

Ulster GAA Coach Development Programme

Tackling For Success

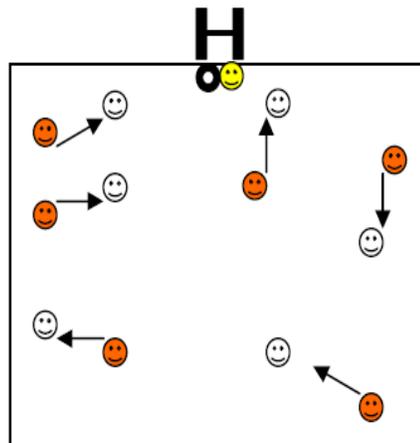
Problem: Players not tackling back.

Like many field sport scenarios this is a massive area. It can relate to forwards not switching on to defend after a particular play or to the half backs who want to get forward all the time and neglecting his/her defensive duties. For young players it may simply be not holding positions or not being aware of the concept of space. A number of years ago Ulster GAA introduced a simple game for U-8s called Six & Switch which was really the forerunner of the Go-Games. This involved a pitch of approx 60 x 40 m divided equally into 3 sections. You had 2 defenders in the first section, 2 midfielders in the middle and 2 forwards in the last section. The defenders and forwards were restricted to their area while the midfielders were allowed to cover the entire pitch. The game was restricted to 2 touches in order to encourage support play and increase the amount of touches per player. More importantly every 5 minutes the game was stopped to allow players to change over so as to experience different positions and for the coaches make positive coaching interventions. After a while you will see the visible improvement in the forwards utilization of space. Rather than standing on the line waiting for a pass they will begin to make their runs from deeper thus keeping the space until the last moment. And of course as forwards learn so too do defenders.

Anyway here are a few drills/games aimed at keeping players switched on and aware that it is what they do for the 90% of the game when they don't have the ball that will really make the difference.

1. LOSE IT/WIN IT [GAME]

Simulates those match situations when forwards have made good runs to get a pass from midfield but the pass has been misdirected and ended up with the opposition goalkeeper. To properly copy this, force forwards to stand at multi-markers at least five or six metres away from any backs. The ball starts with the goalkeeper. He throws it in the air and catches it to signal 'game on'. The forwards immediately try to stop the backs getting the ball out easily and carrying it over the halfway line. Do this over and over to work on suppressing a forward's instinct to simply watch where the ball goes and to improve his ability to close an opponent down.



2. Total Football (4 second rule)

Young and not so young players/forwards tend to switch off after a particular play whether that is a shot, an assist or a mistake. So in order to improve this fault we need to create a situation where there are frequent scoring opportunities, lots of decision making and an enhanced probability of mistakes. Do you observe that generally the team that scores first wins the game? Do players when they score hesitate in attacking another set of goals?

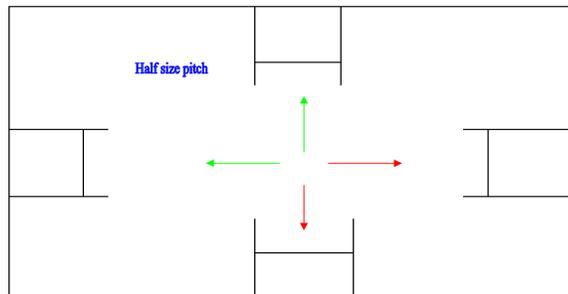
Rules:

- a) 4 sets of goals.
- b) Dimension: Half pitch depending on numbers.
- c) Score by kicking low for goals or just running through the gates.
- d) Team that scores keeps possession and attacks another set of goals.
- e) Any one team cannot score into the same goals in succession.
- f) Supply of balls at each goal to keep the intensity high.
- g) Stop the game after 3 minutes and coach through the issues

Variation:

- a) Different ball
- b) Full rules
- c) Take the goal keepers out and score by carrying the ball through the gate

Total Football



3) Turning Attack into Defence

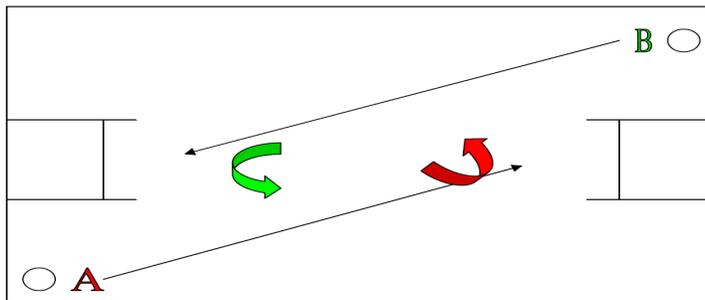
Take the one example of where a forward shoots and subsequently wastes the next precious seconds either admiring his handiwork or cursing his luck. Try this drill/game to highlight and eradicate this problem.

Rules:

- a) One player leaves position A and shoots from close range at opposite goal.
- b) After he shoots a second player with a ball leaves position B with the intention of scoring at the opposite goals.
- c) Immediately on shooting the first player must run to intercept the second player and prevent him from scoring.
- d) Drill continues until each player has gone once.

Variation:

- a) 2 v 2
- b) All go twice.



4) Breakout (Not getting sucked in)

Having looked at defensive play from forwards and from backs, we then took a situation from the middle part of the field – from kick outs – the best example from the 2005 Dublin v Tyrone drawn match came on 60 minutes – Dublin kick out on 1-12 apiece – **Brian Dooher** is under the flight of the ball but doesn't contest it – instead, he breaks free from the midfield bunch to take a pass – no Dublin player follows as all in the middle are still drawn to the ball– Dooher kicks a point.

We used a 4v4 exercise called '**Breakout**' to work on defending against this.

Set Up

Set a circle along halfway line. 8 players inside. Lob the ball in [instead of kick out]. Team that wins the ball must work it with max. two-touch football over the 20m line. Emphasis is on team that loses ball. Players must develop defensive instincts where they are NOT drawn to the ball player, but can switch quickly to mark another opponent and cut the ball player's options. Only one player needs to tackle the ball player head on. Once a play is finished, have 8 more ready to step in. Keep rotating.

