



Curry House
Indian Cuisine

Food For Thought

Defending At The Corner Kick

A corner kick is a method of re-starting play. A goal may be scored directly from a corner kick but only against the opposing team (as defined by FIFA – Law 17)

There has been a lot of discussions and hype over the years surrounding statistical data supporting that a high per cent of goals scored are from set pieces with corner kicks to be one of the greatest sources. Unless you were assessing a particular tournament, game or team league season and all data was collected to support the outcome this might be perceived as more of a generalization or opinion. Not all data collected necessarily supports high numbers of goals scored from the corner kick. You would also need to take into consideration how many actual shots on goal resulted at the taking of the corner. You might be surprised at the results from various teams / studies in this regard.

Maybe your team has a high scoring ability especially coming through the middle whether a result from quick combined play or from a great finishing opportunity delivered deep through central channels. In this case you may decide to focus on defending at corners. A team with higher scoring abilities may look at the corner as a bonus opportunity but not necessarily the method of choice to secure goals. The coach may decide based on the strengths and weaknesses of the players they need to work on preventing a potential shot on net created from the result of a well delivered corner. Depending on the ability level of your players you may want to take different approaches when defending at a corner kick. There are a variety of considerations.

- Height of the player / Strengths of player
- Zonal marking vs. man for man marking
- Specific roles of the primary defending players / the Goalkeeper
- Dangerous areas

How important is the height of a player when defending. Depending on the level of play ie Professional vs . Club level a professional team that yields on average a squad with shorter players may still have an excellent record when defending at corner kicks. In an effective zonal type marking system at the professional level the best headers of the ball would position themselves in dangerous areas like near post and penalty spot area. A good example is Barcelona defending at corner kicks you can see they adopt a zonal approach however in order for this to be effective they must be able to execute their task in that role. They do not line players up on the goal line as this would be too slow in immediately converting to an off-side trap. This is a team that does not report to have a high scoring average resulting from goals scored at corner kicks on the attack. Their strength with scoring results comes from their open play. This is a team who has success at defending at corner kicks even though they field some of the shortest players.

Other teams / clubs choose to adopt a man for man style of defending at corner kicks. In these cases a coach would ensure that a mix with some zonal coverage should be taken into consideration. With so many players in and around the box it can become confusing / tracking players and so vulnerable areas can easily be exploited and therefore must still be covered effectively/ consistently. Man for man marking is best complimented with a mix of zonal coverage in dangerous areas.

The Goalkeeper is another very important consideration and communication will play an important part. The Goalkeeper needs to be clear on all the roles and responsibilities of the key defending team-mates when zonal or man to man marking is utilized. The GK must understand his/her responsibility and must be trained on body / feet positioning to deal with the inswing and outswing of a delivered ball from the corner. The GK must be a great communicator.

One thing for certain regardless of what you as a coach prefer to focus on at training. Players need to be clear on their roles and they must be able to carry out their tasks. Coaches need to know their player strengths and weaknesses both individually and as a team. Coaches must also understand target areas and dangerous space that can be exploited at the taking of a corner. This “tip “ will hopefully just generate discussion and food for thought when planning your practices to deal with set plays like defending at the corner kick.