

Introduction to Defending

The concept of defending is one of the more overlooked items in teaching players the game of soccer. We will break this section on defending down into team principles, individual principles and drills so that you can get an idea of how what concepts to get across and how to get them across.

What you will usually see at the intramural level, especially with the younger players, is everyone going for the ball at once. The second thing that you will see as the players get a little older is the more aggressive players stealing the ball consistently from the less aggressive, and the less skilled, simply by running straight at them.

This of course works at the younger levels, but as the players develop, and the skill differential decreases, this type of play actually becomes a detriment. Overly aggressive players who try to simply run down their opponents and strip the ball at the travel level often times find themselves missing completely and watching the backs of their opponents as they head down field.

This is not to say that aggressiveness is not important, merely to say that controlled play, especially on defense, is what we want to teach them at a young age so that they carry it forward with them as they progress.

What we need to get across to our youngsters is that defense, like the entire game, is dependent upon their teammates, as well as themselves, to do their job.

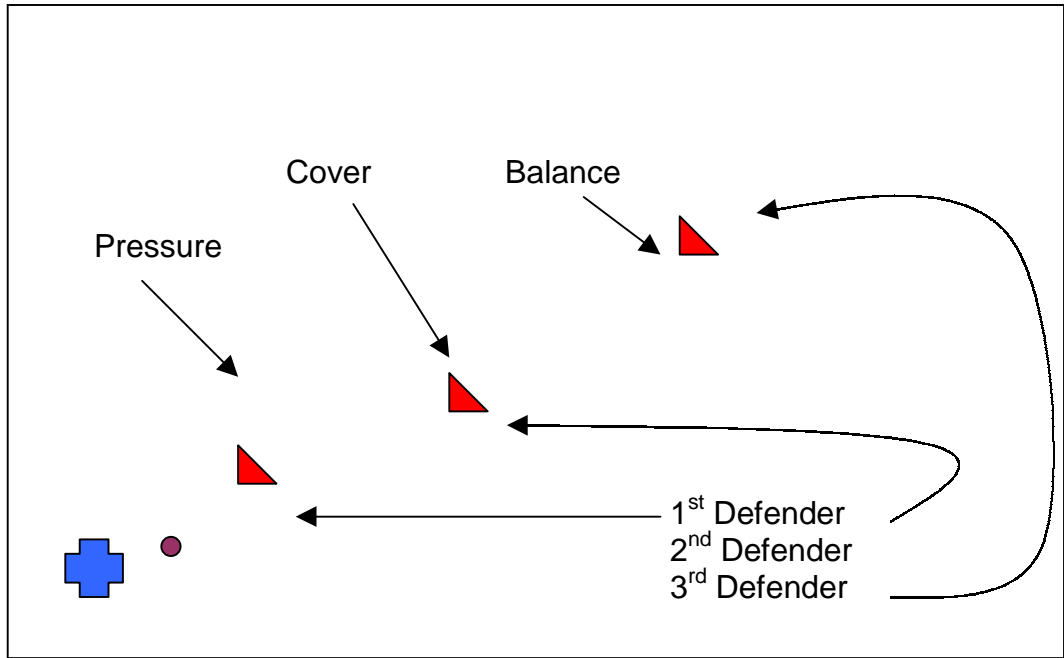
Concepts of Defending

You will hear the terms **First Defender**, **Second Defender** and **Third Defender** used in this manual and in any LIJSL coaching course that you take. The **First Defender** is the person nearest the attacking ball carrier. The initial job of the first defender is not to steal the ball, but to delay the opponent until his teammates arrive to help.

The **Second Defender** is the second person to arrive at the scene. The job of the second defender is to provide **cover** for the first defender. That is to cover up any mistake that the first defender might make.

When the second defender arrives on the scene, the job of the first defender changes from **delay** to **pressure**.

The job of the **Third Defender** is to provide balance. The positions and jobs of all three defenders is shown in the simple diagram below:



Pressure – Cover – Balance (PCB)