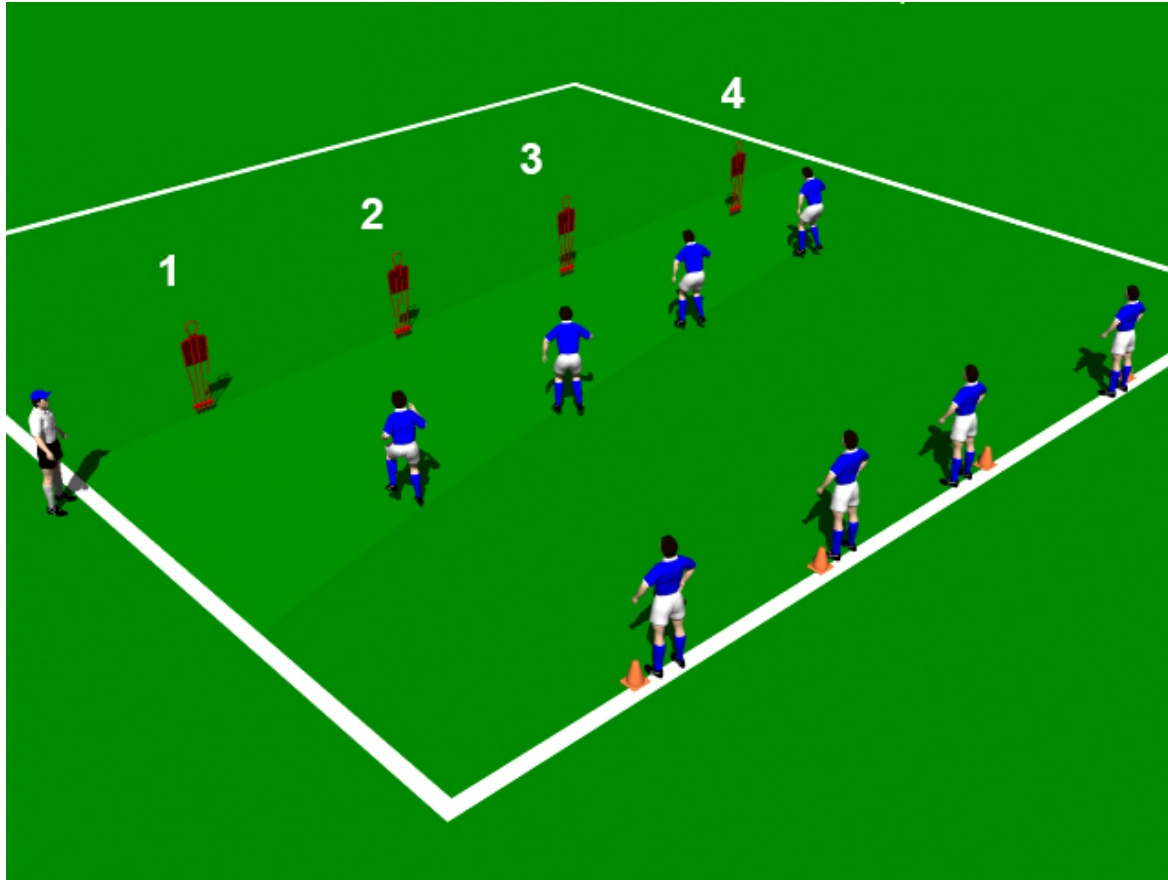


Four Players Closing Down Drill



Exercise Objectives:

This exercise emphasizes the technique of “pressure, cover and balance” when defending.

Coaching Pointers:

Divide your entire team into 4 groups of players. Place a group at each cone. Opposite each cone place a mannequin 15 yards away. Place a ball at the foot of each mannequin. The practice begins with first player in each group closing down the mannequin (as if it is an attacker). Then the next 4 players in line repeat. This sequence is continued as the coach makes vital coaching points.

The Pressurizing Defender (1st defender):

The nearest player to the ball is the pressurizing defender. They must keep a distance of approximately 1-2 yards from the attacker.

The roles of pressurizing player, supporting player and balancing or covering player switch as the ball is moved and kept by the opposition. Circumstances dictate that the pressurizing player will sometimes be able to prevent his opponent from turning, sometimes he will not, depending on this situation all other players adjust, e.g. supporting and balancing/covering players and other members of the team behind them. What the pressurizing player is trying to do first and foremost is stop the ball from being played forward. If he cannot stop the ball being played forward can he stop it by his body shape and force the opposition to play a predictable ball, and then the rest of the team can adjust.

The Supporting Defenders (2nd and 3rd defender):

The supporting defender's role is to add cover and balance to the defensive shape. Cover is important, so they are in a position to add depth for the pressurizing player. For example in a game if the pressurizing defender is beaten then the covering player would be in a position to put pressure on the attacker or clean up and mistakes. Balance is important to prevent any through balls in behind the defense. By dropping off at an angle the defender encourages the player with the ball to make a pass in front on the defender and not behind.

The Weak Side Defender (3rd defender):

The weak side defender role is to add cover and balance to the defensive shape. Cover is important, so they are in a position to add depth for the pressurizing player. For example, in a game if the pressurizing defender is beaten then the covering player would be able to put pressure on the attacker or clean up and mistakes. Balance is important to prevent any through balls in behind the defense. The weak side defender must also be the loudest defender, as they can see the biggest picture.

The coach should emphasize the following coaching points:

- Players should adjust their defensive positioning quickly as the ball is exchanged between the attackers.
- Players should adjust their position as the ball is traveling and be in a good balanced position when the attacker has the ball at their feet.
- Communication is vital, especially from the covering defender as they can see the entire situation.
- Bend the knees and keep the body low. (don't stand tall, stand small). This position enables the legs to be "spring loaded" to change direction quickly.
- Leg position should be with one leg behind the other.
- Pivot using the back foot when changing direction from side to side.
- Keep the upper torso forward, this is crucial for changing direction from a backwards to forwards position quickly.