

Edition 33

Welcome to the Soccer Newsletter. Today's edition will deal with proper defensive positioning off the ball.

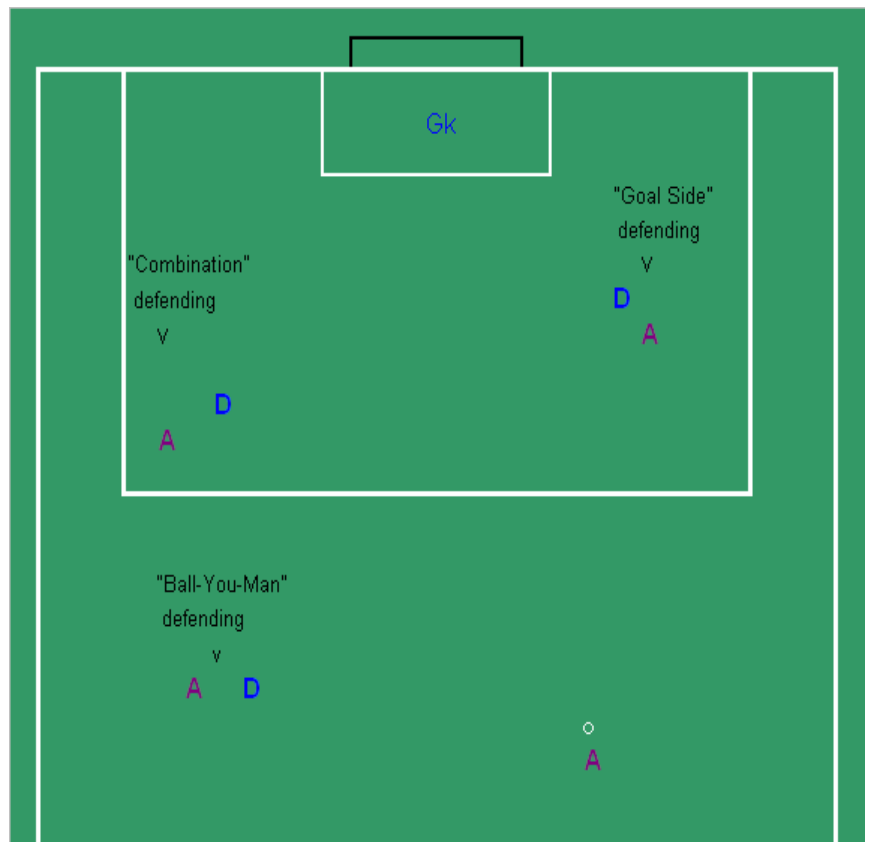
Most players have heard their coaches yell to get goal side on defense but that is just the first step. In my opinion, the proper term is to get ball-you-man-goal side. It takes a little more explanation and a little more thought but it will make you a much better defender.

Let's start with what goal side means. Quite simply, it means making sure that you are closer to the goal you are defending than the player you are marking. The idea behind this is to keep your body between where she is and where she wants to go. It's a simple concept. Keep in mind however, it is not an absolute. By staying goal side, it means you are constantly keeping the opponent onside. That discussion is for a different newsletter.

Ball-you-man is a different term than what most use. However, I believe after an easy explanation, it makes a great deal of sense.

Imagine the ball is with a player on the right side of the field (the defenders right) and the player she is marking is on the left side of the field. If the defender were to stand right next to her to mark her, it would allow for a simple one hole pass to beat the defender (if you aren't sure what is meant by a one hole pass, see edition 14). By playing toward the middle of the field, it will make it much harder for this pass to be completed successfully.

Wherever the ball is on the field, you will want to be closer to the ball than the player you are marking. By doing this, it will make it easy to intercept many passes. In addition to this, it will allow you to give support to your teammates because it will put you closer to their player in case they get beat.



By combining the goal side defense and the ball-you-man defense into ball-you-man-goal side defense, you have a position that will allow you to prevent the player you are marking from getting behind you, you are giving support to your teammates and you are putting your self in a position to intercept errant passes. It is the best of all worlds.

If you are having difficulty picturing this, imagine a field broken up into a bunch of grids on it. The defender always wants to be in a grid closer to the goal then the player she is marking so if you were to look at the field thinking of horizontal grids, she wants to be in a grid closer to the goal then the mark. She also wants to be in a vertical grid closer to the player with the ball then the mark. How far off of the mark does the defender stand? It really depends on the distance of the ball to the mark as well as the location on the field. To simplify the answer, the further away the mark is from the ball, the further away the defender can be. There are so many variables such as speed of the defender and speed of the mark that there is no right answer. It comes with experimentation and experience.

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

Reprinted from FineSoccer.com