



Defending - Purpose and Plan 11v11

"Why do we play defense?" "We defend to win the ball back, attack and score."

The purpose for this exercise is for player development. The game of soccer is often debated whether it can be classified as a science or an art. When we are playing without the ball, we certainly can say that defending is more of a science than an art. This document is designed to instill the "Rush Way" of defending, a science so to speak. Our goal is to have a standard way for all our teams for defensive set pieces all the way from the Youth, Juniors, Seniors and up through the Adult First Team. The older we get the more emphasis we must place on organizing set pieces. Set Pieces can win and lose games for you.

The Team: Defense is a team concept not a position concept. Every player must be held accountable for his or her defending.

Goalkeepers: The goalkeepers should play the full game when possible. They place the demands, are the conductors, and are the sweepers. They are soccer players first!

The Back Line: Give many opportunities to develop a relationship with this line. Be sure to have an additional player who feels very much a part of the system to cover an unforeseen absence. When training the back line specifically, be sure to include the goalkeeper(s). Whether playing flat or with a sweeper, the back line must have depth (in relation to the team or with one another). Weak side backs may provide depth in a back three or should level off with weak side center back in a back four. In normal circumstances, the back line should be plus one relative to the number of opponents who are playing or who are left up. For example: this may be three behind two or two in behind (the opponent's two) and one in front.

The Midfield: Must have relationship and understand positioning relative to the line of players behind them (fullbacks) as well as the line in front of them (forwards). The midfield must be able to decide when to run the opponent out versus show inside, or to kill a change versus defending goal side.

The Forwards: True, their first responsibility is to score goals. They are a critical aspect to a team's defense however. They can help dictate where the line of confrontation is (high pressure or low pressure) as well as what direction a team (opponent) initiates their attack (left side or right side/outside or inside). They also provide secondary pressure (doubling back) for midfield and assist in killing the change (in point of attack).

Pressure: When we address the First Defender or pressure (1v1) we need to address several components to what makes a good defender.

- Intercept- the best way to win the ball back individually speaking is to intercept the ball. This requires the individual to learn to anticipate. Reading the body language



of the opponent is important. Working extremely hard mentally and physically is required.

- Hit- if for some reason you can not intercept the ball, the next step would be to "hit" the opponent hopefully without awarding a foul.
- No Turn- if #1 and #2 are not accomplished, do your best to make the opponent play backwards or hold the ball...neither one is more dangerous than the other.
- Delay- if all of the above objectives were not successful and the opponent is squared up with you, delay or in some cases foul. Some defenders are successful watching the ball while others are successful watching the waist. A combination of both is probably the solution.

Cover: The second defender or cover is the first step in team defense. The second defender is anybody in position to help the first defender and/or step in and win ball if first defender gets beat. The defense need to recognize dangerous moments especially in the defending 1/3.

Balance: The third defender provides balance and is everyone who is not pressuring the ball or covering the pressuring defender. Hard work and thought is required. The purpose is to fill up gaps and holes that might be apparent to the opposition. Use the triangle of goal, ball, man to help determine individual shape relative to the team. (Explanation: Triangles are all over made up of the goal, the ball and the man/opposition. Defenders can gain their shape by finding themselves inside that triangle. See man, see ball. Defenders should also ask the question: Can I get there? This will aid the defender in knowing how far to be away from the opponent.)

Goal Kicks & Punts: Winning air duals in today's game is vital. Spend time with addressing 50/50 challenges as well as specifically goal kicks and punts in training (goal kicks and punts for and against us). Repetitions are the answer. The best ball winners should be placed appropriately to win balls. If the backs are going to challenge (on opponent's kicks), be sure we have cover. If the ball plays out backs (on our goal kicks), backs should bounce in anticipation of opponent winning the first ball.

Throw-Ins: Get two to the ball when possible. Deny changes. Deny serves.

Line of Defense: High Pressure begins at the top of the penalty box or as high as possible. Delayed High Pressure (low pressure) normally begins at midfield. Whether playing high pressure or delayed high pressure or somewhere in between, what is most important is that the team is together and when we go...we go!

Why do we defend? We defend to get the ball and score. Transition is critical. When attacking, we must be prepared to defend if and when we lose possession. Part of our thinking is: If we lose it, can we defend? Thought is given to defensive shape even while in attack/possession. When we do win possession, our first thought is: Can we attack? To be successful in attack, we must first keep possession when we win possession. Transition, again, is critical. In training, play numbers down to make the exercise difficult.



Also, play one touch on the transition to not be caught in ball possession. Why do we defend? We want to score. Our mentality is attack-oriented even when in defense.

Defensive Set Pieces General Comments

- First, Slow the kick down! How? There are many methods here are a few:
 - stay in numbers. tie your shoe. are injured. are unsure whose ball it is. hand the Referee the ball. do not make eye contact with the referee. politely debate where the ball is spotted or where the foul occurred.
- Second, Attitude
 - The most important part of defending whether a dead ball or during the flow of the game is your attitude. Putting you in the right place at the right time is easy.
 - Your attitude to win the ball must be in the forefront of your mind. We play defense so we can play offense.
 - Every second your opponent has the ball is an opportunity missed to score.
 - Great defenders possess qualities such as intensity, tenacity, effort while exhibiting intelligence, discipline and control. Remember intelligence and intensity.... the "two I's".
 - To summarize, The Rush takes pride in being stingy. Don't let your opponent score!
 - Get in the mindset to win the ball back. Attitude is the foundation to preventing the opposition from scoring.
- Other Important Details to Remember:
 - Limit fouls by quality defending.
 - The more cover provided, the more patient the first defender can be which leads to less diving or reaching and thus less fouls.
 - Compact/Together

This is an area in which Goalkeepers need to take more responsibility for organizing their team. There are numerous responsibilities that need to be looked at when a free kick outside the box is given:

1. Do not argue with the referee as to whether it was a foul or not.
2. Be loud when organizing the wall.
3. Demand the number of players that are needed in the wall.
4. Be aware of the number of attackers that are coming forward.
5. Are spaces behind the wall covered?
6. Be aware of all the options the opposition may be looking at and read the situation.
7. Is it an indirect or direct kick?
8. Watch for quick free kicks.

Defending Goal Kicks:

Playing Long - As a rule of thumb, everyone 10 yards within the center circle, or "10 by the 10" to compete for opposition's goal kick.

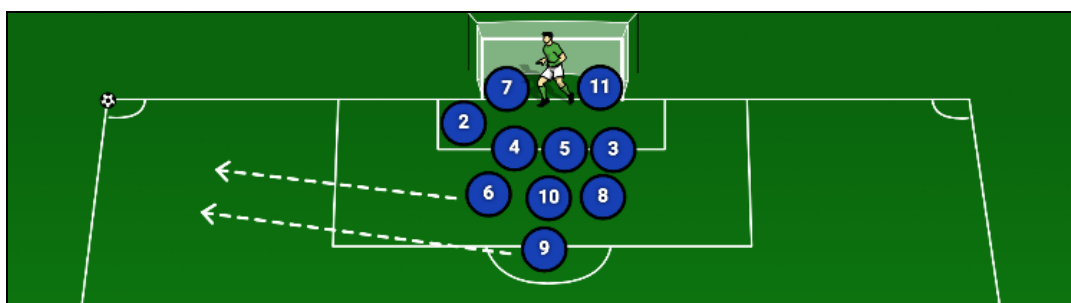


Defending Corner Kicks: With the referee awarding a corner kick the first thing that should happen is the communication and organization by the goalkeeper while at the same time watching the ball and the keeping themselves prepared for a quick kick.

The organization should be centered around making sure that the Defending players are set up zonal (RUSH WAY). A few keys to organization that should be considered are:

- a.) GK should be slightly turned at a 45 degree angle to the ball, just behind the midline of the goal line, watching the ball and area in front of goal.
- b.) GK's call should be made prior to the ball crossing the near post
- c.) GK's call should be AWAY or KEEPER
- d.) Players, as pre-determined by coach, should be posted to the near and far posts
- e.) Post players should be inside of the post on the goal line

Corner Kicks - Zone.



- Outside Midfielders on the post; one near and one far.
 - Outside Midfielders leave the post for two reasons:
Keeper comes off his/her line to make a catch or save. If this happens, both players slide in two yards. They become responsible for four yards each inside the goal.
- The ball is cleared away from danger (debatable topic). Keeper commands "Away" and "Step" for pulling up or condensing the field.
- One player placed in front of the six yard box. His/her responsibility is to imagine a mini goal six yards by six feet. Any ball in this area is "away".
- Three players across the six yard line: one on the near post, one on the far post and one in the middle. These are preferably your best players in the air.
- Three players across the eight, directly out from the three players on the six yard line.
- The last player is in on top of the box....the "bullet man", tenacious and fearless.
- On short kicks, the high near corner man pressures the ball along with the top of the box defender.
- If you are not involved in the heading, you are shielding your man from any rebounds or challenges by "boxing out". Stay engaged until the team is out of danger.

Defending Free Kicks - The Wall:

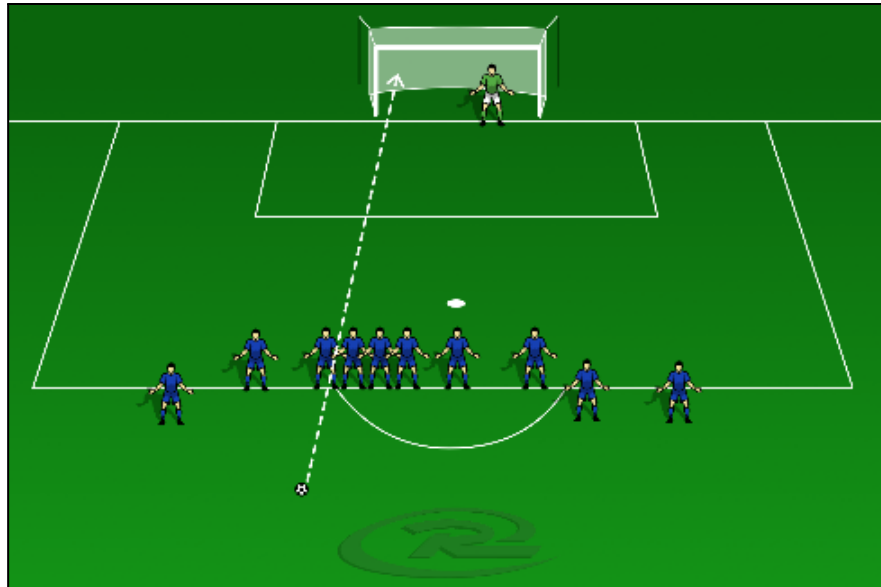
There is no difference between defending an indirect or a direct. However the defending team must understand the definition between the two types of kicks.



- Indirect - (8 types): four for the field player and four for the goalie) A free kick from which a goal can not be scored until the ball touches another player of either team. Referees will physically hold one arm up in the air, signaling the indirect kick.
- Direct - (10 types) A free kick from which a goal may be scored without a second player touching the ball. The referee need not physically signal a direct free kick, other than pointing direction.

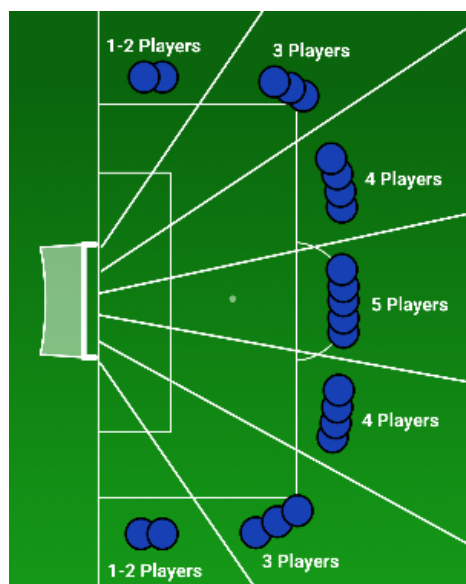
Understanding the definitions can give the defending team an advantage.

The Wall: As you can see, the player number #1 is outside the line of the post. So we "burn" one player. This will compensate for the shooter who has the ability to bend the ball. Players #2, #3, #4, are in the line of the goal. Player #5 is in line with the other post. This wall would be called a **split wall**. In this case, the goalie would be asking for "four plus one".



Other points to remember:

- Closest player should front ball but all players are responsible for guarding against quick kick.
- Keeper determines the number of players in the wall. A general formula is six man wall for a ball spotted eighteen yards from goal. Every three yards further, you may take a man out of the wall. Below is a general rule of thumb outline for how many players should be in the wall.



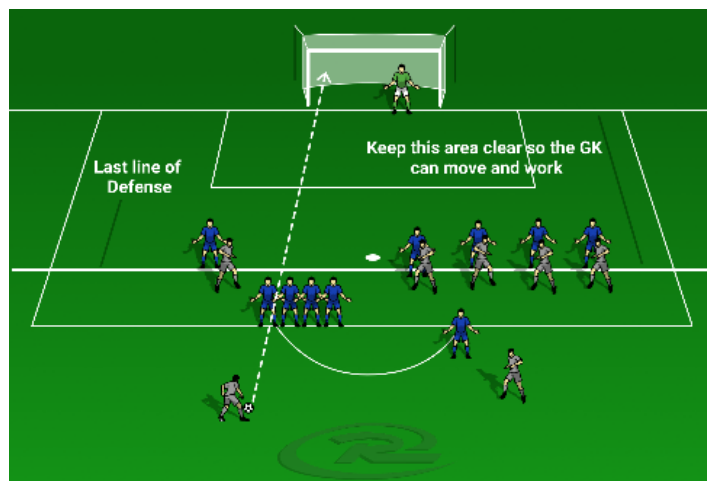
Number of yards away from goal	Number of men in wall
18 yards	Six
21 yards	Five
24 yards	Four
27 yards	Three
30 yards	Two
33 yards	One

- Forward lines up the wall (GK can take over when the referee determines that play cannot resume prior to a whistle). GK initially can line up the wall from the middle of the goal.
- The wall has other responsibilities other than just being a wall. Organizing the other defenders and deciding as a unit if encroachment is worthwhile, i.e. the free kick is dangerous, the score, the skill of the shooter, etc. If a yellow card is issued, change that individual out of the wall. The wall should then decide as a unit if encroachment is once again worthwhile.
- The wall must look for clues the opposition could be giving. Examples: two on the ball, is there a potential pass, shooter's angle of approach, backs sent forward, etc.
- In general, keepers with a poor vertical reach should start inside the goal, i.e. U11's.

It is important that the players in the wall are paying attention to how the goalkeeper lines up the wall and that they listen to his/her instructions. The instructions that are given should be telling the wall to go either left or right, how many players are in the wall, and they have to be LOUD and FORCEFUL. The wall should be lined up with the near post and between the two players that are covering that near post. An example of this is below.

The goalkeeper then should place themselves in a position to where they can have a good view of the ball. This is usually more towards the central area of the goal, so he/she can cover the far post area, but not too far as to not be able to get back across to the near post. The keeper wants to stay in a central location as much as possible and tighter to the goal line.

The keeper should also be aware of the space in front of him/herself. You do not want the defensive line dropping too far back into the box and making the area crowded. This only makes it more difficult to come off the line and receive a clean ball. Again, a general rule of thumb is to have your defensive line just the wall. This is dependent on how far out the free kick is given.



The number one priority is to make sure that set pieces are organized prior to the game. For example, who will be on the wall? Who will be closing the ball down on an indirect free kick? Who is marking players or are you going to play a zonal defense? These are all the responsibility of the goalkeeper and what they are comfortable with. Play to the keeper's ability.

Defensive Set Pieces - Penalty Kicks

- Although there is little we can do to manipulate the defending of a penalty kick, that little bit might be enough.
- Do not leave the penalty box so willingly.
- Keeper should take his/her time getting in position.
- Keeper should watch shooters approach.
- Defenders fight for a good position to follow up. Not only is this good for a deflection, it is telling the shooter you are expecting a rebound.
- Keepers, anticipate, read the shooter, and make an educated decision on which way to dive.