makes a curved run (to stay in an onside position) then accelerates into the space crated by the receiver. The receiver "back heels" the ball into the space he has created for the kicker to run onto. The kicker should look to deliver a pass to the feet of one of the five options in the penalty area.

# Attacking Throw In - The Fake Long Throw



This attacking throw in is designed to exploit the space behind the fullback and creating a crossing opportunity for a strike on goal.

The throw in should be performed only around the area level with the edge of the penalty area. Do not try the throw if a defender is covering the space.

Two players are positioned at each side of the arc. Two players are strategically positioned around the outside of the penalty area to look for any rebounds or loose balls. One player is positioned to attack the back post area.

One player walks slowly towards the thrower and yells "let me take a long throw in". Other players can yell at the thrower to leave the ball for a long throw. The more convincing the shouting, the more the opponents will believe that you are going to take a long throw in.

The receiver walks right up to the thrower and extends his hands while asking for the ball, at this second he turns and sprints into the space and the thrower delivers the ball over the receivers shoulder and into the path of his run. The receiver then attacks the space with the ball and looks to deliver a pass to one of the five options in the penalty area.