

## **Topic: Penetrating the defense**

**Age: 15-18 (Advanced)**

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I will be concentrating on when to penetrate and when to possess the ball. Most teams work so hard to maintain the ball through the defensive third and the midfield third then when they get into the attacking third things start breaking down. It is because coaches must teach players when to try to penetrate and when to possess the ball. If there is not space in behind, then offensively we must try to attract the defensive line to step up and keep things compact at the same time they are leaving space in behind them to penetrate. Offensively players must get width and have players stretch, as far the defensive team will allow. Look for good supporting angles on the ball. When we are switching the point of attack we must concentrate on moving the ball quickly. Even if we cannot penetrate we must move the ball to try to get the back line to slide and find gaps in the defense.

This is geared to older players from U-15 and above that have good technical ability. Feel free to adjust the sessions that it will benefit your team. If you have any questions please feel free to call or email.

### **Warm-Up**

1. Divide players into two groups of 9 with different color bibs.
  - a. Use 6 soccer balls and have the players knocking the ball to anyone (bib color does not matter for now)
  - b. Now each team of 9 players will get three balls within their group.
    - 1) Start them unlimited touch
    - 2) Then 3 touch
    - 3) Then 2 touch
  - c. Now the players must pass within their team but they must split two players on the opposite team. Both groups are still passing the ball between each group. For example red team must pass the ball between two blues to another red player that is showing in between the two blues. The blues will be doing the same.
  - d. Give players a chance to stretch in between the activities.

### **Activity #1: 6v6+2 Neutrals with 4 Target Players**

Set up a grid that is 60 long and 45 yards wide. Take your two play makers (probably your two center-mids) they will wear green and be your neutral players.

They only play with the team that has possession of the ball. You have two teams, one with red and one team with blue bibs on. Take two reds and two blues and have them at the end of the grid (45 width) at opposite sides. The game is to play the ball to your target without forcing the play. Every time the team finds the target they get a point. Then that target plays the ball to the opposite team to keep a rhythm to the training. You must play the ball to a target waist or below for a point. Play to three points after this have the four targets switch with someone on the field. The team in possession of the ball should always have a number advantage with the neutrals. You should coach the players to read when to go forward and when to possess the ball.

Variations/Progressions:

- 1) Have the two neutral player's play two and then one touch.
- 2) Have field players play three touches, two touches, then one touch.

**Activity #2: 7v7 with 4 Targets**

You will play from 18-yard box to 18-yard box and full width of the field. Place the two targets between the 18-yard box and the sideline. Have the players read when to play to the target and when to keep possession of the ball. Play 7v6 in between the middle of the field. The seven reds try to possess the ball until they can find their target waist or below. The one blue that is standing back in the 18 yard box and when the 6 blues when possession of the ball he/she will step on the field and one red will step off the opposite side of the field at the 18 yard box as well. If the 6 win the ball, they can play it to their extra player off the field so now they will have 7 and the team that lost possession drops down to 6 players.

Variations/Progressions:

- 1) Limit their number of touches
- 2) Must connect so many passes before they can go forward

**Activity #3: 8v8 with GK**

Play from 30 yards from one end line to the other end line with a full size goal. Set up a line of cones 30 yards from the end line (the end line that has the goal). Red will have two forwards that will be between the 30-yard line and the end line. The two forwards will have two defenders that will defend the two forwards. In the midfield there will be 6 reds and 6 blues that will play an even number. Once the red midfielders play the ball into the two forwards, the red will go and support the ball and the blues will try to defend. Once it goes into the forwards zone all the midfielders' will cross the line and play. There will be one goalkeeper in the big goal and the other goalkeeper will be behind the line with the coach. When the blue team wins possession of the ball they will try to play the ball to the

goalkeeper. If the red team scores then you start from the coach. After about 10 minutes, switch roles and let blue attack the big goal.

Variations/Progressions:

- 1) Add big goal on top of the 30yard line and play with no restrictions.

In all these exercises we must make sure that we are still concentrating on our attacking shape as a team and defining the roles of when to attack and when to possess. Without good attacking shape (width, stretching the defense, and giving proper support, it will be very difficult to attack or possess in any of these training sessions.