

Session Summary

Session:	4v1 + 1 DEFENDING PRACTICE		
Date:	-	Coach:	Ian Knapp (ianknappuk@googlemail.com)
Duration:	20 - 30 mins	Equipment:	Balls, bibs, cones, goal
#Players:	8 - 12	Age Group:	U10 - U17

Introduction

This practice is one step on from our 2v1+1 Recovery Practice session, in that we're introducing more game realism by using a larger area and more players, to mimic the sort of scenario your defenders might find themselves in in a match. As well as being great practice for defending when outnumbered, it also allows the attacking players to work on their counter attacking skills and how they best take advantage of an overload situation.

Setup

- An area about the width of a standard mini soccer pitch (40 yards) and about 3/4 of the length of a mini soccer pitch (45 yards) but as always, the size of the area should be adapted to the age of the players.
- A goal at one end, which the attacking team will attack towards.
- Set up a "Recovery Line" across the pitch that the recovery defenders use as the point at which they're allowed to recover to help defend once the ball has crossed. Use the half way line of the pitch (see below) or a row of cones about 2/3 of the way along the area (closer to the end the players are starting play from). You may have to adapt where this line is depending on how successful the players are being.
- Attacking team (4 players) set up as shown below, with a centre mid, a centre forward and two wide players (can reduce to 3 players if you want to make it easier for the defenders). Centre mid and wide players start on the line of cones, centre forward starts with their back to goal in a central position.
- Defending team set up with one central defender marking the centre forward and 2 more defenders waiting at the start point where the balls are (see pink 2 & 3 below). These are the recovering defenders.
- Plenty of balls at the start point (opposite end to the goal).
- Goalkeeper if desired.



Rules

- The attacking (white) central midfielder collects a ball and begins an attack, either with a ball in to the striker or a ball to one of the wide players.
- As soon as the ball crosses the recovery line (the pitch half way line in the above example), one of the recovering defenders (number 2 in the above example) can sprint back and help defend. The other recovery defender (number 3) waits until next turn (too tiring for both to keep going every turn).
- Play continues until the attackers score, the ball goes out or the defenders win possession.
- If the phase of play completes without the attackers scoring, the defenders get a point.
- If defenders do win possession or the goalkeeper catches the ball, they can try to play out. If they manage it and get the ball over the recovery line whilst under control (dribbled or passed), they get a bonus point.
- If the attackers get a shot on target, they get 1 point. If they score, they get 2 points.
- Once play has finished, the midfielder collects another ball and play restarts, with the other recovery defender now taking their turn to defend whilst the original recovery defender has a break to catch their breath (it's hard work making recovery runs!!)
- Continue play until all the balls are used up or for a certain time limit. Encourage attackers to vary their types of attack to give the defenders plenty of different scenarios.

Progressions & Variations

- Introduce a second recovery defender (pairs can take turns) to make it easier for the defenders or play 3 attackers instead of 4.
- Vary the position of the recovery line to make it harder or easier.
- For 11 a side teams, introduce more game realism by using a wider pitch, with 5 or 6 attackers, 2 starting defenders and 2 recovery defenders.

5 Key Coaching Points / Challenges

- Delay - your job is to hold up the attackers so that your team mate can get back and help you.
- Positioning - protect the goal, but don't get too close to the attacker with the ball or he/she will just pass to a team mate.
- Don't dive in - if you try to win the ball too aggressively, you leave yourself open to the attacker either dribbling past you or passing to their team mate for an easy goal.
- Recovering player(s) - angle and speed of recovery runs. This might vary depending on where they are starting from and where the ball is. If they can win the ball then brilliant. If not, can they recover to a position that provides cover to allow the outnumbered defender to press the ball?
- Communication - work as a unit and if you have a goalkeeper in the practice, encourage them to communicate too.

There are coaching points for the attackers too, but we're focusing on defending here, so rather than confusing the issue, we'll leave them out here.

Key Coaching Points (FA's 4 Corners)

Technical

- **Delay** - your job is to hold the attackers up to allow your team mate to recover.
- **Positioning** - block the goal but don't get too close to the player with the ball - you need to be able to shift across if they pass.
- **Body shape** - not flat - keep side on - we need to be able to move backwards with the play to keep our positioning.
- **Don't dive in** - you don't have to win the ball.
- Recovery players - **angle** and **speed of run** (do you try to win the ball or try to get into a covering position to allow your team mate to try to press the ball).
- **Tackling** skills once recovered and we try to win the ball.

Physical

- **Speed, fitness, strength** to make recovery runs and to keep pace with the attackers and not let them go past.
- **Balance** and **agility** to tackle, recover and block.

Psychological

- **Decision making** - what position do you take up to best protect the goal AND cover chance of a pass to the other player?
- **Decision making** - recovery player - do you try to win the ball or get back and cover for your team mate?
- **Concentration** - where is the goal? Can we make sure we keep it covered?
- **Anticipate** the attacker's next move based on their body shape and movement.
- **Confidence** to go again if you were beaten last time.

Social

- **Communication**
- Working as a **team**
- **Encouraging** others
- Have **fun!**