

The following are good “rules of Thumb” from Gary Rue – a high school coach from Kentucky:

1. do not allow dribbler to get behind or past the first defender
2. stop or slow down dribbler
3. take away shooting or passing behind the defense options
4. force dribbler sideways or backwards
5. force dribbler to a certain area determined by these factors:
 - field position of the dribbler
 - ability of the dribbler (uni-footed, fast, etc.)
 - location of supporting defender(s) or boundary
 - location of supporting attacker (passing options)
6. keep dribbler's eyes on ball, not allowing the dribbler to look around
7. look for and take advantage of opportunities to tackle the ball
8. maintain defensive presence with dribbler that goes forward after releasing the ball
9. recover quickly into second defender support position when dribbler releases the ball.

1 v 1 Defending – Containment

After the defender has been positioned to prevent the attacker dribbler from getting into paradise (behind the defense), step 2 is to contain the dribbler. That is, to stop or slow down the attack so the defense can recover and organize.

When the attacker is "stopped," the defender can get closer by inching forward via a side-on shuffle, keeping balance or slightly leaning backwards to react to any forward movements by the attacker. The defender should be in constant movement with short hops to keep the feet alive.

If the defender can get the attacker to turn his back, then has won that battle. There are two schools of thought on how to deal with an attacker that has turned his back. The first is to get close with minimal contact, so as not allow the attacker to know exactly where the defender is. Skilled attackers can easily turn on a defender by feeling which side is not being pressured.

The other theory is to apply extreme pressure by charging through the back. The decision making of the referee comes into play on this technique. The defender should be okay, if enough pressure can be applied to keep the attacker off balance, so as not to turn and can keep from pushing or charging in a dangerous manner.

A compromise to the two extremes is the "pop and release" technique. As the attacker turns, the defender "nudges" the attacker and bounces off a little, keeping the feet active. After a second or two, the bounces into the attacker

again to make him aware of the defender's presence and bounces off to stop the attacker's turn attempt.

In a team defensive scheme, there should be supporting defenders and perhaps a teammate to double team the attacker. Once support is there, the defender can be more aggressive in an attempt to take the ball from the attacker.

1 v 1 Defending - Pressure

Once the defender is in control of the attacker, forcing him in the defender's direction of preference, it is important that the defender continue to maintain a high level of pressure on the attacker. The defender need not confront the attacker with a tackle attempt, until the defensive support is in place and the defender is ready.

The feint tackle is one way to keep the attacker off-balanced. The defender feints a reach for the ball, yet maintains excellent balance and position. The defender should not actually get caught with the body weight going forward, only the feinting foot.

The attacker will have to react (if there is a reaction) in one of two ways. First, he may protect the ball by pulling it back or stepping in with a shielding motion. Or secondly, he may attempt to push the ball past the defender, assuming he is off balance.

In the first case, the defender is forcing the attacker to focus totally on the ball. In the second case, the defender should be in good position to cut-off the attempted pass and possibly be able to step between the attacker and the ball.

1 v 1 Defending -Shepherding

Once the immediate threat of the dribbler beating the defender subsides, the defender should force the attacker towards an area that favors the defender and his team. Referring to the rules of thumb above, in this case #5, there are a few factors that must be considered. If the attacker is in his own defensive third of the field, the defender would do well to force the attacker towards the middle. A lost ball in this area would surely be a scoring opportunity.

If the attacker is in the middle third of the field towards one side, the defender would do well to force the attacker towards the touch, thereby restricting his options. If the team defensive strategy is to funnel the attacker in towards the middle, then that should be the choice.

In the defensive third, almost always take the attacker as wide as possible or keep him wide. If the attacker is in the middle, the defender would do well to stay between the attacker and the goal and to keep the attacker moving laterally. If possible, take the attacker towards his weaker side (if he has one), but do not give up a shooting angle by getting to one side of the attacker to force him in a direction.

1 v 1 Defending – Maintaining the Mark

If a defender is able to get an attacker wide deep in the defender's territory, the defender should not over commit and allow the attacker to beat him, i.e. allow the goal line. This is one of the worst attacking situations to have to defend.

One of the best ways to break down a single defender is the one-two combination. That is, the attacker plays the ball to a teammate, runs forward and receives the return pass. Usually, the attacker is able to get around and behind the defender, as the defender will stand and watch the ball or chase the ball after the pass. You may want to review the 1-2 combination practice in the Passing and Receiving section.

The defender is obligated to continue to maintain the mark on an attacker that goes forward after a pass until one of several things occur: *

- the attacker's position is not considered dangerous any more
- another defender can or should take over marking responsibilities
- the attacker on ball is free and unpressured
- support for the defender on ball is needed

The most important time is immediately after the pass. It is recommended that the defender turn with the attacker (taking his eyes off the ball), try to beat the attacker to space he is going and turning back to find the ball. An extended forearm touching the attacker can help the defender know where the attacker is. The defender must not slow down his turn with the attacker, as he may obstruct the attacker.

The beauty of this defensive reaction is that it takes the defender automatically into a supportive position. Once the immediate threat of a return pass is defended, the defender can decide whether to continue a close mark on the attacker, support his teammate who should have closed down the ball by now or close down the ball himself.

1 v 1 Defending – Closing Down the Angles

Once the defender has applied pressure and contained the attacker, he should prevent as many forward passing options as possible. The responsibility of the

through pass still remains with the supporting defender (if present), but the first defender can help the team by also being attentive to the dribbler's passing option. The closer a defender can get to the attacker without compromising his containment position, the fewer passing options an attacker has.

As the defender is keeping the attacker under control, he should try to stay aware of the near ball runs made by supporting attackers. An overlap run will be the easiest to see by the defender and a slight shift towards the overlapper's side could be enough to discourage this option. . Again, the defender needs to be careful not to give the attacker the angle to fake the pass and drive by the defender to the other side.

One other passing option is the nutmeg. Defenders that maintain a side-on position and keep their feet from getting too spread apart, greatly reduce the possibility of this pass being successful.