

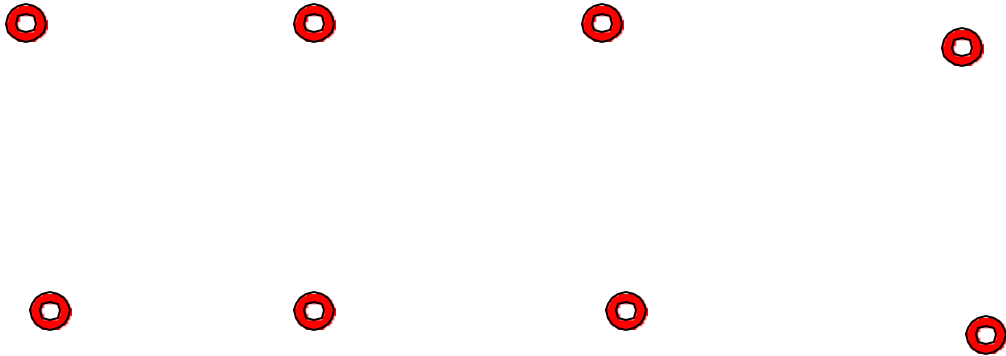
Defending the through Ball

This section deals with stopping penetrating Through balls in a flat back defense. It was supplied to me by Gary Rue , a high school coach from Kentucky and frequent contributor to several coaching forums.

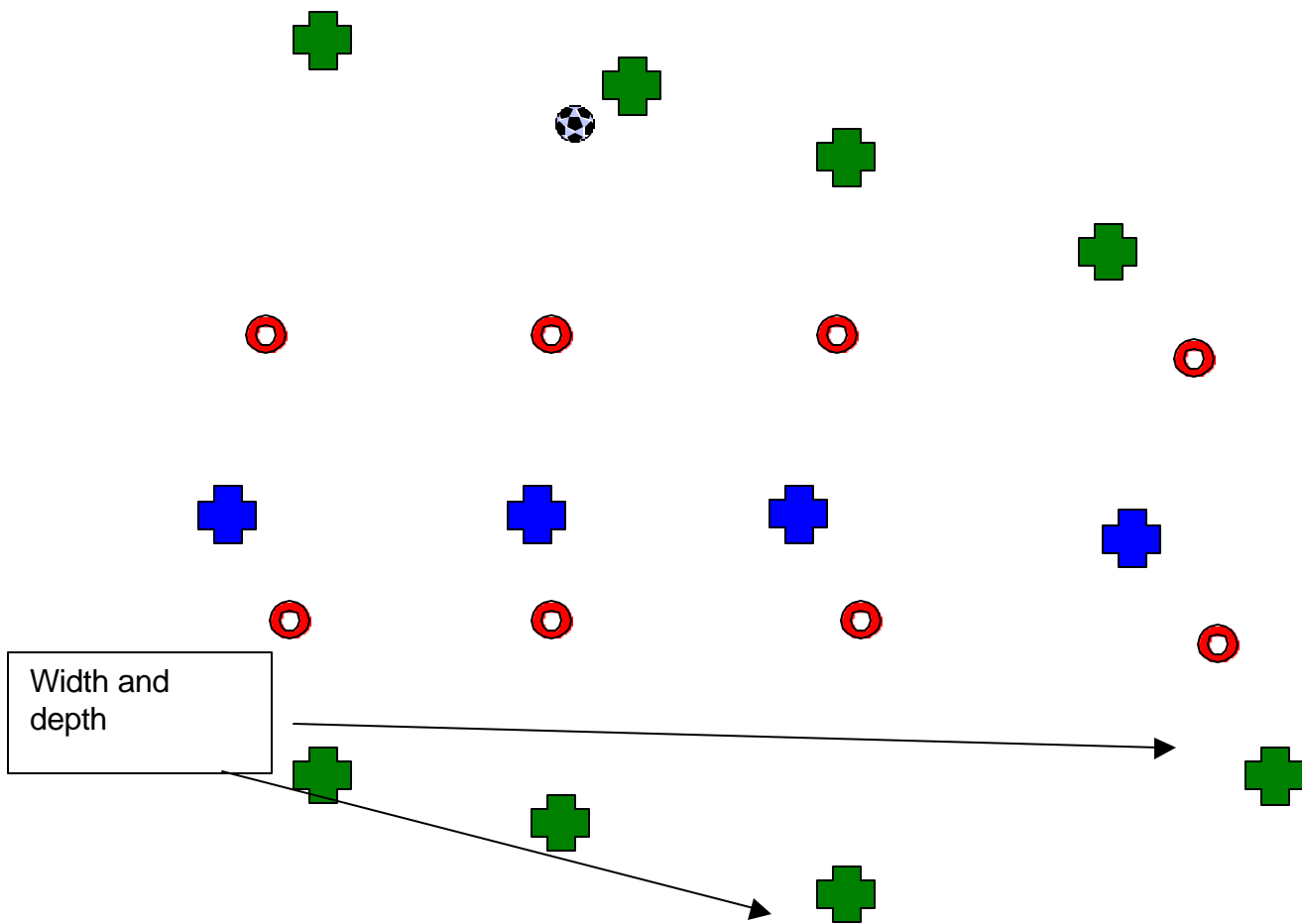
One of the prime positioning responsibilities of the flat back is to stop penetrating through balls. The following exercise helps a flat back learn, shift and position themselves in the face of passes out of the opponents' midfield.

Setup

Using flat cones as markers, create a horizontal channel of 10x60 yards across the field as shown.



Inside the channel are the four defenders. On **each** side of the channel are 4-6 attacking players spread out across the whole width.



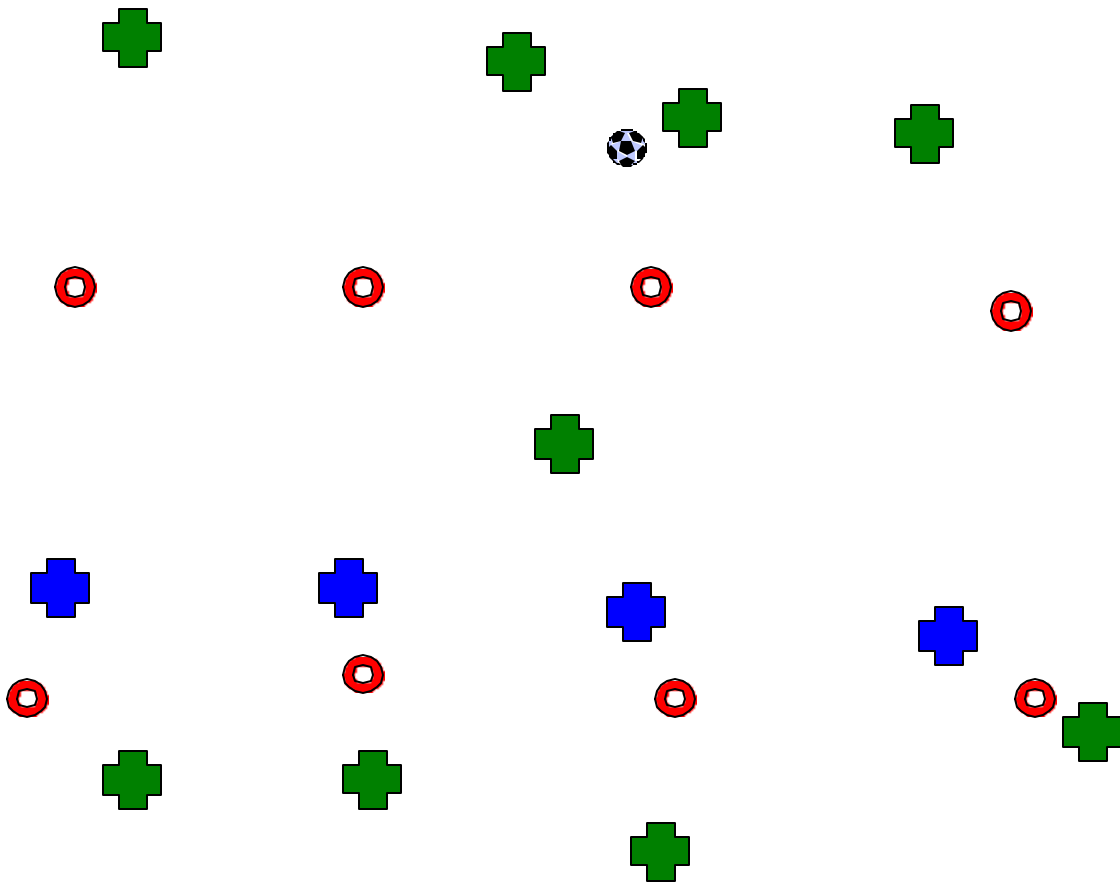
Execution

For ease of switching the point of attack, the attackers may want to position a player forward with back to the channel (as if he was a checking forward player). The attackers should not be in a flat shape, but have some depth and width.

The attackers move the ball around trying to off balance the defenders where they can deliver a pass past the defensive line to the attackers on the other side.

In this exercise, we will assume that the mids are applying appropriate pressure and the backs are just in support of the halfbacks. In the example above, the ball is central and so are the backs. They have gotten closer together and moved closer towards the center. As the ball moves wide, they should shift to that side as well.

Notice the defenders have moved to closer to their back restricted line. This is because they are trying to stop the through ball. **In a flat back, you want to create space between you and the ball when possible.** If the ball is close to midfield, the space is 10-15 yards. It is 5-7 yards when the defense is backed up to its 18. If the ball is dropped further away, they should move forward. As the ball comes forward, they should move back.



Once the basic movement is trained, an attacker can be added to inside the channel. Now the defenders must mark this attacker, passing him on as the attacker moves side to side.

Balls can be played into the attacker who can turn and pass or drop it back.

If a defender must move forward to mark an attacker, the other backs must adjust their positions forward in order to not create too much space between the marking defender and the rest of the backs. This space creates angles for through balls. The diagram below shows the slight difference in positioning when an attacker must be marked in the channel.

