

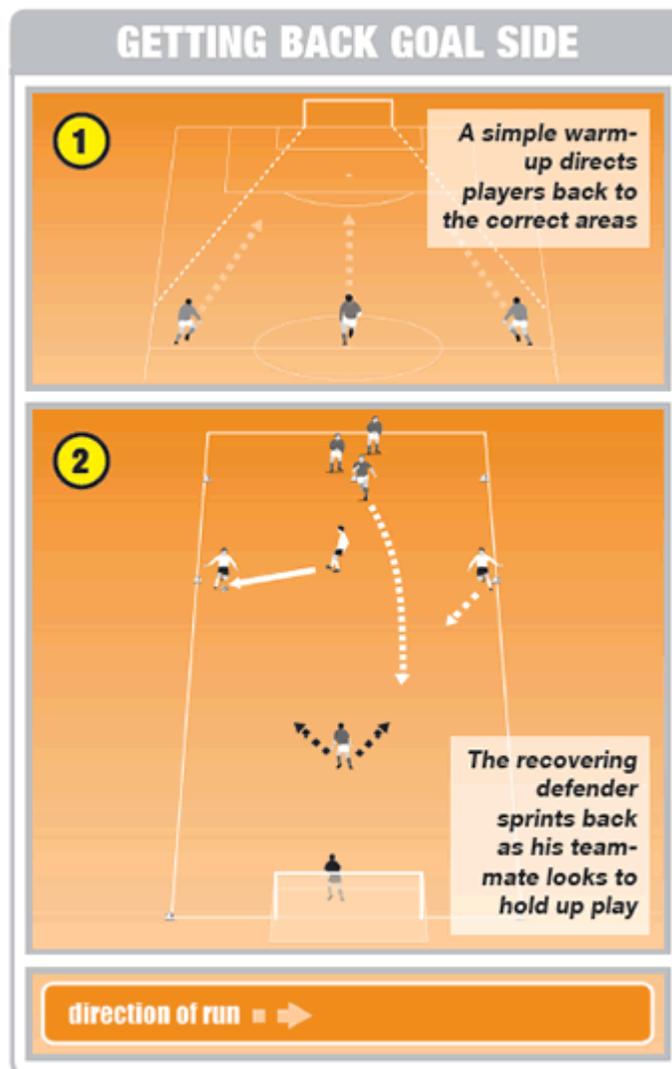
Rapid recovery

By David Clarke

Every coach has been in the situation where his team loses the ball, the opposition race towards goal, yet his own players stand and watch the inevitable conclusion unfold.

For younger kids especially, the idea of heading back to mop up the mess is generally taken as being "someone else's job", and even the most organised teams' defenders can find themselves alone at the back with the opposition haring towards them.

So encouraging your players to get back and help defend is hugely valuable. It will add to a player's game, enhance team spirit and may be worth quite a few points come the end of the season.



How to set it up:

- Use a standard pitch for a warm-up sprint drill.
- Mark out an area measuring 35 yards long by 10 yards wide with a goal at one end – this will form the main part of the session.

Getting started:

- Start first with a sprint drill to teach defenders, who are tracking back, the key areas they should be running to.
- Players should run as fast as possible and take the shortest route towards the danger area. Players on the wing should take a line back towards the nearest goal post, while those in the centre of the pitch should run towards the penalty spot.
- Now move to your 35x10 yards area.
- Three strikers attack against one defender and a goalkeeper.
- A second defender is 10 yards behind the play. His aim is to make it back to the ball to help prevent a goal.
- The middle striker is a server and cannot move. He plays the ball to either of the two forwards. As soon as he does, play begins and the recovering defender can move.
- The lone defender must hold up the strikers until the second defender arrives. The recovering player must make one of four decisions. 1) Challenge for the ball 2) Cover the defender 3) Mark an opponent 4) Mark space between the opponent and goal.
- When a move comes to an end, play restarts with the serving attacker.

Why this works:

The move combines pace and awareness because players must concentrate on recovering by moving quickly, then supporting the other defenders.

Another crucial part of this is in making sure that once your players have made it back, they don't turn off mentally and subsequently fail to complete the defending task.

It can be all too easy to get back and think that the job is done, when really it has only just started!