



“ZONAL DEFENDING”

Performed by Roberto Lopez, US Soccer National Staff Coach, Region II
Session performed on the Transylvania University Men’s Soccer Field
Session conducted with Lexington Football Club U-15 Boy’s Team
(Session documented by Fran Kulas, Director of Coach and Player Development, Kentucky Youth Soccer Association)



Coach Roberto Lopez takes a moment to speak with the L.F.C U-15 Boys Team Prior to the Training Session

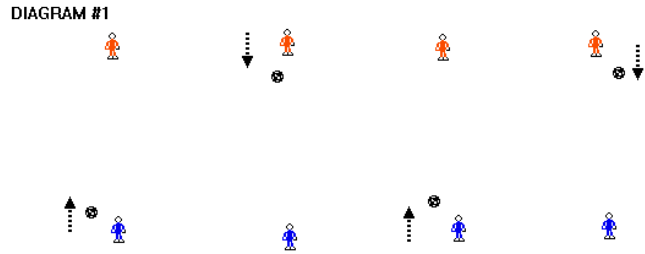
Warm-Up – Players pass and move in pairs in the 18-yard box.

Warm-Up Phase #2 – players pass in pairs.

- After a few passes, one player decides to stop the ball with the sole of their foot and their partner sprints to touch the ball with their foot as soon as possible.
- After a few passes, one player decides to allow the ball to go through their legs. Once the ball goes through the player’s legs, that same player attempts to turn. That player’s partner sprints quickly to close the distance to deny the turn.

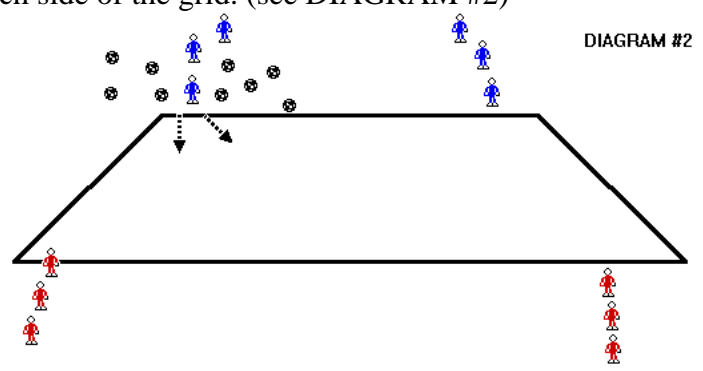
Coaching Points

- Quick reactions
- Close the space as the 1st defender as quick as possible

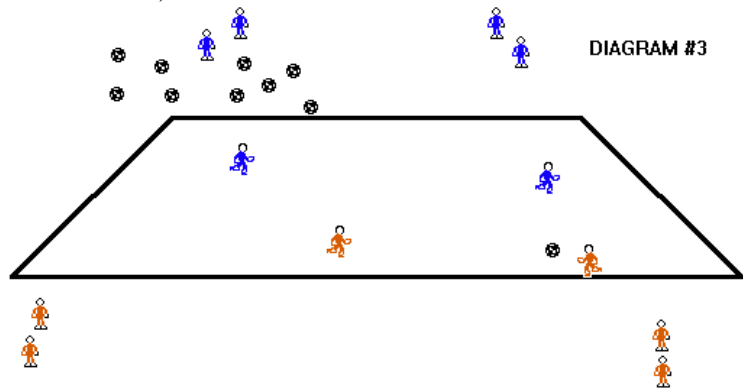


Match Related Activity #1

Set-up – two groups of 6 in a space 15 yards by 15 yards. Each group divided into 2 groups of 3, in each side of the grid. (see DIAGRAM #2)



Explanation – one blue player plays the ball to one of the red players on the opposite side of the grid. When the ball is played, the player who plays it enters the field of play to become one defender and another blue player from the other side also enters the grid to become the second defender. The red player who receives the ball from the blue player becomes the first attacker and another red player enters the field of play from the other side of the field. A goal is scored when one team penetrates the opponent’s goal line via a dribble. (see DIAGRAM #3)

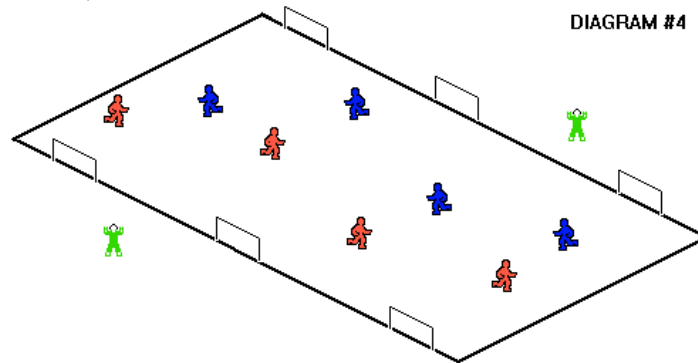


Coaching Points

- Pressure on the ball is of utmost importance, with the proper positioning of the 2nd, or covering defender being equally important to the integrity of the defensive effort
- Players should not cross in front of one of their teammate's path while defending. This eliminates "ball-chasing" and encourages passing players off to create an affect similar to a "piston" – when one player drops in behind, another steps-up to pressure.

Match Related Activity #2

Set-Up – in a space approximately 35 yards wide by 20 yards long, players play 5 vs. 5 (4 field players + 1 goalkeeper per team). Each team attacks three goals and defends three goals. (see Diagram #4)

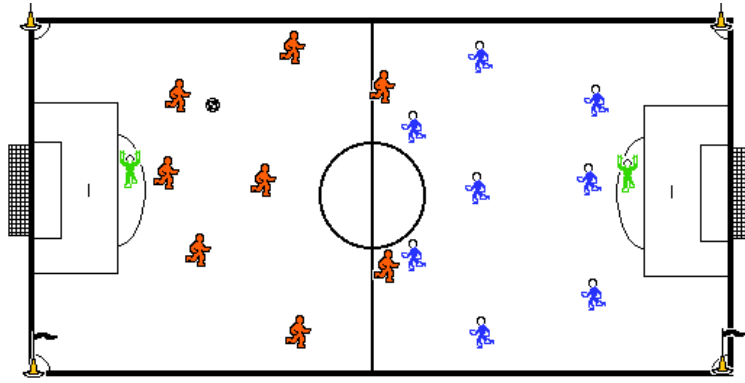


Explanation – field players play 4 vs. 4 in the field of play. Goals are awarded for a goal scored by penetrating one of the opponents three small goals. The goalkeeper attempts to deny the opponent from penetrating one of the small goals. A goal is also awarded if the goalkeeper makes a save and distributes the ball through one of the opponent's goals with his hands.

Coaching Points

- Players must maintain a shape within their teams that allows them constantly have pressure on the ball and defend from left to right
- Players must be aware of their defensive shape in transition so as not to get countered against

Match Condition Activity



Set-Up – each team has 8 field players and 1 goalkeeper. Goalkeepers are placed in the “D” arc at the top of the 18-yard box.

Explanation – teams play a game of soccer where the objective is to serve a ball in the air to the other team’s goalkeeper who is inside the “D” arc.

Coaching Points

- Apply proper pressure on the ball to deny the long penetrating pass
- Be organized defensively behind the ball in the event that a ball is served

Final Game – players played 9 vs.9 with no restrictions.

Session concluded with light cool down jog and stretch.