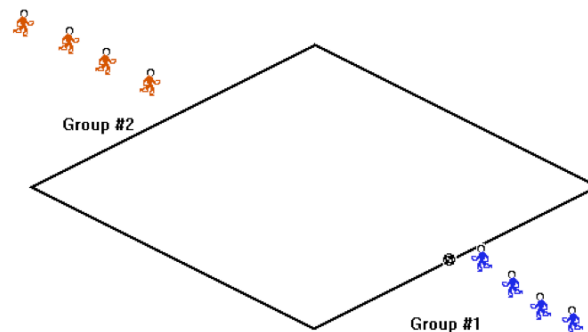




*Teaching Defensive Concepts Using Small Groups – “The Building Blocks”*  
*By Fran Kulas, Director of Coach and Player Development*  
*Kentucky Youth Soccer Association*

**FUNDAMENTAL WITH PASSIVE PRESSURE**

**Stage #1 (Emphasis on Pressuring Defender)**



**Set-Up** – 25 x 20 space with 2 groups of 4 players.

**Explanation** – Ball is played from Group #1 to Group #2. Player from Group #1 becomes 1<sup>st</sup> Defender and applies passive pressure.

**Coaching Points**

- Speed of approach
- Body Shape
- Looking for Visual Cues (attacker’s head down, attacker’s poor 1<sup>st</sup> touch)
- Using position on field as an aid (using the sidelines to help defend)

**Stage #2 (Emphasis on Covering Defender complimenting the Pressuring Defender)**

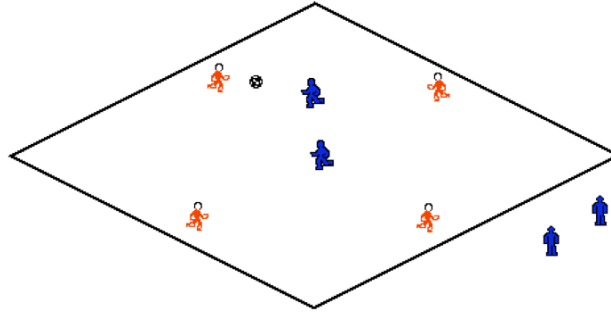
**Set-Up and Explanation** – same as above, now when the ball is played to Group #2, a second player comes out from Group #1 to become the 2<sup>nd</sup> or Covering Defender.

**Coaching Points**

- Same as above +:
- Communication from 2<sup>nd</sup> Defender to 1<sup>st</sup> Defender
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Defender reading the body shape and position of the 1<sup>st</sup> Defender



***POSSESSION ACTIVITY – “WINNING THE BALL WHEN NUMBERS DOWN”***



**Set-Up** – 25 x 20 space with two teams of 4 players.

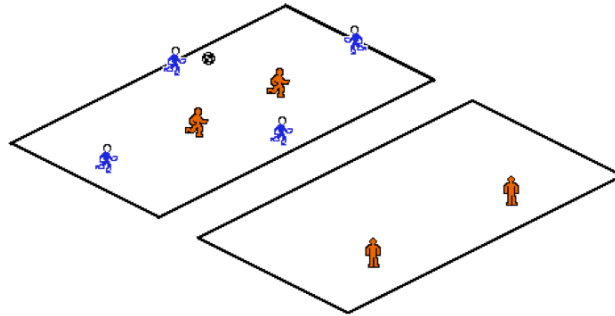
**Explanation** – 4 attacking players play possession versus 2 defenders. After the 2 defenders either win the ball or force a ball to be played out of play, the 2 defender’s teammates waiting outside of the grid enter and become the 2 new defenders. When the second group of defenders wins the ball or forces a ball to be played out of play, their team now becomes the attacking team and the previous attacking team assumes the defending role.

**Coaching Points**

- Encourage constant pressure on the ball
- Encourage proper cover
- Deny the penetrating or “split” pass
- Encourage effective communication so players can decipher between who is the pressuring and covering defenders



## *DIRECTIONAL ACTIVITY WITH TRANSITION*



**Set-Up** – 2 grids of 25 x 20, side by side. 2 teams of 4 players.

**Explanation** – 4 vs. 2 possession in one grid, with 2 players from the defending team waiting in the opposite grid. When the possession team achieves 4 consecutive passes, they look to play to the two players waiting in the opposite grid. When that occurs, the 2 defenders join the 2 new attackers to become the new possession team. The two closest players from the prior possession team enter the grid to become the new defenders.

*\*Note – if the 2 defenders win the ball at any time, they can play to their 2 teammates waiting in the opposite grid who will now become the new attacking group.*

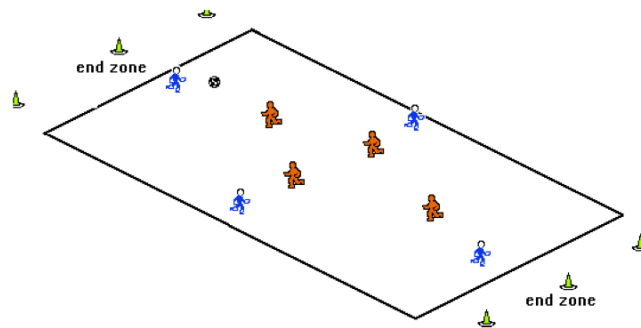
### **Coaching Points**

- Encourage constant pressure on the ball
- Encourage proper cover
- Deny the penetrating or “split” pass to the other grid by remaining compact
- Encourage effective communication so players can decipher between who is the pressuring and covering defenders
- Since this activity contains direction, defenders must be aware of the dangerous spaces (central) and must understand that their first priority is to deny penetration

***Note*** – this activity is an opportune time to educate players that 4 vs. 2 is not just a drill! Many coaches tell players in a 4 vs. 2 possession game not to “get split.” Not many coaches actually coach the players as to what the “split” simulates in the big game. As a result the players walk away from the activity thinking it was just another “drill.” Players need to constantly see how training activities are applicable to the big game. In this case, it is vital that the players understand we don’t want them to “get split” because getting split simulates getting penetrated by the opponent. Depending on if you are coaching your forwards, midfielders, or defenders, your coaching points may be tailored accordingly.



### ***DEFENDING THE PENETRATING DRIBBLE WITH EVEN NUMBERS***



**Set-Up** – 35 x 30 space. Two teams of 4 players.

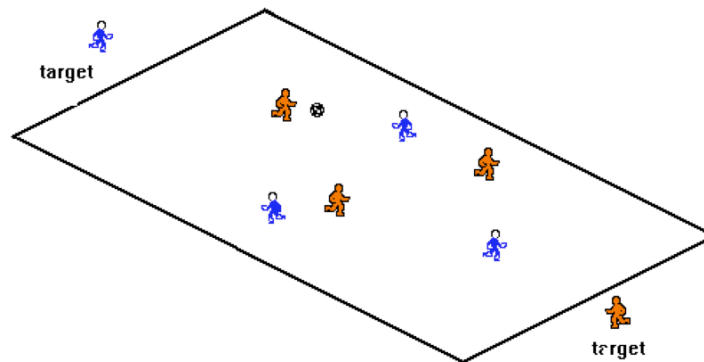
**Explanation** – teams play 4 vs. 4. A goal is scored when a player successfully dribbles over the goal-line and into the 5- yard end zone (between the goal-line and the line of cones.)

#### **Coaching Points**

- Coaching points from the earlier activities are relevant to this activity and players should use this activity to fine-tune what they learned earlier in this more “game-like” situation
- Now that the objective of the game is to score by using a penetrating dribble, the players must have players behind the ball (cover and balance) to maintain their shape and deny penetration



## *DEFENDING THE PENETRATING PASS WITH EVEN NUMBERS*



**Set-Up** – same as above.

**Explanation** – players play 3 vs. 3. A goal is scored when a team successfully plays a pass into their target player who is mobile on the goal-line. This pass must be below the target's knees.

Note – a goal cannot be scored directly from a restart.

Note – if goalkeepers are available, use them as target players, and play 4 vs. 4 in the field of play.

### **Coaching Points**

- All coaching points from the earlier activities are relevant to this activity
- Can players recognize that the 1<sup>st</sup> defender (pressure) becomes more important now that players can score with a penetrating pass?
- Does the 1<sup>st</sup> defender make play predictable to his teammates behind him?
- Can the covering and balancing defenders read the body language of the pressuring defender to intercept predictable passes?

### ***Optional conditions and restrictions:***

- ***Do not allow players to “tackle”***
- ***Do not allow players to cross in front of the path of another teammate when defending***

