

Defending

Basic Defending:

1. Close space to the player with the ball quickly.
Shorten steps as defender gets closer to the player with the ball
2. Choose and angle the last few steps to make player with the ball predictable – choose a side.
3. Face player with the ball with one side of body at a 45-degree angle.
4. Maintain the 45-degree angle even when rotating the other side toward the player with the ball as the attacker changes direction.
5. Stay between the player with the ball and the goal.
6. Maintain the distance between the defender and the player with the ball.
7. Shuffle feet backwards to one side.
8. Remember that PATIENCE is critical to winning the ball. Do NOT lunge at the player with the ball

1. Role of the first, second and third defenders (pressure, cover and balance)

A. First defender (pressure and angles of pressure)

1. Restriction limit attacker's passing options.
2. Deny penetration
 - a. Prevent penetrating pass. Force opponent sideways or backward.
 - b. Make player with ball a ball watcher (head down) so player cannot read the game.
3. Make opponents play predictable. This is accomplished by the angle of the challenge. --
Not so close that attacker can get behind defender.
4. Becoming the first defender
 - a. Angle of challenge when going to close down player receiving ball, take angle to intercept, tackle or predict.
 - b. Speed of challenge must not be so slow, that player receiving ball has time to play ball forward or attack defender with ball. Must not be so fast that player receiving ball can play ball past defender one time or can execute a 1-2 movement.

B. Second defender (cover) - Support of the first defender

- a. Angle of support
Second defender should support the first defender at a 45-degree angle. This allows the second defender to be equally distant from supporting the first defender and closing down a supporting attacker if they were to receive a pass. The angle of support will vary according to positions of attackers and in which third of the field the ball is located.
- b. Distance of support
The distance of the second defender should permit immediately closing down an attacker who has beaten the first defender.
Distance of support will vary with the third of the field, how the first defender has closed down the ball, and whether the player with the ball is running or standing with the ball.
- c. Track down supporting attacker who makes run in advance of ball, while still providing cover for first defender.



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d. Communication - The second defender offers direction to the first defender on which side of the field to force the player with the ball – “Inside” or “outside”.

C. Third Defender (balance)

- a. Tracking of opponents making vertical runs away from the area of the ball (weak side).
- b. Work of the third defender – Be close enough to third attackers to close down the ball as it arrives; be alert to holding the offside line with the other defenders; be prepared to become a second defender if necessary.

D. Team defending principles - Squeezing together of defenders from back to front (vertical compactness) and from side to side (horizontal concentration) to form a defending block.

2. Responsibilities of 1st defender

a. Deny the pass to an attacker.

- I. Positioning: on the defending side of the attacker and ball side of the attacker (inside of the field).
- ii. Establish control of the attacker by stepping in and across the attacker’s body with the leg nearest the attacker – control the body before the ball.
- III. Intercept the ball with the inside foot.

b. Delay an attacker who receives a pass and is facing their own goal - **Closing down from the back.**

- i. When closing attackers down from the rear the defender must be aware of two factors:
 - a. Speed of closing
 - i. Closing down too quickly and causing a foul or being spun.
 - ii. Closing down too slowly, allowing the attacker to receive the ball and turn.
 - b. Angle of closing
- ii. Close player down quickly initially. Slow down when approximately 5-6 paces away by lowering center of gravity.
- iii. Wait behind the line of the ball roll or flight of the pass, behind the foot that is receiving the ball not behind the attacker’s body.
- iv. Be close enough to touch the attacker, but not too close that would permit the attacker to spin and get by the defender with their first touch.
- v. Be sideways to the attacker with the weight low.
- vi. On the attacker’s first touch either laterally or toward their own goal, close the space and attempt to poke the ball away.
- vii. Remember that forcing a pass backwards is good defending; exhibit patience and do not over commit to taking the ball away from the

attacker.

- c. Dispossess an attacker who is facing their attacking goal - **Closing from the front**
 - i. When closing attackers from the front the defender must be aware of two factors:
 - a. Speed of closing:
 - i. Too quickly which permits the attacker to go around the defender.
 - ii. Too slowly, allowing the attacker to receive the ball and run at the defender.
 - b. Angle of approach:
 - c. Too vertical which permits the attacker to go to either side of the defender.
 - d. Too horizontal which permits the attacker to run by the defender.
 - ii. Close opponent down quickly (long strides).
 - a. Slow down by lowering center of gravity as the defender gets closer to the attacker (use shorter steps).
 - b. Focus on the ball.
 - c. Be sideways facing the attacker with one foot forward at a 45-degree angle to the attacker.
 - d. Force attacker to one side an angle.
- d. Delaying an attacker who is facing their attacking goal
 - i. Speed and angle of approach – same as closing from the front (C above).
 - ii. Stay low, stay sideways on with shoulder in line with attackers shoulder – not directly in front of the attacker.
 - iii. Feint as if attempting to tackle.
 - iv. Shuffle feet backwards at an angle (towards the area where the halfway line if in the defensive half of the field meets the touchline or the corner of the field if in the attacking half of the field).
 - v. If the ball is played past the defender, run to recovery in front of the attacker or if possible cut in front of the attacker and the ball.

3. Tackling

a. From the front

- i. Poke Tackle - Generally executed when the attacker is in control of the ball and approaching the defender. The poke tackle is a safe tackle that helps the defender to stay balanced and able to recover. The defender tackles at the moment the attacker loses control of the ball or mis-touches it.
- ii. Technical Cues for Poke Tackle
 - a. Retreat as opponent dribbles forward.
 - b. Tackle with front foot but stay balanced with weight on the back leg.
 - c. Feint at ball; do not land on front foot unless the defender makes contact with the ball.
 - d. Poke the ball with the forward leg across the ball and follow through



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toward the ball.

- ii. Block Tackle The block tackle is a fully committed tackle using the inside of the foot. Block tackling is only recommended in 50-50 situations where neither player has possession of the ball. The block tackle is a driving tackle
- iii. Technical Cues for Block Tackle
 - I. Decision to commit to the tackle.
 - ii. Commitment to ball at high speed.
- iv. Lower center of gravity and shorter steps as defender gets close to ball.
- v. Hop onto support foot, support knee is bent, foot planted alongside ball.
- vi. Back foot contacts ball below equator - foot is in shape of an 'L'
- vii. Follow through is straightforward across at the ball.
- viii. Body weight follows the leg across the attacker and to the ball.

b. From the side – often occurs near the touch line

- I. Approach player with the ball from the side.
- ii. When even with the shoulders attempt to establish the near shoulder in front of the near shoulder of player with the ball.
- iii. Poke the ball with the closer leg – left leg if approaching an attacker's right side and the right leg if approaching an attacker's left side.