

Body Position - Defenders

As one of the trail defenders, it is important not to get caught "square" to play; that is, your shoulders, hips and feet are parallel with the goal lines. For instance, say you are moving up field away from your defended goal and you see your opponent starting to kick the ball towards your defended goal. You should immediately stop your forward movement and turn sideways to play. It may also be wise to start reversing your direction, moving back towards your goal line.

Since the leg swing of your opponent is a clue that the ball MAY be played over your head into the space behind you, being in proper form and movement BEFORE the kick is made may be the difference between a defensive interception or clear and a breakaway opportunity for the opponents.

Since the forwards on the other team are already facing your goal line and probably already in motion, you must use every advantage you can to get to the ball first.

The time it takes to turn and run back, out of a square position, is way too long to keep pace with a opponent that is already moving in that direction. The trick is to get sideways before the moment of truth. This way the defender can see the field (and the ball), move forward or backward easier than when facing one way and having to move in the opposite direction.

A simple exercise to reinforce this would be to have the GK play a long ball out towards the midfield. Several defenders on the 18 will move out towards ball (as if they were the backs moving up field). The attacker is to play the ball back towards the goalkeeper. It is up to the closing defenders to read the play, adjusting their body position prior to when the return kick is made.

Of course, forward attackers can be added to enrich the situation with off-side, picking up of marks, etc.

Again, the body position of the defender is of absolute importance if the quickest change of direction is to be made.