



THE ATHLETIC PREPARATION TO THE YOUNG FOOTBALL DEFENDERS

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Abstract

The postural attitude of the defender, in the phase of non-possession, and the way of moving must be learned in an analytical way, otherwise the loss of fundamental moments in the game action. This is a fundamental condition for the preparation (athletics, technique and tactics) of the defenders.

In this post we will investigate the 3 basic steps for the specific athletic training of the defenders, to provide all the necessary means to carry out this role in the best possible way. The article is addressed to all the staff working with youth categories who first face defensive teaching, and for all those who, in the following categories, deal with the defensive department.

Keywords: *football, athletic training, defenders*

JEL classification: *I20, I21*

Introduction and content

We will start from the assumption with defining the technical / athletic defender skill as a set of specific neuromuscular, postural and attitudinal role components. In particular, the defender is requested:

- in the non-possession phase it must have a dynamic posture (antero/posterior) that allows it to quickly run forward, backwards, sideways and "slip"
- it should not only be quick and explosive but be able to accompany (the step approached or crossed) the action of the ball carrier in the desired direction and in such a way as to always be ready to accelerate
- having choice of time and ability to intervene
- knowing how to perform departmental movements

We will analyze the first 3 points (which are the most connected to coordination and athletic aspects), through progressive didactic Step to optimize the training of one of the most important roles in football.

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1. Step one - *Coordinative and athletic conditions*

Presuppositions means all those motor skills that allow us to learn and make the most of specific defensive abilities; to facilitate teaching, we consider the general coaching means that the whole team uses, because they are important for all the roles (and consequently they are carried out together with the rest of the comrades). The formation of the defender obviously starts (like all the other roles) since the youth sector working on fundamental assumptions such as 1 to 1, contrast and coordination.

From the youth category (and in part from the last year beginners), it is then necessary to work on:

- *Coordinating rapidity* - they are usually repeated circuit exercises with the main purpose of *increasing coordination, the frequency of movements, the attitude to a correct waiting posture and preventing injuries*. It is important to insert the preconditions of explosiveness, different gaits by varying race orientation, braking and starting feet. They are usually proposed in the second weekly training, and possibly also in the first.
- *Work for local muscular resistance* - in this case functional training is essential, in particular the paths aimed at joint stability, injury prevention and acceleration increase; in the post dedicated to the programming of functional training, you can see 2 protocols (the first 2 examples) for these objectives. Recall that functional training is not only useful for accident prevention, *but also to reduce the energy expenditure of less common movements*. It is usually administered in the first and possibly in the second, in case of a 3 workouts weekly session.
- *Work for explosiveness and rapidity* – it means all those jobs performed together with the rest of the team, like analytical work for the speed, collection of global works, and protocol for explosiveness. Usually the speed is entered in the last weekly session, while the explosiveness in the central session.

2. Step two – *Analytic work of defensive movements*

Unlike the first didactic step (which is represented by exercises done with the rest of the team), this phase is specific to the defenders. The term defensive technique (despite not using the ball) I think the most correct to identify this type of work, which in the initial phase, must include *analytical exercises to acquire the correct dynamic posture of the defender and the gait technique* in details.

- *The posture* during non-possession must be in antero/posterior position with the center of gravity lowered (to facilitate acceleration) and the torso upright. This posture must be maintained even in dynamic situations (in movement) when the ball is not in the immediate vicinity (to be ready to "run away" or "shorten"), but in any case in possession of the opposing team.



- *Movements* - remember that in the case of 1 vs 1 the defender must facilitate the opponent's race to the outside (or on the weak foot if it's in the central area). To maintain the right reactivity (therefore a dynamic posture as similar as possible to the above) can adopt 3 types of gaits depending on the speed of the opponent: the first is the postero/lateral step approached (also called backward side sliding), usually used when one is "aimed" at the attacker and/or retreats. The second is the crossed lateral step, which allows to move sideways quickly enough remaining frontal to the attacker, usually used in the 1 vs 1 on the side bands. The last type of movement is the normal straight line in acceleration (maximum intensity), usually used when the speed of movement of the ball and the opponent is high.

It is obvious that the first of these is the slowest (posterior postero/lateral step) but at the same time one that allows one to be more reactive in the face of the attacker's intentions. The second (crossed lateral step) allows to move faster, but when cross the pass became less reactive in the face of a possible change of direction of the attacker. Increasing the efficiency and speed with which these 2 steps are taken is the aim of this step. In this way, it will be possible to use the most effective gaits (that is which allow a greater level of reactivity to be maintained) even at high speeds.

Reactivity means the degree of readiness with which we can respond to a change in direction and speed. The correct dynamic posture, of course, is that with the lowered center of gravity and sufficiently wide support base.

3. Step three - *Specific application*

Provide the defender with the skills to understand when, how and where to move, is the universal goal. Always specify that we are talking about individual skills (situations in which many coaches complain about the defenses of modern defenders) and not the tactics of the entire department.

Recall that the ability of the defender to steal the ball and make effective contrasts it develops right from the junior categories. In fact, already in a previous post we have underlined the importance of the teaching of the 1 vs 1 not only from the offensive point of view, but also from the defensive one. Without these instinctive skills, players will hardly become good defenders, because they will not be able to defend well "to man in the area".

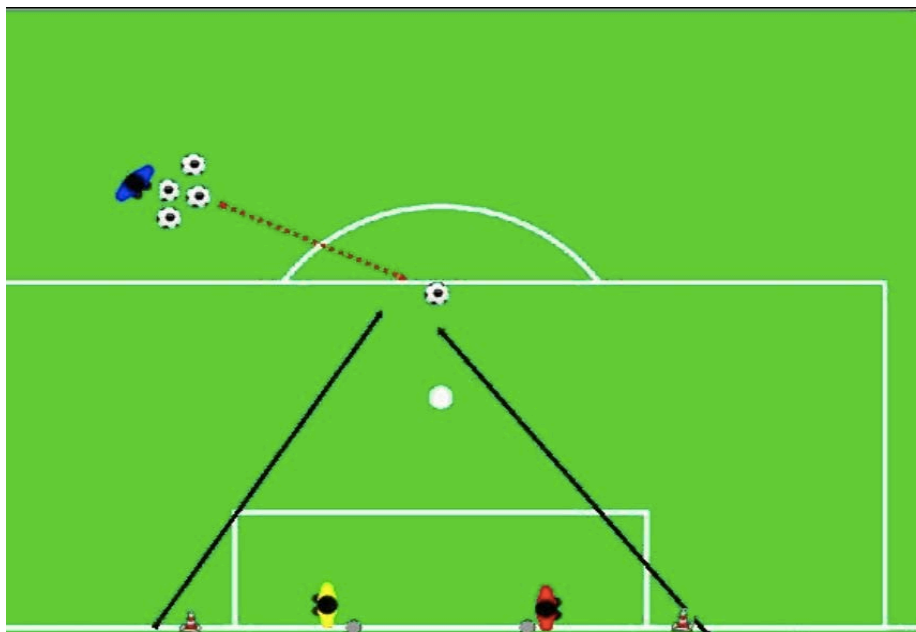
Below we will propose a new structure and other already in-depth which, with appropriate modifications, could make our case.

The goal in the defensive phase (individual tactics) is to direct the attacker towards less dangerous areas and/or steal the ball, depending on the game context. In the figure above (also used for the teaching of the 1 vs 1 in the begginers) is depicted a structure in which the attacker's aim is to *enter a defined area*, while that of the defender is to avoid it (without necessarily having to steal the ball). Further

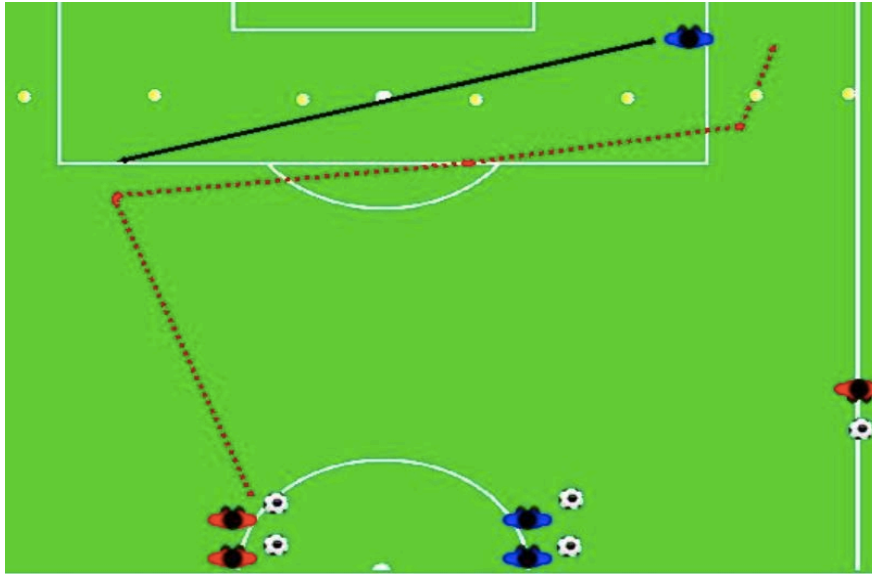


variants can be inserted in relation to the size of the area and the possible presence of doors in the area. This type of exercises is particularly training against the position of the defender (posture) and the *movements of the posterior/lateral step approached*. Consequently, it is recommended especially in the youth categories.

Exercise for 1 vs 1 defensive

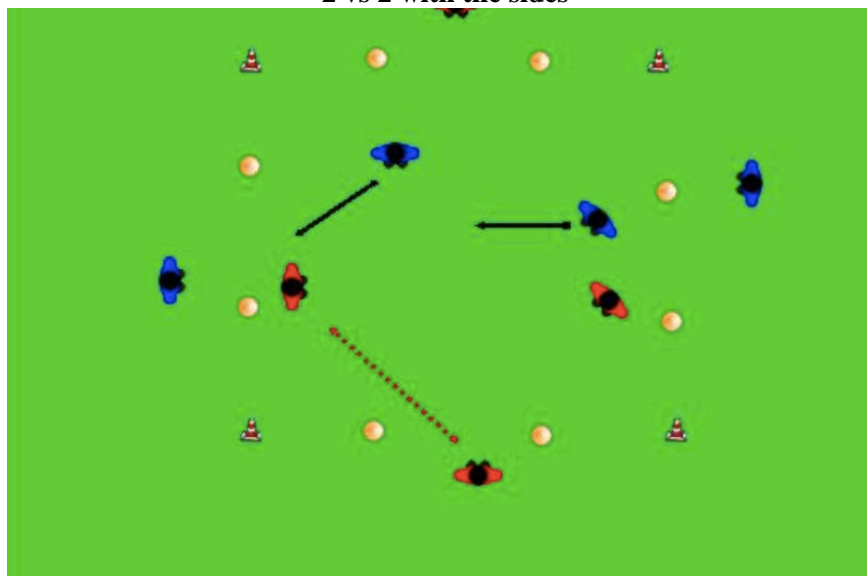


The image above instead is taken from '1 vs 1 for the development of speed. In this structure a 1 vs 1 is made after a phase of rapidity to score goals in the goal. It is possible to introduce the rule "the first who touches the ball is the attacker". As a result, the attacker (the first who touches the ball) will have to score a goal while the defender will simply have to try do not take a goal by preventing the attacker from throwing or stealing the ball. The fact of getting on the ball at speed and not knowing in advance who of the 2 will be the attacker, makes the exercise less predictable of the previous as well as fast. Council to run it with 7-9 players (defensive department plus a few midfielder) to optimize the density of the game and make it also athletic coaching (cognitive speed). By varying the size of the door, the difficulty of the exercise can be modulated.



The image above shows an example of 1 vs 1 to the bitter end. The greatest difficulty (compared to previous structures) consists in the fact that the defender must protect 2 doors and adapt his posture and his movements in relation to the door most "in danger". Not only that, he will be more forced to intervene on the ball when the attacker approaches the doors. It is always to limit the time available to the attacker to score.

2 vs 2 with the sides



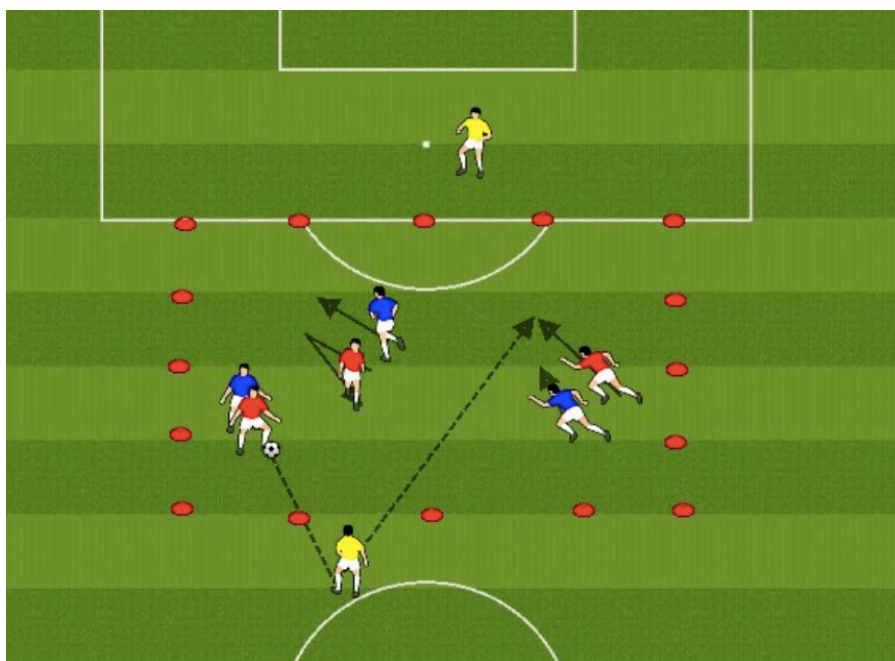


This structure can be used both for learning the concept "body marking" both for the concept of "man-marking in the area". In fact, the purpose of each pair of players inside the square is to make the ball go from one bank to another (obviously the same color of the players inside).

- by imposing the man-marking, the training stimulus of the marking, of the positioning (defensive posture) and of the defensive movements will be greater
- increasing the size of the square (ideal 22x22 m for the last variant described) the defensive task becomes more difficult
- last recommended variant, is to be able to steal the ball only for "interception of the ball" and not on contrast. In this way it becomes more coaching for the "stance" and less coaching for the ability to counter the opponent.

In addition is recommended reversing the banks with central players quite often (every 90/120 ") because the intensity of the exercise is particularly high.

3 vs 3 with the sponde

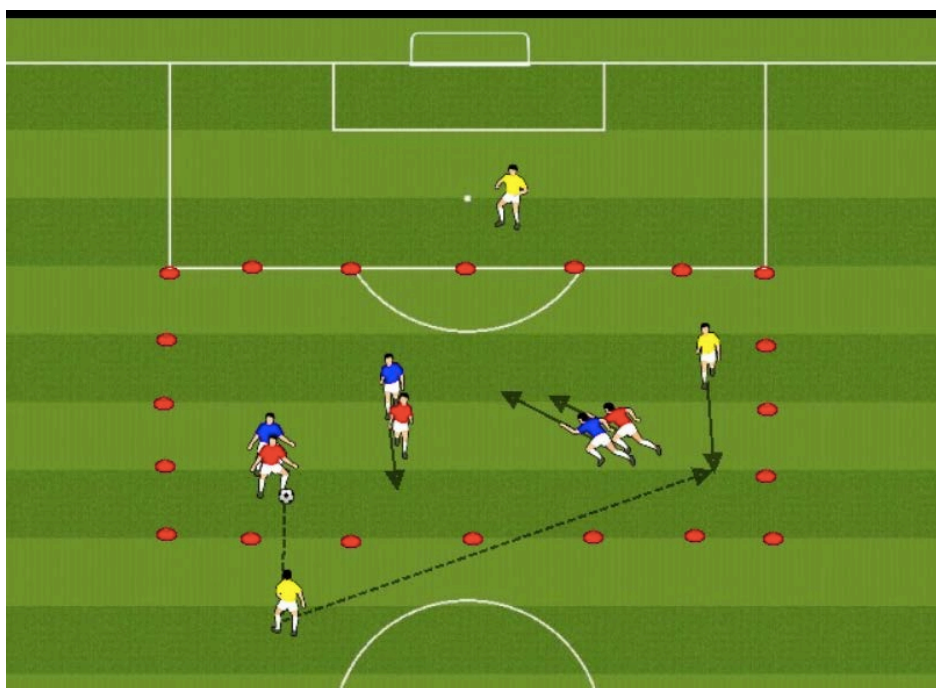


In this structure, there are only 2 banks and they act as Jolly. The purpose (to make the point) is to pass the ball from one bank to another through at least one passage of the players in the middle of the field. If the ball comes outside the ways, the throw-in is carried out (put balls at the sides of the field). The field size is 35 x 20 m. The same recommendations as above for the timing of each series apply, which should not be too long because the exercise is particularly intended. In this



case, since there are no changes between banks and central players, it is better to organize in different microseries of 60 "with 30-40" of recovery, during which the coach can make detailed corrections of the movements of the defenders.

- by increasing the size of the field the defensive task becomes more challenging because it is easier to "attack the space" by the team in possession. It is advisable to increase the size when the technical level of the players is not high.
- possibility to steal the ball only for "interception" and not on contrast.
- set the marking to a man or area. In the case of the zone, it is possible to add a Joker inside the field (see figure below) to facilitate the circulation of the ball. In the latter case, it is crucial not only to enlarge the field, but that the players have already learned the concepts of departmental tactics.



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