

## PRESTON NORTHEND

# Graham Westley Defending set plays

### Overview:

A high percentage of goals are scored from set plays. For that reason, it is vitally important to create a skill set in players which maximises set play defence.

It's important to practise this so that players have a firm steer on following play, coping with movement, affecting an opponent, winning the ball, avoiding blocks and using quick reactions.

If well organised, it is my belief that a defence can cope with any type of set play. For instance, against Hartlepool United on September 18, we kept a clean sheet despite our defence having a significant height disadvantage against their strike force.

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## DEFENDING SET PLAYS

### SET-UP

#### AREA

Up to 54x36 yards

#### EQUIPMENT

Balls, cones, goals

#### NUMBER OF PLAYERS

18 plus keeper

#### SESSION TIME

Main session 15mins, game 15mins

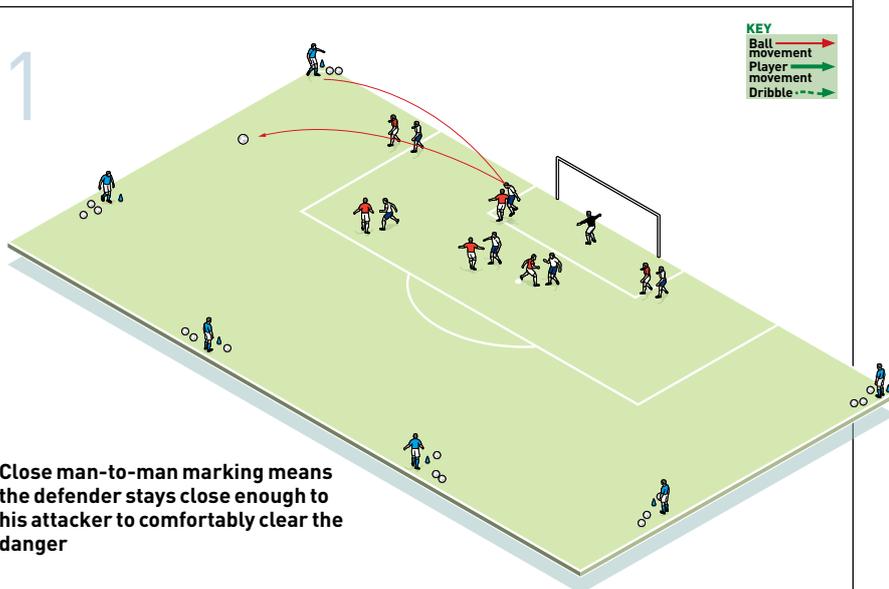
### What do I get the players to do?

Set up with three teams of six, positioned in and around the penalty box. One team defends, one team attacks and the other acts as servers, as shown.

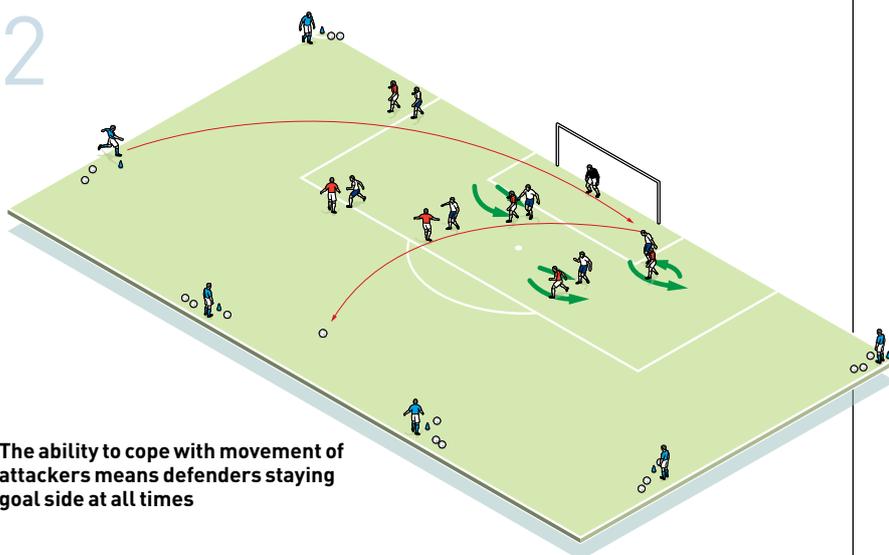
We call each server sequentially – from left and right sides the deliveries replicate a corner, a wide free-kick or a central free-kick. The ball into the box is contested by the attackers and defenders to see which team can win the duel. The ball remains alive until it goes into the goal or leaves the area. Each team attacks and defends 18 balls – three per server. Once 18 balls have been served, teams rotate their positions.

### What are the key things to look out for?

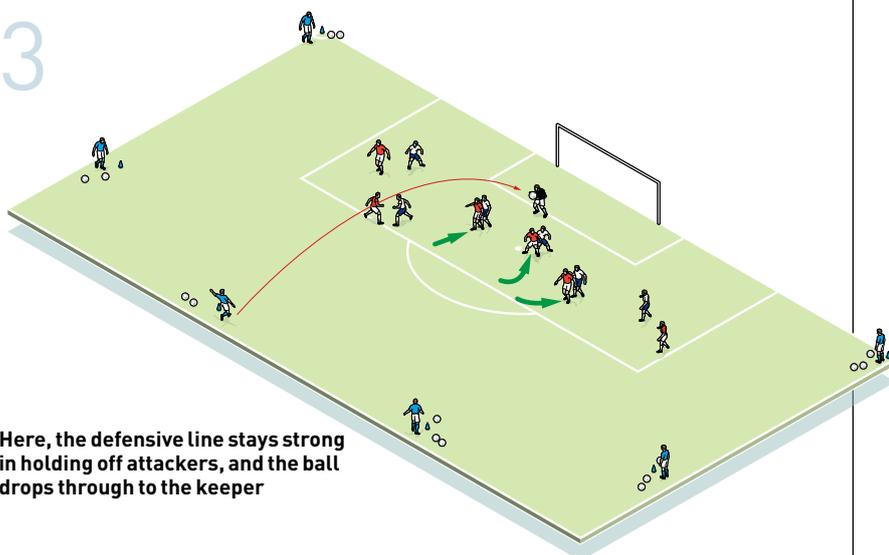
The emphasis here is on how to defend set plays, and there are a number of different elements we look out for. These include an absolute focus on close man-to-man marking, whereby attackers jostling for position and space must be well marshaled (1). Defenders must also



1  
Close man-to-man marking means the defender stays close enough to his attacker to comfortably clear the danger



2  
The ability to cope with movement of attackers means defenders staying goal side at all times



3  
Here, the defensive line stays strong in holding off attackers, and the ball drops through to the keeper



## Graham Westley

### PRESTON NORTH END

Graham Westley joined Preston North End in January 2012, following two spells as manager of Stevenage, during which time he transformed the club from Conference also-rans to a real force in npower League One.

He inspired the Hertfordshire outfit to FA Cup upsets against Newcastle United and Reading, and won the club the FA Trophy at Wembley in 2009, when Stevenage defeated York City in the final.

The back-to-back promotions which saw Borough land themselves a place in League One attracted the attention of a number of potential suitors, and Westley – a former owner of Stevenage and Farnborough – steadied the ship at Preston to secure a mid-table finish. This season, the Deepdale club are one of the frontrunners for promotion.

As a player, Westley turned out for QPR, Barnet, Gillingham and Wycombe Wanderers, as well as a number of non-league sides.

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## DEFENDING SET PLAYS

ensure they stay goal side for every delivery (2), as well as having a good appreciation of attacker movement. This includes knowing how to affect an opponent – through blocking, going shoulder to shoulder and holding the line (3) – as well as being ready to intercept incoming balls (4).

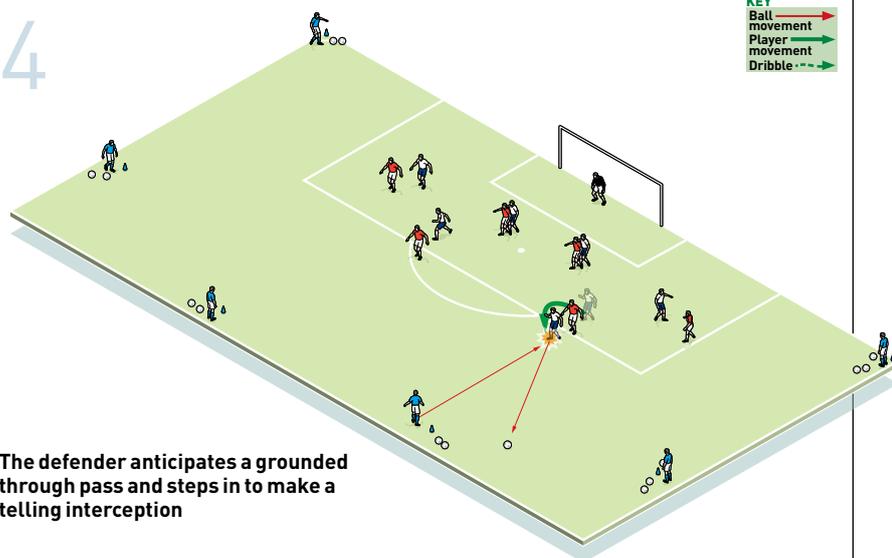
Knowing when to avoid blocks (where attackers link up to confuse the organisation of the defence) is also essential (5), with good communication allowing defenders to ‘pass on’ attackers.

Overall, defenders must show quick reactions, be organised, switched on, and with an absolute focus on winning the ball whilst denying an opponent a goalscoring opportunity.

### How do I put this into a small-sided game?

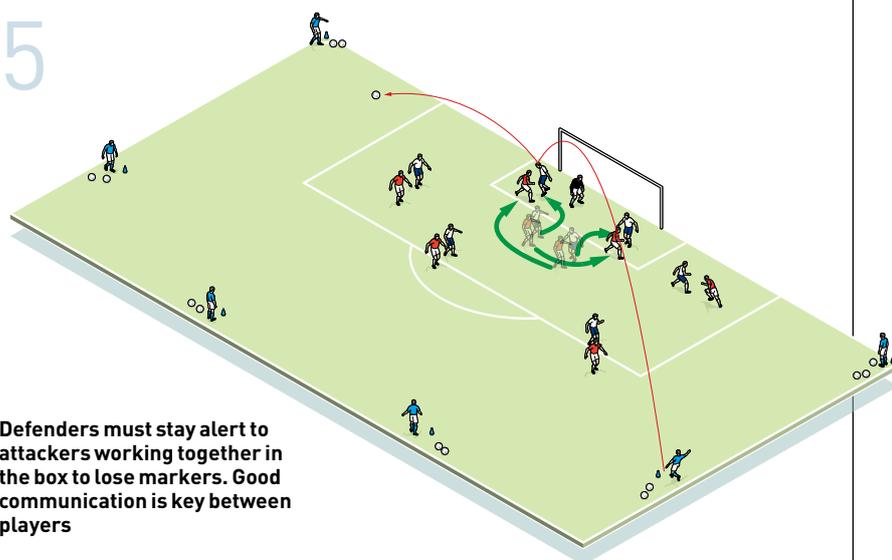
For an 8v8 game situation, we put two penalty boxes together, adding a 5-yard zone to the left and right where two neutral players wait. It’s a set 4v4 in each half (6). The keeper must roll the ball to one of his defenders before it is sent wide, with any goal needing to come from the wide ball in. The game creates live and fast-paced opportunities to practise set play scenarios. ■

4



The defender anticipates a grounded through pass and steps in to make a telling interception

5



Defenders must stay alert to attackers working together in the box to lose markers. Good communication is key between players

6



The small-sided game is 4v4 in each half with neutrals patrolling each wing