

Principles of Play: Defence

When your team has lost possession it must be a priority for all your teammates to win the ball back.

Having an understanding of the principles of defence at an individual and team level will allow your team to regain possession and reduce the likelihood of conceding goals.

When the opposition has possession of the ball, the defending team must aim to:

- Delay by preventing forward movement of the ball.
- Give depth by denying space for the ball to be played in between or beyond defenders.
- Concentrate defensive numbers into dangerous areas.
- Give balance by ensuring players are covered and aren't isolated in one-on-one situations.
- Show control/restraint by assessing whether it's the right moment to tackle.

DELAY

All players, not only defenders, must be encouraged to delay the opposition players' movement forward with the ball. The first priority is to delay the attack so the defence can consolidate or restrict the passing or scoring opportunities. This is an important role and is done by the player nearest the ball (first defender).

DEPTH

A "flat" group of defenders can be passed with one quality ball. Subsequently, players must be in the position to cover balls that are played between or beyond defenders. These players providing depth are termed the second defenders.

CONCENTRATION

Where width is vital for attackers, defenders must concentrate their defensive duties in the danger areas (in and outside the penalty area). Defenders must resist the temptation to follow players wide until balls are played into that area.

BALANCE

Ensure cover is always in place. A well-balanced defence makes the creation of space and good penetration more difficult.

CONTROL/RESTRAINT

Good defenders should not charge into tackles or race forward to support an attack without considering the space left behind.

Players applying the principles of defence correctly when the opposition have possession will:

- Decrease the chances of the opposition achieving penetration or strikes on goal.
- Increase the chances of winning the ball back.

KEY POINTS ON HOW TO APPLY PRESSURE:

- When your opponent has the ball, move in quickly and decelerate (be about 1 - 1.5 metres from your opponent).
- Pick your opponents weaker side.
- Approach on a slight side-on position with feet shoulder width apart and knees bent.
- Using short, quick steps, adjust your movement according to the position of the ball.
- Watch the ball.
- Be patient.

WHEN TO APPLY A TACKLE

The three most important things to consider when tackling are:

- Is the moment right?
- Am I in the right position to win the ball?
- Have I got cover from my teammates?