

Soccer Edition 253

Welcome to the Soccer Newsletter. Today's subject deals with high-pressure defense.

I went to a hockey game recently and while I realize there are a great number of differences between hockey and soccer including size of the fields/rink, speed of the players, rules etc there was one thing I noticed in the hockey game that I wish more soccer players and coaches would see and apply more often in soccer.

Let me start by saying I don't know much about hockey and simply was attending the game as a fan. However, the importance of keeping the puck inside of the attacking third of the rink in hockey is something that, even with the differences in rules between hockey and soccer, is something that should be emphasized by a greater number of soccer teams.

Put simply, when an attacking team loses the ball, rather than immediately retreating, they should sometimes look to immediately go and win the ball right back.

If you want to think of the soccer field as thirds, it comes down to, would you rather defend in your attacking third of the field or in your defensive third of the field?

The advantages of defending in your attacking third of the field are the following: if you win the ball, you can immediately go to goal. Also, if you get beat, there is room to try to recover as opposed to getting beat in the defensive third and the opponent can immediately get to goal.

The disadvantages of defending in your attacking third include the following: it means more space to defend (when you defend in your defensive third you only have one third of the field to defend but when you defend in the attacking third, you defend in that third but if the opponent gets out of that third, you still have to defend in the other two thirds. This also requires a great deal of fitness because when losing the ball there is no time to rest while recovering, as it requires instant transition to pressure. For this reason, it's important to pick and choose when the best time to pressure and when it's best to fall back.

If you have any questions or comments about this newsletter or any other subject, either send them to comments@finesoccer.com or post them to the forum at <http://finesoccer.com>.

Have a great day.

Lawrence

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