20 DEFENSIVE PRESSURE DRILLS

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Playing good sound defense is probably most important in any soccer match. Since goals are often hard to come by, no team wants to allow many goals. In addition, most often a goal is scored because of a defensive mistake. Therefore, it’s very important that all soccer teams practice defensive pressure drills.

There are two important points to playing defense: playing individual defense (player against player) and playing good team defense.

The following 20 drills focus on everything defenders need to be good at in order to play fundamentally solid defense.

The following work on: defensive footwork, conditioning, slide tackling, communication, clearing the ball, playing good team defense near the goal, playing good individual defense near the goal, defensive positioning, and many other important facets.

Too often defenders don’t even realize how many things they need to be doing while playing defense. So these drills will also educate all defenders about exactly what they need to be doing on the soccer field.

If a team uses these 20 drills then they will be very well prepared to play great defense during games.

Recommended Resource

The diagrams included in this ebook were created in 3 mega-easy steps using the incredible Soccer Blueprint software. To get the full story (and learn how to create stunning animated, drills, plays, even entire playbooks in 5 minutes or less), go to:

www.SoccerBlueprint.com

Keep From Turning

What You Need: 4 Defenders, 4 Offensive Players, 4 balls, Half a Soccer Field

How This Drill Works:

You will need 4 offensive and 4 defensive players on the field at the same time. Each of the offensive players will have a ball.

The offensive players will line-up along the 18 with their backs to the goal. The row of 4 players should extend from one goal post to the other goal post. All offensive players should have their backs to the goal.

One defender should cover each offensive player. The defenders will be about a yard from their player and they should face the player’s back. So the defenders will be inside the 18 and have their backs to the goal too.

On the whistle the offensive player will try to turn with the ball and shoot at the goal. The defender will try to stop the offensive player by first taking the ball away and clearing it or by blocking the shot.
Result:

Many times offensive players have their back to the goal and they need to turn and fire a shot. This drill will help defenders learn to stop the shot from being taken. It will also help defenders learn to steal the ball, block shots, and clear the ball, especially near the goal.

Side Alley Drill

What You Need: 4 cones, Two lines (defenders and offenders), Half a soccer field

How This Drill Works:

First you need to place the cones on one side of the field. One cone will be placed where the side of the 18 yard box meets the end line. The other will be placed in the corner. Two other cones should be placed about 40 yards up field and even with the other cones.

You will need two lines of players – a line of defenders and a line of offenders. The defensive players will begin at the end line with a ball and the offensive players will begin near midfield where the cones are.

The defensive player will pass the ball out to the offensive player. The offensive player will take the ball and run forward dribbling the ball. The defender will run out and try to jockey the ball carrier toward the sideline. Then the defender should attempt a slide tackle to take the ball away or at least knock it out of bounds. The offensive player should try to dribble all the way to the end line.

Result:

This is a great drill to teach players to steer their opponent away from the goal – to the outside. This drill also helps players work on slide tackling to take the ball away. You can make players use their off foot to slide tackle if you want a variation of this drill.

1 v 1 Around the Goal

What You Need: Half a soccer field, Line of defenders, Line of attackers

How This Drill Works:

This drill will have a line of defenders starting from behind the near post (out of bounds). There will be a line of offensive players about 5 yards from the corner starting on the sideline.

On the whistle, the defender will run around the back of the goal and come around to guard the
offensive player. The offensive player will begin dribbling toward the goal on the whistle. The defenders must stop the offensive player from getting to the goal with the ball.

Result:

This is a great conditioning drill for the defenders. It also teaches them to move quickly and to make crisp cuts (since they need to run around the goal). Finally, the main point of this drill is to teach defenders to defend the end line and not let players dribble the ball down the line toward the goal.

1 v 1 Jockey

**What You Need:** Half a soccer field, Line of attackers, Line of defenders

**How This Drill Works:**

This drill begins with a line of defenders at one post and a line of attackers near midfield. The first player in the line of attackers will dribble toward the goal. The coach will tell the defensive player which way to jockey the attacker. So as the attacker dribbles toward the goal the defender will run out and put pressure on the attacker so that the ball is dribbled to the left or the right.

The defender should continue to jockey the attacker one way and the attacker should try to score the ball.

Before the first set of players finish this drill the next pair should begin the drill. This drill should be run crisply and quickly.

Result:

It’s very important for defenders to learn to steer or jockey their man in one direction. This drill will help with that. The drill will also help with conditioning since it’ll be run at a fast pace. Finally, it will help defenders learn to defend in the open field.

Quick Clear

**What Your Need:** Half a soccer field, Line of defenders, Line of passers

**How This Drill Works:**

For this drill there will be a line of defenders. The line will begin just outside the goalie box and will be about even with the post. A line of passers will be lined up about 15 yards from the end line and just outside the 18 yard box.

The first player in the passing line will step out onto the 18 yard line and be about even with the defenders. The first player in the defending line will step out a couple steps.

The passing line will send a ball (either on the ground or through the air) to the player at the 18. That player will one-touch the ball to the defender. The defender must use any means necessary to clear the ball quickly and effec-
tively. This means the clear should go far and to the outside.

The player passing to the defender shouldn’t one-touch the ball too hard to the defender but it shouldn’t be soft either. As the defenders get more experienced the one-touches should get harder.

Results:

Often defenders need to be able to clear a ball quickly and effectively. If they don’t they may very well surrender a goal. This drill helps teach defenders to clear the ball quickly and to the outside. It simulates a ball being sent toward the goal with a fair amount of velocity.

1 v 1 Run to Daylight

What You Need: Half a soccer field, Line of defenders, Line of dribblers

How This Drill Works:

This drill is pretty basic but defenders will benefit greatly from it.

You will have a line of dribblers on one sideline just outside the 18. You’ll have a line of defend-ers closer to the end line and on the same sideline.

The first player in the dribbling line will dribble the ball across the field (from one sideline toward another sideline). The first player in the defending line must stay with the dribbler. The dribbler should vary speeds by slowing down and bursting forward. The defender must stay between the dribbler and the goal at all times. The ball should not be stolen.

When the dribbler gets about halfway across the field (can be slightly before or after) then a shot should be taken. The defender should block the shot.

The next players in line should begin once the players in front of them are about 10 yards away so that the drill is run quickly.

Result:

This drill will help defenders learn to stay between their opponent and the goal. It will also help work on footwork and a defender’s ability to handle changes of pace.

Delay the Attack

What You Need: Half a soccer field, Goalie, Line of defenders, 2 lines of attackers

How This Drill Works:

You will have a line of defenders near one goal post and 2 lines of attackers at midfield. One line will be on the right side of the field and the other line will be on the left side.
The first defender will step out a couple steps with a ball and kick the ball to the first player in the line of the right side of the field. Then the defender will run around the goal and come back into the field to play defense. The player with the ball (player A) will dribble forward toward the goal. The first player in the other line (player B) will sprint down the field too.

The defender’s job is to delay the attack as long as possible. The defender will defend the ball and try to slow that player down. Once pressured, the player with the ball can pass to the other player (B). The goalie will then be responsible for stopping the pass.

Result:

One of the worst things that can happen for the defense is for there to be more attackers than defenders. When this happens the defense has to be able to slow down the attack so that more defenders can get back.

This drill teaches defenders to slow down the attack as long as possible. It also teaches the defenders and the goalie to work together.

Stay with Your Man

What You Need: Half a soccer field, 4 defenders, 4 attackers

How This Drill Works:

You will have 4 defenders and 4 attackers for this drill. The 4 attackers will each have a ball and will be spread across the midfield line. Each defender will take one attacker and will start on the 18 yard line.

The attackers will begin dribbling toward the goal and will weave in and out of each other. So an attacker who starts on the far right side may wind-up on the far left side.

The defenders each need to stay with their attacker. Once the attackers come in contact with the defenders they should each attack the goal. The defenders must take the ball away or block the shot. The attackers should try to score.

Result:

This drill teaches the defenders to stay with their attacker even when there is a lot of com- motion. It also teaches defenders to stay between the player they’re covering and the goal. Finally, it helps them learn to take away the ball or to block the shot.

Tackle/Dribble
**What You Need:** 4 Cones, 3 Dribblers, 2 Defenders

**How This Drill Works:**

Begin this drill with four cones marking off an area about 20 yards wide and 20 yards long.

You will have 3 dribblers in the area dribbling around with balls. Two defenders will go after the dribblers. The defenders need to slide tackle and take the ball away from one of the dribblers. Once the ball is taken away, the defender becomes the dribbler and the player who lost the ball becomes a defender.

**Result:**

This drill teaches dribblers to keep their heads up while handing the ball. More importantly, defenders will get to practice slide tackling and taking the ball away from attackers.

**Catch-Up**

**What You Need:** A soccer field, A line of defenders, A line of attackers

**How This Drill Works:**

This drill will begin at midfield. Attackers will stand slightly to the right of the field and directly on midfield. The defenders will be three yards behind the attackers and in the middle of the field. A coach will have the balls at midfield.

With the attacker facing the goal and the defender with her back to the goal, the coach will throw the ball toward the goal and yell “Go!” Both players will sprint toward the ball. The attacker will try to get it and score, the defender will try to get to the ball and kick it out of bounds. If the attacker gets to the ball first then the defender must try to take the ball away.

**Result:**

This drill helps teach defenders to go at the ball. It also helps defenders learn to sprint back into the play when they’re beaten.

**Defensive Form**

**What You Need:** A soccer field, A line of defenders, A line of attackers

**How This Drill Works:**

This drill will go the entire length of the field. An attacker will begin at one end line and dribble all the way to the other end line. The attacker should weave from one side to another side. The attacker can change directions whenever he/she wants to do so. The attacker should go...
across the field more than going up and down the field.

The defender will play defense being sure to change directions when the attacker changes directions. The defender should concentrate on proper footwork and on staying in front of the attacker between the attacker and the goal.

The defender should not try to take the ball away. Defense should be played for the entire length of the field.

Result:

This drill is great for teaching defenders proper footwork. It also teaches defenders to stay with the attacker. Finally, it helps get the defender in the proper condition to play good defense.

Defend the Triangle

What You Need: 3 Cones, 3 Attackers, 1 Defender

How This Drill Works:

Set the cones up so that they form a triangle. Each side of the triangle should have a space of about 4 yards between the cones. Each attacker will be about 10 yards from a side of the triangle. The defender will stand beside the triangle.

The attackers will pass the ball to each other and try to kick the ball through the triangle. The defender must slide his feet and try to protect the triangle and not let the ball be kicked through.

The ball can’t be kicked through the triangle in the air – it must be on the ground. The defender can’t cut through the triangle.

Result:

This drill is great for working on a defender’s footwork. This drill will help with proper footwork and it will also help make footwork quicker. Finally, this drill will also help with conditioning since the ball will be constantly moving around the outside of the triangle.

Defensive Rotation

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What You Need: Half a soccer field, 5 attackers, 5 defenders, A goalie

How This Drill Works:

This drill will take place on a third of the field – from just outside the 18 to the goal. 5 attackers should form a half circle around the outside of the 18 yard box. One defender should mark-up with each attacker. There should be a goalie in net.

The ball will start at the top of the semi-circle, directly in front of the goal. The defender will put pressure on that player with the ball. Defenders who are one pass away from the ball will be close to their men but give some room, and defenders more than one pass will stay with their attacker but play more toward the middle to give support.

The attackers will pass the ball around the outside. They shouldn’t try to score and the defense shouldn’t try to steal the ball. The defense should just continue to rotate closer to their mark or closer to the middle as the ball is worked around the outside. The goalie should also move around the goal as the ball is moved.

Result:

One of the keys to playing great defense around the goal is to keep the attack away from the middle of the field. Once the ball gets into the middle, often extra defensive help is needed. Therefore, direct pressure should only be put on the ball and the other defenders should stay with their marks but also provide support in the middle of the field.

This drill teaches the defense how to cover their men and protect the middle of the field. It also teaches when to pressure their mark and when not to. Finally, this drill helps the goalie learn to stay in position to stop shots.

Defensive Pressure

What You Need: A soccer field, 8 players to a side, 2 goalies, 6 cones

How This Drill Works:

For this drill the cones should be used to divide the field into quarters. Then a game similar to a scrimmage is played with 8 v 8 plus goalies. The one major difference is that teams are awarded 5 points for scoring goals and they’re also awarded points for stealing the ball.

A ball that is stolen in the last defensive quarter is awarded one point. A ball that is stolen in the next defensive quarter is two points. A stolen ball in the farthest offensive quarter is 3 points. A ball stolen in the offensive quarter near the goal is 4 points.

Otherwise the game is played just like a scrimmage. However, since points are awarded for stealing the ball, players should try to steal the ball as soon as possible.
Result:

Too often during games when players lose the ball they either put their heads down and stop or they automatically sprint back on defense. Often the best thing to do is to actually try to steal the ball back.

This drill will teach players to pressure the ball anywhere on the field rather than being content to let the ball get close to their goal before they apply pressure. Of course coaches should stress to the players that if they try to steal the ball and get beat then they need to sprint back until they get in front of the ball.

**1 v 1 Defend the Wall Pass**

**What You Need:** 4 Cones, 4 Players

**How This Drill Works:**

Set the cones so they form a rectangle that is about 10 yards wide and 20 yards long. There will be a support player on the outside on each side of the rectangle. There will be two players inside the rectangle who will go 1 v 1.

One player will begin with the ball and try to dribble through the cones on the opposite end. The other player will try to steal the ball and score by dribbling through the cones at the opposite end. The players on the outside can be used for support but they can only one-touch the ball.

The defender needs to be aware of getting beat by a wall pass and allowing the opponent to score easily. Therefore, when a support pass is made the defender must drop back to stop the breakaway.

Every time a player scores that is one point. Then the other player gets the ball and tries to score first. First player to 3 wins and stays on to play against one of the support players. The loser becomes one of the support players.

**Result:**

A great offensive play is using a wall pass. The attacker passes to another player then sprints forward, losing the defender, and receives a quick pass back. This drill helps teach defenders to stop this play. It teaches defenders not to relax and get caught flat footed when their mark passes the ball. The defenders also learn to drop back quickly.

**Double Down**
What You Need: A soccer field, 4 players to a side, 4 cones, A dividing line

How This Drill Works:

The 4 cones should be set-up to form a rectangle that is about 25 yards long and 10 yards wide. There should be a line cutting the rectangle in half.

The drill will begin with a midfielder (MF) and a defender (D) at one end of the rectangle. The MF will have a ball. At the other end of the rectangle will be a forward (F) and another defender.

The MF will pass the ball to the F and then the MF must stay. The D who was covering the MF should sprint into the other half of the rectangle and help defend. This will create a 1 v 2. The F must touch the ball 5 times without losing control of it. The D must steal the ball.

To make the drill a little more complex, the MF can be allowed to attack into the other end and a small goal can be set-up at the end of the rectangle.

When the drill allows the MF to attack too, the D must then make a decision to double or not. If they do double they better be able to steal the ball.

Result:

This is a great drill to teach strikers or forwards to come back and play defense. Too often offensive players don’t come back into the defensive end to help play defense. This drill will help teach them to leave their own mark and double in the defensive end.

Run the Line

What You Need: 4 cones and one line per station

How This Drill Works:

This drill will have several stations. 4 players should be at each station. Each station needs a line and 4 cones. The end lines, sidelines, midfield, and 18 yard lines can be used. Make two
yard goals on each line. The goals should be about 20 yards apart.

Each station will have 2 players competing and 2 players resting. For 2 minutes one player will try to dribble to one of the goals and put the ball in the goal (between the cones). The other player will play defense. However, the line will divide defender from attacker and the defender can’t cross over the line until directly in front of the goal (to stop the goal attempt).

The attacker will try to beat the defender to either goal. If the attacker feels the defender has the edge then the attacker can change directions and go for the other goal at anytime.

The defender must sprint to whatever goal is being attacked and the defender must try to stop the attacker from scoring.

After 2 minutes the coach should blow the whistle and the defender and attacker should switch places.

**Pressure Scrimmage**

**What You Need:** 10 Cones, 4 Players

**How This Drill Works:**

Set-up the cones in a diamond shape. At the tip of the diamond you will have two cones about a yard apart. These cones will be the goals. The diamond should be about 20 yards long from point to point and it should be about 10 yards wide at the middle. Use the other 4 cones to mark out the sideline as it angles in toward the points.

This game will be played like a scrimmage and it will be 2 v 2. Since the sides come in from the middle, the best way to play defense will be to jockey the attacker toward the sideline, which will be easier because of how the field is arranged.

The key is to steal the ball. Often the second defender will have to come in to help take the ball away without allowing a pass to be made.

4 quarters lasting five minutes each can be played.

**Result:**

This is a great conditioning drill. It also teaches the defender to sprint to always get between the ball and the goal. Finally, it teaches the defender to react to the marked player.
Defense Away

**What You Need:** Half a soccer field, A line of defenders, A line of attackers

**How This Drill Works:**

For this drill you will need a line of attackers standing at midfield and between the sideline and the midfield circle. A line of defenders will line-up at midfield at the side of the midfield circle. The coach will stand in the circle with a bunch of balls.

The coach will kick (or throw) a ball at the goal and blow the whistle. The first player in each line will sprint toward the ball. Since the defending line is closer the defender should get there first.

When the defender gets to the ball he must turn with the ball and kick it back up-field (if there’s time) or boom the ball out of bounds (if the attacker is pressuring). If the attacker gets to the ball first then the defender must try to steal the ball or block the shot.

**Result:**

This drill teaches the defender not to let his/her mark to dribble toward the middle. The defender has to direct the attacker toward the outside. It also helps defenders learn to play together.

**One Third Defense**

**What You Need:** 8 cones, 2 teams of six players, A soccer field

**How This Drill Works:**

Use the cones to make two smaller fields at each end of the field. The cones should make a play area that is 30 yards long and 20 yards wide. Then divide the players into two teams of six players.

Send two players on each team to the other side of the field to be defenders. This will set-up a 4 v 2 on each smaller field. The attackers...
must try to score (without a goalie). Every goal is one point. The defenders must try to steal the ball and kick it out of the play area. Every time they do a point is deducted from the other team’s total.

Let the players play for 5 minutes and then change defenders. Make sure all players play defense at least once.

Result:

This drill teaches players to play good positional defense since they will be outnumbered and have to play toward the middle. Defenders will also learn how to play together and they’ll learn to position themselves to stop shots and stop passes to the middle of the field.