

BFSC U9-U10 Training Session #7: Individual Defending.

Exercise

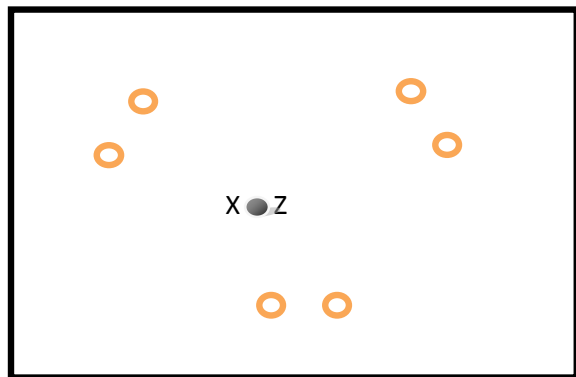
1v1 to 3 cone goals

Environment

15x15 yard areas

Description / Coach

Players work in pairs with three small cone goals set up in a triangular shape around the area. Two players stand back-to-back in the center of the area. Instruct the players to pin a ball between their lower backs and to wait for a signal from the coach. At the signal, the players step away, allowing the ball to drop and then they try to win the ball and dribble it through one of the goals. Then the next players step in and the cycle continues. Players earn a point for each duel they win. Arrange the game so that players get to duel against different opponents each time. After playing for five minutes, check scores and then alter the rules to require players to dribble through two separate goals in a turn to win a point. In other words, if player X wins the ball and dribbles through a goal but then gets stripped by player Z and Z dribbles through a goal, then the next player to dribble through a goal (assuming they have not dribbled through that goal in this duel) wins the point. Play for five minutes and check scores again. This is a fun and competitive way to start a session on 1v1 play.



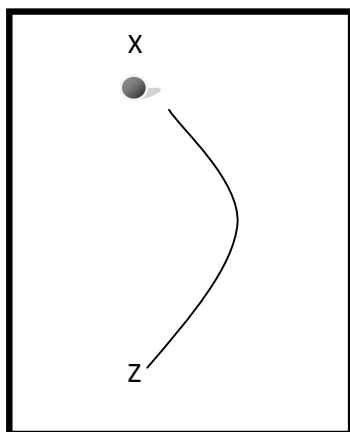
Poke Tackle

12x12 yard grids

Remind players that there are three basic forms of tackle in soccer: Block, poke and slide. The block tackle has already been covered in an earlier session, and it is useful to begin by reminding players that block tackling requires contacting the ball simultaneously with the attacker and trapping the ball between two players. Therefore, it is often used in tight space. The poke tackle, by contrast, is set up differently and also more useful, in general, in more space.

Here are the cues for poke tackling:

1. The approach (shutting down) and the use of jockeying to contain and control attackers is the same as with the block tackle.
2. To poke tackle, defenders must look for a touch that moves the ball off of the foot of the attacker to a point where the defender can step in and literally “poke” the ball out of the attacker’s path.
3. There is some debate as to which foot is the preferred one to use for the poke tackle. Out of the jockeying position, the front foot is easier to disguise and allows for easier recovery in case of a failed tackle, but it is also more likely to cause a foul, as it is closer to the attacker’s feet and a tangle often leads to a call against the defender. The rear foot, on the other hand, is more difficult to disguise and a miss will often put the defender in a wrong-foot position, facing up field (usually having



lost goal-side position), but it is easier to avoid contact with the attacker using this foot. Most players use the front foot, but it is useful to point out both the advantages and disadvantages of using either foot to players learning the poke tackle.

Train on the poke tackle by having players set up in 12x12 grids. Put two players on one end (in line) and two on the other end. Give one group a supply of balls. The first player with a ball passes to the first player on the other end of the grid and then closes down jockies the attacker. For the first two minutes, have the attackers take a couple of short touches and then a longer touch to help set up the tackle. Once the tackle is made, the two players change ends and the other pair duel. Encourage the defenders to utilize fake tackles as well and to learn to feel the distance needed to both remain goalside and also apply pressure and make good tackles.

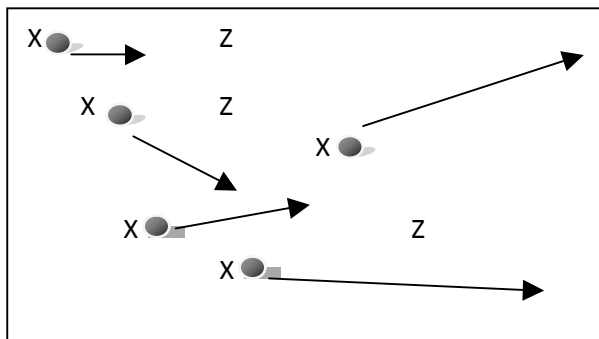
Select two defenders to stand in the middle of the grid. The remaining players line up across one endline of the grid, each with a ball. At a signal from the coach, the endline players attempt to dribble across “no one’s land” to the other side of the grid. The defenders try to poke tackle the ball off of the runners and knock the ball out of the grid. Players who lose their ball join the defenders and play continues until all runners have been stripped of their soccer balls. This is a fun exercise and the coach can determine how strict the poke tackling rule should be enforced (it is probably best to apply the rule very loosely to begin).

Variations:

1. Start with three defenders and allow players who successfully poke tackle an opponent to then get their ball and join the attackers. The player losing the ball becomes a defender until they win a ball. This restriction both prolongs the game and also adds incentive to the poke tackling emphasis.
2. For a player to lose their ball and join the defenders, a defender must win the ball and dribble it out the end of the grid where the run started. In this variation, there is emphasis for both groups to work in transition as well. If the defender simply knocks the ball out of the grid, the attacker retrieves the ball and joins the next attacking run.

No one’s land

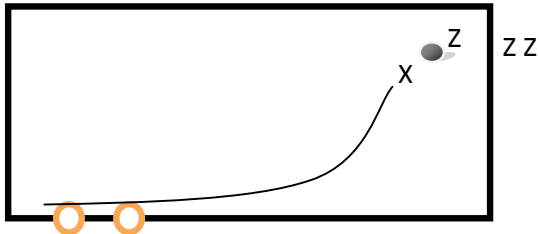
20x25 yard grid



1v1 to a side cone goal

12x12 yard grids

Use the same set-up as the above exercise. Add a cone goal along the side of the grid near where the defenders serve (see diagram). Now explain to players that they may



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3v3 to cone goals

25x30 yard fields

play full out. The exercise is also different in that the attacking player can earn a point only by dribbling through the cone goal. The defender earns a point by poke tackling the ball off of the attacker. The placement of the cone goal near the corner aids the defender by creating a logical lane for the attacker to play in, which also creates more opportunities to poke tackle for the defender. The defender must also understand that the angle of approach becomes very critical in this environment. Specifically, as the attacker is taught to “cross” the defender, the latter needs to blend a high approach with the necessity of remaining goal-side to contain and press the attacker. Watch players work and check to see that they are cognizant of the two variables (as well as the speed of individual attackers) as they close down and jockey. After each duel, players change ends. Play for five minutes and check scores.

Continue the theme of playing small-sided games early in the training process. Play 3v3 to small endline goals. For the first five minutes, award a point for a good poke tackle and two points for a goal. If there are multiple games, rotate teams and implement tournament scoring (i.e. total points over all games played). Then simplify the rules to just grant a point for a goal and let the players play for the remainder of the session.