

# BEGINNING SOCCER



## **OBJECT OF THE GAME**

Soccer consists of two teams with eleven players each. Of the eleven players, the only requirement is to have one goalkeeper. At each end of the field there is a goal which is defended by one team, and attacked upon by the other. The object of the game is to put the ball in the opponents net as many times as possible. The team which has the most goals after 90 minutes wins. Each team tries to advance the ball toward the opponent's goal through the use of any body part except the hands and arms. When the ball COMPLETELY crosses the goal line, this is a goal and worth one point.

## **HISTORY OF THE GAME**

Games similar to soccer have been played all over the world throughout history. FIFA, (the governing body of world soccer), states that the "very earliest form of the game for which there is scientific evidence was an exercise of precisely this skilful technique dating back to the 2nd and 3rd centuries BC in China (the game of cuju)." Various forms of soccer were played in medieval Europe, though the rules differed depending on time period and location.

The Cambridge Rules, first drawn up at Cambridge University in 1848, were particularly influential in the development of rules for soccer. The Cambridge Rules were written at Trinity College, Cambridge. They were not universally adopted. During the 1850s, many clubs unconnected to schools or universities were formed throughout the English-speaking world, to play various forms of soccer.

These ongoing efforts contributed to the formation of The Soccer Association (The FA) in 1863. At the final meeting, the first FA treasurer withdrew his club from the FA over the removal of two draft rules at the previous meeting, the first which allowed for the running with the ball in hand and the second, obstructing such a run by hacking (kicking an opponent in the shins), tripping and holding. Other English rugby football clubs followed this lead and did not join the FA, or subsequently left the FA and instead in 1871 formed the Rugby Football Union.

The laws of the game are currently determined by the International Soccer Association Board (IFAB). The Board was formed in 1886 after a meeting in Manchester of The Soccer Association, the Scottish Soccer Association, the Soccer Association of Wales, and the Irish Soccer Association. The Fédération Internationale de Soccer Association (FIFA), the international soccer body, was formed in Paris in 1904 and declared that they would adhere to Laws of the Game of the Soccer Association. The growing popularity of the international game led to the admittance of FIFA representatives to the International Soccer Association Board in 1913. The board currently consists of four representatives from FIFA and one representative from each of the four British associations.

## Laws

There are seventeen laws in the official Laws of the Game. The laws are often framed in broad terms, which allow flexibility in their application depending on the nature of the game. In addition to the seventeen laws, numerous IFAB decisions and other directives contribute to the regulation of soccer. The Laws of the Game are published by FIFA, but are maintained by the International Soccer Association Board, not FIFA itself. The most complex of the Laws is offside. The offside law limits the ability of attacking players to remain forward (i.e. closer to the opponent's goal line) of the ball, the second-to-last defending player (which can include the goalkeeper), and the half-way line. To view the laws of the game, follow this link: [Laws of the Game](#)

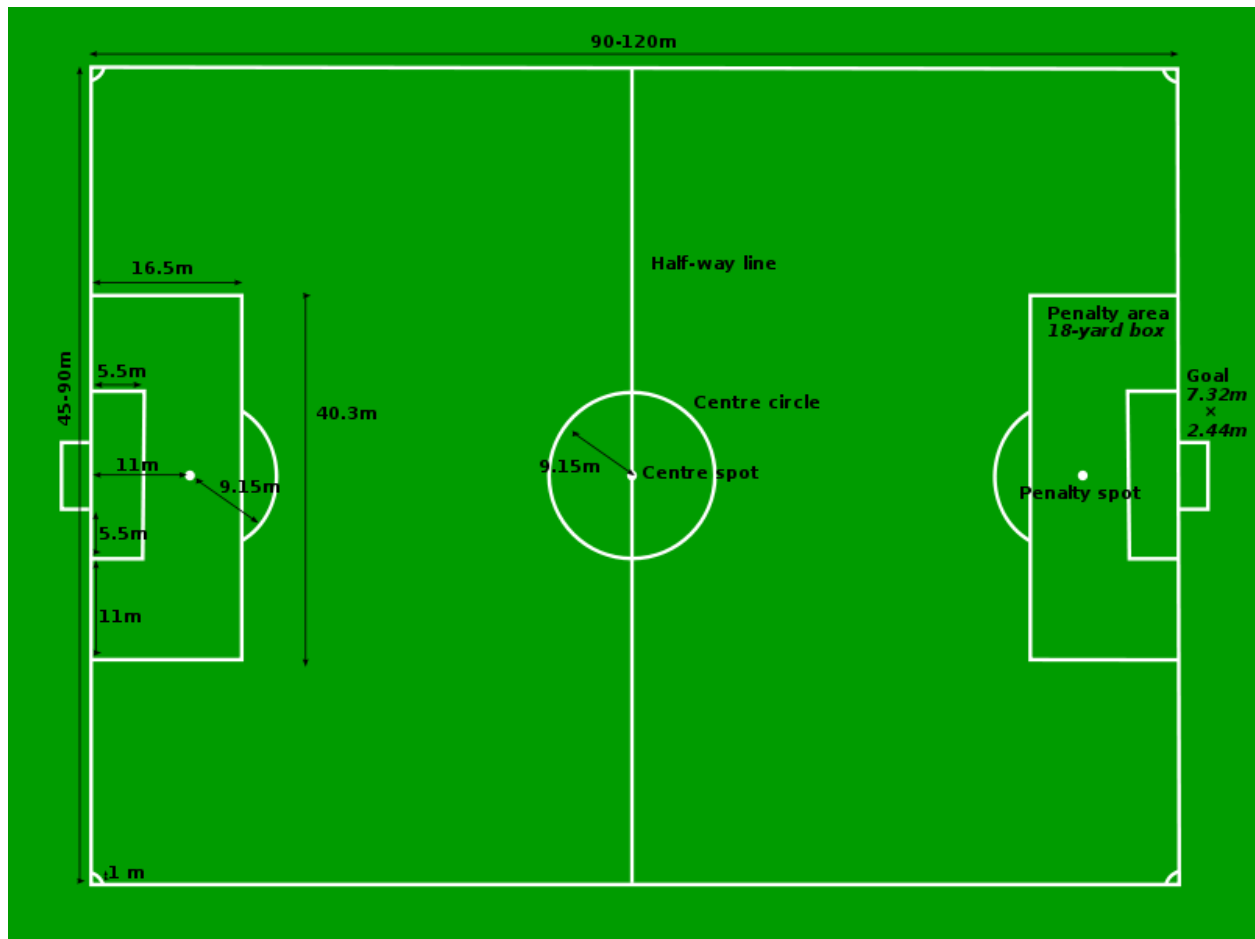
## Players, Equipment and Officials

Each team consists of a maximum of eleven players (excluding substitutes), one of whom must be the goalkeeper. Competition rules state a minimum number of players required to constitute a team; this is usually seven. Goalkeepers are the only players allowed to play the ball with their hands or arms, provided they do so within the penalty area in front of their own goal. Though there are a variety of positions in which the outfield (non-goalkeeper) players are strategically placed by a coach, these positions are not defined or required by the Laws.

The basic equipment or *kit* calls for players to wear a shirt, shorts, socks, footwear and adequate shin guards. Headgear is not a required piece of basic equipment, but players today may choose to wear it to protect them from head injury. Players are forbidden to wear or use anything that is dangerous to themselves or another player, such as jewelry or watches. The goalkeeper must wear clothing that is easily distinguishable from that worn by the other players and the match officials.

A game is officiated by a referee, who has "full authority to enforce the Laws of the Game in connection with the match to which he has been appointed" (Law 5), and whose decisions are final. The referee is assisted by two assistant referees.

## The Pitch



The length of the pitch for international adult matches is in the range 100–110 m (110–120 yd) and the width is in the range 64–75 m (70–80 yd). Fields for non-international matches may be 91–120 m (100–130 yd) length and 45–91 m (50–101 yd) in width, provided that the pitch does not become square. The longer boundary lines are *touchlines* or *sidelines*, while the shorter boundaries (on which the goals are placed) are *goal lines*. A rectangular goal is positioned at the middle of each goal line. The inner edges of the vertical goal posts must be 7.3 m (8 yd) apart, and the lower edge of the horizontal crossbar supported by the goal posts must be 2.44 m (8 ft) above the ground. Nets are usually placed behind the goal, but are not required by the Laws.

In front of each goal is an area known as the penalty area. This area is marked by the goal line, two lines starting on the goal line 16.5 m (18 yd) from the goalposts and extending 16.5 m (18 yd) into the pitch perpendicular to the goal line, and a line joining them. This area has a number of functions, the most prominent being to mark where the goalkeeper may handle the ball and where a penalty foul by a member of the defending team becomes punishable by a penalty kick. Other markings define the position of the ball or players at kick-offs, goal kicks, penalty kicks and corner kicks.

## Time of Play

A standard adult soccer match consists of two periods of 45 minutes each, known as halves. Each half runs continuously, meaning that the clock is not stopped when the ball is out of play. There is usually a 15-minute half-time break between halves. The end of the match is known as full-time.

The referee is the official timekeeper for the match, and may make an allowance for time lost through substitutions, injured players requiring attention, or other stoppages. This added time is commonly referred to as *stoppage time* or *injury time*, and is at the sole discretion of the referee. The referee alone signals the end of the match. In matches where a fourth official is appointed, toward the end of the half the referee signals how many minutes of stoppage time he intends to add. The fourth official then informs the players and spectators by holding up a board showing this number. The signaled stoppage time may be further extended by the referee.

## In Play

The ball remains *in play* from the beginning of each playing period to the end of that period, except when:

- The ball leaves the field by entirely crossing a goal line or touch line (this includes when a goal is scored); or
- Play is stopped by the referee (for example when a foul has been committed, a player is seriously injured, or the ball becomes defective).

Note that when the ball is in play it remains in play if it rebounds from a goalpost, crossbar, corner flag, referee or assistant referee, assuming that they are on the field of play at the time. When the ball is in play players may play the ball, contest the ball, and goals may be scored. Substitutions may not occur whilst the ball is in play.

## Restarts

When the ball becomes out of play, the ball is put back in to play by the appropriate restart. The restarts in soccer are:

- Kick-off: following a goal by the opposing team, or to begin each period of play. (Law 8).
- Throw-in: when the ball has wholly crossed the touchline; awarded to opposing team to that which last touched the ball. (Law 15).
- Goal kick: when the ball has wholly crossed the goal line without a goal having been scored and having last been touched by an attacker; awarded to defending team. (Law 16).

- Corner kick: when the ball has wholly crossed the goal line without a goal having been scored and having last been touched by a defender; awarded to attacking team. (Law 17).
- Indirect free kick: awarded to the opposing team following "non-penal" fouls (like obstruction, offside, etc.), certain technical infringements, or when play is stopped to caution/send-off an opponent without a specific foul having occurred. (Law 13).
- Direct free kick: awarded to fouled team following certain listed "penal" fouls. (Law 13).
- Penalty kick: awarded to fouled team following "penal" foul having occurred in their opponent's penalty area. (Law 14).
- Dropped-ball: occurs when the referee has stopped play for any other reason (e.g. a serious injury to a player, interference by an external party, or a ball becoming defective). This restart is uncommon in adult games. (Law 8).

## Misconduct

A foul occurs when a player commits an offence listed in the Laws of the Game while the ball is in play. The offences that constitute a foul are listed in Law 12. Handling the ball deliberately, tripping an opponent, or pushing an opponent, are examples of "penal fouls", punishable by a direct free kick or penalty kick depending on where the offence occurred. Other fouls are punishable by an indirect free kick.

The referee may punish a player or substitute's misconduct by a caution (yellow card) or sending-off (red card). A second yellow card at the same game leads to a red card, and therefore to a sending-off. A player given a yellow card is said to have been "booked", the referee writing the player's name in his official notebook.

If a player has been sent off, no substitute can be brought on in their place. Misconduct may occur at any time, and while the offences that constitute misconduct are listed, the definitions are broad. In particular, the offence of "unsporting behavior" may be used to deal with most events that violate the spirit of the game, even if they are not listed as specific offences. A referee can show a yellow or red card to a player, substitute or substituted player. Non-players such as managers and support staff cannot be shown the yellow or red card, but may be expelled from the technical area if they fail to conduct themselves in a responsible manner.

Rather than stopping play, the referee may allow play to continue if doing so will benefit the team against which an offence has been committed. This is known as "playing an advantage". The referee may "call back" play and penalize the original offence if the anticipated advantage does not ensue within a short period, typically taken to be four to five seconds. Even if an offence is not penalized due to advantage being played, the offender may still be sanctioned for misconduct at the next stoppage of play.

## FORMATIONS

### 4-4-2



The most common formation you will likely see in soccer is the 4-4-2.

It's made up of four defenders, four midfielders and two strikers. It is an adaptable system where you have strength in midfield and plenty of width. Having two strikers means that the front line has extra support rather than having to wait for the midfield to reach them. This formation, like others, tends to free up the full-backs, who will have more time on the ball than midfielders, particularly if the opposition is playing 4-4-2 as well. In fact, some coaches see the two central midfielders in this formation as defenders and the full-backs as attackers. This formation also offers the chance for one of the two central midfielders to get forward and support the strikers. Sometimes the two midfielders will take turns in pushing forward to keep the defenders guessing. But some teams favor a more solid approach, assigning a midfielder to have a more defensive and deeper role to cover the defense. This gives the more attacking midfielder greater freedom to push forward and support the strikers. This type of formation has been called the diamond formation as the four midfielders form a diamond-like shape, and it favors a team which does not have strong wingers.

## 4-4-1-1



This formation is not as confusing as it looks.

It is a simple variation of 4-4-2 in which the second attacker plays just behind the main striker but ahead of the midfield. If a player plays ahead of the midfield but behind the striker, it causes problems for the opposition because they find it hard to mark them. The midfield already has four midfielders to mark and if a defender takes up the job, he will get pulled out of defense. The second striker is a master at standing still, which although it sounds stupid, actually finds him space as the play moves forward. This formation allows a creative player a bit more freedom to operate. He has more options, to pass short or long, dribble, cut wide or bear down on goal. If he fails to create an opening for himself, more often than not he will create goal scoring chances for others. And the added advantage is that, if he creates something further forward, he can arrive late in the box to join the attack.

## 4-5-1



Traditionally favored by European teams, the 4-5-1 formation is becoming ever more popular in the Premiership.

The 4-5-1 - that is four defenders, five midfielders and one striker - is often seen in European games where teams face a tough away fixture and the manager chooses to pack the midfield. It can be very effective, particularly at keeping possession, and with five midfielders covering the defense it provides a solid base. Sometimes you will see 10 men behind the ball. But it also means that attacking options are limited. The poor old striker often has a lone battle up front. It works best with a big, strong front man who can win the ball in the air and hold it up until support arrives. Otherwise it can produce relatively few goal-scoring chances. This system has a lot in common with the 4-3-3 formation, where the wide midfielders join the lone striker. Put simply, they play 4-3-3 when they have the ball and 4-5-1 when they do not.

## TERMINOLOGY

**Assist** - A contribution, usually a pass, by a player which helps a teammate to score a goal.

**Assistant Referee**- One of the officials who assist the referee in controlling a match. Two officials (informally know as **linesmen**) stand on the touchlines.

**Cap** - An appearance for a select team, such as a school, county or international team in sports.

**Corner kick** - awarded to the attacking team when the ball leaves the field of play by crossing the goal line (either on the ground or in the air) without a goal having been scored, having been last touched by a defending player.

**Cross** - A delivery of the ball from either side of the field across to the front of the goal by applying various kicking techniques. A cross is there to provide a goal-scoring opportunity. Crosses are generally airborne but a ball along the ground from a crossing position may be a **low cross** or a **pass**.

**Direct free kick** - a method of restarting play following a foul. Unlike an indirect free kick, a goal may be scored directly against the opposing side without the ball having first touched another player.

**Dribbling** - The maneuvering of a ball around a defender through short skillful taps or kicks with the legs. The purpose of such an action is to bring the ball past a defender legally and to create opportunities to score.

**Dummy or Feint** - Refers to a particular player deceiving the opposition into believing he is going to pass, shoot or receive the ball and instead doing something entirely different, thus gaining an advantage. This can be done through body language as well as dribbling.

**Extra time** - An additional period played if the score is tied at the end of normal time. In score notation, it is often denoted by the letters ET.

**Formation** - Describes how the players in a team are positioned on the pitch. Different formations can be used depending on whether a team wishes to play more attacking or defensive soccer.

**Foul** - An unfair act by a player which is deemed by the referee to breach Law 12 of the Laws of the Game.

**Goal lines** -The shorter two of the four boundary lines that distinguish the outer limits of the pitch. The goal lines must be equal in length, measuring between 45 meters (49 yd) and 90 meters (98 yd). However, in international matches, the lines must be between 64 meters (70 yd) and 75 meters (82 yd) long. The goals must be placed at the center of each goal line.

**Indirect free kick** - A method of restarting play in soccer in which a goal may not be scored directly from the kick, unlike a direct free kick.

**Laws of the Game** - The rules governing soccer. They are written and maintained by the International Soccer Association Board (IFAB).

**Man-to-man marking, or man marking** - A defensive strategy where defenders are assigned a specific opposition player to mark rather than covering an area of the pitch. The alternative to man-to-man marking is zonal marking.

**Offside** - A law which effectively limits how far forward attacking players may be when involved in play. Broadly, a player cannot gain an advantage by waiting for the ball near the opposing goal when there are fewer than two opponents between him and the goal.

**Own goal** - When a player scores a goal that is registered against his or her own team. It is usually accidental, and may be a result of an attempt at defensive play that failed or was spoiled by opponents.

**Passing** - This brings an advantage in that helps secure possession of the ball, particularly as play is taken towards the opponents' goal. The skill of dribbling the ball is seen much less in modern soccer matches than in the first half of the twentieth century. This observation is often noted with regret by fans of the game that were familiar with older styles. The hallmark of passing in soccer is the passing of the ball between players of the same team including the forward pass.

**Penalty kick** - A type of free kick taken from twelve yards (approximately eleven meters) out from goal and with only the goalkeeper of the defending team between the penalty taker and the goal.

**Pitch** – The field of play.

**Professional foul** - A deliberate act of foul play, usually to prevent an opponent scoring.

**Set piece or set play** - Refers to a situation when the ball is returned to open play following a stoppage, particularly in a forward area of the pitch. Most often, the term is used to refer to free kicks and corners, but sometimes throw-ins.

**Sliding tackle or slide tackle** - A skill in which a player attempts to take the ball away from an opposing player by deliberately leaving their feet and sliding along the ground with one leg extended to push the ball away from the opposing player.

**Volley**- An airborne strike.

**Zonal marking** - A defensive strategy where defenders cover an area of the pitch rather than marking a specific opponent. If an opponent moves into the area a defender is covering, the defender marks the opponent. If the opponent leaves this area, then marking the opponent becomes the responsibility of another defender. The alternative to zonal marking is man marking.

## Positions

**Playmaker** - An attacking player who controls the flow of the team's offensive play, and is often involved in passing moves which lead to goals. The term overlaps somewhat with attacking midfielder, but playmakers are not constrained to a single position - creativity is the only true requirement, and good passing ability and tactical awareness help. Because many midfielders have these attributes, they tend to be the playmakers of a team. They are sometimes called the "number 10" of the team.

**Midfielder** - A player whose position of play is midway between the strikers and the defenders. Their main functions are to dispossess the opposing team, to retain possession of the ball, and to feed it to the strikers, and perhaps, to score as well. Some midfielders play a more defensive role, while others blur the boundaries between midfielders and forwards. The number of midfielders a team uses during a match may vary, depending on the team's formation and each individual player's role. The group of midfielders in a team is called **the midfield**. Some midfield positions include: side midfield, winger, defensive midfield, center midfield, and attacking midfield.

**Forwards** - Also known as **attackers** and **strikers** are the players on a team who play nearest to the opposing team's goal, and are therefore principally responsible for scoring goals. This very advanced position and its limited defensive responsibilities mean forwards normally score more goals than other players; accordingly, they are often among the best-known and most expensive players in their teams. Modern team formations usually include one to three forwards; two is most common. Coaches typically field one striker who plays in an advanced position (the *center forward*), and another attacking forward who plays somewhat deeper and assists in making goals as well as scoring (the *second striker*).

**Defender** - An outfield player whose primary role is to prevent the opposition from scoring. There are four types of defender - center back, sweeper, full back, and wing back.

**Goalkeeper** - Occupies a position that represents the last line of defense between the opponent's offence and his own team's goal. The primary role of the goalkeeper is to defend his team's goal and prevent the opposition from scoring a goal. The goalkeeper is the only player who is permitted to touch the ball with his hands or arms in open play (within his own penalty area). Each team is required to have a goalkeeper on the field at all times during a match.

## Styles of Play (Offense and Defense)

## **Counter-Attacking Soccer**

The aim of this type of soccer is to catch the opponent on the "break". When they give away possession in midfield or attack, defensive players will tend to be further up the field than usual and may not be able to quickly adjust to a defensive mindset. Counter-attacking soccer may involve leaving one or two strikers near the half-way line in the hope that a through ball can be played to catch the opponent off guard. This tends to go hand-in-hand with the long through ball tactic explained below. In the example, an attack by the black team has broken down and ended up in the hands of the white goalie. By kicking a long through ball for the furthestmost white player (left up there in the hope of this situation - this is the "break" mentioned above), the player has a chance of scoring as he should have evaded the defense if he is fast enough.

In other cases, defenders and midfielders may join in the counter-attack, trying to outnumber or otherwise overtake the opposition by quick and intelligent movement and fast passes. Speed is an important factor both in offence and defense, as the probability of scoring decreases sharply when the opponent has managed to organize their defense.

Teams playing successful counter-attacking soccer will try particularly hard to dispossess the opponent's midfielders. A measure to prevent this is to play long balls from the defenders to the attackers, temporarily omitting the midfield players.

## **Possession Soccer**

Teams that aim to retain control of the ball over longer periods of time, in the process making a large percentage of passes that give low risk of losing the ball, are said to play possession soccer. Utilizing this tactics demands players skilful in ball control and precise passing. If successful, it will tire the opposing players because they have to run and tackle more. Also, the term sometimes indicates that each player retains possession for a longer period of time, using more touches. That will ensure that the move will be precise and effective. This style of soccer is where a large number of, both short and long, passes are deployed by multiple players of the team before culminating in a definitive strike on the opposing team's goal.

## **Direct Soccer**

More often associated with counter-attacking soccer than with possession soccer, direct soccer means that players spend little time with the ball before passing. In order to achieve this, each player frequently uses only one or two touches. The direct attack is sometimes associated with the long-ball style. Long ball is the term used in association soccer to describe an attempt, often speculative, to distribute the ball a long distance down the field via a cross, without the intention to pass it to the feet of the receiving player. It is a technique that can be especially effective for a team with a tall striker to get in the box.

**"Total Soccer"** - The label for an influential theory of tactical soccer in which any player can take over the role of any other player in the team. It was pioneered by Dutch soccer club Ajax Amsterdam.

In Total Soccer, a player who moves out of his position is replaced by another from his team, thus retaining the team's intended organizational structure. In this fluid system, no player is fixed in his nominal role; anyone can be successively an attacker, a midfielder and a defender.

Total Soccer's tactical success depends largely on the adaptability of each player within the team, in particular their ability to quickly change positions depending on the situation. The theory requires players to be comfortable in multiple positions; hence it puts high technical and physical demands on them.

### **General principles of attack and defense**

Width and depth are both principles of offence and defense as follows:

- *Width in attack*- the attacker tries to stretch the enemy by maximizing width and space
- *Width in defense*- the defender tries to contract and deny width and space
- *Depth in attack*- the attacker uses depth by moving men up from the rear, but may use a constant "target striker" or front man to always be present deep in the defense.
- *Depth in defense*- the defender also uses depth by providing covering support for a teammate, but may abandon depth temporarily to set an offside trap.
- *Balance in defense*. The defense attempts balanced coverage of vulnerable space. Players do not simply cluster on the right side for example, just because the ball is there at the moment.

### **General defensive tactics**

All eleven players on the pitch have a defensive role. Which roles they are assigned, depends on tactics. In principle, there are two ways of defending, zone defense and man-to-man defense. In a zone defense, defensive players mainly move in relation to each other, whereas a man-to-man defense mainly moves in relation to opposing players. Whenever defensive players are given, or give themselves, a larger degree of freedom, hybrids of the two are seen.

### **First, second and third defender**

The **first defender** has the main responsibility for what the opponent in possession does, seeking to obstruct dangerous passes. The first seconds after the team has lost the ball are important, as the defending team in these seconds will be poorly organized defensively. Wise first defending will contribute to the defending team managing to organize before the opponents may attack.

The first defender should usually be the player closest to the opponent holding possession, but needs to be at the defending side of him in order to do an effective job. He should keep a distance of about 2 meters, although the ideal distance will vary with each situation. The point is to pressure the opponent as much as possible without giving him a large possibility of a dribble. As a dribble isn't as dangerous when the defending team is well organized, the distance may be shorter in these cases.

In certain cases, the first defender should attempt a tackle. Often, however, this will increase the probability of being dribbled and passed.

The direction in which to move towards the opponent with possession of the ball may be the shortest direction. However, it may be of value to curve the defensive run, in order to channel the opponent in a certain direction. If the defensive team is well organized, he should be channeled towards the center of the pitch. In the case of temporarily poor defensive organization, however, he should be channeled towards the line.

The **second defender** is for security if the first defender is passed. In that case, he takes over as first defender, and ideally one of the **third defenders** takes over as second defender. The team should be organized in a manner to make this transition as fast as possible. The typical ideal distance between the second and first defender is about six meters, but this will vary strongly from situation to situation. The most important factor is the opponent's speed. If he's moving fast, the distance should be longer. If he's standing still, the second and first defender may in some cases join forces and work as two first defenders.

The job of the **third defender** is to provide deep cover. He is generally in a stand-off position relative to the first and second defenders and tries to view the "big picture", keeping watch for new opponents moving up, and covering vulnerable gaps if the first and second defenders are bypassed. The *sweeper* role is sometimes conceived as that of a third defender, but every defensive player not immediately engaging the ball has the obligation to adjust his positioning to guard against dangerous situations and to plug vulnerable gaps. While the role of first and second defenders are rather similar, the third defenders' role is very different in zone defense and man-to-man defense. Also, their organization will vary with formation.

## The zone defense

In zone defense, second and third defenders and midfielders are organized in two lines, in the transverse direction of the field, thus organizing a **defender line** and a **midfielder line**, the midfielder line working as an "outer shield" for the defenders. The lines should be as straight as possible, although the first defender and in some cases the second defender may rush out of it to pressure the opponent with the ball. A straight line of defenders may prevent spaces behind some of them due to the offside rule. Also, even in zone defense, some opponents, for example those moving into dangerous space, may temporarily need to be marked. The man-to-man defense ideology holds that almost *all* opponents need to be marked at all times, although they will have to keep an eye on zone considerations as well, and usually a **sweeper** will be given a

free defensive role. In practice, however, every defense will be a mix of zone defense and a man-to-man defense, although often with heavy leanings towards one or the other.

Some formations use midfield anchors to stop attacks between the two lines. Attackers usually also play a role in pressurizing defenders, in order to give them less time to find good passing alternatives.

The lines should be shifted sideways depending where the ball is. The third defenders should keep a sensible distance to each other, depending on the width the opponent's attacking players are distributed in.

### **Depth considerations**

The distance between the defender line and the midfielder line should be kept constant at about 15 meters. However, the defensive line should back up and thus increase this distance, *stand off*, when there is no pressure on the opponent in possession, as this increases the possibility of a through ball. With tough pressure on the opponent, the distance may be reduced to below 15 meters. Also, as opponents move in close to the penalty area, the defending team will be forced to move their midfielders ever closer to their defenders.

When organized, the defending team will offer no resistance until the attacking team has advanced to a certain height on the pitch. The **pressure height**, or at which depth the midfielders should start acting as first and second defenders, depends on a lot of factors. For example, as higher pressure is more tiring, it demands players with good stamina. In general, a defensive-minded team will tend to stay lower, thus diminishing defensive risks as opponents get less space. This however, also gives them a longer way to the goal in the event of a break and counter-attack, making the long through ball a typical alternative.

### **Man-to-man defense**

In a man-to-man defense system, a single defender follows his opponent wherever he goes. Extremely tight marking can be achieved in this way and star players can often be neutralized in a game by use of a dedicated "shadow". Since the man to man defense will take defenders in any part of the field, interceptions and broken plays will often offer opportunity for quick counter-attack. The Italian teams of the 1970s and 1980s often used this approach with impressive results.

The weakness of the man to man defense is depth when fresh attackers move up. The man to man defense also allows defenders to be drawn out of position, opening gaps for other attackers in vulnerable areas. To overcome this problem with depth, the man to man defense may use a 'sweeper', who is a central defender and has a free role, *i.e.* has not been assigned a player to mark. He sometimes takes up a position slightly behind the other defenders, as his defensive role often is to 'sweep up' any attacks that break through the defense and as such he adds valuable depth to the defensive unit. Usually the sweeper will be the controller of the

defense. They will determine where the back line should be at any given time. Zone defense does not require a sweeper role, and as many teams have changed their tactics to this, sweepers are today rare.

## **Offensive tactics in set pieces**

### **Throw-ins**

How throw-ins are best handled depends on where it is:

- In one's own half the aim of a throw-in may be to retain possession in order to build up the next attack. The throw need not go forward, and the most unmarked player may be a full-back who is behind the ball. Such a throw followed by a quickly taken 'switch' pass could be an effective tactic. Under pressure, however, the ball is often thrown up the line to gain as much ground as possible.
- If the thrower is unmarked a simple tactic is to take a short throw to the feet or chest of a marked player who immediately returns the ball to the thrower.
- In the last third of the pitch a player with a long throw can put pressure onto the defenders by throwing the ball deep into the penalty area, resulting in somewhat similar tactics to a corner kick situation.

### **Goal kicks**

A goal kick is an important 'set piece' that will occur many times in a game and yet few teams practice it. If taken quickly the kick may be taken short to a full-back who has run into a wide position. Although this may gain little ground it retains the all-important possession of the ball. A longer kick to the midfield is more common and it is vital that the midfield unit is in a position to receive it.

### **Corners**

A corner is a real goal scoring opportunity and it is essential to know who is the best at taking a good corner from both the left and right side of the pitch. A good corner will be aimed high across the goal and may be 'bent' towards or away from the goal. At least one of the forwards should be on or close to the goal line when the kick is taken.

Another tactic on a corner is to let the best shooter stay in the back "trash" position and have the defense worried about those up front. The player taking the corner kick makes a small pass back to the trash shooter who has time and space to take a good shot.

## **Defending at set pieces**

### **Free-kicks from short range**

At free-kicks from short range, a wall of defensive players is lined up. How many players should participate in the wall will depend on the angle and distance from the goal, and on the opponent's assumed shooting skills. The wall usually covers one end of the goal. The goalkeeper will be positioned nearer the other end of the goal, both because he then can see the ball when it's shot, and because it is more difficult for attackers to hit a powerful shot on target at the end that the wall covers.

### **Corner kicks and other crosses**

At corner kicks, and at free-kicks or throw-ins that are likely to become a cross, most teams use man-on-man marking, even those which otherwise play zone defense. Each player is given an opponent to mark, in advanced soccer they usually have been assigned an opponent before the match. Substituting at the time of a defensive set piece is regarded as unwise, as play may be started before the substitute has come into marking position.

A few teams use the tactic of gathering defenders on one line on corner kicks and similar situations, in effect giving them the responsibility for zones instead of particular opponents.

### **Penalty kicks**

In the case of a penalty kick, no defending players except the goalkeeper are allowed within the penalty area or within ten yards of the penalty spot. A significant number of players should, however, be placed right outside the penalty area, alert to advance into the area and clear any deflection. For this purpose, sometimes the attacking team will nominate two players to run at the goal from either side of the penalty spot; timing their run so that they only enter the penalty area once the kick has been taken will hopefully give them the first opportunity at gathering the ball if it is saved by the goalkeeper. This tactic is rarely seen, however, since the likelihood of the ball being saved and then falling into the path of the attacking player is small. A particular tactic that can be used by the goalkeeper involves trying to distract the penalty taker by drawing his concentration away from striking the ball cleanly. Such tactics normally involve moving one's body, or body parts, in an extravagant manner, or through verbal comments.