

DEFENDING CROSSES

AGE PHASE: U17+

LEVEL

- U17-First team

PRINCIPLES OF PLAY

- Compactness to force play wide
- Pressure on the ball in wide areas
- Open body shape and man-marking inside box

PART 1: 6v5+GK TACTICAL SITUATION GAME


- This practice is designed to develop players' understanding of recognising opportunities to play forward and when to maintain possession.
- It also helps develop players' movement to support the ball.
- Out of possession, the practice develops players' understanding of how to press as a team.


PART 2: 7+GK v 7+GK+3 SMALL-SIDED GAME

- This practice builds upon Part 1, increasing in complexity as it developed into a small-sided game.
- The practice requires a group of 19 players split into two groups of eight (seven players plus one goalkeeper) and a group of three neutral players.

KEY

 Ball movement

 Player movement without the ball

 Player movement with the ball



Players



Cones



Flat marker



Cones with flat marker



Goal



Mini-goal



Mannequin



Pole



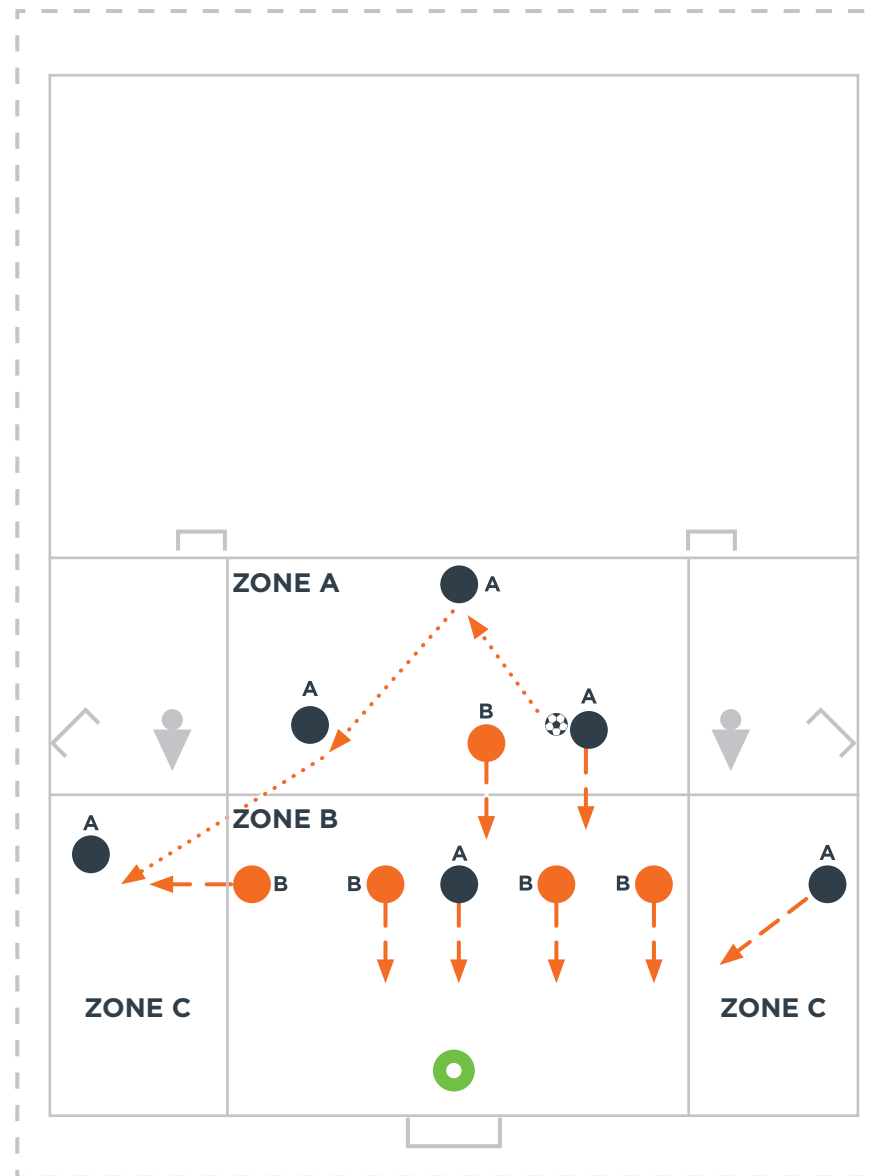
Football

6v5+GK TACTICAL SITUATION GAME

DEFENDING CROSSES

FUNCTION

- The 6v5+GK tactical situation game begins in Zone A, with **Team A** in possession. They must connect three passes before playing the ball into either Zone C, towards their wingers, or into Zone B for their forward.
- **Team A** is arranged in a 3-3 formation – three midfielders in Zone A, one forward in Zone B, and one winger in each Zone C.
- **Team B** is arranged in a 4-1 formation – one midfielder begins in Zone A and four defenders begin in Zone B. The offside rule will be in effect.
- Once **Team A** plays a pass into Zone C, the **Team B** full-back on the ball side can exit Zone B to press the winger once they have taken their first touch. The winger must use a minimum of two touches.
- Once the ball is played into Zone C, one midfielder from **Team A** and the single **Team B** midfielder can drop into Zone B.
- The winger will have **5 seconds** to execute a cross into Zone B. If a cross is not available, they must recirculate the ball through Zone A for another minimum of three passes before repeating the sequence.
- If the ball rotates back through Zone A, all players on both teams must sprint back to their original starting positions.
- **Team A** can score in one of three ways: directly from a cross from Zone C; scoring off a second ball in Zone B within **5 seconds**; or passing directly into Zone B from Zone A and scoring within **5 seconds**.
- Every time the ball exits Zone B or Zone C, the 5 second clock restarts.
- **Team B** scores by scoring in one of the four small goals positioned outside Zone A.
- After a goal or when the ball goes out of bounds, play restarts with **Team A** in Zone A.



COACHING DETAIL: TECHNICAL

DEFENSIVE LINE ORGANISATION

- When the ball is in Zone A, the defensive line must 'narrow off', denying Team A the option of playing between the lines to the lone forward. The centre-backs will co-ordinate the line organisation for the offside – i.e. pushing up and 'narrowing off' when the opponent passes the ball backwards.

DEFENDING CROSS COLLECTIVELY

- When the ball is in Zone A and the ball travels outside to Zone C, the ball-side full-back sprints to apply pressure to the winger, while aiming to be about **2 yards** away in depth from the attacker in order to be in the crossing line and able to block possible crosses.
- Meanwhile, two central defenders and the far-side full-back quickly drop and narrow off, maintaining a position of around **10 yards** in depth behind the pressuring full-back; the first centre-back uses the near post as the positional reference in width.
- The distance between the three defenders in the box should be **less than 10 yards** between players. The central midfielders must drop to defend the midfielder joining the attack.

1v1 DEFENDING

- When the ball travels out to Zone C, the ball-side full-back must quickly accelerate and begin to decelerate **within 5 yards** of the attacker, forcing the play wide.
- The first thought should be to sprint to block crosses; the second thought is to recover the ball in the 1v1 duel, initiating contact with arms first to control the attacker.

BODY SHAPE

- Once the two centre-backs and far-side full-back have established positioning inside the box, all three must have an open body shape, enabling them to see their teammates, the ball and the opposition.

MAN-MARKING

- When defending inside the box, the priority is man-marking. However, the first centre-back should zonally defend the near post to clear crosses before it enters the box.
- The second centre-back and far-side full-back should man-mark. When man-marking, initiate contact with arms to 'bump' attackers off their runs and challenge for aerial balls.

COACHING DETAIL: MANAGING THE OPPOSITION

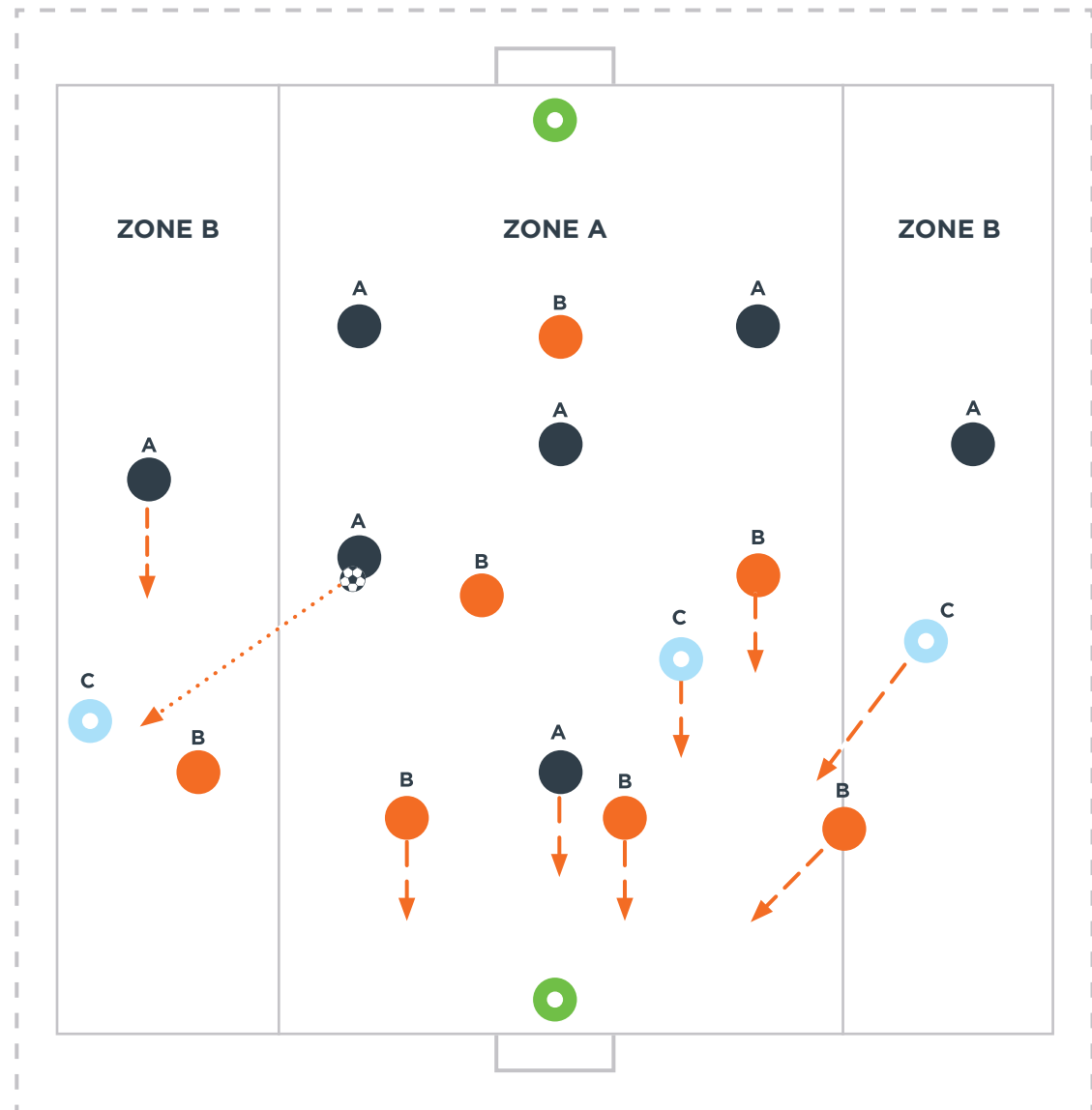
- The attacking team should look for quick ball circulation into Zone C for crossing situations. If the initial cross is not available, show patience to quickly rotate ball to the opposite side.
- They should vary the crosses: lofted, driven to second post, or whipped on the ground behind the defensive line.
- They should also vary the types of runs in the box: zig-zag, diagonal, straight.

7+GK v 7+GK+3 SMALL-SIDED GAME

DEFENDING CROSSES

FUNCTION

- The 7+GK v 7+GK+3 small-sided game builds off the 6v5+GK tactical situation game.
- In this game, both teams will be training defending crosses.
- Out of possession, both teams will defend in a 4-2-1 formation. The offside rule will be in effect.
- The three neutral players (**C**) will play for whichever team is in possession and be positioned in their zones: one in Zone A and one in each Zone B.
- The neutral player in Zone A will always be allowed a maximum of three touches.
- Once the ball progresses into either Zone B, the neutral player in the opposite Zone B can move into Zone A and take up a position from which they can attack any subsequent crosses. However, whenever the ball is in Zone A, both neutral wingers must remain in their respective Zone B.
- The game will have a natural flow to it, but the scoring conditions are as follows: scoring directly off a cross from Zone B with one touch is worth three goals; scoring any other way is worth one goal.
- If a team scores, a new ball will begin with their goalkeeper.
- If the ball goes out of bounds, a new ball will begin with the opposition goalkeeper.



COACHING DETAIL: TECHNICAL

DEFENSIVE LINE ORGANISATION

- When the ball is in Zone A, the defensive line must 'narrow off', denying **Team A** the option of playing between the lines to the forward. The centre-backs will co-ordinate the line organisation for the offside – i.e. pushing up and 'narrowing off' when the opponent passes the ball backwards.

DEFENDING CROSS COLLECTIVELY

- When the ball is in Zone A and the ball travels outside to Zone B, the ball-side full-back sprints to apply pressure to the winger, while aiming to be about **2 yards** away in depth from the attacker in order to be in the crossing line and able to block possible crosses.
- Meanwhile, two central defenders and the far-side full-back quickly drop and narrow off, maintaining a position of around **10 yards** in depth behind the pressuring full-back; the first centre-back uses the near post as the positional reference in width.
- The distance between the three defenders in the box should be **less than 10 yards** between players. One of the central midfielders must drop to defend against the midfielder joining the attack.

1v1 DEFENDING

- When the ball travels out to Zone B, the ball-side full-back must quickly accelerate and begin to decelerate **within 5 yards** of the attacker, forcing the play wide.
- The first thought should be to sprint to block crosses; the second thought is to recover the ball in the 1v1 duel, initiating contact with arms first to control the attacker.

BODY SHAPE

- Once the two centre-backs and the far-side full-back have established their positioning inside the box, all three must have an open body shape, enabling them to see their teammates, the ball and the opposition.

MAN-MARKING

- When defending inside the box, the priority is man-marking. However, the first centre-back should zonally defend the near post to clear crosses before it enters the box.
- The second centre-back and far-side full-back should man-mark. When man-marking, initiate contact with arms to 'bump' attackers off their runs and challenge for aerial balls.

COACHING DETAIL: MANAGING THE OPPOSITION

- The team in possession should look for quick ball circulation into Zone B to enable crossing situations. If an initial cross is not available, they should show patience to quickly rotate the ball to the opposite side.
- They should prioritise scoring off crosses from Zone B as the primary way of scoring.
- Vary the types of crosses – lofted, driven to second post, whipped on the ground behind the defensive line.
- Vary the types of runs in the box – zig-zag, diagonal, straight.