

Role of the full back in Gaelic Football

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Four Key Tasks:

- ▶ Keep the full forward from winning possession.
- ▶ Dispossess the full forward if he wins possession.
- ▶ Catch the high balls dropping in around the goalmouth.
- ▶ Control the centre area in front of the goal.

Key Principals:

- ▶ Mark the full forward alongside or slightly in front.
- ▶ Be first to the ball and hold at first attempt (if you can't catch it, punch it hard, left or right, away from the danger area).
- ▶ Must have a clear understanding with the goalkeeper about a high ball dropping in near the goalmouth. (normally the goalkeeper should take the ball if it is dropping into the small parallelogram).
- ▶ Must have an understanding with the corner backs for them to anticipate and cover breaks when full back has committed himself to contest a high ball in front of goal.
- ▶ Must control centre and not allow the forward to have a clear shot at goal/goalkeeper. – (Positioned between line of attack and centre of goal)

When a forward in possession of the ball is running at the full back , the full back has to :

- ▶ Go straight at the forward and take the ball as the forward attempts to play it – this requires excellent timing and keep your body in front of the forwards run, slightly to the side of his kicking foot. In this way you will avoid a frontal charge (foul) but you will succeed in obstructing his kick or toe-tap. The technique is to time the run in such a way that the back, without losing his running momentum, gets up close to the forward as he releases the ball to shoot or toe-tap, then collects, smothers or flicks away the ball to gain possession.
- ▶ Decide to shadow – Shepard forward away from danger area – stay on the balls of the feet and retreat backwards. (Retreating backwards slows down the attacker and prevents the back from committing a personal foul). Clever forwards will catch an

outstretched arm and make it look like you have fouled. Time a block and dispossess.

Some Suggestions

These are dependant on opposition, team tactics and agreed game plan, however the following should be considered

- ▶ **Jumping for a high ball** – Practice jumping with high knee lift. This is needed for protection and discourages forwards from running in to knock you off balance. Full backs should earn a reputation that when they go for a ball no one should get in their way!!!
- ▶ **Safety first in clearances** – Fist/hand pass to supporting player. Find possession from clearances down the nearest wing. In an emergency a long kick aimed 5 metres from the sideline on the halfway line (your own players also need to know your options). Where the opportunity arises you could take a return pass but make sure you find possession as a counter attack would leave your goal exposed. DO NOT cross your own goals in possession of the ball.

The Roving Full Forward

The full back should tightly mark up to a *radius of 45 meters from the goal. As the intention of the roving full forward is to create a gap in the central area the full back has to weigh up the risks in being too far from goal and kept out on the wing when an attack is progressing.

One option is that one of the corner backs could take up the full forward when they wander outfield and the full back drops back into the corner back position. Where the forwards interchange from the full forward line to the half forward line, then the back should have an understanding to cover their area. (I.e. pick up whatever forward comes into your space.)

A Second option would be to decide to follow the full forward out to a range of *45 meters radius and stay in the centre and pick up attackers coming through the centre. (the rationale here is that a forward who is more than 45 meters from goal is less likely to score direct from that position and will need to pass to a player nearer to goal and will look for a return pass. In this way the full back is making space and collects whatever is coming into the scoring area).

**It should be noted that the range is 45metres radius – a player on the 45metre line close to the sideline is probably 60 metres from goal –a long way back for a full back to cover an attack down the centre!!!*