

## Session Summary

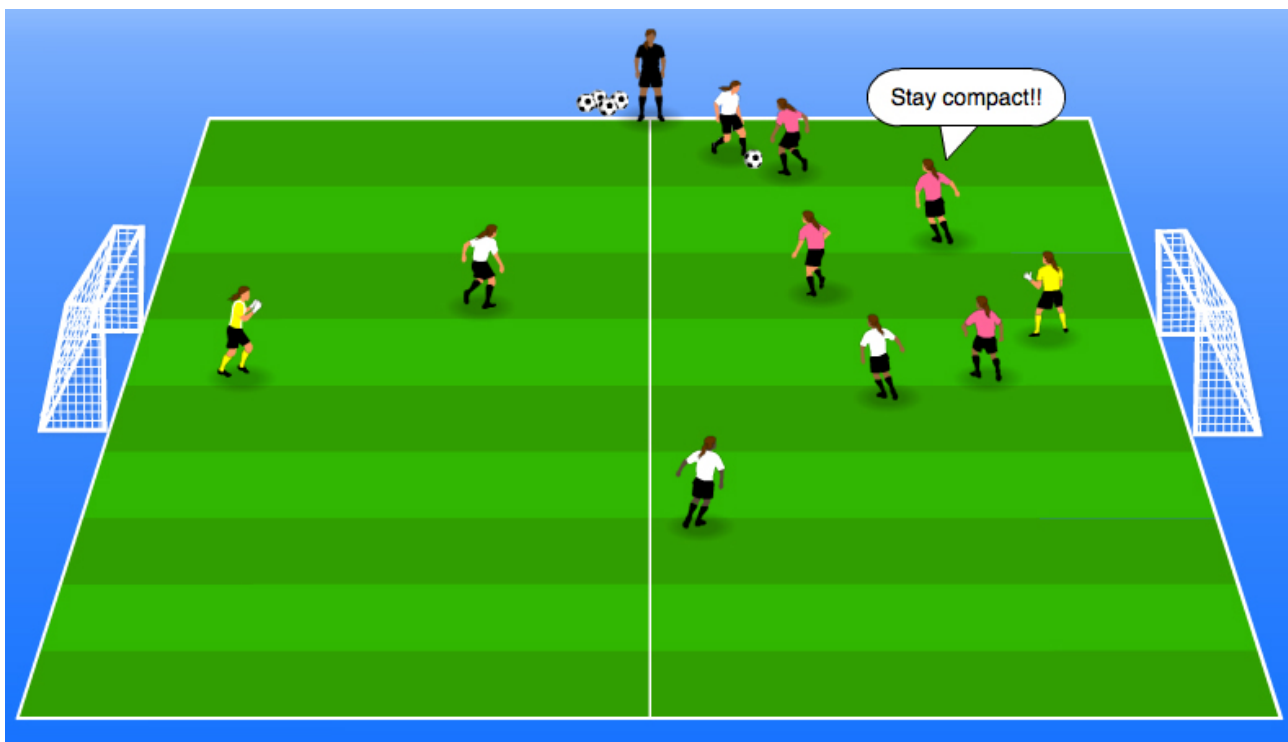
<b>Session:</b>	<b>DEFENDING AS A UNIT SMALL SIDED GAME</b>		
<b>Date:</b>	-	<b>Coach:</b>	Ian Knapp (ianknappuk@googlemail.com)
<b>Duration:</b>	15 - 25 mins	<b>Equipment:</b>	Balls, bibs, cones
<b>#Players:</b>	10	<b>Age Group:</b>	U10 - U17

## Introduction

This small sided game gives your players the opportunity to work on defending as a unit repeatedly in a match-like scenario. The skills they have learned in earlier 1v1 and 2v2 defending practices are put to the test, with the added challenge of working as a team to defend the goal, recover to get back into shape if they lose the ball high up the pitch and to transition defence into attack when they win the ball back.

## Setup

- Play 4v4 (plus goalkeepers if desired) on a small pitch. Exact size of pitch can be manipulated depending on age of players and how easy you want to make it for them to defend effectively (smaller area = easier to defend).
- Coach at side with more footballs.



## Rules

- Can either play a "normal" game where both teams work on their defending or work with one team only, starting play each time the ball goes out with the opposition in possession.
- Challenge the defending team to keep the opposition from getting a shot on target.
- Other than that, it's just a regular game of football, with the focus on defending as a unit.

## 5 Key Coaching Points / Challenges

- Work as a team - the closest player presses the ball whilst the others cover. If anybody is dragged out of position, work as a unit to hold up the opposition and give your team mate(s) a chance to recover back into position.
- Imagine the 4 defenders are connected with a piece of invisible string (see below) that keeps them in formation.
- Body shape / 1v1 defending skills ("show" the opponent where you want them to go with the ball)
- Don't dive in - we don't have to win the ball straight away - if we keep the opposition away from the goal, playing backwards or sideways, they will eventually make a mistake. Wait and only try to win the ball if it's there to be won.
- Communicate - if you are going to press the ball, let your team mate know they need to drop and cover you.

### Key Coaching Points (FA's 4 Corners)

#### Technical

- Work as a **unit** - one presses, the others cover. Generally the closest to the ball presses and the others drop and cover.
- **Angles and distances** between pressing and covering players. See "invisible string" below.
- **Protect** the goal.
- **Body shape** - side on, balls of feet, crouch, arm up. **NOT FLAT!**
- Show the attacker **away from the goal**, on to their **weaker foot** or in to **your team mates**. Try to make them play backwards or sideways and make them **predictable**.
- If the opportunity to win the ball arises, **tackle** with your front foot or if the player tries to go past you, you could use your back foot to block the ball.
- **Timing** of the tackle
- Keep your **eyes on the ball**, regardless of any tricks or fancy footwork the attacker may be using.
- Once you've won the ball, can you drive forward and **turn defence into attack**?

#### Physical

- **Strength** to hold off the attackers and win the ball.
- **Speed** and **fitness** to keep pace with the attacker if they do go past you or to make a recovering run to cover for your team mate.
- **Balance** and **agility** to tackle, recover and block
- **Speed** at which you close down the attacker

#### Psychological

- **Decision making** - is there an opportunity to win the ball or should we just hold the player up?
- **Awareness** - is the player left or right footed, can we show them onto their weaker foot.
- **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

- Working as a **team** and covering for your team mates
- **Communication** between the two players.
- **Encouraging** others if they made a mistake or are struggling
- Have **fun!**