



Developmental Skills

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Individual Defensive Tactics

- **GOAL SIDE AND BALL SIDE:** *The first rule of defense!* Always position goal side, between the opponent you are marking and the goal you are defending. Be sure to shade your opponent to the side of the ball. From here you will be able to see both the opponent and ball, as well as cutting off their passing lane.
- **CLOSE QUICKLY, APPLY PRESSURE:** Quickly close the distance to the opponent you are marking when you see that he or she is about to receive the ball. Ideally you should arrive at your mark at the same time as the ball does.
- **SET AND JOCKEY:** Slow your approach as you near the opponent to maintain optimal balance and body control. The faster they are coming toward you the more space you will need to set and jockey, gradually moving backwards with your opponent channel them in the desired direction. Remember space equals time, therefore the less space you give your opponent the less time he or she will have to make decisions to play the ball.
- **DEFENSIVE STANCE, SIDE ON:** “Set” in a slightly crouched posture with knees bent and a low center of gravity. Use a staggered stance with your feet a comfortable distance apart and one foot slightly forward (much like a boxers stance). From this position you can quickly change direction in response to your opponent’s movements. The “side on” position will also prevent your opponent from playing the ball through your legs i.e. Nutmeg.
- **CHANNEL:** Slightly shade your opponent forcing he or she toward the sideline, toward a teammate, or toward their weaker leg (i.e. make a right footed player dribble to the left).
- **LUNGE:** Once you are channeling your opponent in the direction you desire you can lunge at he or she to force them to make a decision with what they are going to do with the ball. When you lunge at the attacking player it is important that you immediately drop back several yards so as not to let your opponent explode past you. If the attacking player does not react and commit his or herself you now have control of the attacking player and will be able to step in and win the ball.
- **MARKING DISTANCE:** *Ability of the opponent; Give the opponent a bit more space if he or she has great speed and quickness. This will prevent him or her from merely pushing the ball forward and out racing you to the goal. Mark more tightly if your opponent relies on a high degree of skill. Deny him or her adequate time and space to use those skills to beat you. *Area of field; as a general rule, the closer the opponent is to your goal, the tighter he or she should be marked. An opponent within scoring range of your goal must be denied the opportunity to shoot or pass the ball forward.
- **CONTROL AND BALANCE:** A good dribbler will use deceptive body feints and foot movements to unbalance you, and to get you leaning one way or another. Strive to maintain good balance and body control at all times. Keep your weight centered over the balls of your feet. Don’t lean back on your heels and don’t challenge for the ball in a reckless manner.
- **PREVENT THE TURN:** Try to prevent your opponent from turning with the ball to face your goal. Once turned, he or she will be able to send penetrating passes into the space behind you or attempt to beat you off the dribble. Your marking should be tight, but not so tight that the attacker can spin with the ball and roll off you. Always be in a position to see the ball and be ready to step forward to win the ball as your opponent turns.
- **CONTAINMENT:** If your opponent does successfully turn on you with the ball, your immediate priority is to deny penetration. Channel the opposition into areas where space is limited (i.e. Toward the sideline or into a nearby teammate), or force him or her to pass the ball square or to drop it back toward his or her own goal. If you can delay penetration via the pass or dribble, even for a few moments, your teammates will have time to recover to positions goal-side of the ball to support you in defense.
- **LEAP FROG:** In the event you are beaten by your opponent, do not stand there and do not chase the ball, immediately get to a goal-side position of support for the teammate that has covered for you.
- **PATIENCE, PATIENCE, PATIENCE!!**