

ATTACKING & DEFENDING (INDIVIDUAL & UNIT FOCUS)

AGE PHASE: U12-U16

LEVEL

- U12-U16

SESSION OBJECTIVES

- To develop each individual's ability to attack and defend both as individuals and in small units.

PART 1: UNOPPOSED TECHNICAL PRACTICE

- This practice sees players attempt to beat a mannequin using a variety of 1v1 moves; it is unopposed and sees the players exposed to a high volume of repetition.

PART 2: OPPOSED 1v1/3v3 PRACTICE

- This practice progresses from an opposed 1v1 to an opposed 3v3 in which there are three separate 1v1 battles.
- The focus is on individual attacking and defending skills, as well as the concept of defensive cover.

PART 3: OPPOSED 3v3 GAME

- This is a 3v3 game with a focus on a variety of attacking and defending principles within the context of an around-the box practice.

PART 4: ATTACK VS DEFENCE

- This practice sees waves of attack against defence and encourages the attacking side to retain their attacking width and search for shooting opportunities.

KEY



Ball movement



Player movement without the ball



Player movement with the ball



Players



Cones



Flat marker



Cones with flat marker



Goal



Mini-goal



Mannequin



Pole



Football

FUNCTION

- In this practice, players are split into four even groups.
- Players dribble at a mannequin, which serves as a defender, before performing a 1v1 move to beat it.
- In the example here, **Player A** in the group on the left dribbles towards the mannequin, beats it, then passes the ball to **Player B** before joining the back of the queue behind **Player D**. Player B repeats the pattern in the other direction, eventually passing to **Player C**.

PROGRESSION

- The receiving player on either side of the mannequin plays a one-two with the central player before he takes his turn to beat the mannequin.
- In this example, **Player B** would play a one-two with **Player A** before beating the mannequin and passing to **Player C**.



COACHING DETAIL: TECHNICAL

MAKING AN ANGLE

- The receiving players should make an angle by moving to either side of the flat marker (denoted by the blue circles) behind which they are stood, to open a passing line for the ball-carrier. Each flat marker should be used as a reference point to eliminate by playing around it.

DROP THE SHOULDER

- Players could be encouraged to use the drop of the shoulder – either once or twice – as a 1v1 move that would unbalance an opposition defender. They should be encouraged to exaggerate the movement in order to sell the move to the defender.

VARIETY & CREATIVITY

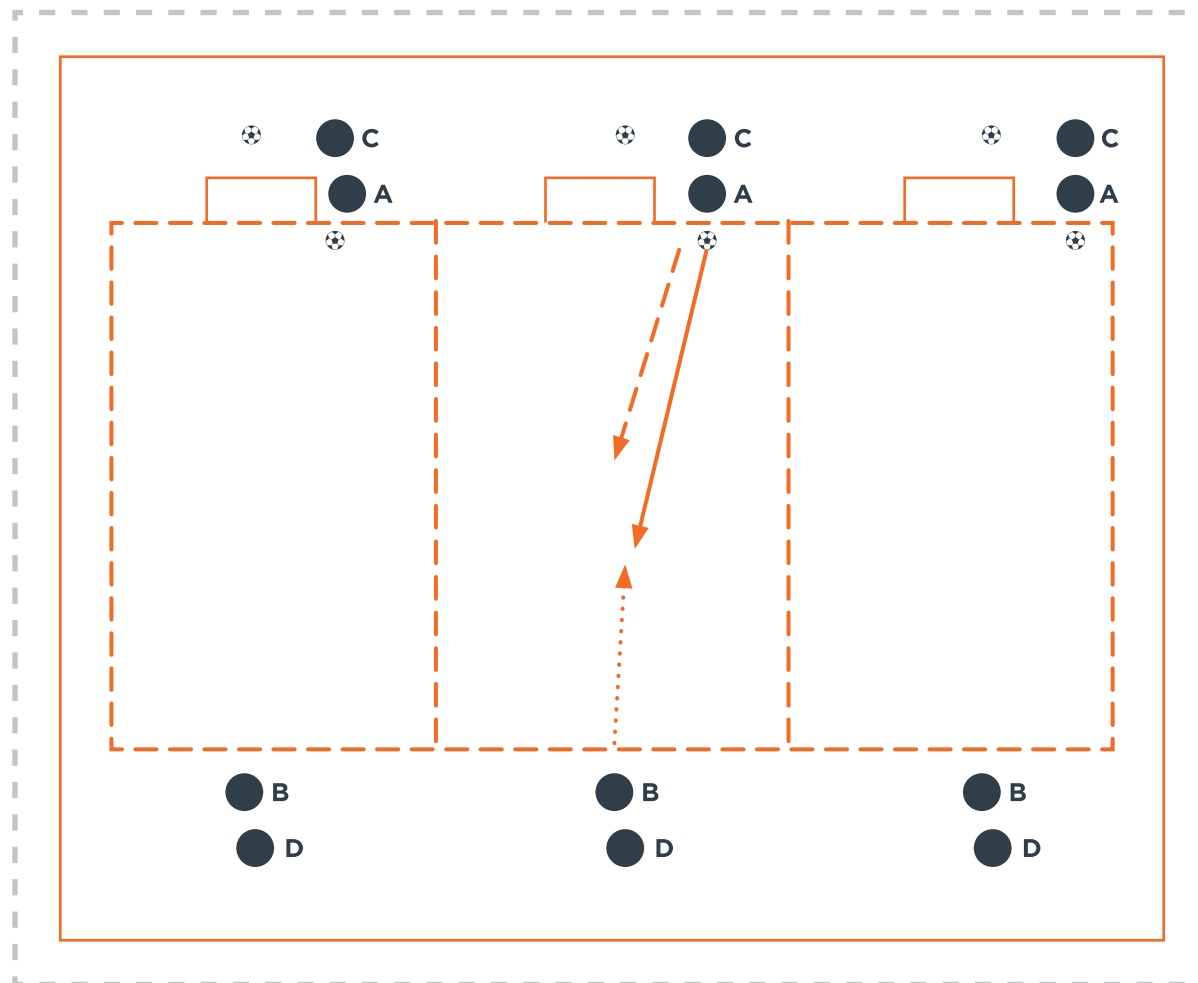
- Players should be afforded the opportunity to practise their own interpretations of the best way to beat defenders in 1v1s and not be limited by the coach's imagination.

OPPOSED 1v1 PRACTICE

ATTACKING & DEFENDING:
INDIVIDUAL & UNIT FOCUS

FUNCTION

- In this practice, players are split into three even groups of four. Each channel is 20x12 yards.
- This practice sees a competitive 1v1 toward a mini-goal in each of the three channels that is initiated by a pass from the eventual defender to the attacker.
- In the example here, **Player A** is the eventual defender. He plays to **Player B**, who then tries to beat **Player A** in a 1v1 toward the mini-goal.
- Should the defender regain possession, their outlet pass is to the waiting attacker. Here, if **Player A** wins possession from **Player B**, they must attempt to pass to **Player D**.
- After each completion of a 1v1, the attacking player joins the defenders' queue, while the defending player joins the attackers' queue.



COACHING DETAIL: TECHNICAL

1v1 DEFENDING

- Players should be encouraged to be tough to beat in a 1v1; they should attempt to force the attacker one way before making contact with them, using their leading arm where appropriate.
- Players should seek to identify the triggers that lead to their regain of possession; these could be heavy or misplaced touches.

1v1 ATTACKING

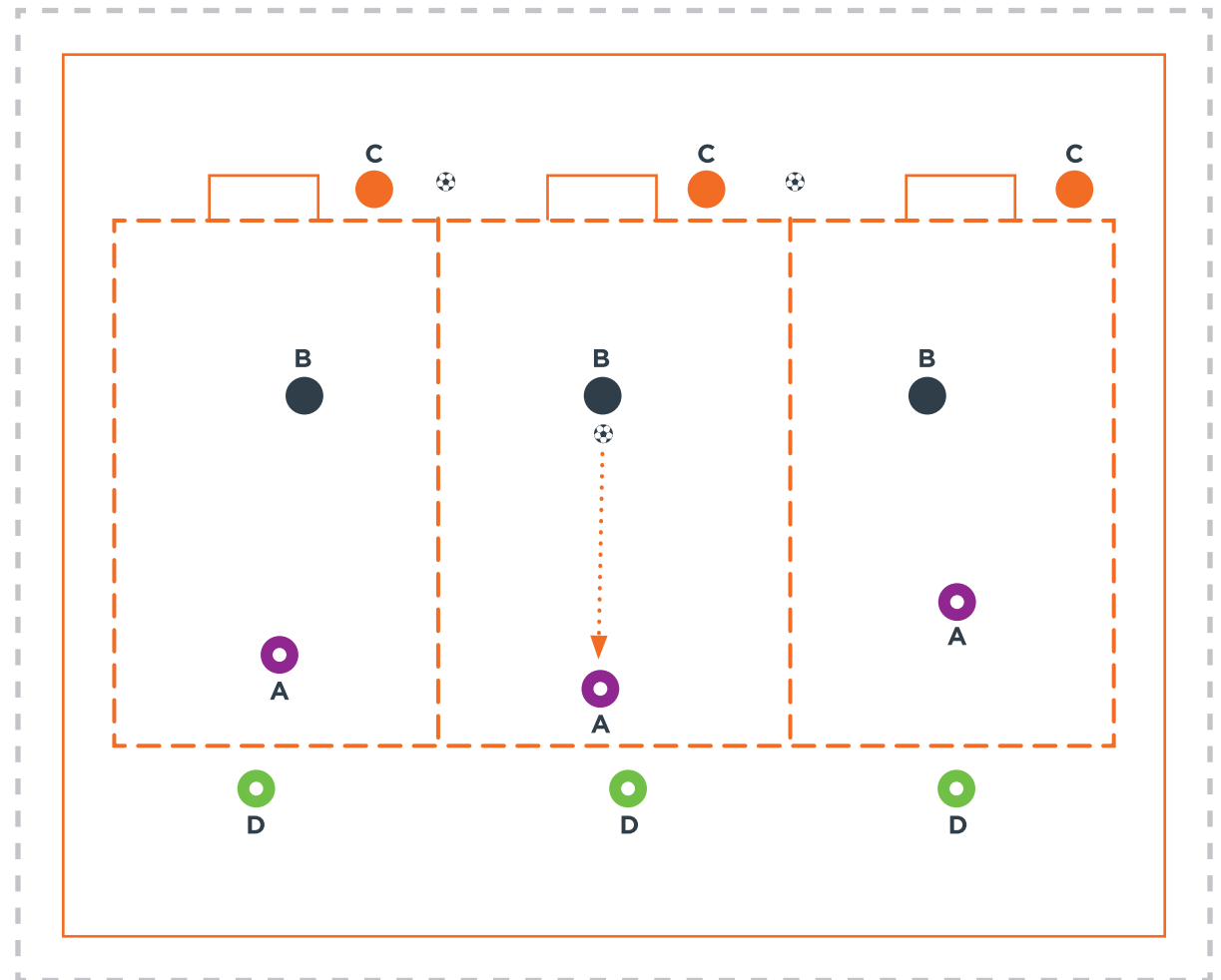
- Players should be ruthless in attempting to beat the opposition defender.
- They should not seek to beat them twice, but attempt to score immediately after doing so the first time.

OPPOSED 3v3 PRACTICE

ATTACKING & DEFENDING:
INDIVIDUAL & UNIT FOCUS

FUNCTION

- This practice leads on from the 1v1 practice and utilises the same set-up.
- This time, three attackers play against three defenders in an opposed 3v3. However, players are restricted to playing in their zones in order to ensure that there is a continued focus on attacking and defending in 1v1 situations.
- Each 3v3 starts with the eventual defending team - here, **Team B** - serving into the attacking team (**Team A**). The attacking team then attempts to score in one of the mini-goals at the top of the playing area.
- Should the defenders regain possession, their outlet pass is to the waiting attackers. In this example, **Team B** would look to play into **Team D** on possession regain.
- After the completion of each 3v3, the attacking players join the defenders' queue behind **Team C** and the defending team joins the attackers' queue behind **Team D**.



COACHING DETAIL: IN-POSSESSION

DECISION-MAKING: 1v1 OR PASS?

- Players must determine whether it is more appropriate to attack the defender in their channel 1v1 or shift the ball to another channel.
- The defender's body position, their distance from the attacker and the attacker's momentum might all be factors in this decision.

COACHING DETAIL: OUT OF POSSESSION

PRESSURE & COVER

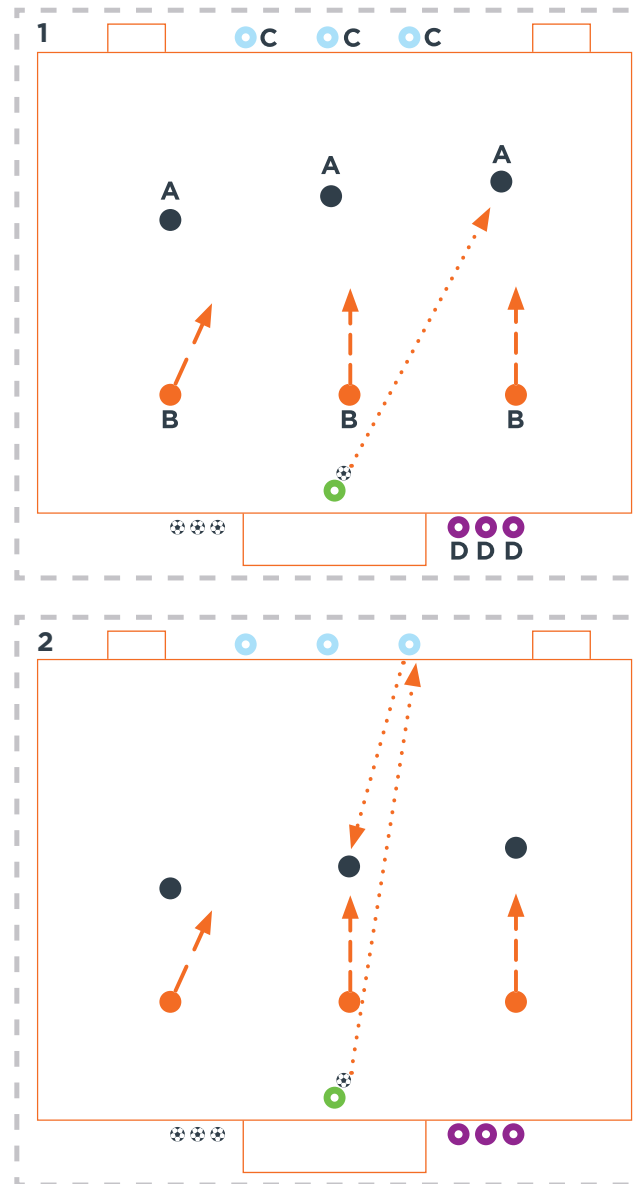
- Although this practice restricts players in 1v1 situations, there is still an emphasis placed on the second and third defenders' positions.
- The defender working against the ball-carrying attacker should aim to apply aggressive pressure.
- The remaining defenders should take up covering positions that prevent the attacker from playing into the goals in their channels. This reflects covering forward passes in a game situation.

OPPOSED 3v3 GAME

ATTACKING & DEFENDING:
INDIVIDUAL & UNIT FOCUS

FUNCTION 1

- This practice is an opposed 3v3 in which players are unrestricted.
- There are four teams of three; six players play while a team of defenders and a team of attackers rest.
- The goalkeeper initiates each attack by playing into the attacking **Team A**. As he does so, from a set start position, the defending **Team B** must get up and prepare to engage the three attackers as far from goal as appropriate.
- The attacking team must attempt to stay onside.
- **Team B** must attempt to steal the ball from **Team A**. If they do so, their targets become the two mini-goals positioned in front of them.
- As each attack concludes, the defending team replaces the waiting attacking team (**Team C**) and the attacking team replaces the waiting defending team (**Team D**).



FUNCTION 2

- A variation of the practice sees the goalkeeper play to the waiting defenders, who play first time into the set of attackers who then start their attack from a back-to-goal situation.

COACHING DETAIL: IN POSSESSION

USE THE SPACE

- Attacking players should be encouraged to use the space in front of them positively; they should build speed and momentum that can be used to engage defenders.
- This may provide cues to slide to a teammate as the defender makes a commitment to tackle, or to beat them 1v1.

POSITIVITY IN 1v1 SITUATIONS

- As 1v1 situations present themselves for attackers, they should be encouraged to demonstrate a positive mentality and try to beat defenders 1v1 in order to create opportunities to score or assist.

FINDING SPACE TO SHOOT

- As the practice moves on to emphasise the back-to-goal situation for forwards, the coach should encourage creativity among the attacking players in order to find sufficient space to work quick shots.
- More unorthodox shooting techniques, such as toe-pokes, might be required to make use of split-second shooting opportunities.

RUN TIMING & VARIATION

- Attackers should be encouraged to make a variety of runs. Emphasis should be placed on decoy runs, being onside and not making the same type of run as another attacker.

COACHING DETAIL: OUT OF POSSESSION

DEALING WITH THE 2v1

- As the attacking team creates 2v1s through the use of an overlap, the defending team must deal with this situation appropriately. The first defender, initially confronted with a 2v1, must take care of the runner on the outside, while the inside defender should deal with the ball-carrier.

PRESSURE & COVER

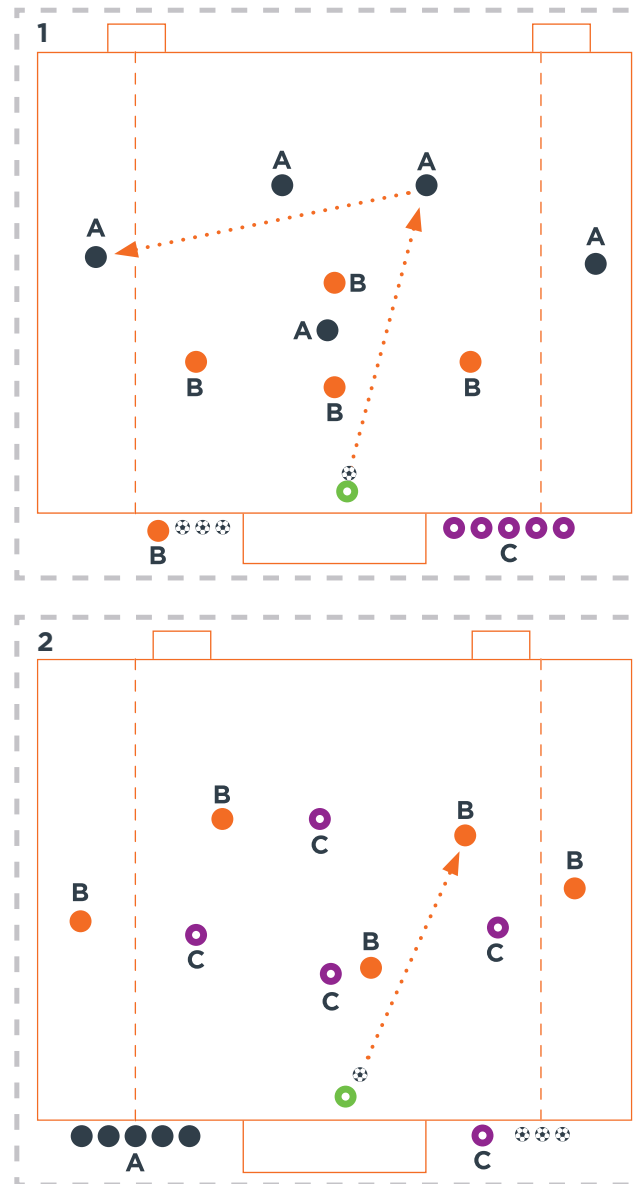
- Defenders should be encouraged to get up quickly and engage the attackers as far from goal as possible. Their defending should reflect the urgency and aggression that is required to successfully defend the box.
- They should be encouraged to hold a high line and, where appropriate, make use of the offside trap.
- Emphasising the need to cover the pressing player is also important; the defensive line should not be flat.

PREVENTING FORWARDS FROM TURNING

- As the practice progresses to see defenders engaging attackers with their backs to goal, defenders should make every attempt to prevent the attacker from turning and facing them up.
- An appropriate body position and contact are prompts for coaches to make.

FUNCTION

- This is an attack vs defence practice in which a team of attackers (**Team A**) must attempt to score in the big goal. On possession regain, the defending team (**B**) should attempt to score in either mini-goal.
- The defending team (**B**) is always in a 3-1 shape (with one of their team of five inactive) so as to create a 5v4 situation in the attacking team's favour.
- The outside channels marked by the dashed lines are reference points that indicate to the wide attacking players on **Team A** the need to maintain width to their attacking structure so that there is a way of stretching the opposition.
- After the completion of each attack, the attacking team (**A**) becomes the resting team, the defending team (**B**) becomes the attacking team and the resting team (**C**) becomes the defending team.
- This changeover is depicted by the variation in the set-up from **Diagram 1** to **Diagram 2**.



COACHING DETAIL: IN POSSESSION

MAINTAIN WIDTH

- Using the outside channels as a reference point, the in-possession side should ensure there is width to their attacking structure. The wide attacking players should position themselves so that their side can switch play, stretch the opposition back line and find opportunities to exploit 1v1s and gaps between defenders.

1v1 POSITIVITY

- Stretching the opposition back-line using quick switches of play will lead to frequent 1v1 situations for wide attackers.
- Coaches should reinforce the focuses of the earlier parts of the session from the perspective of 1v1s.

COACHING DETAIL: OUT OF POSSESSION

A COMPACT LINE OF THREE

- The three defenders operating as a back three should attempt to react to changes in the point of attack, maintain appropriate distances between one another and defend aggressively.

1v1 FOCUS

- The focuses from the perspective of defending 1v1 – aggression, contact, identifying triggers to steal the ball – should remain following the session's earlier practices.