

## **U-18 Women's Team Defending**

The following is a session on team defending which was a soccer tip of the week from eteamz.

During the last U-18 Women's Camp held at the ARCO Olympic Training center in Chula Vista CA, the team had a week together with head coach Steve Swanson and assistant coach Jeff Pill, in preparation for their upcoming trip to Bulgaria.

As we played, several problems surfaced that needed to be addressed. They were:

1. The coordination of the defending action of the back four and midfield four.
2. The coordination of the defending action of the midfielders and strikers.
3. Being able to consistently play in to the strikers and creating opportunities off of those penetrating balls.

The following addresses the first need; **team defending**. This activity was used during the course of the week as part of a bigger progression. It is the major teaching activity that was used to assist the players as they learned their roles within the team.

### **11 v. 11, FULL FIELD, CONDITIONED PLAY**

The coaches needed to improve the team's ability to coordinate the defense of the back 4 and midfield 4. Too many gaps were present, and, they had difficulty reading how, when, and where to put pressure on the ball. This activity addressed that concern well. It also gave the team confidence in the defending 'system' as this game showed them that they could play numbers down and still have success with their defending.

#### The Game

- The 'white team' attacks with all 11 players. - The 'dark team' can only defend with the 8 field players and keeper, once the ball is in the defensive half.
- If the 'dark team' wins the ball, the two strikers can come back over the restraining and assist the team in getting the ball over the line of cones.
- Once this is done, the game is now reversed, with the 'darks' attacking against the 'lights' 9 players (the 2 strikers go and wait in their attacking half beyond the cones)

#### Coaching Points

- Good communication from ALL members of the defending team

- Stay compact. Keep gaps tight between the lines of defense, to make it difficult for the attacking team to play.
- Maintain zonal responsibilities, keep gaps tight between players.
- Good individual defending, don't lunge in.
- Weak side defenders need to pinch in and balance, keeping the team 'compact'.
- Keep the lines of defense distinct. Midfield defenders must stay in midfield and not get sucked back in to the defensive line.

If attacking team loses the ball, they apply pressure immediately to try to take advantage of their brief numerical superiority.

If good pressure is put on the ball, the defensive team can 'step', which includes the keeper, keeping the space the attacking team has to play in limited.

If there is weak pressure on the ball, the defending team must drop and delay.