

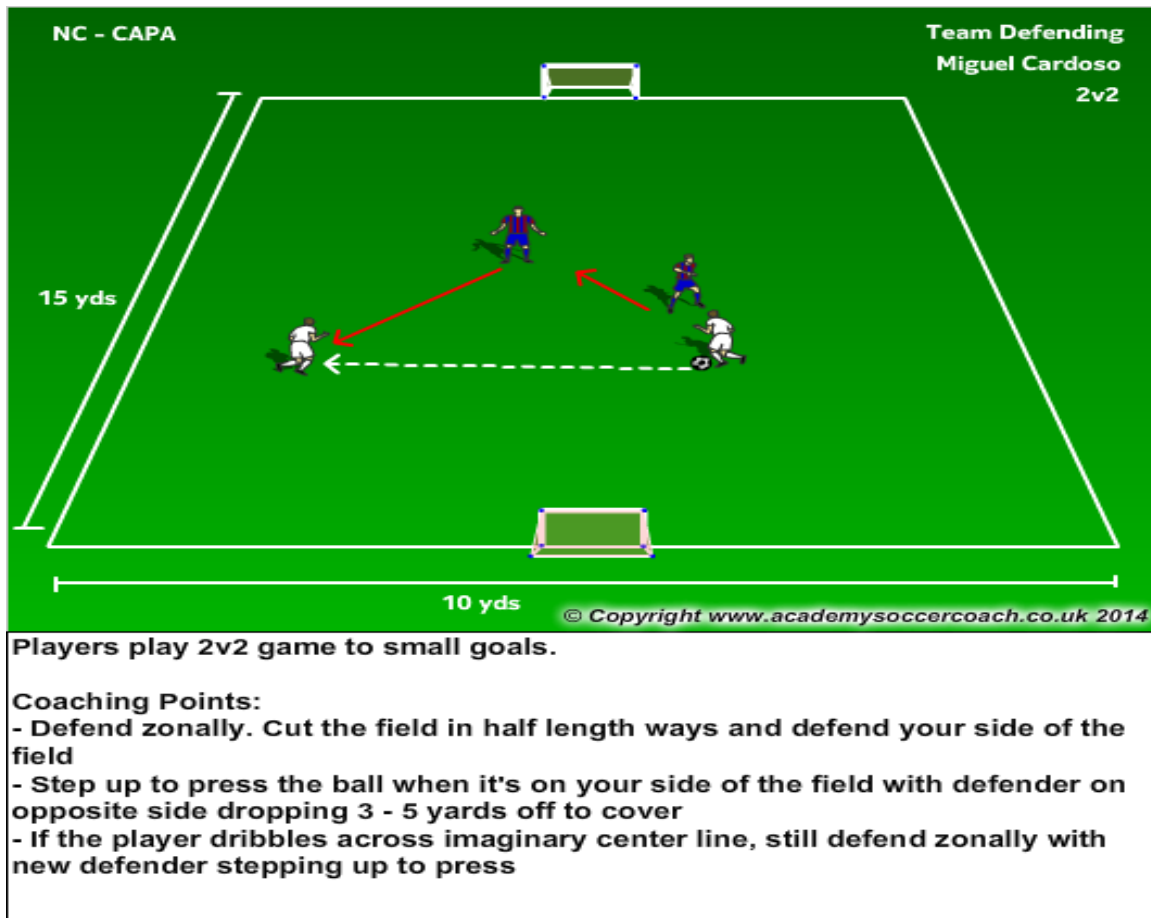
Team Defending – Miguel Cardoso

Miguel Cardoso is a Portuguese coach that is currently working with the U21s at Shakhtar Donetsk. He is coach that is held in high regard when it comes to teaching defensive principles and having see his session at the convention, it comes as little surprise that that is the case.

Cardoso's session was on Team defending. He spent a small amount of time at the start of the session briefly outlining how he builds those principles within a group of players. It is his belief that these principles are best taught through Small Sided Games (SSGs). Within the SSG, Cardoso is looking for his teams to defend within a formation. He likes to organize that group so that they work in the formation. He would start with the back 4 and slowly add in players from there. In 2 v 2 situations, he said he may use a CB and FB, both CBs together, or both DMs together, to get them used to the process of working as a unit. It is his belief that he needs to work on the individual groups that he wants before he has them working together. As he builds numbers, he would add more players that would be required to work as a block. He stated that the highest he tends to go to is 6 players, which he would usually have as his back 4 and 2 DMs.

With all the defending he coaches, he says he would begin with 1v1s. He would then progress to 2v1s, 2v2s, 3v2s, 3v3s etc all the way up to the 6v6 I mentioned earlier. He also said that it is his preference that his groups work zonally, and he teaches that to all his players.

Cardoso began the session with a 2v2 game. Both sides had small goals to play to and very simply, he wanted them to work together. The game can be found below:



Within the game, Cardoso had the players stepping up to press the ball when it was on their side of the field, and dropping off into a cover position when the ball was on the other side of the field.

When he progressed the game to a 3v3, became much more specific about how he wants his groups to work. The 3v3 game can be found below.

Within this game, Cardoso began to stress the importance of a 1st line and a 2nd line of defenders. To Cardoso, the 1st line was the player applying immediate pressure to the ball. The 2nd line is the covering defenders. It was with these players that he worked the most as he continually stressed how important it was that they were a line. He constantly reiterated the point that their heels should be in line with one another. **“One foot or two feet makes a big difference in the game for offsides. We must have a line”**. He also talked about how much he wanted them to pinch, limiting the space between themselves so as to avoid being split with a pass.



Players play 3v3 game to small goals.

Coaching Points:

- Defend zonally. Cut the field into thirds length ways and defend your third of the field
- Step up to press the ball (1st line) when it's in your third of the field with defenders in the other zones making a 2nd line about 3 - 5 yards behind you.
- If the player dribbles across imaginary "zone" line, still defend zonally with new defender stepping up to press
- Defenders on 2nd line must limit space between each other to avoid being "split" and should be flat/in-line with one another

From the 3v3 game, Cardoso explained that he would continue to build it up, adding players as necessary before reaching a game of 6v6. However, knowing he was limited for time, he moved onto his next exercise that worked with the team's back 4. When moving on, he explained why he progresses the session in this way when he said **"First we must teach specific behaviours. Then we can teach specific positions defending with those behaviours"**.

With this in mind, his next exercise can be found below:



Working with the back 4, call out the number of one of the cones. The player with the same number then presses the ball while the others take up the correct defensive positions on the 2nd line. In the example above, the stripes shows the position of the players if "2" is called. The whites shows the position of the players if "4" is called.

Coaching Points:

- Defend zonally. Step to press (1st line) when your number is called while other defenders cover (2nd line) about 3 - 5 yards behind you.
- Players on 2nd line should close the space between each other to avoid being "split" and should be flat/in-line with each other

Progressions:

- Add a player with the ball in front of the cones that as they dribble side to side, players step accordingly (visual rather than verbal cue)

This was basically the same exercise as before but taken out of game context and taught specifically to a group of players. Within this exercise, Cardoso continued to stress how important the flat 2nd line is and even took a coach from the audience to ensure that the players were lined up correctly as they moved backwards and forwards.

From here, he added a progression to the exercise, which can be found below:



Working with the back 4, call out the number and colour of one of the cones. The player with the same number then presses the ball while the others take up the correct defensive positions on the 2nd line. In the example above, the stripes shows the position of the players if "Blue 2" is called. The whites shows the position of the players if "Yellow 1" is called.

Coaching Points:

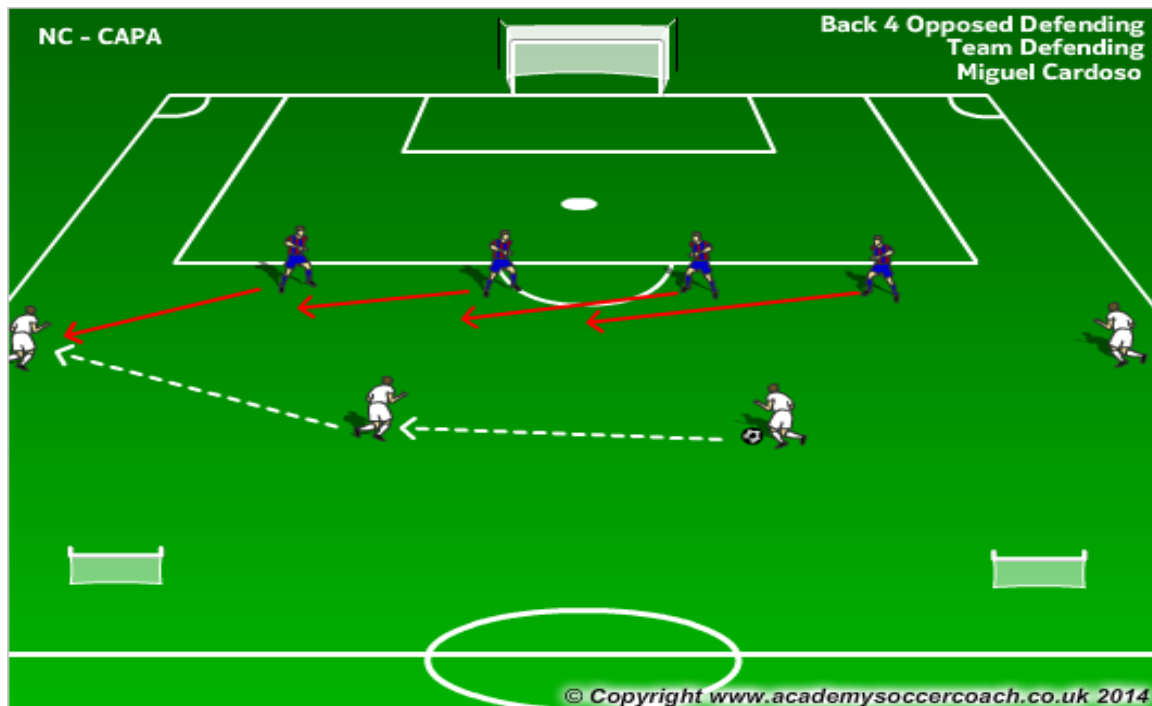
- Defend zonally. Step to press (1st line) when your number is called while other defenders cover (2nd line) about 3 - 5 yards behind you.
- Players on 2nd line should close the space between each other to avoid being "split" and should be flat/in-line with each other
- Get forward or backward as quickly as possible while keeping eyes downfield

Progressions:

- Call colours and numbers before players are set in their defensive positions
- Add a player with the ball that dribbles side to side or backwards and forwards and players step accordingly (visual rather than verbal cue)

Here Cardoso began to make the exercises a little more game realistic and added in different lines that meant the defence had to move forwards and backwards depending on where the "ball" was, just as they would in a game. Again, he had an assistant coach keep a close look on the 2nd line of defenders ensuring that they were always in a straight line. It was here that he also gave my favourite quote of his session when he said **"Make your opponent play against your whole team. Make it 10 players against that 1. It's all about how you must move as a group"**.

Cardoso then moved the session on to another exercise that looked to make the defending even more game realistic. The exercise is below:



This begins as a passive exercise! Whites are 4 midfielders that pass the ball from side to side. Defence slides as side to side as the ball is passed. When ball is passed to one of the wide players, FB presses the ball, while the other defenders move into a cover position.

Coaching Points:

- Only press the ball in the wide areas
- Stay flat when the ball is moving side to side, keeping the right space between you defensively
- When the ball goes wide, FB presses the ball (1st line), and other defenders give cover about 3 - 5 yards behind him (2nd line), closing the space between each other to avoid being "split"

Progression:

- Add a forward to the whites. Defenders will now need to press and cover (1st and 2nd line), when the ball is passed into them
- Add 3 man midfield on the defensive team so that they are now working with the defence
- Make drill active, allowing the defenders to win the ball and transition to the mini goals.

Within this exercise, it became evident that the work that had gone in beforehand had really started to improve the movement of the players that were working the session with him. The 2nd line had definitely become better at getting flat and staying in line much quicker than before.

Also, the progressions within this drill are important as they begin to build a bigger picture of how the team works together and how they should defend as a group. Making the exercise an active one also means that it becomes more game realistic and that can only help the players learn.

One final point that Cardoso made was that, if your defence drops deeper than the line of the penalty area, they should stop working as 2 lines and begin to work as 1. Whoever presses the ball should no longer have players 3 – 5 yards behind him but should now have his teammates on the 1st line alongside him. As they move back outside the penalty area, the defence becomes 2 lines again.

Before finishing the session, Cardoso spent some time talking to the coaches in the audience again. It was at this time that he stressed the importance of creating a pattern with your defence, and that the exercises he had shown would help to do that. From here, he explained that it is the “How” and the teaching of the how, that is important. Coaches must decide on an identity for their team’s defending and then find the exercises that work on whatever identity it is you want to create.

Cardoso’s was an excellent session. His energy and enthusiasm were obvious from the start. He was engaging and informative, and is clearly a good defensive coach. His passion for good defending was clear and he believes that the system he has in place works well.