

First contact

Not all players enjoy defending so it is essential practices are competitive, fun and give the player a reward for winning the ball (the chance to score a goal!) Encourage your defenders to make "First contact" in the bid to thwart an attack.



What you tell your players the session is about

1. Improving defending skills.
2. Experience of playing against different types of attacker (quick, slow, big, small, skilful).
3. Improving the attitude to winning the ball.

Session planner

Warm up 10 mins	Session 15 mins	Developments 15 mins	Game 15 mins	Warm down 5 mins
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Activity	Kit	Outcome
Warm up	Bibs	Players must try to grab opponents bibs, from <i>The Ultimate Football Warm-Ups manual</i> , exercise 19
The session	Balls, bibs cones	The defenders are showing a better attitude to pressuring the attackers and winning the ball
Development	Three mini goals, balls, bibs cones	The defender is reacting to a number of attacks in a short period of time
Game	Two goals, balls, bibs, cones	The players are defending better and on regaining possession they are seeing the reward by having the chance to attack and score goals
Warm down	n/a	Gentle jogging and stretching exercises



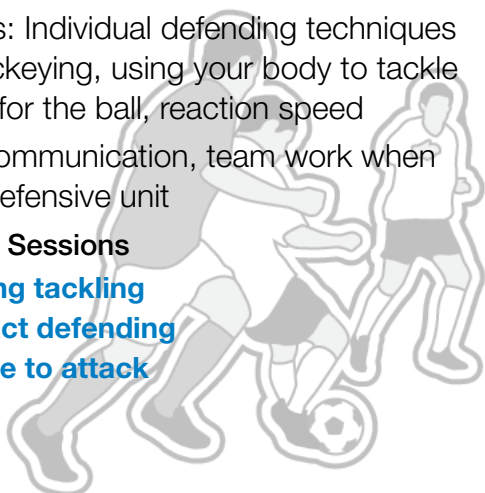
Where it fits

Individual skills: Individual defending techniques – pressing, jockeying, using your body to tackle and compete for the ball, reaction speed

Team skills: Communication, team work when moving as a defensive unit

Related Smart Sessions

- 6 Teaching tackling
- 18 Compact defending
- 21 Defence to attack



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What to think about

- The practices in this session do not give players an option on whether to defend or not as the attackers are continuously working to retain the ball or score a goal. Putting your players in this environment will aid their desire to defend.
- The practices will enable you to see which players really need work on their defending skills.
- The players must see the reward of defending well and having the opportunity to attack. On winning possession, can the defender then dribble or pass forward to enable their team to become attackers?





Set-up

- Use a 30 yards by 10 yards area, split into three equal sections for the session.
- Use a 20 yard square for the development.
- Use a 40 yards by 30 yards area for the game.



What you get your players to do

Place four attackers in the top area and four attackers in the bottom area. Each attacker has a ball. Place a ball on a cone in the centre square. Finally place one defender in the top and bottom areas.

Defenders try to tackle all four attackers and knock each ball out of the area. Then each defender runs to knock the ball off the cone in the centre to be the winner. All players have a turn as a defender.



What to call out

- “Press the attacker”
- “Can you win the ball?”
- “React to the next attackers”



Development

Split players into four teams. Three teams are nominated as attackers. One team is nominated as defenders. The attacking teams take turns to dribble 1v1 to score in the mini goal that is opposite their starting position.

The defender, working alone, defends three attacks in quick succession.

If the defender wins the ball from the attacker he can score in one of the other two mini goals. After the three attacks, a new defender takes the place of the current one.

All teams have a turn as the defenders.



Game situation

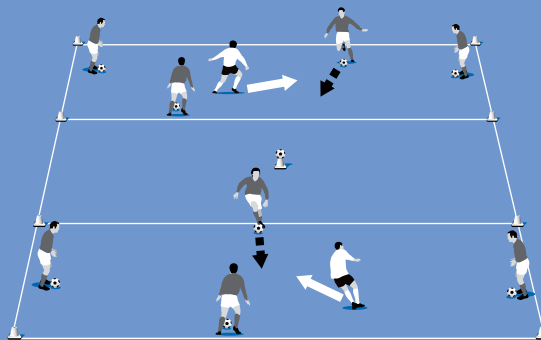
Play a small-sided game. Most of the action takes place in the defending team's half of the pitch. Attackers have the ball and try to score goals.

The defending team must work together in order to win the ball. If successful, the defender regaining the ball is allowed to dribble, unopposed, into the opposite half of the pitch and have a shot at goal.

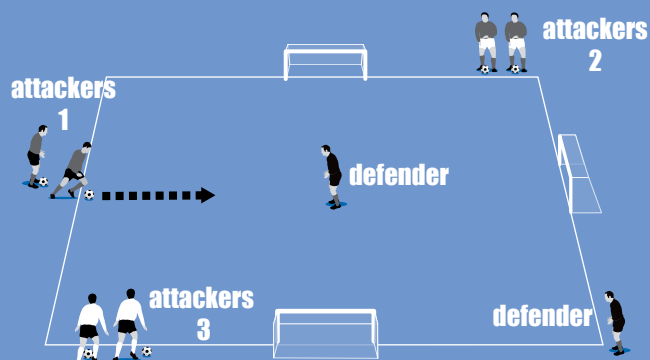
Swap the teams over after seven minutes. The team with most goals combined from attack and defence wins.

First contact

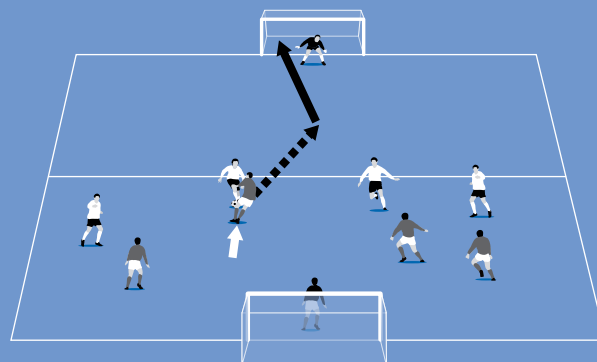
direction of run
 run with ball shot



Two defenders compete to tackle the attackers and then to clear the ball off the central cone. The quickest one wins.



The defender must work hard and react quickly to defend against three different 1v1 attacks. Then swap with his defending team mate.



The defending team regains the ball and can then dribble upfield and have a shot at goal.

