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PRACTICE THEME: Improve Midfield Defending – Starting a Counter Attack

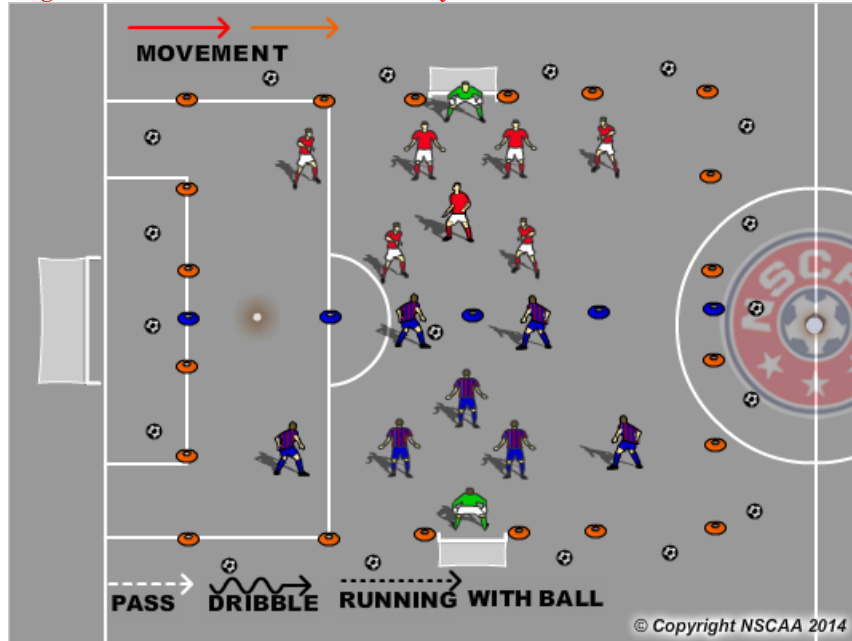
- Pre Training – Pre Match Warm Up – Work On Soccer Specific Muscles – Hydrate If Necessary – If Players are Sore – Extend It.
- Discuss The Importance of: Forcing The Player Away From The Middle Of The Field – Defending Players Are “In Charge” of Attackers
- Proper Defending Pressure, Cover, Balance – Forcing the Attacking Team Into Your Strength – “Allowing Them To Play Where You Want Them To”
- Proper Reading the Flow of Play – Anticipation – Head On A Swivel – Vision – Players Need To Anticipate The Ball Offensively and Defensively 2,3,or 4 passes in advance. Train The Players To Keep The Ball On The Ground and Simply Redirect The Ball.
- Speak Briefly About The Topic and What Specifically You Are Looking For – Encourage The Players Positively – Remind Them To Work Together
- Communication Is The Key To The Activity – Verbal and Non Verbal Communication – Work Rate – Consistency - Focus

Session Ran 07-01-2009 – **Stephen M. Hauter** – CoachHauter@aol.com

| DIAGRAM | ORGANIZATION | KEY COACHING POINTS |
|---|--|--|
| <p>Stage 1 Coach – Train in the Flow of Play</p> <p>www.CoachingSoccerMadeSimple.com</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Divide Players into 2 Teams, working on forcing the Players to play into your Strength and work with the proper Defensive organization of Pressure, Cover, and Balance. • Attackers are looking to be certain you are playing good crisp and accurate passes, making supporting runs to help the Player you passed it to so you can maintain Possession of the Ball. • Player with the ball looking to find Time and Space and not allow the Players with the Ball to get the ball back into the middle of the field. Defensive Players work together to make the play predictable and cause problems for the Attacking Team. • Depending on Weather, the last Match or Training Session Players need to Hydrate encourage them to drink and stretch. • Remind Players about anticipation of the Ball and Players need to process information 2, 3, or 4 passes in advance both Offensively and Defensively. • Everything is set up for Session to run Simple – Complex. • Before activity starts do a slow walk through to ‘Paint a Clear Picture’ for what you want to see. • Make certain Players operate as if it is a Game Like situation. • If Red wins the ball they look to unbalance the Attacking Team and find the lanes and seams to not be closed down. • Repeat Activity, Critique Activity, Critique Players. • Extra balls are set out just in case ball goes out of bounds. • Don’t play the ball unless there is eye contact and Players are checking to the ball. Receive, Turn, and Know Where to Play the Ball to Maintain Possession. • Encourage Players to use deception both with their Voice, Body Movement & Coerver Moves to create separation and maintain possession. Limit Their Touches – So They Play Quicker. • All Players must understand as the ball is coming to them they must take a look at where the best option to play the ball is to maintain Possession. • How quickly can you read the flow of play and anticipate when to step in and when to make the activity difficult for the Attackers. • What can you do to ramp up the consistent effort and consistent work rate by your Players? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication, Organization, Proper Timing of Closing the Player down with the Ball to win it back and begin a Counter Attack. Use sidelines as an extra Defender. • Defenders should have the mentality of not allowing the Attacking Team to stay in control you force them to play into your Strength. Increasing The Opportunity To Win The Ball. • Players with the ball do not play a ball unless there is eye contact and Player is communicating and checking to them. • Defenders have the mentality that the Player with the ball is the most dangerous Player • Pressure Defender closes the Player down rapidly with the Cover, and Balance Defender Communicating to “Force Right” or “Force Left”. Make a bending run without overrunning the Attacker forcing the Player to be uncomfortable with the way you are closing them down and if the misplay the ball it goes out of bounds and now it is your ball. The Cover and Balance Defenders work together preventing the Attacker from going to the Middle of the field. • GET OUT OF YOUR COMFORT ZONE!! • Use the whole grid, touchline to touchline – REPETITION BUILDS GOOD HABITS!! If too easy make the grid smaller encourage Players to get into a Rhythm. • Do everything at the Highest Quality!! • Players need good anticipation of what a Attacker will do, as they go through the activity monitor and critique the Players and have them act as if it is game realistic. • This is the opportunity to get out of your comfort zone and Players are strongly encouraged to explode toward the Attacker and make the Attacker nervous and have Touch Tight Defending physically touching them and making them uncomfortable. • Key Factors – bending Defensive Run, Cover and Balance Defender telling you where to force the Player into your Strength. • Players need to know when to step in and win the ball and begin the Counter Attack or be patient and guide the Attacker towards your Teammates. • Coach – Train in the Flow of Play – Coaches Toolkit |
| <p>Stage 2 Coach – Train in the Flow of Play</p> <p>www.CoachingSoccerMadeSimple.com</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • After Players go through Stage 1 – Have Players Play 8 v 8 using the Rules and Guidelines of forcing the Player to the out of bounds line rapidly to make them cough up the ball and have difficulty advancing towards the Goal. • After Players win the Ball by forcing them to Play into your Strength, look to find the most open Player and keep the ball moving to cause problems for the Defending Team. It is important to constantly find the open space, play touchline to touchline and maintain possession. • If Defending Team wins the ball they Counter Attack and again look to find the most open Player forward, backward, or sideways. Always looking to play useable ball the Players can simply redirect the ball. • Defense instructed to have Touch Tight Defending. Defenders work together and know when to step in and win ball back. Don’t hesitate to ramp up your speed of play and your speed of thought to make a high intensity activity. Read the Flow of Play and listen to what your Teammates are telling you in order to constantly create problems for the Attacking Team. • Communication and runs on and off the ball and good quality touches are critical to the success of this activity. You have limited time to force the Attacker to Play into your Strength. • Use Communication Skills to organize and force the Attacking Team to Play where the Defending Team wants you to play. • DO NOT PLAY THE PREDICTABLE BALL – Attackers are trying to maintain possession and Defenders are trying to gain possession. Must be crafty and find a way to take a Defender on 1 v 1 make them commit and then lay a ‘useable’ ball off. • Communication and quick combinations are the Key in this activity – for Attacking Players and Defending Players need to | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need a close the Attacker down rapidly which will cause them to become uncomfortable and potentially play the ball quicker then they want to play. Grid is small and you will be closed down rapidly. Train your Players to have composure and confidence no matter how many Players are trying to close them down. • Communication, Organization, Proper Pace and Timing Of Pass and Runs off the Ball. Listen to the Defenders behind you and tell them which way to force the Attacker. • Focus on quality repetitions with the Ball being played on the ground – communicate to the player receiving the ball to ‘paint a picture’ for the Player receiving the ball. Playing the ball on the ground will help the Player to control the ball and make a decision on who is open and can you get the ball to them for a quality opportunity. • Keep your Head on a Swivel – run to quickly close the Player down, approach the Player with the Ball running Fast to Slow and your Body Stance High To Low. • Encourage the Players to organize themselves both Offensively and Defensively. Defensively, jockey the Player and if they misplay the ball disrupt the Attack quickly. • Can you organize your Players and create a 1 vs. 1 situation or a 2 v 1 situation? Be patient and wait for the Player to misplay the ball and be confident to step in win the ball and Counter Attack. • Communication, Communication, Communication • Defenders look to win the ball quickly, find the most open Player either diagonally, switching the point of Attack and take advantage of the Attacking Team that lost the ball. • Reminder – focus is making the Attacker uncomfortable and |

Consistent Work Rate? Head On a Swivel? Communication? Good First Touch?

Stage 3 Coach – Train in the Flow of Play



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think and close down Attackers Fast limiting their options and making the Attackers forced away from the middle of the Field.

- Now in Stage 3 go to Goal encourage Players to ramp up their Speed of Play and Speed of Thought and Focus On Defending.
- Using the Skills Worked On in Stage 1 and Stage 2 instruct Players to raise their level, Speed of Play and Speed of Thought.
- The GK and the Defenders should be the key to organizing the Defenders and the Midfielders – if they are organized properly – there are no shots and there are no Goals.
- Can you isolate a Player or Players to reinforce: 1v1's, 2v1's, 2v2's, 3v2's etc.. How quickly can you close the Player down with the ball in numbers and make them make a mistake.
- Remember the focus is Midfield Defending – which requires knowing when to step in and win the ball,, counter attack with speed and quickly get the shot off and follow the shot.
- Defending Players properly anticipating where the ball will end up and limiting time and space by the Attacking Team. Reading the flow of play and meeting the Player receiving the ball at the same time. This will make the Player receiving the ball uncomfortable and potentially give up the ball – Defending Team after winning the Ball becomes the Attackers and go to Goal.
- Have a supply of balls ready in case ball goes out of bounds to not allow the Players Mental Switch to turn off.
- Stay spread out while Attacking – opening up lanes and seams come back behind the ball [ALL PLAYERS] to stay compact while Defending. Defending Team takes charge of Attacking Team.
- Play is continuous until 5 Goals are scored – then switch up Teams. Rotate 2-3 Players per team. Train Players NOT to panic and have composure and confidence in TIGHT SPACES.
- Players need to read the Game and know when to step in and when to Jockey the Player with the ball until they misplay the ball. Make the Player with the Ball as uncomfortable as possible.
- Transition is important in this activity – Attack in Numbers, with the proper Speed of Thought and Speed of Play and Defend in Numbers.
- Players Counter Attacking are looking to switch the point of attack constantly and maintaining Possession to make the Defense work very hard to chase the Players down and win the ball back.

- potentially force a pass then Counter Attack to Goal.
- Have Composure operating in Tight Spaces and Have Confidence In Your Ability to Defend in Numbers.
- Coach – Train in the Flow of Play – Coaches Toolkit

- Head on a Swivel – Jockey the Player, know when to step in and win the ball back – look to combine with a Player off the ball then continue your run to Goal and look to get the ball back.
- HAVE THE WILL TO WIN!!!
- Reinforce communication and organize often.
- Train the Defending Team when and how to step in and win the ball. How quickly can Players close the Attackers down, win the ball and Counter Attack at Speed..
- Run to receive the ball/run to provide help for Player receiving the ball. Read the flow of play – How quickly can you close the Player with the ball down and force them to put their Head down limiting their options. Use the sideline as an extra Defender.
- Constant movement of the ball and Players – adjust as the ball is played and always support the Player receiving the Ball. Remind Players to have confidence in taking Players or the Goalkeeper on 2vs1 or 1v1, draw the closest Defender to you, make eye contact with an open Teammate and play a useable ball to them.
- Defenders are to listen to the organization coming from the Defenders and the Goalkeeper and actually do what they have to say.
- FOLLOW YOUR SHOT.
- Attackers need to work together , with confidence – Attackers need repetition and to play the ball to the foot farthest away [across the body] to have confidence and not to expose the ball to the Defenders.
- Defenders are to work together constantly to make the Play predictable and force the Attackers to play into your Strength so Attackers turn the ball over constantly and consistently.
- Can you Counter Attack at Speed?
- In stage 1 and stage 2 you are instructed to use deception, Coerver moves and take your touch away from pressure. Do the same in stage 3 and 4 but, when you find space explode into it and find other Attackers weak side.
- Coach – Train in the Flow of Play

Stage 4 Coach – Train in the Flow of Play



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- Play full sized Game 6v6 or 8v8 or 11v11 with Goalkeepers..
- 3 Seconds to get the ball back in Play or it is the other Teams ball.
- Observe the Learning Curve from Stage 1, Stage 2, and Stage 3.
- NO RESTRICTIONS!!

- Good First Touch?
- Head on a Swivel? Aware of Teammates / Opponents?
- Good Communication?
- Proper Passing and Receiving?
- Runs on and off the ball?
- Players assisting the Player receiving the ball with at least 2 options?
- Look to recycle the ball by Shifting the Players and the Ball “if you can’t go forward.”
- Patience while Defending however, closing down at Speed when you see a bad first touch, hesitation, etc..
- Take The Shot & Place The Ball Away From Keeper.
- Follow Your Shot!!

SCRIMMAGE: Observe the Learning Curve – Players having a comfort zone with knowing when to ramp up the speed of play and force the Attackers to make a Mistake? Work ethic there? Communication Skills? Runs off the ball there? Speed of Play there? Speed of Thought there? Proper – Touch Tight Defending? Restart Quality? FOLLOW YOUR SHOT ALWAYS!!!

- Review Session With Players – Session Can Be Adjusted For 11v11 Teams, 8v8 Teams, & 6v6 Teams.
- Players have composure? Players building confidence? Compliment Players Getting Out of Comfort Zone Did The Players Understand Activity? Players Maintaining Possession?
- Do A Cool Down – Remind Them About Chocolate Milk [Better Than Gatorade For Recovery] & Remind Them About Next Training Session Or Game. Remind Players To Drink 8-10 8 ounce Glasses Of Water Everyday – Make It a Habit!!!
- Did Players Force The Ball or Did the Players look for Layoffs, Combination Plays and Isolating a Player to Take A Player On 1v1, 2v1, 2v2, 3v2's?
- Did the Players work together and use the Sideline as an extra Defender and make the Attackers Play Where YOU want them to play? Defense should be in charge of Offense!! Good Consistent Work Rate?
- Target Players are Simulating a Player at or around the Top of the 18 Yard Box who can either lay the ball off to another Attacker, Receive, Turn & Attack The Goalie 1v1 or 2v1, Or Playing a Double Pass to Get Into The 18 Yard Box.
- 3 R's – Restart, Reshape, Recirculate!! WHAT IS THE RESTART QUALITY OFFENSIVELY AND DEFENSIVELY??