

SECRETS of successful CORNERS



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Acknowledgements

Editor	David Clarke
Illustrations	Steve Thorpe
Production	Julie Lifton
Finance Manager	Julie Heathorn
Marketing Executive	Lucie Lancashire
Customer Services Representative	Duncan Heard
Managing Director	Andrew Griffiths

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Meadow View, Tannery Lane, Bramley, Guildford, Surrey, GU5 0AB, United Kingdom
Tel: +44 (0)1483 892894 Fax: +44 (0)1483 894148 E-mail: duncanh@greenstarmedia.net

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Introduction

Dear Coach,

As you know, corner kicks are one of the most challenging parts to the game of soccer – the expectation to successfully score from or defend a corner is high.

Despite this, too few teams practice corner kicks, preferring to leave them to fate or chance. However, it is always better to have a planned routine focused on corner kicks in order to maximise the possibility of scoring and minimise the possibility of letting a goal in.

Therefore I have pulled together 11 great articles revealing the secrets behind successfully attacking and defending corners.

I'm certain that these secrets will make a winning difference to your team.

Yours in soccer,



David Clarke

P.S. Before we get going let's refresh our memory of the corner kick law.

Law 17: The corner kick

Applies to: 11-a-side, 7-a-side, minis.

A goal may be scored directly from a corner kick, but only against the opposing team.

A corner kick is awarded when:

- The whole of the ball, having last touched a player of the defending team, passes over the goal line, either on the ground or in the air, and a goal is not scored in accordance with Law 10.

How to take it:

- The ball is placed inside the corner arc – or touching one of the lines – at the corner nearest to where the ball went out.

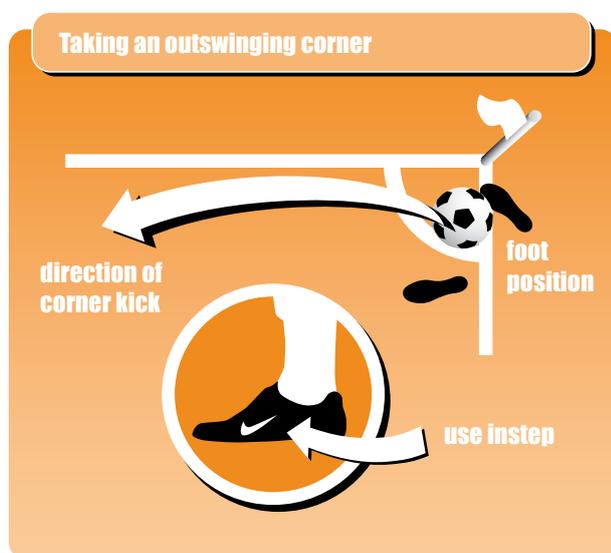
- The corner flagpost cannot be moved.
- Opponents must be 10 yds from the corner arc at 11-a-side – or 5 yards at 7-a-side and minis – until the ball is in play.
- The ball is kicked by a player of the attacking team.
- The ball is in play when it is kicked and moves.
- The kicker cannot play the ball a second time until it has touched another player.
- If the ball goes straight out of play from the kick, a goal kick or a throw-in is awarded.

Deadly swinging kicks

Technique for the perfect corner kick.

To take an outswinging corner

- 1 Your player must first put the ball in the correct place on the corner quadrant.
- 2 Practice with a corner flag in place so your players can see how they can get in the way.
- 3 Position the ball as the diagram shows so your players are not hitting the flag.



Technique counts at corners

Show your players how to use the instep and kick low down and slightly across the ball to generate lift and apply spin to the ball. They must plant the standing foot next to the ball to get maximum distance. The spin produces swerve to create an inswinging or outswinging corner. This makes it harder for the goalkeeper to cut out.

Aim for the front of the goal

If you get your corner taker to aim at the front of the goal he will have more chance to make the corner work. At junior level it is hard to get the ball beyond the near post. If you land the ball in the middle of the goal the keeper has more chance to save it. At the near post the defender is likely to miss a swinging ball and your players will have the chance to score. 🟩

Key coaching tip

If your players struggle to make a corner work, practice short corners to give them a better angle to cross.

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The ultimate attacking set up

Well set up teams know what they are doing at corners, says Tony Carr, Academy Director at West Ham United.

- 1 Take a good look at your players and decide who can deliver the right ball. Decide what type of delivery you want, i.e. inswinger, outswinger or just chipped to the near post, and choose who can deliver the ball.
- 2 The positioning of your players to some extent will be decided by which type of delivery you want and the ability of the players.
- 3 If you have a very tall player who is good in the air, you may want him to stand on the near post to flick the ball on for others to head for goal. You may want to deliver a faster, deeper ball for him to attack directly, the choice is yours.

- In the diagram the corner taker 7 will deliver a longer ball to the far post with his right foot.
- We have four players looking to attack the ball directly, Nos 4, 5, 6 and 8. They will split their runs attacking different areas, with No 6 spinning away from the ball, arriving late on the back post.
- No 10 will try to distract the goalkeeper with his presence, trying not to allow him a free run for the ball.
- No 9 stands on the near post for any ball driven lower than its intended target or as an alternative for the corner taker 7.
- The use of hand signals by No 7 can alert his teammates of his intent.
- No 11 waits on the edge of the box for any balls headed or cleared out while Nos 2 and 3 stay back as markers.

How to set up an attacking corner



Concentrate on (a) a good delivery, (b) well timed runs, (c) being first to the ball and (d) hitting the target! 🎯

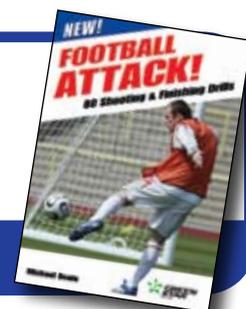
Key coaching tip

Delivery of the ball is the most important factor.

Score more goals, win more games

Do your players have the ability to grasp that match winning opportunity? Have they got the skill and confidence to make the right play when it matters most?

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The ultimate defending set up

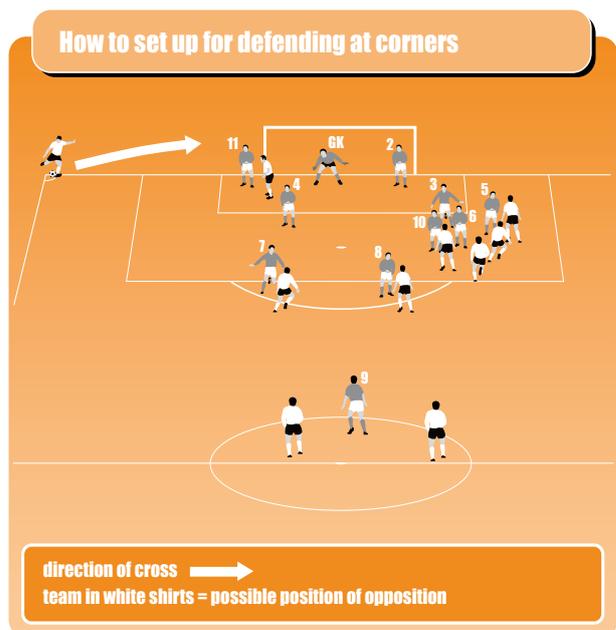
One of the key elements of a defensive strategy for your team is getting your players to know their positions at corners, says Tony Carr, Academy Director at West Ham United.

Using the diagram show your players the positions for basic marking responsibility. Some are man for man, others are zonal marking.

Assuming the corner is being taken on the left by a right footed player swinging the ball in towards the goal.

The set up you should employ is:

- Your best four headers of the ball would man to man mark (in the diagram they would be numbers 3, 5, 6 and 10) and their job is to mark the opposition's main heading threat, marking slightly in front, and being first to the ball.
- No 11 would mark in front of any opposition standing on the near post or just mark the space in their absence.
- No 4 marks the space in front of the main markers, keeping a look out for any opposition standing in front of the goalkeeper. If this is the case he may have to adjust his position so he is standing in front of the attacker.
- No 2 marks the far post.
- Nos 7 and 8 mark any opposition on the edge of the box.
- No 9 stays upfield, occupying two defenders and hoping to help spring a counter attack. 🚩



Key coaching tip

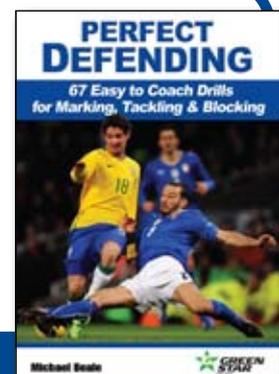
They key is concentration and to make sure you are first to the ball!

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Zonal or man-to-man marking? Part 1

Why leave defending corners to chance when, with a bit of organisation, you can improve your team's chances of keeping the ball out of the back of the net? Tony Rock, a Fulham FC in the community coach, offers some advice.

Like any set-play in the defending third, corner kicks against your team are dangerous, but that doesn't mean that there aren't steps you can take to reduce the threat of conceding a goal...

Have a plan

There are three ways of defending corners – we'll deal with the second two options on the next page – but whatever system you choose, every player should have a job to do.



In the zone

In zonal defending, give your defenders an area to cover, and if the ball reaches them, it is up to them to clear it. Here is a list of jobs they can do:

Protect the posts – Two players, perhaps your least-effective headers, can be placed on each post to clear shots off the line that beat the keeper, and cover the keeper if they attempt to punch or catch the ball.

Stand on the six – The better headers should be on the six-yard line. Put three players here, one each

opposite the posts and one opposite the centre of the goal, who should be the best header in the team.

Double up – A further three players can be positioned in a similar arrangement but between the six- and 18-yard lines.

Disrupt the kicker – One defender stands 10 yards from the player taking the corner kick to prevent the ball from being driven to the near post, or tries to block the kick by jumping, so forcing the attacker to play the ball differently. This defender also applies pressure should the attacking team try a 'short corner', where the kicker passes the ball to a nearby teammate, who crosses the ball.

Reinforce the near post area – Add an extra defender in the six-yard box, outside the near post and few yards from the goal-line to guard against dangerous "flick-ons".

Lead the counter-attack – Leave a target, possibly a shorter, faster player, say near the halfway line so when the ball is cleared they can hold it to allow teammates to get out. A second player can also be left up, for example, between the penalty box and the halfway line.

Keep the ball out – Finally, the goalkeeper should stand in a position where they can see the ball and as much of the penalty area as possible, which will mean a little forward from the goal line near the middle of the goal. They have to decide early whether or not to challenge for the ball by catching or punching.

Of course, if you do all the above, you'll need more than 11 players! It's up to you which areas you consider most important. 🟡

Zonal or man-to-man marking? Part 2

As mentioned there are three ways of defending corners – we’ve already covered zonal marking – but whatever system you choose, every player should have a job to do.

Man-to-man

This involves your defenders selecting an attacking player and following them closely. Defenders must each pick an opponent according to their size and heading ability, and be in a position to see both the player and the ball. Defenders should also be goalside of their opponent.

REMEMBER: You may still want to leave players protecting the post and upfield to counter-attack.

A bit of both

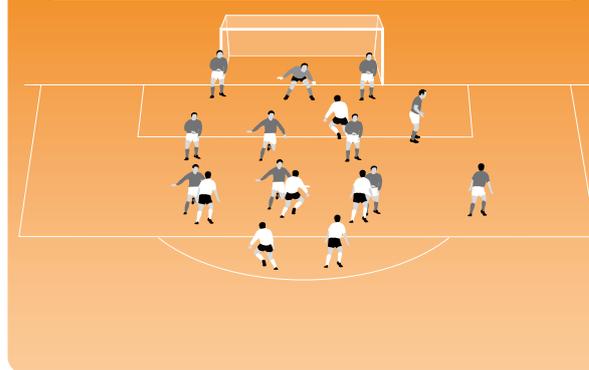
Combining zonal marking with man-to-man allows key areas to be covered while marking man-to-man the opposition’s most dangerous attackers with your biggest, best headers.

There are pros and cons for each one of the three systems we’ve covered, but whichever one you choose – KEEP IT SIMPLE!

Don’t forget the four gets

- **Get back** – Quickly bring plenty of players back to positions in and around the penalty area to outnumber or at least equal the opposition.
- **Get it together** – As the game’s stopped players can lose concentration, but they mustn’t. Now’s the time to get organized. Appoint a leader – your goalkeeper, best header, or best talker – and let them prepare the team to avert danger.
- **Get there first** – Players should be brave and also determined to beat their opponent to the ball. Get them to clear the ball as far, high and wide as possible to allow themselves time to move out as quickly and if necessary catch the other team offside.
- **Get in the way** – If defenders can’t reach the ball first, they should stop attackers from keeping the ball in front of the goal and shooting. Win the “second” ball!

Combining zonal with man-to-man covers key areas



How to practice

- Begin with no opposition apart from the corner taker.
- Take corners from both sides of the pitch.
- Vary distance, height, speed of the delivery.
- Add opposition.
- Try zone and man-to man marking plus a mix of the two. 🎯

Key coaching tip

Be careful to prevent players from getting bored or cold, so don’t practice too long.

The most important defensive corner position

One position you should give a great deal of thought to is the defending player nearest to the corner taker. A strong player in this position offers a number of defensive outlets, says David Clarke.

Clearing the first defender

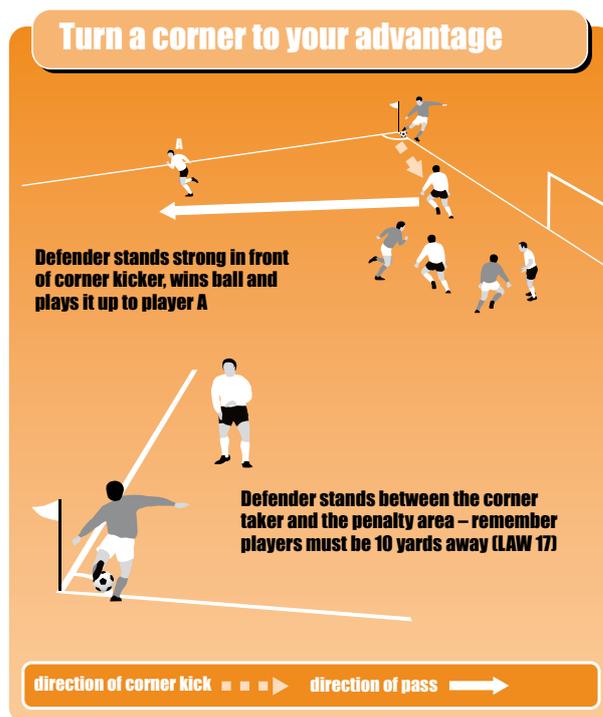
In a lot of youth soccer games you will find that corners are hit to the near post and teams either look to flick it on or the ball skips through to the centre of the penalty area where the defending team has a much harder task to clear the ball. This is especially true as players get tired and find it hard to get any height on the ball.

This means it is vital to defend the area between the corner kick taker and the near post of the goal. If you leave this area unmarked attackers will have time to use the ball and set up chances for their team mates.

Teams need a player who can stand strong half way between the corner and the penalty area, to intercept any loose kicks that result. A player standing in that position creates a number of plus points for your team: They can:

- Win the ball direct from the corner.
- Prevent any attackers flicking the ball on by challenging for the header.
- Disrupt the corner taker's routine so they find it hard to hit the danger areas in the penalty area.
- Prevent short corners.

Once this position has been claimed by one of your players, use tactics on match day so when they win the ball you leave a player upfield. When the defending player wins the ball from the corner they quickly pass it upfield immediately setting up an attack.



During training

Practice corners where the player in this position is constantly getting the ball played to them at different heights and they can use chest, head and feet to rob the opposition of vital balls into the box.

When you are coaching this role you can also advance the play by getting your corner taker to practice playing balls over and around the player to different parts of the penalty area. If you combine it with the exercise on page one of this issue you can get an attacker to challenge the defensive player. So you are coaching three different roles in the one exercise. 🟡

Effective scoring tactics

I've been asking my fellow coaches what tactics they have come across in their latest youth soccer games – these two corner tactics stand out. The best thing about them is that they are tried and tested to score goals, says David Clarke.

Both these corners resulted in goals and they caught my eye because of the effort the coaches put in to make them a success. The coaches of the teams involved told me their teams were not having any success with corners being put in the air into the penalty area, so they tried something different. I like element of surprise and the use of decoy players to make the corner work – I bet the players had good fun with these making them work in practice.

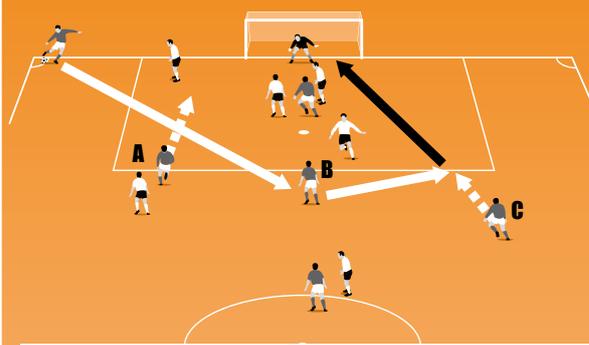
Corner one – 7-a-side

- The corner taker hits a firm ball along the ground towards player A who makes a run towards the corner of the penalty area.
- Player A steps over the ball and lets it run on to player B who controls it. As the defenders close him down, he rolls it into the path of player C, already on the move, who runs on to it and has a shot.

Corner two – 11-a-side

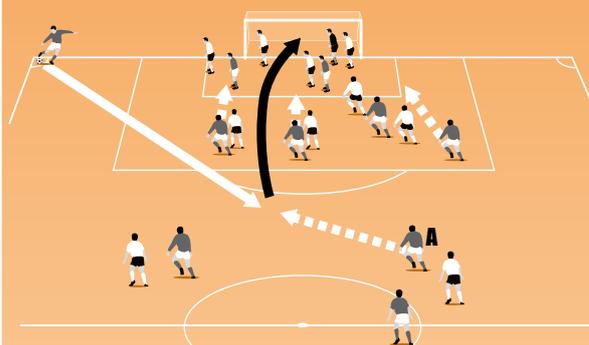
- The four attackers on the edge of the area time their runs as if they are going to attack the corner, taking their markers with them.
- The corner taker plays the ball firmly along the ground to player A, who has come from deep to the edge of the 'D', and gets a shot on target. 🎯

Tactics to use from corners



CORNER ONE

In this 7-a-side game the corner taker combines with players A, B and C to create space for a shot at goal.



CORNER TWO

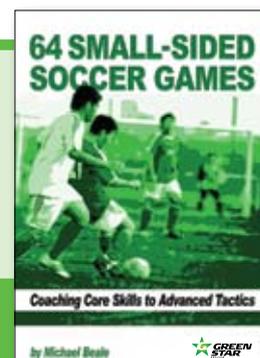
In this 11-a-side game the corner taker combines with player A and players move to create space for a shot.

direction of run - - - ➔ pass —➔ shot —➔

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Simple but effective short corners

Having problems with corners? Try taking them short, it's an easy way to goal, says David Clarke.

Two players stand near the flag

The short corner involves two players standing near the flag, with the kicker passing the ball to the second player and developing the play from there.

If you follow the diagrams you can coach your players how to create space when they are closed down by a defender.

Create opportunities from a 2v1

Both players should start facing the goal and should stand side by side just behind the ball.

One player should pass the ball to the other, if the corner is from the attacking team's right side the player who is strong with the left foot should touch the ball to the player who is strong with the right foot. This lets the player with the right foot dribble straight down the end line toward goal, or use the player with the strong left foot to either shoot first time or cross the ball.

If the player dribbling down the line goes right at the defender, the second player will be open.

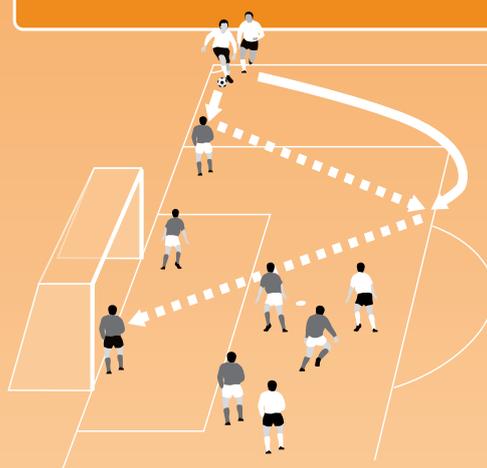
If the defender goes with the runner the player with the ball keeps going to goal. 🟩

Make a success of short corners

If the defender goes towards the runner, the corner taker goes straight to goal



If the defender stays in position, the ball simply gets played out to the runner for the quick shot or cross to the far post.



movement of player → pass/shot - ->

Short corner trickery

Young soccer players love trickery in matches, and they enjoy practising them at training. This corner trick is clever, fun and very effective. I set my players a target of trying this in every match because it has led to important goals and always causes confusion in the opposition defence, says David Clarke.

Getting clever at corners

Doing the unexpected can often result in a chance to score a goal. In youth soccer the unexpected can catch the whole team out. In the case of corners the defending team will set itself up for a ball played into the penalty area directly from the corner with one player tracking anyone going short at the corner.

How to do it

- When you win a corner have attacker 1 ready to take it while attacker 2 runs from the penalty area and shouts attacker 1's name loudly and makes a gesture that signals he wants the ball played to his feet.
- The defender will go with him – running with attacker 2 towards the corner.
- As attacker 2 gets near to attacker 1 get him to stop running and hold his hands up in a 'no' gesture and shake his head.
- The defender seeing this will stop as well and look back at the penalty area, totally off his guard.
- Attacker 2 then sprints into the area away from the attacker 1 who plays the ball into attacker 2's path.

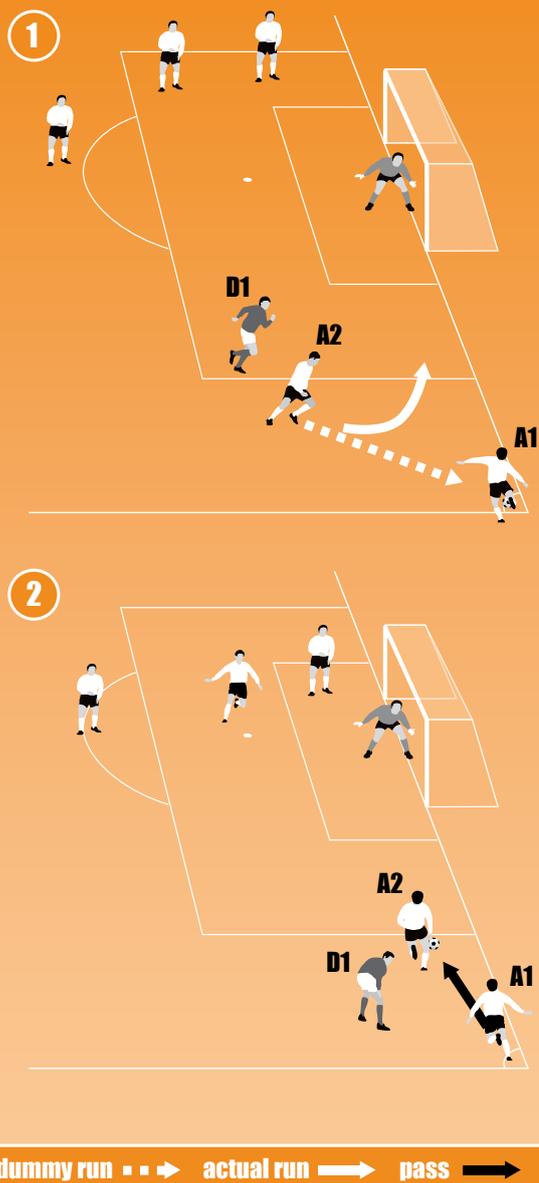
Attacker 2 then has three choices:

- 1 Pass to a player on the penalty spot.
- 2 Chip it to the far post.
- 3 Run at the goal and shoot himself, also giving him a chance of winning a penalty. 🍀

Key coaching tips

- You have to practice this one so you get it right first time, you don't want to make a mess of it and lose the ball.
- Remember when you have done it once the defender will not let you make a fool of him twice – or so he hopes...

Catch defenders out at short corners



Near post nightmares

This is an excellent tactic for youth soccer. It is a great way to get your players to understand how movement and positions at corners can help to create excellent opportunities for your attackers to get a shot in on goal, says David Clarke.

A change of tactic at corners

I have this tactic ready for games when the pitch is very wide and players are struggling to get the ball into the heart of the penalty area. It is also good for young teams that find it hard to kick the ball a long way in the air. You can see the complete move in diagram 1.

- 1 The corner taker plays a quick ball into the player on the near post along the ground.
- 2 The receiver moves towards the ball to get it.
- 3 He plays the ball back to the corner taker who has moved to the edge of the penalty area.
- 4 The ball is played to the edge of the D where one of your midfielders has moved into position.

Isolate the defender with movement

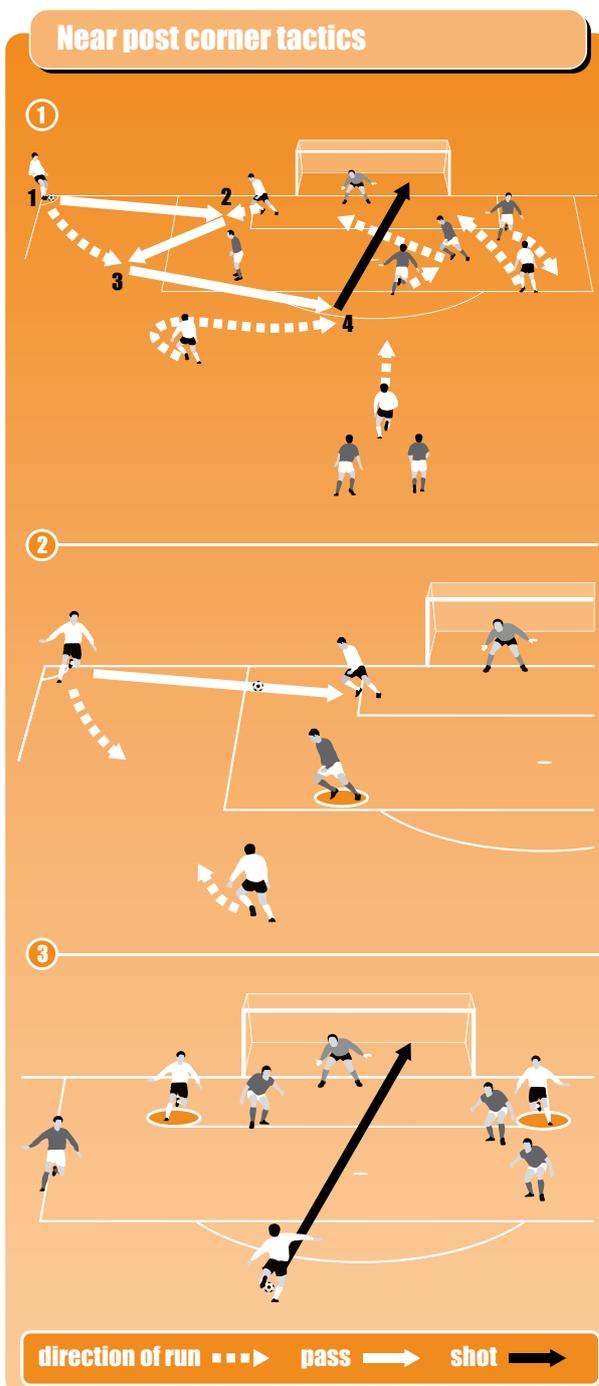
Diagram 2 shows a close up of the initial move. The corner taker and two receivers have moved quickly so the circled defender is isolated in no man's land. Players are moving to the ball and must be quick to control and pass.

The other attackers act as decoys

Diagram 3 shows how the defenders have moved to cover the attackers they expect the ball to be played to. The two circled attackers have not only pulled the defenders away opening up a route to goal from the penalty area, they are also in the perfect position to score from any rebounds. 🍌

Key coaching tip

You can practice this without defenders but make sure that attackers vary their movements, to create space and pull defenders out of position.



My secret weapon at corners

A player who sits on the corner of the box to give an outlet for a surprise angle of attack, writes David Clarke.

Making your attacking plays count

One thing that makes a huge difference at set plays is getting players in positions to make your advantage count. One of my favourite is to have a player stand on the corner of the 18 yard box, not inside it but to lurk predator-like around that area. He must be a player who naturally can just appear in that position without the opposition picking him up. Often he will be left unmarked anyway because he doesn't look like he is threatening the goal.

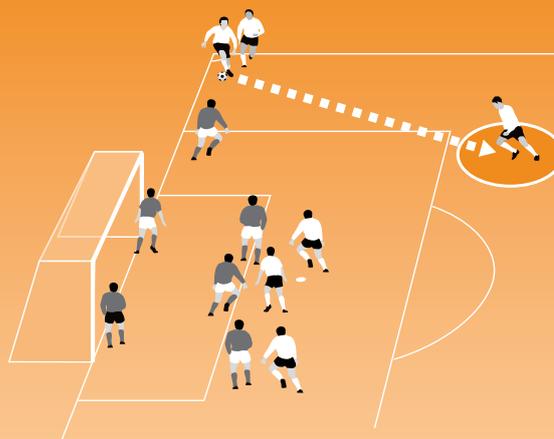
Opening up your team's options

But, he is threatening the goal. When your team plays a short corner he should be ready for the pass from one of the corner takers. He can then open himself up so he is facing the goal. He can play left, right or even shoot.

Bypassing a crowded penalty area

He also gives options: when the penalty area is crowded a simple pass out to him can create more space or quick passing on the edge of the area can create goal scoring opportunities.

Special position for set plays



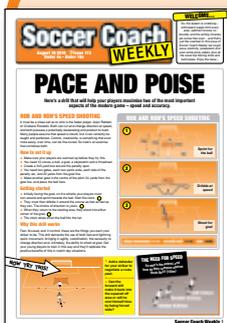
movement of player → pass/shot →

Space in front for your player to surge

It is a great position to receive the ball, because the player is facing the goal and will usually have a lot of space in front of him to exploit. 🎯

Key coaching tip

Tell your player to be patient and hold his position and not be tempted to join the fray.



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