THE WINNING DIFFERENCE: Coaching Defensive Techniques Near To Your Own Goal

By Tony Carr

Using the big kick is one way to clear your lines in defence, but not always the right one. What if the ball is in the air and you have to head it? Or it's dropping out of the sky and you need to volley it?

There are lots of ways to defend your goal. The only golden rule I have about defending is DON'T LET THE BALL BOUNCE. Once the ball bounces the defenders have lost momentum and the attackers can follow the ball taking advantage of any weak clearances.

Here's a great way to practice defending - it's a fun game in its own right but it also gets across a lot of what the defender must do to make it easier for his goalkeeper and team-mates to clear the ball.

Look out for good heading and volleying techniques, good team work and make sure your players are aware of what is going on around them.

Stage 1: The team in possession has 7 players in their area of the field. The opponents defend their area with 4 players and 3 players in the cental zone. The team with the ball has to make at least three passes in the air before playing the ball over the cental zone landing it on the floor of their opponent's area. This gets them a point.

The player in the central zone - player 5 - is there to prevent the opposition scoring a point by stopping the ball touching the floor. He can retain possession by making an aerial pass to a team mate and the team can play a form of head tennis.

The 3 players in the centre zone forming the 'net' must retreat into their own area and the other team must send 3 players in. (3, 4 & 6). The 3 "net" players can intercept the ball and score a point this way.

Stage 2: If the players become very good, you could allow 1 or 2 of the net players to go into their zone and put pressure on them. Two points could be scored by playing the ball back on one touch and landing it in the end zone, however failure to hit the target means a point lost.

By using this session you will be coaching your players so they can defend their goal under pressure. It recreates match-like situations that you can use as your coaching blueprint.