

Coaches Symposium

Developing the U-14 Player

Individual & Small Group Defending

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Warm-up

Dribble individually in a grid 20x30 yards. Find space, play ball 5 yards in front then sprint after it. When near ball slow down to reach it under control.

Stretch calf in push up position.

Then in pairs, play ball 5-10 yards to partner, then close down in a similar way. Once attacker gets ball, take on the (passive) defender for a few steps.

Stretch groins.

Defenders must show urgency to put immediate pressure on player with ball. Jockey player the way he/she is already going. If we slow the attacker down, his head goes down to keep an eye on the ball and therefore is unable to penetrate.

For a final exercise – give players a frame of reference, and have 2 lines of small goals. Play ball to partner and then they take on defender for the nearest small goal.

Activity #1: 1v1, 2v1

In 10x15 grid have 3 yellows and 3 reds at opposite ends. Have plenty of balls at each end. Play is continuous: one plays ball to other end, one of his team closes the attacker down. The attacker tries to reach the end line. Alternate ends/players.

Look at where the first touch of the attacker went, the angle of approach, etc.

Then introduce 2v1 defenders. Stress cover, support & communication. Will still find need to coach 1st defender of course! Give defenders incentive to win ball go score on other end line.

Address defenders switching roles, and if attacker turns back.

Then play 2v2 and alternate players involved.

Activity #2: Numbers game

In same grid, players at either end are numbered 1, 2 & 3. Coach has supply of balls on sideline (nearer one end than another). He plays ball to team furthest away calling a number and the defender with the same number closes down (defender can move as soon as the ball is played). Build to 2v2, 3v3.

Activity #3: Chip & Dale

Play 4v4 in grid 30x40 yards. Resting players occupy a semi-circular end-zone. To score, players have to chip ball into semi-circle and have it caught by teammates. Teach that immediate defensive pressure on ball denies scoring opportunities!

Activity #4: Man Marking Game

Again use 30x40 grid, and play 4v4. Each team has a designated sweeper, who is restricted to their half and cannot be tackled. They are however limited to 2 touches. Each of the other field players is responsible for marking one of the opposite team.

Players will eventually realize that the sweeper is spare and play ball back to alleviate pressure.

Stress communication from sweeper, good defensive shape, stay goalside of your man to see the whole field.