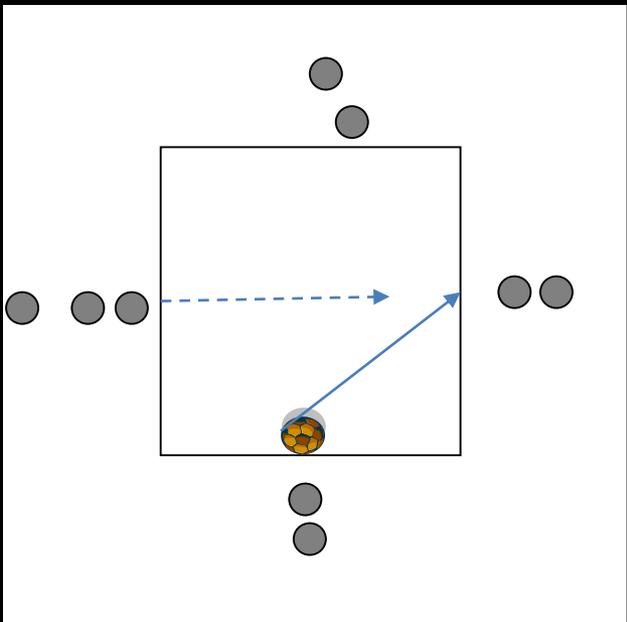




→ Ball  
 - - - - -> Player

# Zonal Defending



## Organization

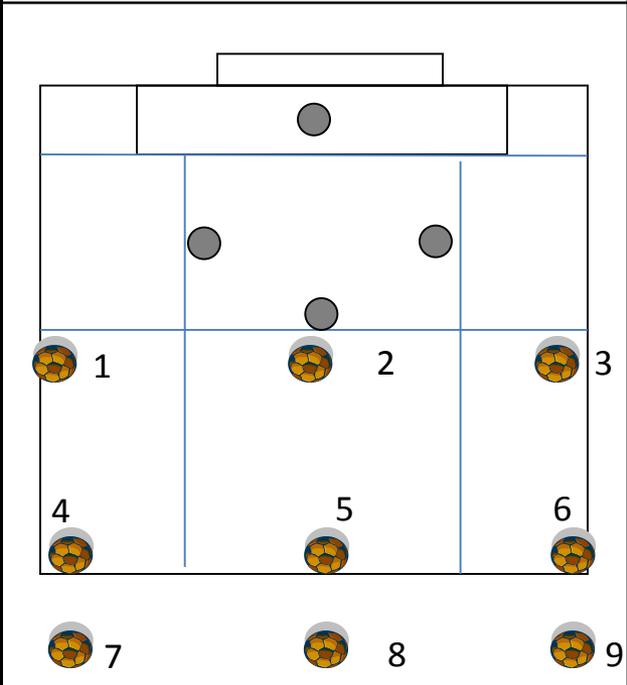
15 yard square with groups of 2-3 standing in the middle

1 ball

1<sup>st</sup> the ball is passed around either to the left or right only the inside of the group – focus on getting a good rhythm

As the ball is passed around the pressuring defender comes from the group directly opposite

The receiving player holds the ball until pressure is still



Area  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the field with 9 balls (numbered)

Field is broken up into 6 zones 4 wide and 2 central with one open zone at the end and a zone for the goalkeeper to cover

The left, right and central defenders are put into the 1<sup>st</sup> 3 zones with the goalkeeper in the last one

Coach calls out 1-2-or 3 and player react to that ball and defend it

Speed up the numbers called

Be ready to change positions if 1 or 3 is called and play is channeled out

Progress up the field with more numbers

## Coaching Points

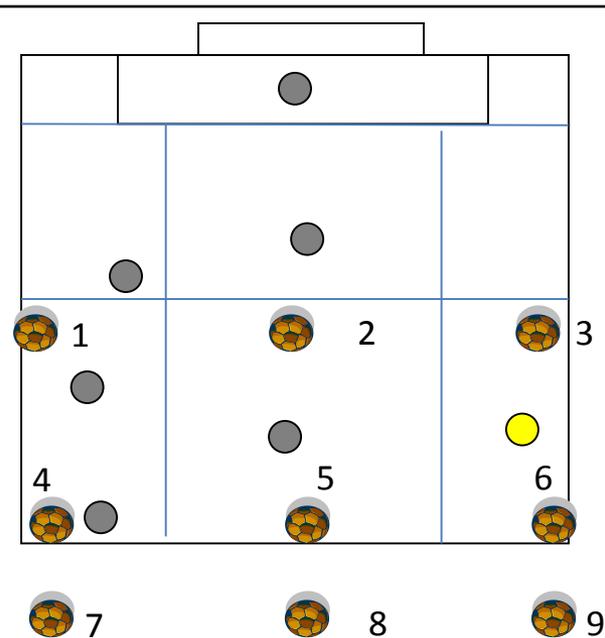
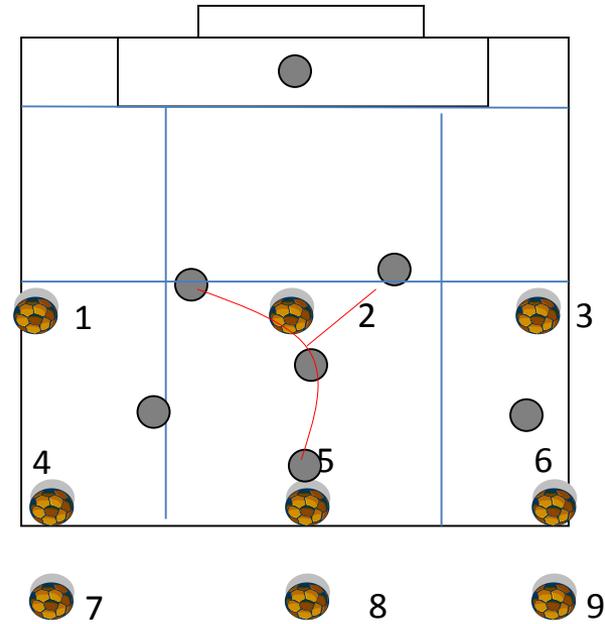
- Be ready to step and pressure the ball
- 1<sup>st</sup> step should be forwards
- Close as quickly as possible
- Shorten steps as you get closer to the ball
- Get sideways on
- Don't get caught square too the ball making the play predictable
- Travel as the ball moves
- Distance from the ball should be close enough to touch it with the front foot but not too close so they can get beat with one kick

- Get familiar with your zone
- GK covers all space in behind the back line
- Be ready to close the ball in your zone
- Communication – I go ball
- 1<sup>st</sup> defender – channel either in or out
- 2<sup>nd</sup> defender cover at an angle relevant to 1<sup>st</sup> defenders channeling
- 2<sup>nd</sup> defender distance to cover
- 3<sup>rd</sup> defender balance and transitional point



→ Ball  
 - - - - - Player

# Zonal Defending



## Organization

Now a midfield is added

The goal of this part of the session is to have the line behind react to the line in front

The coach calls out the numbers again and now the midfield and the defensive zone react together

1- top picture- Number 5 is called and the midfielder reacts as the 1<sup>st</sup> defender

The imaginary rope pulls the central d in and the two outside defenders in

2. Ball number 4 is called out and the outside midfielder pressures the ball channeling it out engaging the full back and the defenders to shift across

As the play is channeled onto the fullback the opposite outside midfielder in yellow is the transitional player

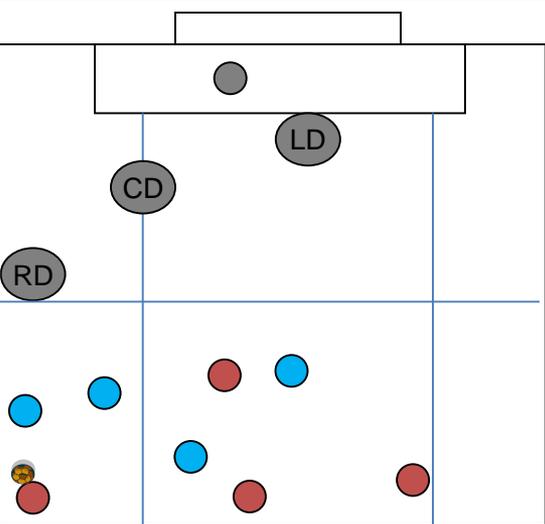
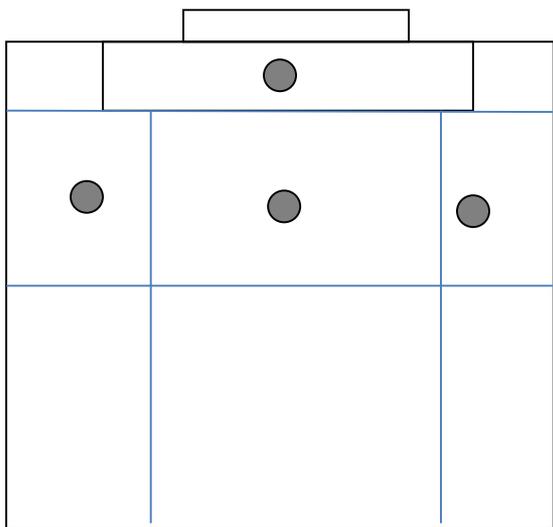
## Coaching Points

- Pressure of the 1<sup>st</sup> defender – close quickly
- Communication of the cover
- Compact the space
- Recognize the invisible chain that connects the players in the sides and through the middle and how it pulls everyone along
- Be aware of the offside line
- Make sure which player or players need to work to call the offside line
- Recognize who is the transitional target player based on the channeling of the 1<sup>st</sup> defender
- Speed of play
- When the play is channeled wide make sure that the opposite outside midfielder is ready to either track back or pass on their mark to the fullback



→ Ball  
 ----- Player

# Zonal Defending



The ball is in front of the right defender zone so the right defender moves to the top of the zone and the central defenders cover diagonally. The left zone has been given up

## Organization

Play a possession game and have defenders work on shifting based on a moving ball

Area ½ the field marked out into 8 zones with 2 central zones and 2 wide zones – 2 central zones start 5 yards along the 18 yard box

3 teams 1 goalkeeper

1 team is the defending team and 2 teams play a possession game

Start all players in their actual zone having them recognize what is their zone and who they cover

Goalkeeper covers zone behind the back 3

Groups remain separated and don't cross lines of defending team and possession teams

The coach will coach the defending team and encourage the possession team to have a good shape and move the ball across the field

As the ball moves in the possession game coach the defending team how to zone and how to cover

As the players gain confidence do the same one in the next zone up defending the halfway line

## Coaching Points

•1<sup>st</sup> defender –

1. Be ready with weight forwards-move as the ball moves
2. Communicate ( I've got ball)
3. Speed – close as quickly as possible -be ready to channel

•2<sup>nd</sup> defender

1. Recognition of zonal support
2. Distance- Step into 1<sup>st</sup> defenders area and be in a place to cover but not too close to be beaten with 1 pass
3. Angle- Diagonal and behind the 1<sup>st</sup> defender
4. When to stay central and when to cover wide

•3<sup>rd</sup> defender balanced

1. Communication – to all
2. Be ready to track runners
3. Monitor the offside line
4. Be ready if the ball is switched across the field

•Recognition of which zone to give up

•Goalkeeper – coverage of space behind defenders

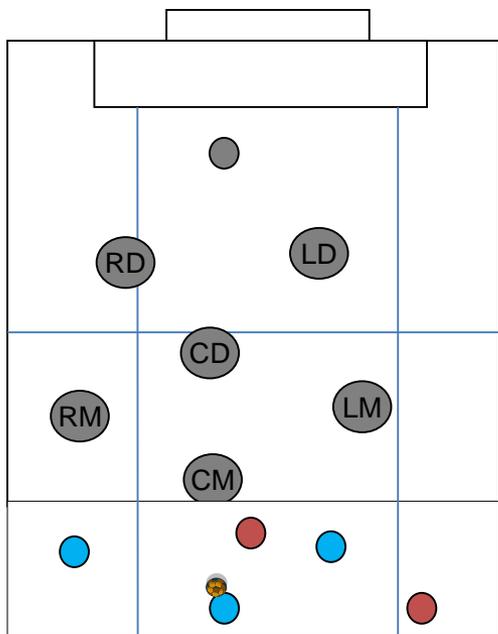
•Move up as the team moves up

•Communication



→ Ball  
 - - - - - Player

# Zonal Defending



## Organization

Now we add in the midfield

Coach the 1<sup>st</sup> line pressure and the 2<sup>nd</sup> line when to step in and cover

Coach the players on the line behind the pressing midfield zone on how they shift to cover

Possession is at central midfield  
 Central midfielder pressures at top of their zone  
 CD steps in to cover- back line covers CD

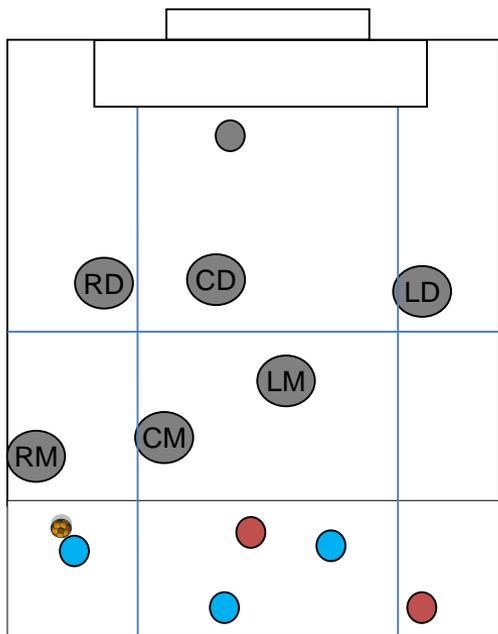
## Coaching Points

- 1<sup>st</sup> defender –
  1. Be ready to be the 1<sup>st</sup> defender – weight forwards
  2. Communicate ( I've got ball)
  3. Speed – close as quickly as possible -be ready to channel

- 2<sup>nd</sup> defender
  1. Recognition of zonal support
  2. Distance- Step into 1<sup>st</sup> defenders area and be in a place to cover but not too close to be beaten with 1 pass
  3. Angle- Diagonal and behind the 1<sup>st</sup> defender

- 3<sup>rd</sup> defender balanced
  1. Communication – to all
  2. Be ready to track runners
  3. Monitor the offside line
  4. Be ready if the ball is switched across the field

- Recognition of which zone to give up
- Goalkeeper – coverage of space behind defenders has now stepped up into the defenders zone
- Communication



Now the ball is wide and the outside midfielder steps to the edge of their zone

The key moment in this part is who the 2<sup>nd</sup> defender is

If the outside midfielder defends on the inside of the ball with their back to the middle of the field the right defender is the 2<sup>nd</sup> defender and the back line shifts

If the outside defender defends level with the ball ( see across)with their shoulders facing the opposing goal then central midfielder is the 2<sup>nd</sup> defender and the mid shifts

In this exercise the outside player(either midfielder or defender) based on which lines doesn't 2<sup>nd</sup> defend is the outlet and closest to the opposite touchline

Now allow the remaining players to play against the 8 with counter goals