Global Premier Soccer

Principles of Defending
The 7 traits that all GPS teams should exhibit:

**CONFIDENT**
GPS teams are made up of confident players. This confidence comes from self belief, hard work, repetition and team camaraderie, all instilled in a positive coaching environment.

**GAME INTELLIGENT**
GPS teams are intelligent. Players are students of the game and are able to make adjustments based on what they see on the field.

**POSSSESSION-BASED**
GPS teams play an indirect style of soccer but have an awareness of the most appropriate penetrating pass.

**BUILD FROM THE BACK**
GPS teams always look to build attacks from the back as opposed to playing kick and run soccer.

**ATTACK-MINDED**
GPS teams play the game with flair and creativity.

**DEFENSIVE ORGANIZATION**
GPS teams understand how and when to apply pressure in order to regain possession of the ball.

**PHYSICALITY**
GPS teams excel in the physical element of the game - exhibiting pace and power. GPS teams are hard working, strong in the tackle and always play within the laws of the game.
FORMATTION - NUMERICAL SYSTEM

GPS SYSTEM OF PLAY 1-4-1-4-1
GPS SYSTEM OF PLAY 1-4-1-4-1

FORMATION - PLAYER MOVEMENTS OUT OF POSSESSION
PRINCIPLES OF DEFENDING:

The 3 key aims of defending are:

1. Prevent scoring chances
2. Limit opportunities to get into scoring positions
3. Regain possession

GPS Team shape when out of possession
Principles of Defending as a team:

1. Delay
2. Depth
3. Compactness
4. Balance
5. Restraint
6. Predictability
**Delay**
The ability to prevent the ball from being played forward quickly.
A pressuring player (nearest player) needs to reduce the time and space of the attacker to prevent the ball being played forward.
Team must compact and regain shape behind pressuring player and recognize body shape of defender to which direction play is being forced.
Players need to perform ‘a job and a half’ blocking a passing lane while being in a position to apply pressure to the nearest player if necessary.
PRINCIPLES OF DEFENDING AS A TEAM

Depth
The depth of the teams defensive position is dependant on the quality of pressure on the player in possession.

Diagram shows good pressure on the player in possession from the #9 which allows the rest of the team behind to squeeze and close space denying passing lanes leaving the space in behind the back 4 free. This space can be left as the player in possession is unable to play a long forward pass due to the high pressure by #9.

Another trigger to be able to squeeze high would be an opponent facing their own goal in possession as they cannot play a forward pass.

Diagram shows the player in possession under little pressure meaning ample time to get their head up and play a forward pass. This would force greater depth from the defensive team to deny a dangerous pass in behind the back 4 and keep the play in front of them.

#9 in this situation would look to block of a passing lane and make play predictable so the rest of the team can react and set up defensively to force possession in a certain area before stepping to win the ball.
PRINCIPLES OF DEFENDING AS A TEAM

Compactness

1. Maintain good distance between players to block forward passes and be able to provide cover should a team mate get beaten.
2. When ball travels across the field its important to transition across at the same speed to keep angles and distances so passing lanes do not appear for the opposition to penetrate. *Every player travels as the ball moves (across/forwards/backwards)*
3. Compactness denies space for the opposition to receive passes.
PRINCIPLES OF DEFENDING AS A TEAM

Balance

In order to cancel the threat of mobility provided by the offense, balance is required by the defending team to retain defensive shape. Balancing is an extension of delay and support. Balancing players provide additional support and have to be prepared to leave weak side attacking players unmarked to balance the strong side of the field.

In the diagram you can see the left back of the opposition in possession of the ball. The team has shuffled across the field to delay, provide depth and compactness. The balance is brought to the team by the players on the left hand side of the team formation, numbers 3, 10 & 11. These players occupy a position infield, leaving space on the weak side, but being able to get across to delay should the ball be switched to that side of the field.
PRINCIPLES OF DEFENDING AS A TEAM

Restraint

Defending players need to be patient and assess the risk involved in challenging for the ball. A well structured defending line can quickly become disorganized with one rash challenge. Players need to exercise control and restraint and re-adjust their shape to changing scenarios. Players also need to be alert to their surroundings at all times (switched on!).

Diagram shows opposing wide forward receiving ball in centre of the field on a counter attack. #6 on defensive team engages with attacker and forces player into an area on the field away from goal with no support. This restraint allows team to recover and regain cover and balance increasing the potential to regain possession. Communication from #4 & #5 would be crucial here to inform #6 best direction to force player.
PRINCIPLES OF DEFENDING AS A TEAM

Predictability

Predictability - Defensive movements should encourage/force the attacking team to play into certain areas of the field. Channeling play into particular well defended areas or less important areas of the field makes play predictable and increase our chances of regaining possession or decreases goal scoring threats. Encourage defenders to try and read the pressure on the ball (make early decisions).

Diagram shows the #2 moving out to pressure the left forward who is in possession. Blue arrow shows defender curving run to force the play centrally, making it predictable and therefore allow #6 to apply pressure in the centre of the field or as a last resort the #4 step out and pressure. Ideally #4 doesn’t leave the back line and possession is won before #4 needs to act.
Principles of Defending as an individual:

1. Pressure (the first player)
2. Cover (the second player)
3. Balance (the furthest player)
4. Intercept
5. Spoil
6. Delay
PRINCIPLES OF DEFENDING AS AN INDIVIDUAL

Pressure

Nearest player moving out at speed to rush the opponent into making a bad decision or poor technical execution. As the pressuring player you are trying to make the attacker look down at the ball so they cannot have there eyes up to make a decision or force them to make a decision based on the options you have given with angle of your pressure.

Nearest player should move out to pressure the ball. Defender should curve the approach to block off a certain avenue or passing lane and look to force the attacker into a tight space or towards a team mate (pressure). On approach player should slow speed and lower centre of gravity moving into a half turned position. Have your chest and feet facing the direction you want the player to go. If you see a trigger to win possession make a strong tackle. Trigger to win possession would be:
- Bad touch
- Hesitation
- Bad Pass
- Opponent turns to face own goal
PRINCIPLES OF DEFENDING AS AN INDIVIDUAL

Cover
The role of a covering defender is to back up the pressuring defender and cover the space behind the pressuring defender. A covering player should adjust the distance from pressuring defender based on the speed of the attack and the skill and speed of the attacker. The covering player should communicate with the pressuring defender, let him or her know that you are there, tell them which way to push the attack, if necessary.

As the nearest player pressures the ball, covering player needs to slide across and read body shape of team mate to recognize which way they are trying to force the attacker. Covering player will now perform a ‘job and a half’ being in a position to step out and tackle should attacker beat pressuring player on the inside and also provide cover should attacker get by pressing player down the outside.

Above image shows the covering player moving into position to do a ‘job and a half’. Red arrow shows player is able to cover behind the pressuring player and yellow arrow shows player is able to step forward and apply pressure. The position of the covering player also prevents a split pass being played between the two defenders as they are both in a position to intercept any attempted pass.
PRINCIPLES OF DEFENDING AS AN INDIVIDUAL

Balance
The role of players providing the balance is to watch the rest of the attackers and stop them getting the ball by marking any attackers who could receive the ball. Players must watch attackers who are moving or could move into threatening positions and cut out any passing lanes. Weak side players must tuck in to protect central areas and leave space on the opposite side to the ball.

As pressuring and covering players move across the rest of the team slide across and provide balance to the team shape. This is to prevent passing lanes being open and to be compact as a unit to deny space.

It is the responsibility of players providing balance to be in a position to get across to the weak side should the opposition switch play. The red arrow shows that the weak side player has tucked in to provide balance but is also able to get out to pressure should the ball be switched. The Blue and yellow arrows show how the players can step forward to pressure or drop in and cover should a pass be played in behind pressuring players.
PRINCIPLES OF DEFENDING AS AN INDIVIDUAL

**Intercept and create**

There are 3 things a player should be thinking while moving to apply pressure. The first thing is to try and intercept the pass before the opponent can receive possession. Attacking while defending means knowing where your teammates are which will allow you quick transition should you steal the ball.

Intercepting a pass requires a player to recognize a number of factors:

1. Which way is the player in possession being forced by your team mate. Are they being forced towards you?
2. Has the player in possession looked up to make a decision? Is the player in possession giving away signs of where they will play: standing foot, hips eyes all pointing towards a target
3. Read the head and eyes of a potential receiver. Have they taken a look to see where you are or is he unaware? Can you get in on his blind side and intercept with him being unaware until it is too late?
4. Read the receiver’s body posture. Are his hips turned toward the passer? If so then he may have lost vision of the field and is vulnerable to interception.
5. Read the receiver’s feet. If he is flat footed and/or immobile then you can run around him to get between him and the ball to intercept.
6. Do I know where my team mates are if I can intercept. Can I start an attack?
PRINCIPLES OF DEFENDING AS AN INDIVIDUAL

Spoil and recover
If when pressuring the ball you can not intercept a pass your next objective is to try and spoil the first touch of the receiving player slow the speed of the attack down and to give you or a team mate to the chance steal possession and start a counter attack.

Diagram shows good positioning blocking off a passing lane which forces the opponent to play a predictable pass into the centre of the field. This allows the defending player to anticipate the pass and apply good early pressure.

When applying pressure use upper body to make physical contact (within the laws of the game) to make it difficult for the opponent to take a good first touch giving themselves or a team mate a chance to steal the ball. Defender must lower centre of gravity and use small quick foot steps to stay close to attacker and force them away from goal or into pressure.
Delay
If when applying pressure a defender can’t intercept a pass or get close enough to spoil the first touch the main aim is to slow the player in possession down and restrict the forward passing options.

Here the defender has applied pressure, has not been able to steal the ball so is forcing the attacker away from goal and towards a team mate. This delays the speed of the attack and allows the team to recover a good defensive shape and begin to pressure the ball.