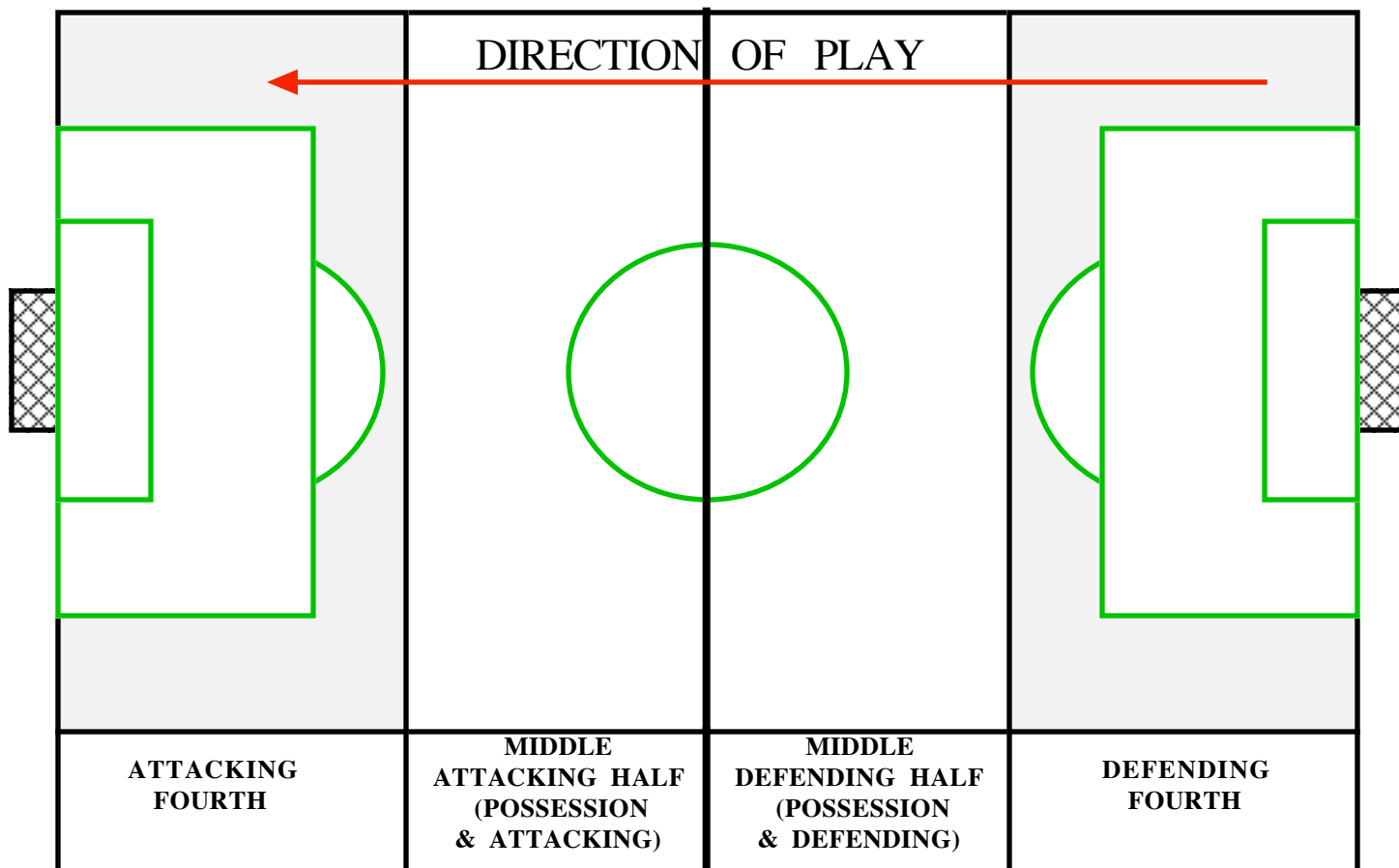


TEACHING TACTICS



“Dividing the Pitch Into Fourths”



THE “FOURTHS” OF THE PITCH

For years and years, soccer coaches have been taught to divide the pitch into “thirds” when teaching basic tactics. These thirds were: 1) Attacking, 2) Middle, and 3) Defensive. Seemed simple enough; however, breaking the pitch into “thirds” had one glaring weakness -- the middle portion. When the point of attack is just in either half of the field, the thought process of a team would be different; thus, it is much better to divide a pitch into “fourths”: 1) Attacking; 2) Middle Attacking (Possession & Attacking); 3) Middle Defending (Possession & Defending); and 4) Defending. Using our diagram above, here is an example of why breaking the pitch into “fourths” is better than breaking it into “thirds”: When in the “Defending Fourth” a team will always think defending before anything else, obviously. As the ball moves forward -- but remains in the “defending half” of the field -- the first option of the team in possession should be to get the ball over the midline and into the “attacking half” of the field while also maintaining defensive shape because loss of possession in this fourth of the field puts the opponent into an automatic attack mode. This is where the difference is between “thirds” and “fourths”. That is why this is called the “Middle Defending Fourth (Possession & Defending). The thought process in this area of the pitch is totally different. Once over the midline, the thought process moves into an attacking mode with maintaining possession the main objective in what is now known as the “Middle Attacking Half (Possession & Attacking). Maintaining possession in this fourth provides better opportunities to get the ball into the “Attacking Fourth” where the objective is to score.