Defending Principles Of Play

Defensive Principles

Defensive principles apply to all defending regarding of your positioning on the field. It is easy to assume that defending principles, should only apply to defending and attacking should only be left to the forwards. All players should be made aware that good defending and defending as a team should begin with the forwards, then the midfield players then the defenders. Defending as a team is the most effective way of defending on the field of play.

- **Immediate pressure on the ball** - Play the Barcelona way, the idea is to win back possession of the ball, before the opposition can find a rhythm or build any significant attacks. Barcelona football club one of the most successful clubs in the world attempt to win the ball back under 6 seconds once they have lost the ball. If an attempt to win back possession of the ball is deemed too risky (example if a midfield player misses a tackle the team may lose their defensive shape) the best option is to exhibit restraint, contain the player and be patient.

- **Delay** - The key consideration within the concept of the delay principle is to get defenders behind the ball in a good defensive shape to help prevent penetration from the attacking team. An experienced defender will show restraint, stay on their feet and steer attackers into areas away from their goal. Just a few seconds delaying an attacker will allow teammates to retreat and offer help. Delaying can relate to both individual and team defending.

- **Support/Cover** - This can be provided by one or more players and refers to the distance and angles at which teammates offer defensive help. For simplicity sake the player putting pressure on the ball can be referred to as the first defender and the nearest supporting defender can be referred to as the second defender.

- **Depth** - Similar to the concept of support. The difference is this includes getting all players behind the player, putting pressure on the ball. It is very important a team to have good depth in defending in instances when there is no direct pressure on the opponent with the ball.

- **Compact/Concentration** - Compactness refers to the distance between the defensive team’s front players and back line. Good pressure on the opponent will allow the defensive back line to step up making the field more compact with less space for the opposition to exploit. In contrast, if there is no pressure on the opponent the back line may need to retreat resulting in a less compact area. Concentration refers to the pinching in of the defensive team to, again squeeze the space making it more difficult for the opposition to play.

- **Balance** - This refers to the positioning of teammates and defenders in relation to opposing players who are not in immediate support of the ball. It is not enough to simply have a lot of players behind the ball; they must have the appropriate width and depth. The positioning of all balancing players is determined by the distance from the ball to their opponent.