

## **Beaten on the Dribble**

### **How should a defender react in the defensive half of the field?**

*By Lawrence Fine*

On the defensive half of the field, an attacking player demonstrates some deft footwork and moves past an opponent. How the defender reacts can be the difference between stifling a scoring opportunity and picking the ball out of the back of the net.

The defender's initial reaction defensively when beaten on the dribble is to give immediate chase to the player with the ball. However, if the attacker can't be caught in the first two steps, the next decision should be a full sprint directly toward the near post. This puts the defender on the most direct route to the most likely destination for the attacker, increasing the chances of catching the opponent. If the defensive teammate is in a good position to step up and become the first defender, this also puts the beaten defender in an area to provide proper support.

One key to making the quick decision regarding whether to provide immediate chase of the ball or to head to the near post is to listen to the supporting players. This is an area where proper communication is vital. Any hesitation in the decision-making process dramatically increases the chances of a goal-scoring opportunity for the opponent. As soon as the beaten defender hears a teammate say that he or she has the ball (meaning he or she will assume responsibility for the person with the ball), the defender should make the run to the near post. If the supporting defender doesn't make this call, the first couple of steps should be directly at the opponent in an attempt to catch him or her.

The first few times the recovery run is made toward the near post, it will feel a bit awkward but the results can be amazing. Trying it once in training and will make it a fixture in defending strategy. This is actually one of the easiest and best habits to break, so start in the next trip to the pitch.