

## WHEN TO DROP BACK AS A TEAM

Coaches,

Going around the games I see teams being successful with their movement, moving up from the back is getting better, the back four are not deep and isolated but close and in contact with the midfield when we have the ball.

I do though see problems of **when to drop back** to avoid the long ball over the heads and the ensuing chase.

Players and coaches need to recognize early **when** we lose the ball, **where** we lose the ball, if there is **pressure** on the ball (to prevent the punt, hit and hope method of play others employ), if there is **no pressure** on the ball to prevent the punt which is when we must **drop** etc.

If you as a coach can see it and the players still are learning when to see it then you can make the call **DROP** so they know when and where to do it. The idea is to teach the players to **recognize the moment**. It is important you are always looking at the back four and where they are in relation to the ball don't just focus on the ball all the time.

An example; they win it at the edge of the defending third and the midfield third and we are pushed up to the half way line as we should be when we have possession. But we lose it there and as soon as this happens the back players have 2 choices, play offside or drop off into the space where the ball is likely to be punted.

Play offside and lets face it, it will be Russian roulette (we don't push up to play offside but to condense the field), dropping off quickly means we give ourselves time and space to play in and vital yards on the attackers. Some teams are still not comfortable passing back to the keeper but if under pressure and not able to turn that is the way to play, the keeper should have time to take a touch or two to clear. Or if you have yards of space you can turn and play it forward or across the defense.

If you are playing the back line correctly we will have a center back dropped off slightly deeper than the other three anyway, as a sweeper, this is why I say it is never a flat back four although it is called this.

Which side the ball is on determines which center back is the sweeper, it is simple, and if a fullback has pushed on anyway then we are a back three which is how you used to play (second center back is the sweeper) and our defensive mid is the old stopper. So by the rotation we have a triangle at the back with a sweeper deeper so you will be covered anyway. But I see us flat here too much, inviting the ball over the top.

So we do **up, out, slide** well, forget **hold** for now, but **drop** is what we need to focus on. Some have mastered this also to be fair but many haven't and defend too deep because they are afraid of the ball over the top which is not the way to play if you want your midfield supported from the back. Too often there is a massive gap between the midfield and the back and opponents win the ball in here and have a free run at the back players anyway, we need to avoid this. Learn when to push up but also when to drop back. A point also is to encourage (no, insist) whoever is close to the ball when we lose it to put **IMMEDIATE** pressure on the player with the ball and this will buy some time for the back players. Too often we give it up and let them play.

This comes back to the need for total concentration during the three moments in the game (when we have the ball, when they have the ball, when possession changes) probably the most important is when possession changes and the players have to change their mindset from attacking to defending or defending to attacking. **Attacking to defending** is the really difficult one

to get them to do because it is hard work (usually running back) and not as much fun as changing to attacking but it is at this moment that **anticipation** and **concentration** can make all the difference and is where I see the greatest need for improvement at the moment.

Apart from this there is a lot of good entertaining soccer being played with transitions getting better all the time. This is the one point I see that I needed to discuss with you. If you have a serious problem with it give me a call and I can do a session with your team (or for any other reason).

Hope you get the chance to see the world cup and how teams transition and how you will find most of the teams employing what we are teaching, with a back four rotating and moving forward from wide areas. OK the level is different but the principles are the same.

Hope this helps,

Cheers, Wayne.