

Themes: defensive positioning, communication, teamwork, tackling back

In prior weeks we have looked at formations and movement for build-up on offense. This week we have some great defensive play in three short examples. It's worth watching these examples multiple times to see the teamwork on defense.

Example 1 - This successful winning of the ball high up the field is shown from two angles. You see communication between the attacking center midfielder in black and the wide left player to set themselves up as a team. Based on what you see the opponent do in a game, it's important to clearly communicate with teammates where they should shift. The attacking center midfielder points and communicates with the wide player in black to set himself up in a position to cover the pass out to the wide gold player on the sideline or to force them inside. The center forward also helps by splitting the field and shaping play to this area.

Example 2 - (shown from two angles also) of teamwork determining who should pressure the ball, and making a second defensive action after the first is completed. Black sets up with the wide attacker covering the pass outside, and then when it goes inside, he does his 'second job' of closing down the next passing line and pressuring the ball. Meanwhile, the attacking center midfielder adds pressure by approaching too. This results in the gold player making a rushed, inaccurate, and lifted pass, which makes it difficult for the wide gold player to receive the bouncing ball (knowing that they too will soon be under pressure). And the result is a turnover. Communication among the black team helps them to know who should pressure the ball and when to cover a channel. The clip starts with the center forward coming across to pressure the wide gold player.

Good defending (involving footwork, body position, timing, and doing multiple jobs) is complex, and communication among teammates is essential.

Example 3 - this clip shows a different type of defending in the defensive half of the field by the German (black) team. You see close man-to-man marking and a free German player. The free player can direct his teammate who is challenging for the ball on where they want to channel the Dutch (orange) player in possession. The German player challenging for the ball also holds up the play, giving time to the German midfielders and forwards (who did not cut out the initial outlet) to cover back, creating more pressure on the Dutch ball player, and resulting in him playing an unsuccessful pass over the end line. This is only 30 seconds from the end of the first half, and you can see the energy coming from the GK celebrating this success of the defensive unit in creating a turnover at this crucial moment.

Good defensive shape, work rate, attitude, and communication! Success in defense.

Video clips: <https://youtu.be/jA-erN8Cnjw>