

## Defending in the middle third

**OBJECTIVE:** To teach your team how to be organized and compact in the middle third to avoid being played through.

**TEAM TACTICAL PRINCIPLES:** Press situations, Pressure/cover/balance, Anticipate long balls

**WHAT:** Understanding cues for when to press the ball and when to hold and be patient.

**WHEN:** When the opposition have the ball in their defensive line and try to pass their way up the field.

**WHERE:** middle-third

**WHO:** Central and wide midfielders as well as a reaction to what your striker/forwards do.

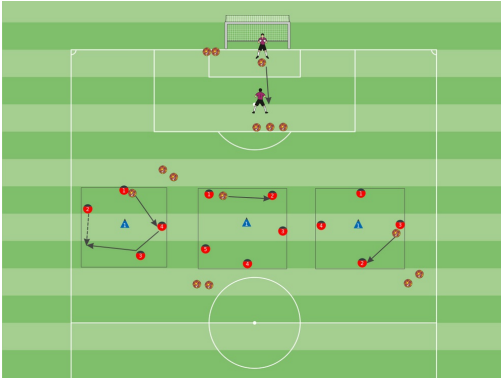
**WHY:** Working as a unit to be organized and hard-to-beat should help us avoid conceding goals. Plus, we stand a better chance of scoring a goal when our team is organized and in position to transition to attack.

Stuart Barlow

AGE: U14 / U19 / 18 players

Defending

DURATION: 90 min

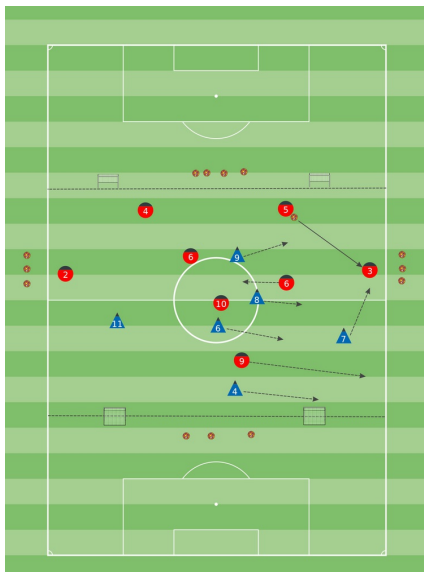


### Warm-Up : Rondo

**EXERCISE RULES:** Players in small groups of 5 or 6 around a 15x15 yard grid. Once player in the middle trying to regain the ball. Switch the middle player with every turnover or every 30 seconds.

**FOCUS TEAM OBJECTIVE:** We use this warm-up to help our players with their approach to the ball, their defensive stance and their patience.

**NOTES:** This is an easy activity to start off and will allow you to occupy players as they filter in to practice.

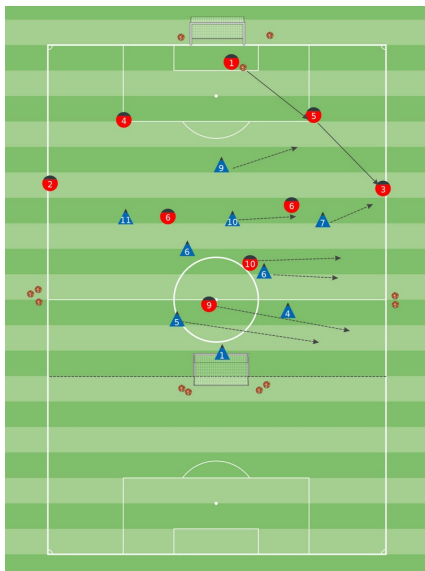


### 7 v 8

**EXERCISE RULES:** Set-up in the middle third and situate players as shown. The opposition will have a back four, two midfielders and two forwards. Small goals (as shown) at either end. The focus team will have one center back, three midfielders and three forwards (alter this to suit your chosen formation).

**FOCUS TEAM OBJECTIVE:** Work as a unit to direct the play to either side of the field - once they have done this we are trying to find a cue to go and high press the ball and win it back.

**NOTES:** This activity should be a natural progression from the warm-up. We're simply putting the activity in to an area of the field we want them to use it. Emphasize the importance of patience and staying in shape as they wait for mistakes.



## 9v9

**EXERCISE RULES:** Small sided game using all of your players. Try to mimic the real formation you use and have players in their chosen positions. It's also useful to have players play a new position for a part of practice to experience the field from a different view point.

**FOCUS TEAM OBJECTIVE:** Prevent build-up play. Force errors or long balls from opposition. Prepare for the long ball.

**NOTES:** This should look like the real game but with lesser numbers. Try to look for opportunities when the players are performing as asked or when you see breakdowns that highlight your topic.

### Five Elements of a Training Activity

1. **Organized:** Is the activity organized in the right way?
2. **Game-like:** Is the activity game-like?
3. **Repetition:** Is there repetition, when looking at the overall goal of the session?
4. **Challenging:** Are the players being challenged? (Is there the right balance between being successful and unsuccessful?)
5. **Coaching:** Is there effective coaching, based on the age and level of the player?

### Training Session Self-Reflection Questions

1. How did you do in achieving the goals of the training session?
2. What did you do well?
3. What could you do better?