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TACTICAL SOCCER COACHING VOL.1

SYSTEMS OF PLAY, STRATEGY AND ANALYSIS



**JONNY CARTER AND
MICHAEL J LOUTER**

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Tactical Soccer Coaching Volume 1

Systems of Play, Strategy and Analysis

By

Jonny Carter

And

Michael J Louter

Published by

WORLD CLASS COACHING

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Education Football
Tactical Soccer Coaching Vol. 1

Premier Select Course

Foreword

Tactical Soccer Coaching Vol. 1 | **Foreword**

The **Education Football** concept was a creation born out of a need for soccer knowledge. As a student of the game I found it tough to find information in easily accessible and cheap formats. I couldn't find the time or money to attend a coaching course just to satisfy my inquisitive nature regarding a certain formation that I had seen deployed in the *Champions League* semi-final or some such equivalent match. The pundits on the TV were more interested in stroking their co-presenter's media ego than teaching me the nuances of the game during the half-time love-in. Newspaper journalists were just vehicles for facts, no detail at all. Cookie cutter reports arbitrarily regurgitating what happened; "he passed to him, him passed back to he, that guy kicked it in...34th minute". Who cares? I want to know why it happened. Not when or where or who or how; I want to know why. I had nowhere to turn to validate my thoughts or to realign my errors. How could something so important be so difficult to find information on? Why is tactical elaboration so difficult to learn? Where can a soccer student look for his epiphany?

With this barren deficit of information all too evident I chose to self-educate and document. Collecting pieces of knowledge from one resource and comparing it with another; building a collection of information that was previously impossible to obtain. After a lifetime of hoarding random nuggets of wisdom I turned that collection of information into a detailed series of courses that are lecture-presented through **Education Football** | www.EducationFootball.com



*Offering a pathway of UK accredited academic courses on the concepts of soccer. **Education Football** is the pioneer of certificated qualifications in football theory*

Tactical Soccer Coaching Vol. 1 explained

Now the course content and resource materials from **Education Football** are available through World Class Coaching www.WorldClassCoaching.com

Education Football delivers a series of UK accredited academic football / soccer theory courses with a clear pathway guiding our soccer students through a natural advancement and with a coherent flow. All **Education Football** courses currently run at 12 hours duration and are 100% classroom-based lectured courses. Full attendance at every course component is mandatory to complete the course and therefore to receive an *attendance certificate*. All **Education Football** candidates have to complete a regulated on-line test in order to receive their *qualification certificate*. Regulated tests are conducted in compliance with strict UK academic testing guidelines.

Education Football testing is done in a regulated environment with course candidates able to access the on-line testing web site via a *Smartphone, i-phone, Blackberry, Tablet or laptop*.

All **Education Football** courses are academically accredited through **TLM**.

The Learning Machine Ltd (TLM) is an innovative academic awarding organization that is accredited by Ofqual www.OfQual.gov.uk, the Office for Qualifications regulation in England, Wales and Northern Ireland; and utilizes International Grades – Open Technologies to provide on-line customer service to candidates <https://theingots.org/community/about>. TLM is proud to have their unique organization publically listed on the Ofqual Register of Regulated Qualifications on the Ofqual web site <http://register.ofqual.gov.uk/Organisation/Details/RN5273>. TLM is the first Ofqual registered awarding organization to offer academic football / soccer certifications outside of the UK.

The **Premier Select Course** content and the **Elite Champion Course** content are included within the pages of **Tactical Soccer Coaching Vol. 1**. The **Professional Course** content and the **Master Course** content will be released in the near future to complete the four course pathway.

Those soccer students now have a place to turn when they need a resource of reliable information. These pages will provide some answers to those troubling questions that you just can't quite work out. Not only will questions be answered but new and interesting topics will be opened up inspiring a further desire for knowledge and soccer information.

If you like these pages then you will certainly be looking forward to the **Professional Course** content and the **Master Course** content that will be arriving in the World Class Coaching www.WorldClassCoaching.com coaching resource store in the near future.

If you or your football / soccer organization would be interested in an **Education Football** course then there are a few options available...

1. Host a 12hour, 100% classroom-based, lecture-presentation **Education Football** course for your soccer community
2. Host an **Education Football** on-field 'Special-Topics' clinic for your soccer community
3. Become an owner of 12hour, 100% classroom-based, lecture-presentation **Education Football** courses and deliver courses for your soccer community
4. Become an owner of **Education Football** and deliver an on-field 'Special-Topics' clinic for your soccer community

Thank you.

Jonny Carter

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Education Football
Tactical Soccer Coaching Vol. 1

Premier Select Course

Introduction
Professional Authors

Introduction | Professional Authors

Jonny Carter has a rich football experience having been a student of the game from his informative playing days through a celebrated coaching career that has seen him travel to multiple football cultures in the pursuit of knowledge. Since earning his first coaching certificates while still at University in the mid 1990's Jonny has voyaged through Europe, America and across much of Asia learning and sharing his unique insight into football and coaching.

As a soccer student Jonny is obsessed by the intricacies of tactical football and the methodologies used worldwide to coach this information. As a keen advocate of youth development Jonny has previously documented his 'Principles-Based' methodology in his earlier *World Class Coaching* published manuals, and has further documented his possession oriented approach to coaching in other recent manuals. Some of the training activities and ideas that Jonny uses to share his philosophies are detailed and included within this coaching manual.



Jonny has travelled far in search of coaching wisdom including the 1st Team Head Coach at the prestigious Kowloon Cricket Club located in the vibrant heart of Hong Kong, Vitesse Soccer based in Tennessee and as Technical Coordinator of the u13 & u15 Academy Generations | 1st Team Assistant Coach at Phnom Penh Crown FC. Jonny has written and delivered the football program for the Nike Soccer Camp in Hong Kong that offers elite youth player's opportunity to experience his contemporary training methods. Jonny was the guest Head Coach for the Yau Yee League Select Team who participated with esteem at the respected HKFC Citibank Soccer 7's event in 2014, where the amateur team were pitted against local professional clubs and Premier League heavyweights.



Jonny currently runs a series of coach education courses based on theoretical football concepts through his Education Football www.EducationFootball.com project; *soccer students can learn from a pathway of UK accredited academic courses on the concepts of soccer. Education Football is the pioneer of certified qualifications in football theory.*

To open video links in a new tab, hold the Ctrl key down when clicking the link.

Introduction | Professional Authors

Michael J Louter originates from the Netherlands and brought with him a strong football heritage when he concluded his playing career in Holland and embarked on his academic coaching career in the US. Following his academic pursuit Michael turned attentions to coaching, marrying a keen interest in psychology with the technical and tactical components of the game. Alongside his college coaching experience Michael has excelled in the collection of coaching certificates boasting both a USSF 'A' License and the NSCAA Premier Diploma.



Michael is currently the Director of Talent Development FC Dallas Tri and oversees the development of the senior section of players from u13 – u19. In addition to this responsibility Michael runs his elite camp program *Soccer Camps at Vitesse*, which offers elite players the opportunity to experience his vast knowledge of football and coaching in a spectacular purpose built training facility in Tennessee. *Soccer Camps at Vitesse* www.SoccerCampsAtVitesse.org has two purpose built grass fields, a small-sided astro training field and a residential lodge suitable for accommodating forty players and staff; set in idyllic Tennessee this truly is an exclusive training experience.

Michael was a youth player of Vitesse '22 Football Club in Castricum, Holland from age 8 to when he entered the Dutch professional program as a senior player. From this legacy Michael founded *Soccer Camps at Vitesse* in 2006 because he wanted to provide for his family, and for other families, similar opportunities that he had growing up with Vitesse '22 FC. The core value at Vitesse is COMMUNITY | A safe place for each individual to be challenged in exploring their interests and talents, with each individual truly identifying and being embraced for his/hers strengths.

“Having grown up in that nurturing environment for 20 years, I am convinced that the concept of ‘community’ allowed me to develop at the level to play professionally”



Jonny Carter

Kowloon Cricket Club | Vitesse Soccer



ODP | Olympic Development Program | Tennessee | www.TNsoccer.org
TN ODP Staff Coach | Summer 2016

Tri Cities FC PDL Otters | Tennessee | www.OtterSoccer.com
Staff Coach | Talent Assessor

Phnom Penh Crown FC | Cambodia | www.PPCfc.com
Technical Co-ordinator u13 & u15 Academy Generations | PPCFC 1st Team Assistant Coach

Vitesse Soccer | Tennessee | www.SoccerCampsAtVitesse.org
Group Tactics Coach

Kowloon Cricket Club | Hong Kong | www.KCC.org.hk
u15 Elite Team | KCC 1st Team Head Coach

Nike Soccer Camp | Hong Kong | www.CNSportsCamps.com
Head Coach | Curriculum Development

Yau Yee Select | Citi Bank HKFC Soccer 7's | Hong Kong | www.HKSoccerSevens.com
Head Coach

Education Football | www.EducationFootball.com
Academic Director

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Coaching Possession with a Purpose | Volume I & II

Coaching Qualifications & Certificates

AFC 'A' Licence | 2013 · AFC 'B' Licence | 2012
NSCAA Advanced National Diploma | 2007 · NSCAA National Diploma | 2006



Michael J Louter

FC Dallas Tri | Vitesse Soccer



FC Dallas Tri | www.FCDallasTri.org
Director of Talent Development | Seniors u13 – u19

US Club Soccer | www.USClubSoccer.org
State Technical Director | Alabama

Fairleigh Dickinson University | www.FDU.edu
Staff Coach | Women's Soccer

Alabama Olympic Development Program | www.AISoccer.org
Director

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Coaching Possession with a Purpose | Volume I & II

Soccer Camps At Vitesse | www.SoccerCampsAtVitesse.org
Camp Director & Owner | Head Coach & Curriculum Developer
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Coaching Qualifications & Certificates

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NSCAA Premier Diploma
M.S. Degree in Sports Coaching & Sports Fitness | US Sports Academy
B.S. Degree | Psychology



World Class Coaching | www.WorldClassCoaching.com

Since 1998, WORLD CLASS COACHING has become a household name in the worldwide soccer coaching community.

Our digital magazine is the publication of choice for soccer coaches in over 70 countries ranging from coaches of professional and national teams to coaches of young recreational teams.



WORLD CLASS COACHING has its own line of over 200 soccer coaching DVDs and books as well as the world's largest online searchable database of soccer drills and exercises.

Every year WORLD CLASS COACHING conducts an international coaching seminar that is attended by hundreds of coaches from across the country.

In total, over 40,000 soccer coaches from all over the world, use WORLD CLASS COACHING to help with their training sessions and game day coaching.

WORLD CLASS COACHING has received many *testimonials* from prominent coaches and clubs as well as from our regular customers. Visit our web site for these testimonials and other information. www.WorldClassCoaching.com

Coaching Soccer Weekly Pod Cast | www.CoachingSoccerWeekly.com

Jonny Carter and the World Class Coaching publication *Conquering Your Next Coaching Course* is featured in the recent pod cast interview with Coaching Soccer Weekly | Listen to the in-depth interview

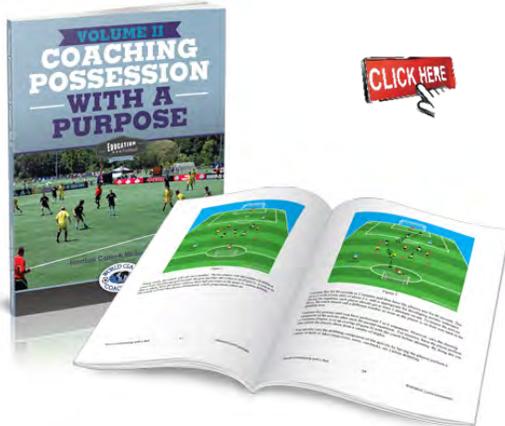
The banner is a horizontal strip with a dark blue background on the left and a red background on the right. On the left, there is a portrait of Tom Mura, a man with short dark hair, smiling. To his right, the text "COACHING SOCCER WEEKLY" is written in large, bold, white letters, with "WITH TOM MURA" in smaller white letters below it. On the right side, the World Class Coaching logo is displayed. Below the main text, there is a white box containing a play button icon, the text "WORLD CLASS COACHING Coaching Soccer Weekly Intro", and a SoundCloud waveform. Below the waveform is a "Cookie policy" link. At the bottom of the banner, there is a row of five small images showing various soccer coaches in action or speaking. The text "WORLD CLASS COACHING" is written in white at the bottom right of the banner.



Coaching Possession with a Purpose | Volume I

A complete guide to making maximum use of possession so you also pose maximum danger. Packed with detailed diagrams, setup instructions and coaching points, its drills will give your players a bigger advantage every time you win possession.

Divided into 11 chapters, with each focused on a specific scenario when you are in possession and how to train your players to move the ball in the right direction up the pitch and through the opposition. This includes building play through the midfield, third player movement to create penetration, penetrating runs to break midfield lines and urgency of possession in attacking areas.



Coaching Possession with a Purpose | Volume II

The game has wised up. Today's clued in coaches know it's not how much of the ball you have but what you do with it that counts. They've realized that chasing crazy high possession stats isn't going to win you games. It's playing with maximum productivity that will.

This new manual expands on the first volume with highly focused drills that train your players to exploit the weaknesses of high possession sides and to make better use of the ball to mount attacks. It includes chapters on switching the play, executing 'give and go' combination plays, exploiting creative wing play and much more.



"The concept of the coaching manual 'Conquering Your Next Coaching Course' is a truly excellent idea and one that the industry really does need. The concept of understanding the coaching course environment and being advised on how to prepare specifically for the high pressure setting is valuable knowledge, and these pages are full of knowledge.

The training session plans are clearly set up with very coherent flow, relevant progressions and all are scalable to different levels on the coaching course pathway. Well written, well presented and well-conceived; incredible."

Tom Durkin

Former US National Team Coach | u17 boys

Former Assistant Coach | Tampa Bay Mutiny MLS | Former IMG Academies Director



Coaching the Principles of Soccer Attack & Defense

This manual breaks down how the game is played into digestible chunks. Drills are provided which highlight to players what they need to do, when and why in a variety of offensive and defensive situations. Every drill is clearly explained with setup instructions, detailed diagrams and coaching points for maximum benefit.

The principles are clearly defined, which remain the same whatever formation you play. These chapters also look at the numbering of positions and where in the formation you'd expect each player to be. In particular, it aims to help players understand what their roles and responsibilities are in different situations.



Conquering Your Next Coaching Course

If you want to advance your career this manual is essential reading. It's a unique guide on exactly what to expect at every stage and what to do to impress the assessors. With these valuable insights, you know exactly what's expected of you before you arrive. Instead of massive pressure and stress, you'll feel confident and ready to pass.

Coaching courses can be harsh and unforgiving. Give yourself the best possible chance of survival with this unique self help guide on 'conquering' every stage of any coaching course and coaching at the next level.

-The ultimate guide to preparing for any coaching license



"Coaching the Principles of Soccer | Attack & Defense is more than just a coaching tool and more than just another football coaching resource. The structure and clarity of the documentation allows a coach to understand the core principles of attacking and defensive football and then carry these training concepts from the page, to the practice field and to share the details with our players.

The formatting of the session plans allows a coach to retreat or to progress training session to meet the needs of your players and your teams."

Arjan de Zeeuw
13 Years Professional Player in England | 6 Years Premier League
Barnsley FC | Wigan FC | Portsmouth FC | Coventry City FC

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Education Football
Tactical Soccer Coaching Vol. 1

Premier Select Course

Traditional Numbering System of Players

Traditional Numbering System of Players

There is much debate and conjecture regarding the origins of the traditional numbering of football positions, some theories holding with more merit than others. The most logical suggestions relate back to early formations of the 1950's and some of these legacies have carried through into the contemporary game. However, over the course of time some of the definitions have been lost or confused and even different football cultures have variations in the numbering of player's positions.

For the benefit of this book the following numbering of positions have been used. This may differ from other opinions but for the benefit of consistency and continuity through the following information it is important that the reader recognises the following detail.

The goalkeeper has always and will always be number #1.

The defensive group is organized as Right fullback #2, Left fullback #3, two central defenders #4 & #5. Occasionally you would see number #6 used instead of #5, Bobby Moore for England 1966 is a good example. The concept of a back four is a relatively new evolution in the long history of football strategy; the early formations were very much front-heavy with little regard for defending. The balance between defense and attack is really only noticeable during the 1950's and onwards. In English football a central defender is often still referenced as a "*centerhalf*" which is a legacy from the midfield players being pushed back into a defensive role but still carrying his midfield (half) name. The two last defenders or '*full backs*' were pushed wide but too kept their name even with the addition of players to the defensive group.

The midfield four have the two central midfield players as #6 & #8; with the wide right midfield #7 and the wide left midfield #11.

The central forward is the #9 with the second striker, or playmaker, or attacking central midfielder as #10.

4-4-2 Formation	Traditional Shirt Numbers
Goalkeeper	#1
Right Fullback	#2
Left Fullback	#3
Central Defender Centerhalf	#4
Central Defender Centerhalf	#5
Central Midfield	#6
Right Midfield	#7
Central Midfield	#8
Central Forward	#9
Attacking Central Midfield 2nd Striker	#10
Left Midfield	#11

Traditional Numbering System of Players

4-4-2 Formation



4-3-3 Formation



4-4-2 | Formation



4-3-3 | Formation



Education Football
Tactical Soccer Coaching Vol. 1

Premier Select Course

Section #1
The Evolution of Team Formations

Section #1

The Evolution of Team Formations

A Brief History of Soccer | Part I

The origins of contemporary soccer / football are synonymous with England. However, it is merely the documentation and the refinement to the structure of soccer / football that occurred in England, certainly not the source. It is deceptive to suggest that England pioneered the world game. There are many and varied cultures throughout history that have more than a tenuous link to soccer / football that have contributed to soccer's mass appeal and global recognition.



Ancient Greek, Roman and Chinese history all pay reference to some form or guise of football within their heritage. Perhaps not with the same complexion that we are used to seeing on our TV's today, but certainly there are strong affiliations with football across borders and throughout time.

Kemari | Japan

The first evidence of Kemari is suggested at A.D.644. Kemari is a group game of juggling or 'Keepie-Uppie' activity more suited for ceremony or pageantry than competitive sport. It is thought that the rules were somewhat standardized from the 13th century onwards and is regarded as one of, if not the first Japanese sports to become highly developed.



Cuju | China

Cuju originated from China around B.C.400 – A.D.900 and literally translates to 'kick ball'. Cuju is an ancient version of football with similarities to the contemporary game in that rules & regulations were imposed and even goals & goalposts forming integral aspects of the soccer field. It is seen by some to be a forerunner of modern football and though originated in China was also thought to be played in Korea, Japan and Vietnam.

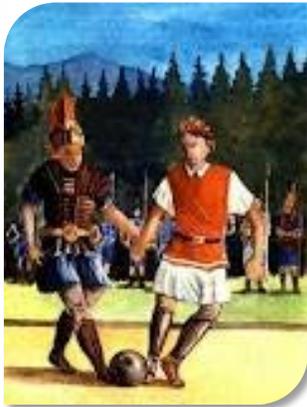
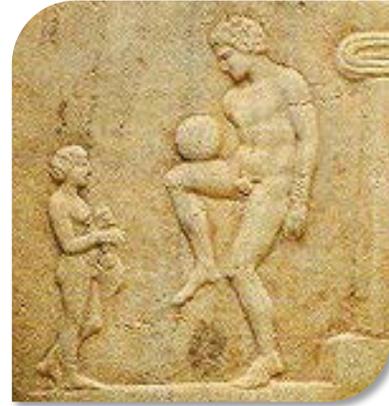


Harpastum | **Roman Empire**

Harpastum, also known as Harpustum, was a football based game popular within the Roman Empire. Consistent with the Roman Empire it is thought the game was barbaric, physically enduring and devoid of integrity or rules. It is also assumed that many European versions were hybrids of a similar origin.

The heritage suggests a rather lawless and barbaric nature of ancient sports somewhat missing of culture and refinement.

The term football often referring to games played on foot, as opposed to actually kicking the ball with the foot. Many ancient activities were designated either to be more peasant games while the hierarchy played more sophisticated games played often on horse rather than played on foot. This generalization of the term 'football' leads to many variations of the game football across the world.



Episkyros | **Greek**

Another European version of football was developed in Greece. Again, this version of the sport was rumored to be particularly gruesome and probably involved more carrying the ball in hand than regular football would permit.

There are other, many and random references to football in its primitive formats across many cultures. References include the unlikely prospect of Inuit football taking place on ice and even Native American's playing football well before the New York Cosmos were ever conceived.

Mob-Football | **Europe**

Medieval Europe saw the growth of rather Neanderthal incarnations of modern soccer in the form of mob-football. Still a sport based more on physicality and endurance, as opposed to skills and rule-referencing, 'mob-football' did represent how this team invasion game unified, excited and entertained the mass population.

With unlimited numbers of players on opposite teams and with very few rules to comply with the games were pretty lawless and unrefined. Basic objectives of strength would dictate the winners with opposing villages chasing a severed animal head or intestinal bladder across the opposition's parish; sometimes for days at a time.



Increase in Popularity | **Sport for the People**

As the interest and popularity of football grew so did the references throughout documented history which highlighted just how football was already beginning to creep into being an important factor in society.

One such writing is documented by William Fitz Stephen in about 1174–1183 as he described the “... activities of London youths during the annual religious festival of Shrove Tuesday.” Through the course of history there are multiple references in literature documenting the early evolution of the game. Most of these references are from legal documents, criminal reports and banning petitions from the aristocracy who viewed the working class pastime as a social problem.



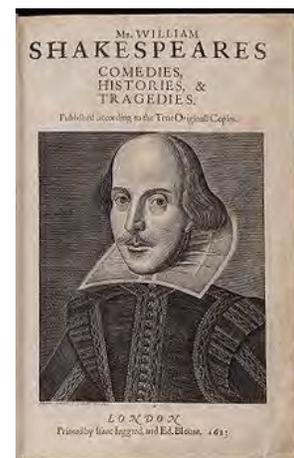
Calcio Fiorentino | **Italy**

During the 16th Century there is much documentation regarding the ‘*Calcio Fiorentino*’ football event played at the ‘*Piazza Santa Croce*’ in Florence, Italy during religious festivals.



William Shakespeare | **1564 - 1616**

Modern football media is a relentless and unprecedented industry today; perhaps the pioneer of the industry was conceived from the very best. There is reference to football as a point of popular culture within Shakespeare’s tragic writings of ‘*King Lear*’ and a ‘*The Comedy of Errors*’.





The Private School Revolution | **England**

While most peasant workers were working heavy jobs, and with children readily inclusive in the workforce, there was not much time, money or energy left for the development of football. This socio-economic obstacle meant that a new demographic was able to take up the reign of football's evolution and drive forward with radical steps towards what we might describe today as a recognizable version of the game.

The English private school system provided intelligence, academic ability and a reason to provide structure to football that the working class society could not. The higher social standing and advanced academic standard also provided documented evidence to support the changes and developments of the time.

Genuine structure was given to the sport and while things have moved on from what we see watching a game today, it was these times and these changes that showed the most significant growth towards the competitive sport that we recognize as football.

Football became a school and university sport, played by the upper-classes and showed a definite move away from the peasant mob-football culture that was its predecessor. This shift was initiated and embraced by the very best schools of the time such as Eton and Winchester. The structure that these academic institutions gave to football development initiated games played under elementary strategy, basic rules & regulations, boundary lines, positions, goals & goal posts. And match officials.

The invention and popularity of rail travel allowed for inter-school competition and the further advancement of competitive football. Unfortunately different schools complied with different rules as there was still no governing body or no agreed regulations.

'Home and away' policy was developed or '*first half, second half*' where different rules were honored dependent on the location of the game venue or indeed which period of the game was being played.

William Webb Ellis | **Rugby Football**

Dissention amongst players and teams led to a notable defection. In the 1820's rugby and football split to travel their own individual paths, both originating from mob-football to the respective sports that you see today. William Webb Ellis is thought to be a pioneer of the defection to rugby after choosing to embrace a game more about carrying the ball in-hand rather than playing it with the feet on the ground. Ellis a student of Rugby School, Warwickshire continued to write his own legacy.



Trinity College | **Cambridge Rules**

In 1848 at Trinity College, Cambridge a meeting of significant schools and universities was arranged to refine a ubiquitous set of rules. These rules would encompass more definitive boundaries than ever before and would include such intricate detail as the off-side rule, which would change significantly over time. This widely recognized set of rules & regulations was termed the ‘*Cambridge Rules*’.



The Football Association | **Laws of the Game**

However, as the name suggests, the Cambridge Rules were still rather colloquial, regional and were embraced only by those who chose to embrace them. There was still no definitive document of agreed regulations.

However, on 26th October 1863 a meeting was held at the Freemasons' Tavern, Great Queen Street, London to unify the rules of football. Representatives of the most significant universities, schools and clubs were present at what is now regarded as the beginning of the Football Association | The FA.



On 8th December 1863 the ‘Laws of the Game’ was published by the FA.

Those who canvassed a more ball-in-hand running sport defected and in 1871 created the Rugby Football Union signaling the defined split and separation of rugby and football.

Football Structure | **A Rapid Development I**

In 1886 a massive and still relevant moment of football was conceived; the International Football Association Board was created. The IFAB was founded by the football associations of the British home nations England, Northern Ireland, Scotland & Wales.

England		The FA Football Association
Northern Ireland		IFA Irish Football Association
Scotland		SFA Scottish Football Association
Wales		FAW Football Association of Wales

The main authority of the IFAB is to vote on rule changes and amendments to the laws of the game that are accepted across the entire world of football.

Football Structure | A Rapid Development II

The now globally recognized FA Cup was founded by C. W. Alcock in 1872 and remains the world's most revered club cup competition.

The first official international football match took place on 30th November 1872 between Scotland and England in Glasgow, again at the instigation of C. W. Alcock.



The tactics and strategies of modern football have been refined, changed and amended quite dramatically since that game. It is suggested that England started the match with a flamboyant 1-1-8 formation accommodating eight forwards; while Scotland were slightly more reserved with a 1-2-7 formation.

The oldest league in world football is regarded as the English Football League which was founded in 1888 by *Aston Villa FC* director William McGregor. The original league format consisted of 12 clubs from across England and is a pioneer to the Premier League that we see today.



In 1904 FIFA, Fédération Internationale de Football Association, the governing body for world football was formed in Paris. Many of the most significant football associations from around the globe joined FIFA all declaring they would adhere to 'the Laws of the Game' of the Football Association.

The growing popularity of the international game led to the admittance of FIFA representatives to the International Football Association Board in 1913. Today four FIFA representatives sit on the IFAB committee and help to influence the direction of the world game.



Section #1

The Evolution of Team Formations

A Brief History of Soccer | Part II

As football began to develop and move away from the mob-football origins the structure and tactical appreciation for the game also developed. Football was streamlining itself away from a mere village activity and into a sport that required the adaptation of strategy as well as physical proficiency in order to triumph.

Some formations appear random, even crazy given the aesthetics of Premier League and Champions League football today, but at the time these developments were radical advancements guided by the ideas of some of the games true pioneers.

As the concept of formations grew with interest as did the naming or ownership of dramatic new advancements of strategy. New formations were frequently named after the pioneering coach who developed the concept; before a ubiquitous method of cataloguing a formation was recognized as the simplest way of defining an idea.

The numbering system; i.e. 4-4-2, is a relatively modern innovation against the long and rich heritage of football but this has now become a staple method for interpreting a strategic concept. The numbering system denotes, from back-to-front, how many players will be deployed in each unit, department or group. To use the 4-4-2 example again; 4 defenders, 4 midfielders and 2 forwards.

No matter what the coaches' preference of formation, it is generally regarded that having a goalkeeper is always a sensible tactic (as well as a rule of the game), and so it is assumed that a goalkeeper will be part of any team composition, and as such it is not deemed necessary to reference a goalkeeper in a numerical formation. Only the remaining outfield players typically command a number. However, changes and more modifications are starting to see that goalkeepers are recognized in the numerical charting of a team formation, especially within the American soccer coaching culture, where it is becoming common practice to reference a 1-4-4-2 formation.

As modern football has developed so have the formations. Contemporary football today may see a formation with more units, departments or groups than the conventional Defense, Midfield and Forwards. It is not uncommon today to see a team formation deploying players '*in-between*' recognized groups i.e. 4-4-1-1 or 4-2-3-1.

Scotland v England | 30th November 1872

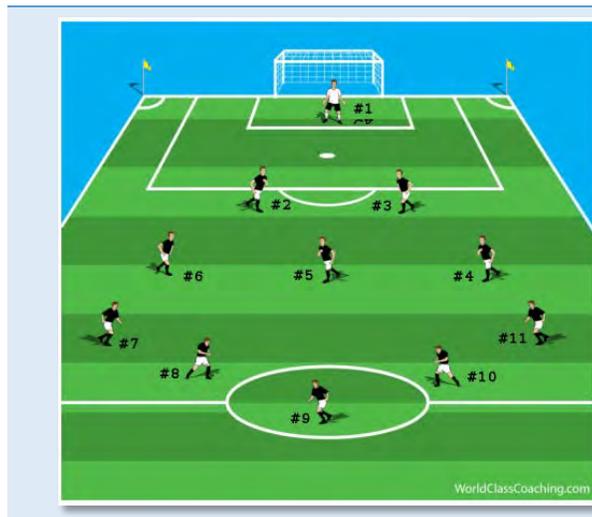
As previously referenced, the first international match, between Scotland and England, is rumored to have shown two rather attack-heavy formations. With England playing with 7 or 8 forward players and Scotland being only just more cautious with a reported 6 forwards.

These heavily weighted formations favored the attacking team and cultivated a rather direct style of play with the main strategy simply to get the ball forward individually. The concept of an intricate short-range passing game was some way off. However, it was recognized as a significant development that Scotland did choose to deploy a rudimentary passing strategy in contrast to the English style of direct football.

2-3-5 | The Pyramid

The 'Pyramid' formation, recognizable as a 2-3-5 formation finally saw the first steps toward balancing attack with defense. The two fullbacks (defenders) and the three halfbacks (midfielders) equally balance with the five attackers.

It is thought that this was perhaps the first genuine strategic formation and is dated around 1880. Given the obvious advantages of respecting both attack and defense this formation was widespread and used extensively across the game for many years. The 'Danubian School' is a modification of the referenced 2-3-5 system that was very popular in the 1920's and 1930's with eastern European countries such as Austria, Czechoslovakia and Hungary. The more balanced formation allowing the development of a short-range passing game against the individualistic fashion of the outdated strategies preceding it.



1. | Goalkeeper
2. | Right Fullback
3. | Left Fullback
4. | Halfback
5. | Halfback
6. | Halfback
7. | Right Winger
8. | Inside Forward
9. | Centre Forward
10. | Inside Forward
11. | Left Winger



Metodo (The Method) | 2-3-2-3

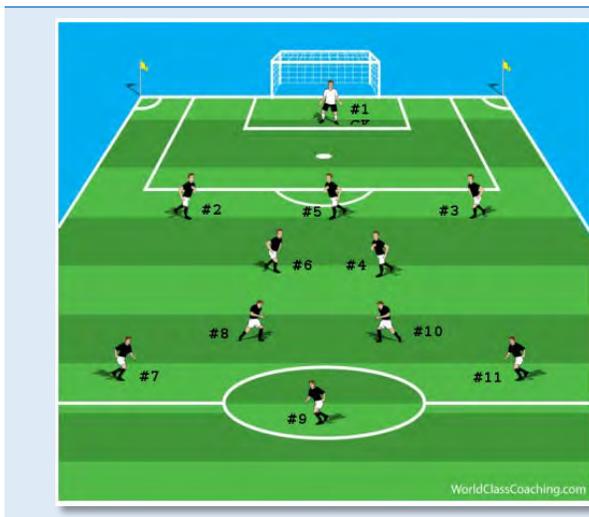
A derivation from the 2-3-5 formation is attributed to *Vittorio Pozzo* who was national team coach for Italy for nearly twenty years through the 1930's and 40's. *Pozzo*'s strategic modification was to 'pinch-in' the Inside Forward players #8 & #10 to provide yet more defensive support to the original structure.

The new look formation more resembled a 2-3-2-3 formation and was overwhelmingly successful as *Pozzo* can boast a unique achievement of winning back-to-back World Cups in 1934 and 1938 in addition to Olympic glory.



WM | 3-2-2-3

Another very widely used formation of the time was the WM. It is thought that *Arsenal FC*'s legendary manager of the mid 1920's *Herbert Chapman* was a pioneer of this formation and the trophy cabinet of the *Arsenal FC* team of that era is testament to *Chapman*'s innovation.



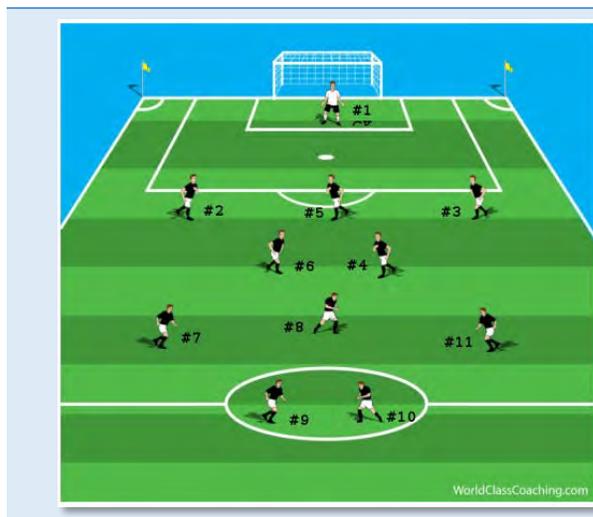
1. | Goalkeeper
2. | Right Fullback
3. | Left Fullback
4. | Halfback
5. | Centre Fullback
6. | Halfback
7. | Right Winger
8. | Inside Right Forward
9. | Centre Forward
10. | Inside Left Forward
11. | Left Winger

The formation again gave more respect to the notion of defending and was inspired by a significant rule change. The off-side rule was amended, now allowing only two rather than three opposition players to activate the offside decision. The 3-2-2-3 formation delivered great balance to the team shape and this formation was again a staple right across football of that time. (See formation over leaf.)



WW | 3-2-3-2

An evolution of the WM formation was to invert the attacking 'M' and create yet more solidity through the centre of the field developing a WW 3-2-3-2 formation. It is thought that these developments were the grounding of the first true superpower of world football which helped to cultivate the revered Hungarian national team of the 1950's.



1. | Goalkeeper
2. | Right Fullback
3. | Left Fullback
4. | Halfback
5. | Centre Fullback
6. | Halfback
7. | Inside Right Forward
8. | Attacking Centre Midfield
9. | Centre Forward Right
10. | Centre Forward Left
11. | Inside Left Forward

3-3-4 | Blanchflower's Spurs

A recognizable evolution of the time allowed attack-minded teams to modify the inherent reservations of the 3-2-3-2 formation and exploit the forward thinking instincts of offensive players in the 3-3-4 system. The double-winning (domestic league and FA cup) *Tottenham Hotspur FC* team of 1961, marshaled by the talismanic *Danny Blanchflower*, were an advocate of this positive attacking formation.



1. | Goalkeeper
2. | Right Fullback
3. | Left Fullback
4. | Halfback
5. | Centre Fullback
6. | Halfback
7. | Right Winger
8. | Attacking Centre Midfield
9. | Centre Forward
10. | Centre Forward
11. | Left Winger

4-2-4 | 1950's Hungary

The full evolution of the WW formation came to fruition in the 4-2-4 system. Both the successful Hungarians of the 1950's and the Brazilian teams who would boast World Cup success in 1958 & 1970 utilized this formation.

The top-heavy 4-2-4 formation allowed a chosen player to drop deeper and take-up more of a #10 'playmaker' role. The team shape also demanded a greater range of skill and fitness from each player and



the fluid formation asked different questions of player's dependant on the game situation.

The 4-2-4 evolution required players to track back and be defenders when not in possession and equally players were required to forage forward when the attacking opportunities were available.

It is worth noting that the defensive group including four players is a relatively late evolution to the strategy of football. Four defenders is a common sight across world football in the modern era, but it was not until the 1950's that this strategy was commonly deployed.



1. | Goalkeeper
2. | Right Fullback
3. | Left Fullback
4. | Centre Fullback
5. | Centre Fullback
6. | Halfback
7. | Right Winger
8. | Halfback
9. | Centre Forward
10. | Centre Forward '*Playmaker*'
11. | Left Winger

Tactical Soccer Coaching Vol. 1 | **Field Notes**



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Section #2
Contemporary Systems of Play & Team Formations

Section #2

Contemporary Systems of Play & Team Formations

The history and evolution of football is an enchanting story and provides great foundation to compliment the football that we watch today. It is excellent education to recognize that the intricate tactical nuances of modern day football have travelled a long and arduous path. Looking back from the vantage of today the history of football strategy can seem archaic, dated, and often clumsy with their modifications to the team shape, but all of these small steps have contributed to the giant leaps that football strategy has taken since the beginning.

However, the more contemporary football becomes the greater the acceleration of ideas has unfolded. Perhaps the last 40 years has seen the most activity in terms of strategic development and it doesn't look like slowing down. These are some of the more contemporary team formations discussed.

Introduction | **What Systems of Play or Team Formations?**

A formation provides structure to a collection of players that allows considered organization both when a team is in possession of the ball, without possession of the ball and the moments of **transition** in-between. And while a formation will never win games on its own, it is regarded that some strategic appreciation for where players should play, during different scenarios and principle moments of the game, is of valuable benefit to the team and will influence the outcome of the game.

Introduction | **How do you choose a Systems of Play or Team Formations?**

It is worth considering that there are many factors that will dictate how a team chooses to deploy its players. Such factors include... the ability of the players available, the ability of the opposition, the score in the game, the time remaining in the game, the prestige of the game, the nature of the competition (tournament or league play), the area of the field where the play is being conducted, the team in possession of the ball, the weather conditions, the referee, the support (home or away) etc...

Formations are fluid and subject to multiple changes dependent on many of the uncontrollable factors referenced, and including many others not mentioned. Throughout any given game a team will change, amend and meander through various different formations and systems of play given the game-play environment that presents itself. You will only see the one true formation of a team when defending a kick off, at all other times through the game the advertised formation is absolutely subject to change.

4-3-3 | Traditionally Netherlands, Chelsea FC 2004 - 07 & FC Barcelona 2008-16

Seen as an evolution of the referenced 4-2-4 formation, the 4-3-3 is perhaps the longest serving formation in football and given its record of success there is nothing to suggest that the 4-3-3 will not continue to influence modern football for a long time to come. In fact, despite the 4-3-3 formation going somewhat out of fashion and accepting a lull in popularity in favor of the 4-4-2 a generation back, football has seen a recent renaissance of this formation return to spectacular effect.

Defense |

Consistent with most modern football formations the **back four** has become a very recognizable staple with the left and right fullbacks fortified with two central defenders. This defensive shape is widely utilized throughout world football and though there are exceptions to this formation the back four in this shape is heavily standardized.



Diagram A

Midfield |

The **midfield three** can be composed in alternative ways dependent on the desire of the coach, dependant on the status of the game, dependant on which area of the field the play is being conducted and which team has possession of the ball.



Diagram B

The midfield three can be deployed with a more defensive tactic of two deeper lying defensive midfielders #6 & #8 with one more advanced attacking midfielder #10 (see diagram A) or vice versa with a more attacking attitude with one deep-lying defensive midfielder #6 and two more advanced attacking midfielders #8 & #10 (see diagram B)

The midfield three in the 4-3-3 formation are usually always very **narrow**, frequently occupying the vital middle of the field and operating either side of the halfway line and within the width of the six-yard-box. (See diagram C)

Forwards |

The **front three** allows for great balance across the forward line, with players operating through the left, the right and through the centre. Deploying the three attackers is a very positive strategy and ensures that when a team is going forward that there are options to penetrate ahead of the play.

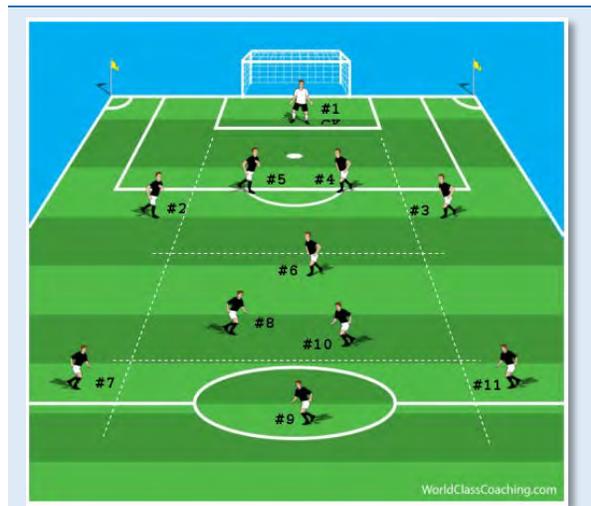


Diagram C

The genuine width causes problems for the opposition defensive fullbacks who tactically wish to remain close to their central defenders but can be unbalanced, can be pulled out of position and isolated by the natural width of this team shape.

Attacking Patterns |

The narrow midfield three provides an additional central midfielder when playing against the standard 4-4-2 formation. This dominant numbers-up situation gives greater potential to winning the strategically influential centre of the field. The additional balance of having midfielders assigned to attacking responsibility and defensive responsibility allows players to deliver on their task reassured that other midfielders have been assigned to their opposing duties. Instead of **box-to-box** midfielders commonly seen under the 4-4-2 formation that are asked to perform all encompassing midfield tasks, the midfielders in the 4-3-3 have more defined roles.

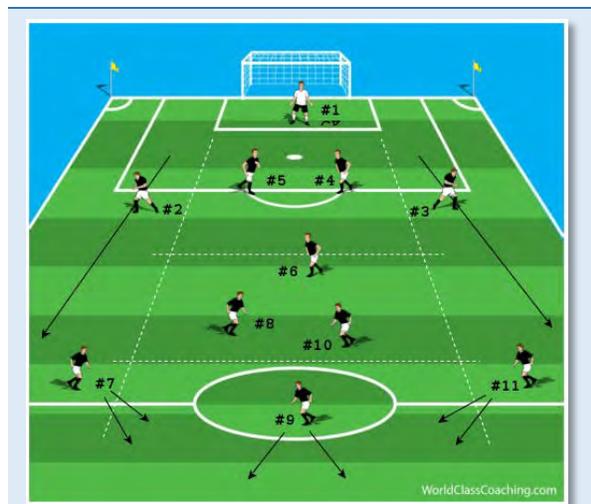


Diagram D

The narrow midfield three and the high & wide forward line mean that the width deeper in the field has to be provided by the fullbacks. (See diagram D). The recent resurgence of the 4-3-3 formation has seen the role of the fullback become perhaps the most important position on the modern football field. *Dani Alves, FC Barcelona; Maicon, Inter Milan FC; Ashley Cole, Chelsea FC; Patrice Evra, Manchester Utd. FC 2011/12;* are and have been amongst the most expensive and most desired players in world football given their ability to provide attacking potential from a defensive berth, most frequently in the 4-3-3 formation.

Defensive Patterns |

The narrow midfield three often has one or two players allocated for a deep-lying or defensive responsibility. This deep-lying role is specifically designed to negate the opposition counter attack, especially if your aggressive fullbacks are venturing forward. The tight midfield three provide **compactness** in the vital areas of the field and in front of the central defenders.

The three forwards allows for a positive tactic when in possession and when on the attack, however, when defending the three forwards can leave the midfield exposed and in a subordinate numbers-down 3 vs. 4 when playing against the traditional 4-4-2. (See diagram E)

The balance of attack and defense are tested with this formation and is why the 4-3-3 is regarded as a very positive, very attacking formation, but also a formation very much susceptible to the counter attack, especially if lazy wingers neglect their defensive duties.

Many clubs that have played the 4-3-3 system with much clarity through recent seasons with a few very salient examples providing excellent and comprehensible examples when understanding this system of play.

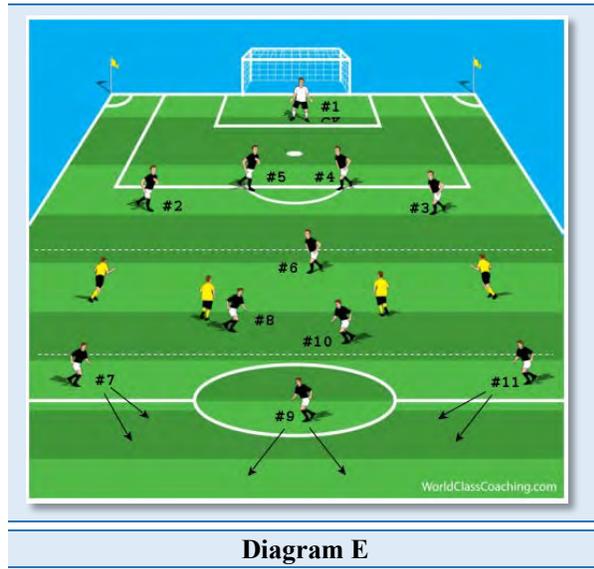


Diagram E

Arsenal FC, Premier League | *Chelsea FC, Premier League* | *FC Barcelona, LaLiga* have demonstrated this 4-3-3 formation with regularity in many of their recent season through the 2000's.

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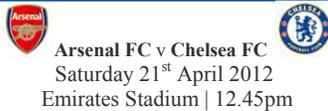
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Diagram F

Perhaps the greatest exponents of the 4-3-3 formation were the *AFC Ajax* team of the 1970's led by *Johan Cruyff* and *Johan Neeskens* under the guidance of *Rinus Michels*. *AFC Ajax* were crowned European Cup Winners 1971, '72 & '73, to accompany a rich era of 4-3-3 Dutch football with Holland contesting the World Cup finals 1974 & '78, and *Michels* leading Holland to the 1988 UEFA European Championship. (See diagram F)



28th May 2011 | Wembley Stadium



4-4-2 | Manchester Utd. FC, Traditionally England, Majority of the Premier League up to 2012

The 4-4-2 formation is ubiquitously the most common system of play used in world football across all standards of the game. The very linear simple structure allows maximum understanding from the player while the system ensures that all units, departments or groups on the field (defense, midfield, forward, left, right & centre) are occupied and prepared for any given situation and **Key Moments** of the game

The simplicity while retaining the ‘balance’ within the 4-4-2 makes it a favorite formation from youth development, amateur, through to the professional game. The longevity of the 4-4-2’s success has at times incited criticism with illogical dissention suggesting that this formation is archaic, out-dated or obsolete. And while the 4-4-2 has indeed been in common use for a very long time the notion that it is primitive or irrelevant for contemporary football is way off the mark. For many seasons a majority of Premier League clubs have deployed a 4-4-2 system, as do many successful teams worldwide, inclusive of *Manchester Utd. FC* who were perennial Premier League champions under the guidance of *Sir Alex Ferguson* and frequently used the 4-4-2 system on their way to a record breaking haul of Premier League titles.



Diagram A

Defense |

The **back four** in the 4-4-2 is consistent with the reference under the 4-3-3 formation and is consistent with almost all contemporary football formations. The two central defenders are flanked by left and right fullbacks who both have dual roles to attack when the opportunity presents itself and to defend when necessary.

Midfield |

The **midfield four** in the 4-4-2 formation can be deployed in a number of different ways. The traditional method of deploying the midfield four is to provide full width across the field with a left wide midfielder #11, a right wide midfielder #7 and two central midfielders #6 & #8. (See diagram A)

The two central midfielders can be deployed with different strategic agendas dictated to by the coach. The classic 4-4-2 central midfielder was regarded as a **box-to-box** player, with the assumption that the midfield would contribute to the attack when the team was in possession and then also contribute to the defense when the team lost possession. The physical demands on such a player are huge and the skills required to be both excellent defensively and excellent offensively have all but seen the **box-to-box** midfielder extinct given the pace and accuracy of modern football. The speed of the game and the increased level of ability required mean that the **box-to-box** concept of old is rarely achievable by an individual player.

One solution to the fading concept of the box-to-box midfielder was to have a shared midfield union where, during any given passage of play, one midfield player would assume the attacking tactic leaving the other midfield player to assume the defensive responsibility. This **shared accountability** relies heavily on sound decision-making and great communication between central midfield partners and is often flawed because of it.



Diagram B

To eliminate the need for decisive communication an evolution of the 4-4-2 central midfield pair conundrum was to merely assign one player to be a constant attacking midfielder and the other a constant defensive midfielder, frequently titled the **holding midfielder**.

Another modern evolution of the 4-4-2 midfield was to introduce the **diamond midfield**. The diamond midfield allocated players to specific duties and to specific departments on the pitch, thus ensuring that defensively and offensively the midfield has adequate personnel in all areas and for all scenarios.

The diamond midfield deploys a **deep-lying** or **defensive midfielder** #6, with two **narrow** wide midfielders left #11 and right #7, and one **attacking midfielder** #8. (See diagram B).

When *Carlo Ancelotti* first took over at *Chelsea FC* in 2009 he deployed the diamond version of the 4-4-2 midfield.

Forwards |

The two forwards is a classic arrangement and many teams across the world of football will be playing with two central forwards. The **two centre forwards** shows a team's willing to attack but also pays greater respect to the need for midfield and defensive solidity.

The classic #9 position is that of the centre forward. The basic description puts a #9 centre forward into one of two simplistic categories. The first category is the **back-to-goal** #9 centre forward.

(See diagram C)

Traditionally very physical and uncompromising with brutality, the back-to goal #9 holds-up or flicks-on direct balls played early into the forwards. The hold-up play allows advancing midfielders to join the attack making the #9 centre forward a **link** between the attacking units. The flick-ons are attempts by the #9 centre forward to

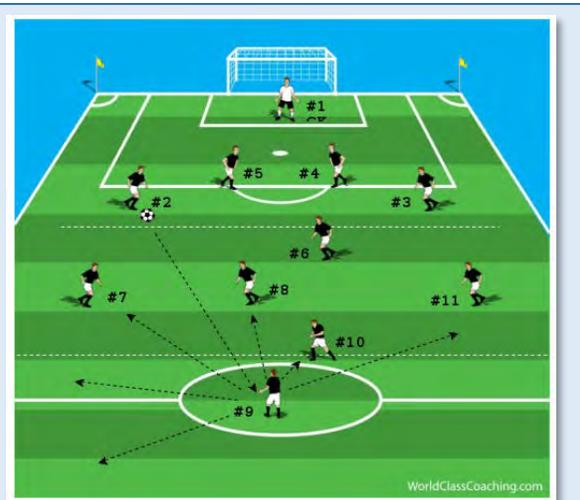


Diagram C

cunningly deviate a forward ball into favorable areas for predatory teammates to expose vulnerable gaps with penetrating runs ahead of the ball and off the ball.
(See diagram D)

Perhaps *Alan Shearer* is the most classic Premier League exponent of a classic #9 centre forward.

The second simplistic category for a classic #9 centre forward is the **striker** who plays on the shoulder of the last defender, who dances the offside line and comes electric when the perfect ball is presented in a goal scoring situation. The very best classic strikers can remain frustrating or even anonymous for long periods of the game waiting for their chance. Operating on the offside line, on the weak side (blindsided) of the defender and trading off speed of thought, electric pace, cerebral cunning and composure in front of goal.
(See diagram E)



Diagram D

Fernando Torres at the peak of his game and *Ruud van Nistelrooy* were perhaps the most salient classic #9 strikers in the Premier League.



Diagram E

The traditional partner for the classic #9 centre forward is to play with the classic #10. Sometimes referenced as the **second striker**, the **playmaker**, **in-the-hole**, **withdrawn**, **in-the-pocket** and other colloquial terminology aside. The #10 is traditionally given license to roam around, free from the shackles of responsibility, causing problems for opposition defenders who thrive on routine, order and structure. *Diego Maradona*, *Peter Beardsley*, *Teddy Sheringham*, *Eric Cantona*, *Dennis Bergkamp* and *Wayne Rooney* are players who have excelled in the classic #10 role.



Torres



van Nistelrooy



Bergkamp



Cantona

Premier League Classic #9 & #10's



Sheringham



Beardsley



Maradona



Rooney

World Class #10's

Attacking Patterns |

The neat and linear structure of the 4-4-2 allows a balance to be delivered when both in attack and defense. When in possession of the ball the wide midfielders are encouraged to attack down the flanks like traditional wingers, supplying crosses for the central attackers.

Dependant on the deployment of the midfield there is great expectation that some central midfield contribution be made to the attack.

The attacking width of the fullbacks is somewhat nullified in the 4-4-2 as the width is provided by the midfield thus occupying the attacking areas that the fullbacks might exploit in the 4-3-3 formation. However, when the fullbacks do attack there is greater potential for overlapping

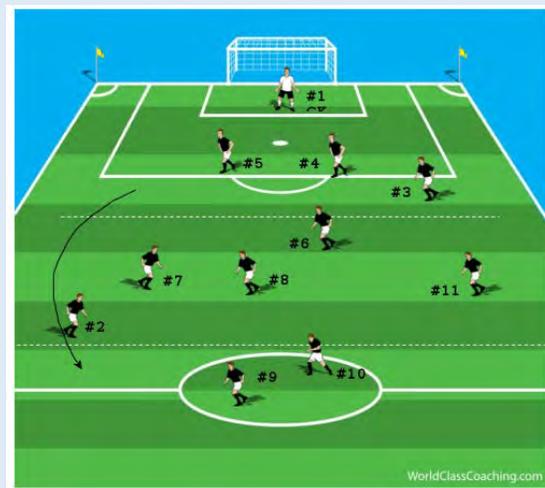


Diagram F

combination plays which are highly effective and can create dangerous penetration if executed correctly. (See diagram F). Though overlapping fullbacks can be greatly exposed by a counter attack if the execution of the combination play is incorrect.

Defensive Patterns |

The structure of the 4-4-2 is perhaps the biggest reward for playing this formation and goes a long way to explaining its mass popularity across the global game. Each unit, department or group (defense, midfield, forward, left, right & centre) are well covered and adequately fortified within the 4-4-2 system, leaving reduced potential for ambiguity, misunderstanding or lazy players to trip up the team. The straight lines and basic strategy of each position is simplistic, and the mirror image of left and right means that players and coaches are able to understand or be understood when discussing team tactics.

The 4-4-2 is often derided for its lack of sophistication but its traditional merits have been built on solid reason and this system will continue to be used throughout world football for a long time to come.

France won the 1998 World Cup playing a 4-4-2 system. Many Premier League clubs continue to play a 4-4-2, as did *Manchester Utd. FC* on a regular basis with a classic #9 *Chicharito* or #9 *RVP* & #10 *Rooney* or #10 *Kagawa* partnership up top in the 2012/13 season.

4-4-1-1 | Tottenham Hotspur FC 2011/12

The 4-4-1-1 is a close relation to the 4-4-2 with greater emphasis placed on the #10 to drop a few yards deeper and exploit the space found between the opposition defensive line and the opposition midfield line. Despite the linear attributes of the 4-4-2 formation there are still gaps to be found for a #10 who can drop off the forward line and operate in the vacant areas **between-the-lines**. (See diagram A)

Dennis Bergkamp was a genuine master at this role and was a pioneer of the 4-4-1-1 formation while it was still being called a 4-4-2. Perhaps one of the clearest examples of a player who exploited this situation was *Rafael van der Vaart* of *Tottenham Hotspur FC* during a two season Premier League cameo following his 2010 transfer from *Real Madrid FC*. At just £8Million for an international quality player who would play over one hundred times for the Netherlands, this was regarded as the bargain of the season.

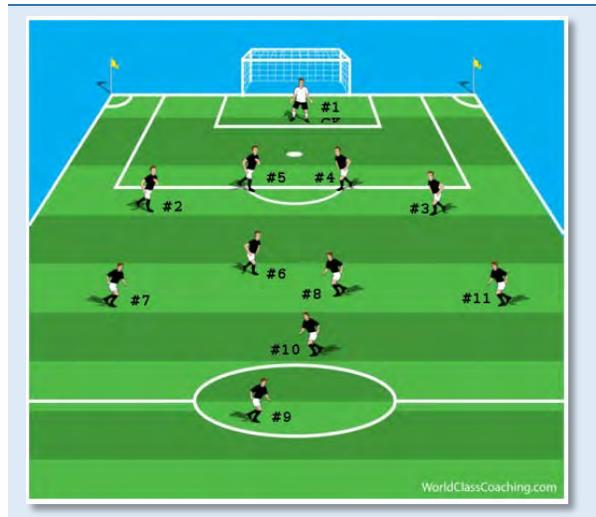


Diagram A

Attacking Patterns |

Rafael van der Vaart was able to find time and space in the vacant areas between the simplistic structures of many opposition Premier League team's 4-4-2 formation. With the opposition defensive group and midfield group unsure on whose responsibility it was to pick him up, *van der Vaart* was able to dictate the ball and heavily influence the tempo of the game with his technically excellent left foot. (See diagram B)

Defensive Patterns |

Defensively the #10 would be asked to drop back in to midfield when defending to create a midfield 5 when out of possession. The main defensive responsibility of the #10 would be to pressure the opposition #6 and prevent the ball being played out of the back and into midfield. The #10 would often be the instigator of any **pressing-tactics** with his deeper-lying position allowing him a wider perspective of the field and a better opportunity to coordinate any high press.

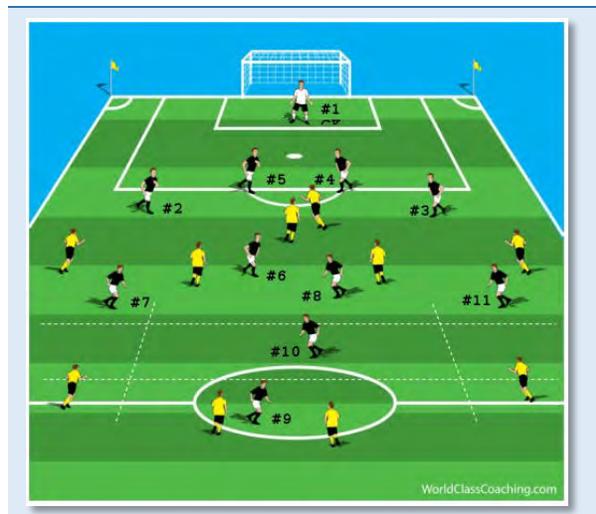
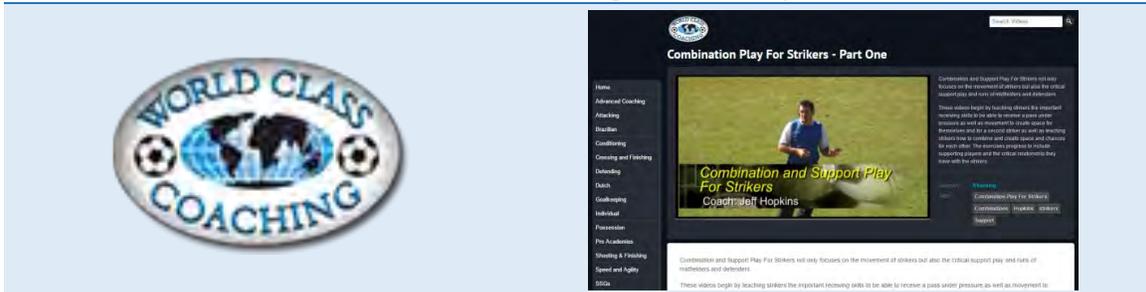


Diagram B

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4-5-1 | Moyes's Everton FC Decade

The 4-5-1 is regarded as a very defensive approach to a game, usually deployed by a team playing away from home or playing against opposition of perceived superiority. The midfield is given greater defensive coverage with a fifth player assigned to the traditional midfield four, creating a three player central midfield. (See diagram A). The additional strength in midfield comes at the sacrifice of the forward line. The lone number #9 centre forward is then asked to play in an isolated role against the standard four defenders.

Attacking Patterns |

Despite the 4-5-1 being perceived as a defensive strategy there is not too much modification required before the shape begins to look like a more positive 4-4-1-1 or indeed a 4-4-2. The attacking principles of these formations are identical to the 4-5-1 when the team is in positive possession and on the attack, meaning that the wide midfield players and plus one from the central midfield will need to join the attacking phases of play.

The important attacking factor of the 4-5-1 is that the most advanced attacking midfielder must make every effort to connect to the isolated #9 centre forward to provide that link. *Everton FC* under *David Moyes* have long played the 4-5-1 system with *Tim Cahill* or *Marouane Fellaini* being that most advanced attacking midfielder. The nature of the advancing attacking midfielder is that he arrives late and unpredictably into dangerous areas making him difficult to defend.



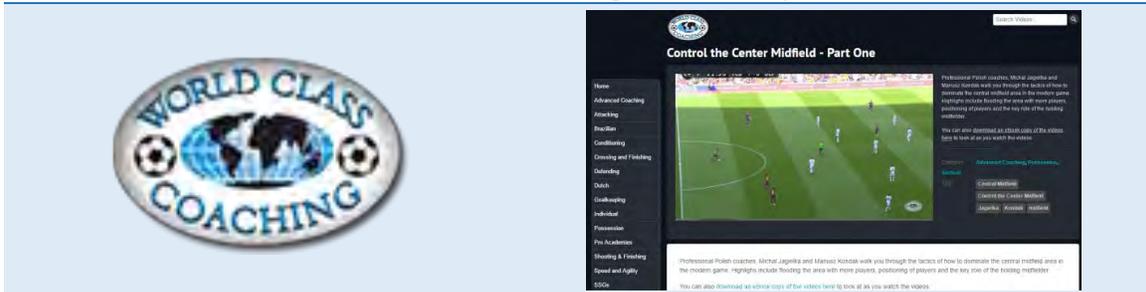
Diagram A

Defensive Patterns |

The 4-5-1 allows a defending team to be strong, contained and even have a player spare in the vital central areas of the field. With many teams playing a four player midfield under the standard 4-4-2 formation the extra defensive player in the 4-5-1 formation delivers security, cover and a clear intention of defending a given scenario.

However, if a team cannot generate any positive attacking momentum then the isolated forward can become lost, disconnected and abandoned. Without the threat of an attack the opposing team can grow in confidence and begin to push forward. While it is recognized that the five man midfield is better prepared to resist opposition attacks the lack of an attacking instinct can simply incite potential danger. The gamble then becomes a roulette of whether the 4-5-1 can defend for the remainder of the game.

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To open video links in a new tab, hold the Ctrl key down when clicking the link.

5-3-2 | Not Too Many Teams Play This Way Anymore

Playing with five defenders is a concept that is not very common in contemporary football. And to reference the opening comment of Section 2, the 5-3-2 only really has five defenders when the team is defending the ball in their own territory.

The overriding benefit of the 5-3-2 formation is that it allows fullbacks to evolve into **wing-backs**. When the team is in attacking possession the defense reverts to three defenders allowing the two wide wing-backs #2 & #3 to venture forward into midfield and beyond. (See diagram A)

Attacking Patterns |

The main attacking benefit to the 5-3-2 formation is that it allows a team to have two central forwards without compromising the three in central midfield. Having two central forwards occupying opposition central defenders is a rare attacking luxury in the cautious world of contemporary football.

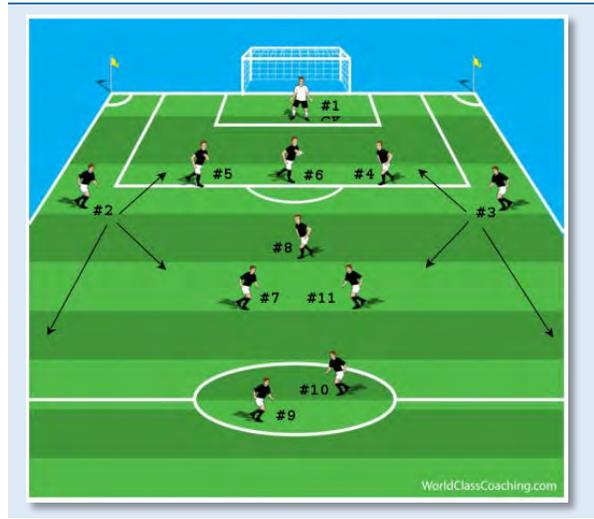


Diagram A

The front five in midfield and up-top can be deployed in any number of different ways, all of which will have little effect on the attacking wing-backs who have an unenviable task. The role is simple and yet extraordinarily difficult to perform. The wing-backs will be asked to provide the attacking width the entire length of the field, providing crosses in the attacking third as well as fulfilling defensive duties and all at the same time.

The energy and motivation required to get forward to provide the necessary width and important quality of ammunition for the forwards is a vital task given the limited numbers in the midfield, but if wing-backs fail to reach these demanding standards then the attacking impotence of the team is evident.

Defensive Patterns |

The similar conundrum is equally valid though in reverse, in that if a wing-back commits all his effort into fulfilling the attacking responsibility then he can leave his defensive duty unattended. The fragile nature of a three man defensive unit requires the assurance of the weak-side wide defender to create the recognizable component of a standard back four; the physical demands of the wing-back can render such desires as beyond the abilities of the player.

Very few teams now play with wing-backs and in truth very few teams ever did. This system places too much accountability onto a very limited number of players and given the speed and physicality of contemporary football the expectation to fulfill that accountability is almost impossible. The wing-back role is too demanding for the contemporary game and so the 5-3-2 has phased itself out over a short lifespan. Finding a player with the combination of attacking ability and defensive craft along with the physicality and willingness to entertain the task is a rare alchemy and somewhat explains why you don't see this system of play that regularly.

4-1-4-1 | Spain UEFA Euro 2008 Champions

The 4-1-4-1 brings a new line into the formation equation and has evolved as a more modern opposition to the widely used 4-4-2. A negative aspect of the 4-4-2 formation is that the lines of players are very straight, both horizontally and vertically, and so the 4-1-4-1 system allows players to play **between-the-lines**. (See diagram A)

Defense |

The defensive unit of the 4-1-4-1 system deploys a similar back four setup to almost all systems of play that utilize a back four. The two central defenders operate zonally in a left and right configuration # 4 & #5 with right and left fullbacks #2 & #3 required to be prominent in both attack and defense as and when the game situation dictates.

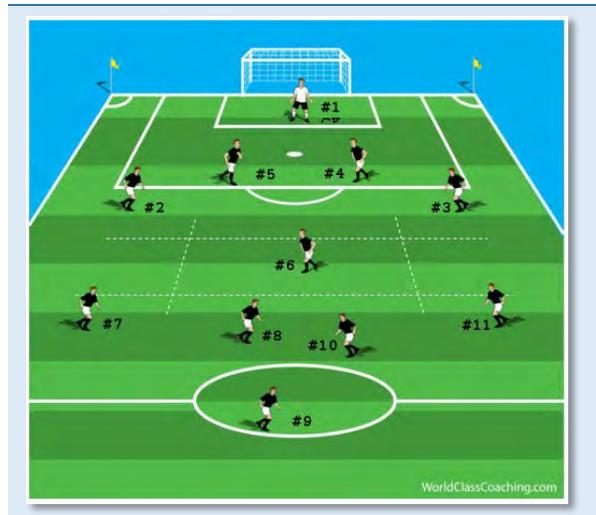


Diagram A

Midfield |

The greatest benefit of the 4-1-4-1 system is that the back four, and in particular, the central defense, is protected by a defensive midfielder whose role is only to defend. The deployment of the one **defensive-midfielder** or **holding-midfielder** #6 is a direct strategy to protect against the opposition counter attack. This shield or screen of protection in front of the defensive unit also allows the fullbacks more opportunity to venture forward and join the attacking passages of play with greater confidence.



Diagram B

The main beneficiaries of the defensive holding midfielder are the other midfielders and forwards. The remaining midfielders and forwards can be deployed in a variety of ways dependant on the coach's desire and usually dependant on the individual strengths of the players at his disposal.

The **attacking-midfield** four could be spread across the field in a flat line providing great width and the capacity to stretch the opposition defense. Though more **depth** can be gained by playing the attacking midfielders in a slightly staggered configuration, in an effort to create yet more lines within which to play. (See diagram B)

Forwards |

Another alternative might be to play with three attacking midfield players and two forwards, again the forwards can be played in a variety of ways, either with two number #9's or as a classic #9 & #10 combination.

Attacking Patterns |

With the perceived security of the #6 defensive holding midfielder the 4-1-4-1 realistically allows a team to attack with seven players inclusive of the fullbacks being encouraged to penetrate down the wide areas. The 4-1-4-1 system allows width in all areas of the field and should create multiple passing options ahead of the ball when in possession with natural triangles and diamonds created with the lengthened formation.

Defensive Partners |

As referenced, the one defensive holding midfielder is primarily designed to stifle the opposition counter attack which is becoming a more prevalent strategy in modern football. The back four operate in the same way as within other systems of play that deploy a back-four and as a consequence are demanding on the fullbacks. Perhaps the only danger with the 4-1-4-1 system is to ensure that the attacking midfielders are aware that defensive duties are still required and failure to work back to support the one defensive holding midfielder could leave him overrun in the vital area of the field.

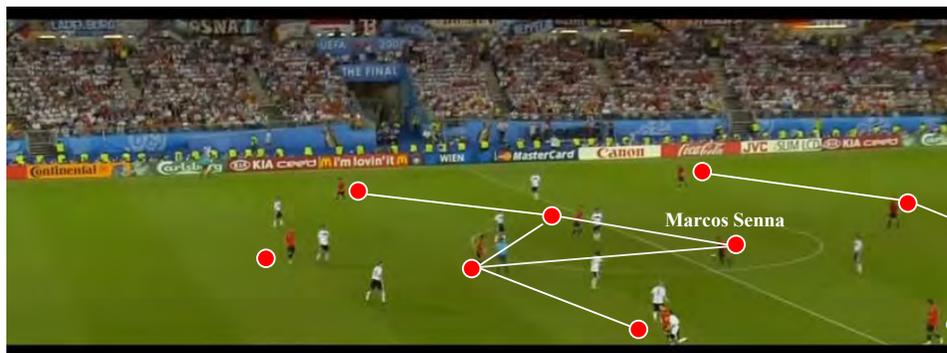
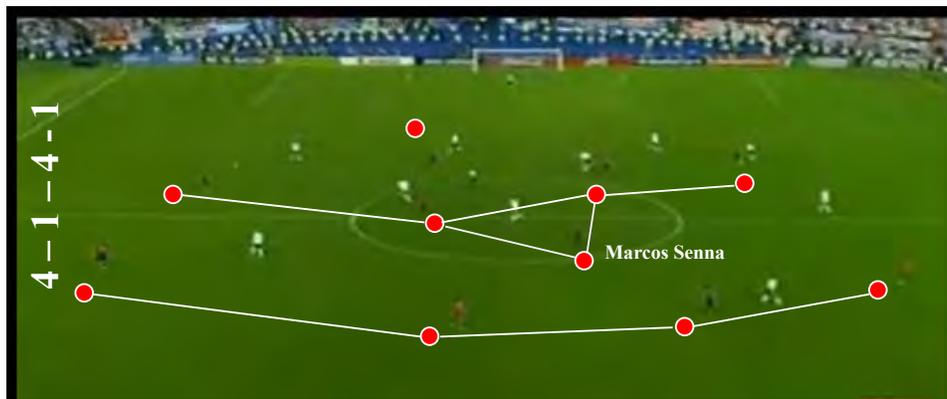
The winning Spain team from the UEFA Euro 2008 Championships was the most recognizable team to deploy the 4-1-4-1 system with *Marcos Senna* the most salient contributor in the important defensive holding midfield role. The discipline of *Senna* allowed the creativity of *Xavi*, *Iniesta* and *David Silva* to carry Spain to a much deserved first senior international title.



UEFA Euro 2008 Final
29th June 2008
Spain v Germany @ Ernst Happel Stadion, Vienna
Spain team in a 4-1-4-1 formation



1. | Iker Casillas
2. | Sergio Ramos
3. | Joan Capdevila
4. | Carlos Marchena
5. | Carles Puyol
6. | Marcos Senna
7. | Andrés Iniesta
8. | Xavi
9. | Fernando Torres
10. | Cesc Fàbregas
11. | David Silva



4-2-3-1 | Spain Fifa World Cup 2010 Champions

The natural evolution from the 4-1-4-1 was the 4-2-3-1 and this very modern system of play is directly descended from the 4-1-4-1 origin. The same tactical benefits are prevalent in the 4-2-3-1 in that the addition of a unit (group or department) allows greater depth down the field and allows players to operate between-the-lines of other more linear opposition formations. (See diagram A)

Defense |

There is no discernable change to the back four in the 4-2-3-1 system. Conventionally two central defenders are paired with two wide fullbacks who are encouraged to attack when in possession.

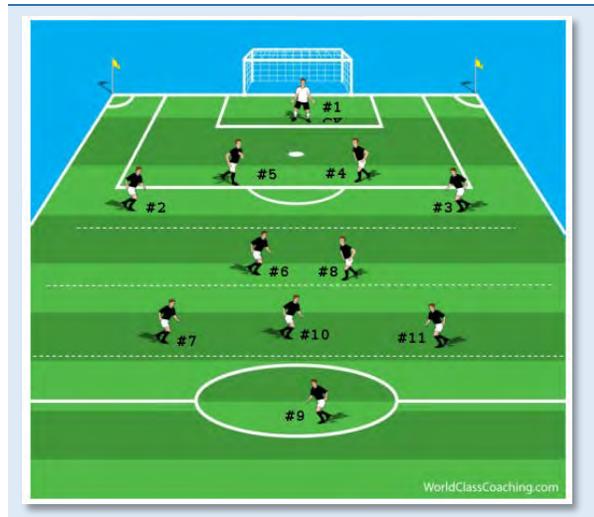


Diagram A

Midfield |

The biggest change comes with the defensive holding midfielder being replaced by two **deep-lying midfielders**. It is important to note that this is not merely an addition of a defensive holding midfielder, rather that the increased playing ability of the deep-lying midfielders is the biggest change. Traditionally defensive holding midfielders were aggressive in the tackle but limited in their ability to contribute to the attack when possession was regained. The evolution of the deep-lying midfielders is that they are now high-quality, skilled '*playmakers*' with excellent passing technique to compliment their defensive duties. These #6 deep-lying midfielders are the catalyst of the play providing the vital link from the defense to the attack with the ball being possessed throughout the midfield.

Having two deep-lying midfielders again gives greater respect to the ever improving ability of opposition teams to counter attack with greater penetration and greater speed. This double protective shield or **double screen** in front of the back four is a direct tactical strategy designed to add yet more resistance to the opposition counter attack.

Forward |

The three remaining attacking midfielders and the forward can again be deployed in a number of tactical ways. Conventionally this is done with a left, central and right set-up with the one forward. Typically however, the #7 right & #11 left wide forwards would play deeper and narrower than in a recognizable 4-3-3 formation, more likely with a starting position connected to the #10 rather than the higher or wider deployment.

Attacking Patterns |

The three attacking midfielders / forwards # 7, # 10 & #11, can provide width, but in doing so the danger is that the one lone forward can become isolated. A preferred method is to deploy the attacking midfield three a little more narrow and to provide the width from the fullbacks who have license to get forward



knowing that the double defensive shield of the deep-lying midfielders is protecting them against any counter attack.

With the fullbacks encouraged to attack, the 4-2-3-1 can still penetrate with six players while having two deep-lying midfielders to support and create the play from deep.

To make the 4-2-3-1 formation a success a new breed of player is starting to emerge. Players are now asked to perform the complete range of skills both defensively and when in possession. Players can no longer simply be one-dimensional and describe themselves as a defender or a midfielder. The demands of today's game are that fullbacks have to be excellent with the ball as well as without it, delivering crosses and yet defending their own goal line with regularity. And the phasing out of the one-dimensional defensive, destructive midfielder player is being replaced in the middle of the field by elegant ball players who can create the play, but possess an appetite for combat.

With the attacking width being provided by the fullbacks the narrow attacking players #7 & #11 are often deployed in an **inside-out** or **inverted** arrangement. With the right footed player playing on the left and the left footed player playing on the right. This is very evident with the 2013 Champions League winning *Bayern Munich FC* team with the left footed *Arjen Robben* and the right footed *Franck Ribéry*; as well as *Cristiano Ronaldo* and Welsh legend *Gareth Bale* at 2014 Champions League winning *Real Madrid FC*. Bale wears #11 and is left footed but predominantly plays from the right hand side.



Defensive Patterns |

The 4-2-3-1 provides a little more balance to the team shape that could potentially be exploited with just the one defensive midfielder of the 4-1-4-1. However, as with all systems that encourage creativity and territorial advancement from the fullbacks there is always a danger of being overrun on the counter attack. The extra cover in the deep-lying midfield helps to prevent such counter attacks, but cannot truly eliminate the danger.

The defensive responsibility is also more coherent and defined, especially for the three attacking players behind the one central forward; the #10 has a defensive responsibility to pressure the opposition #6 who are increasingly becoming the modern team's 'playmaker', and the wider attacking players #7 & #11 have a defensive responsibility to track the marauding runs of the opposition fullbacks.

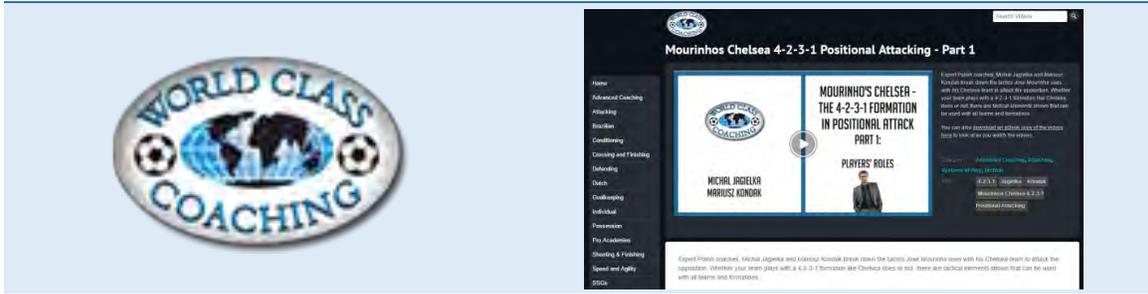
After the triumph of 2008 the Spanish national team evolved with the 4-2-3-1 formation after taking out *Marcos Senna* as the defensive holding midfielder and deploying *Xabi Alonso* and *Sergio Busquets* in the deep-lying midfield roles. Similarly to their previous international success this new look Spain team triumphed at the 2010 World Cup in South Africa, beating the Netherlands 1-0 in the final.

FIFA World Cup Final 2010
11th July 2010
Spain v Netherlands @ Soccer City, Johannesburg
Spain team in a **4-2-3-1** formation



1. Iker Casillas
2. Sergio Ramos
3. Joan Capdevila
4. Gerard Piqué
5. Carles Puyol
6. Sergio Busquets
7. Andrés Iniesta
8. Xabi Alonso
9. David Villa
10. Xavi
11. Pedro

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False #9 | Spain Euro 2012 Champions

The concept of the '**False #9**' is a relatively new system of play that has its origins in Spanish football. And is a tactical concept that is frequently misunderstood. Due to an abundance of diminutive attacking midfield and forward players at *FC Barcelona* and within the Spain national football team squad, team selection became a difficult if happy problem. With so many talented players all vying for starting berths, creative thinking was required in an effort to get all the desired players into starting XI.

The solution was to squeeze all the diminutive attacking midfield and forward players into the team but at the expense of a recognized #9 centre forward.

Defense |

All of the intriguing adaptations to this formation come much higher up the field in the midfield and forward groups. The defensive structure is pretty well recognized with a regulation back four.

Midfield |

The midfield is pretty similar to a regular three man triangle midfield that you would see with a 4-3-3 formation. There is a recognizable deep-lying central midfielder player or players, usually two screening #6 midfielders that allow the attack minded fullbacks #2 & #3 to advance and provide the width.

Forward |

The evolution with the **False #9** strategy comes with the blurred lines between the attacking midfield players and the forward group, particularly the #9 central striker. The suggestion from the team selection is that no conventional #9 central striker is selected; instead additional attacking midfielders are chosen.

In the example of *FC Barcelona* there would be no *Samuel Eto'o*, *David Villa* or *Zlatan Ibrahimović*, no recognizable #9 central striker, instead an additional attacking midfielder would appear in the starting XI. With regards the example of the Spanish national team, again no recognizable conventional #9 central striker such as *Fernando Torres*.

The notion of a vacant #9 central striker is somewhat inaccurate, as we will highlight in the next couple of paragraphs, but at least in regards of a team sheet starting XI the system of play would appear to be more like a 4-2-4-0 formation.

Attacking Patterns |

In the example of *FC Barcelona* and the Spanish national team, each squad has a wealth of attacking central midfielders who excel in the #8 and #10 roles. The idea of the **False #9** being that positions are loosely assigned and those players are able to float into different positions with a fluid philosophy.

As long as all the different attacking principles of width, depth, height and support are fulfilled with positional rotation and mobility it doesn't really matter who the specific player to perform that task at any given moment is.

This lack of a rigid structure makes it difficult for the opposition players to make clear decisions in terms of organizing their immediate opponent. This becomes especially difficult for the central defenders as they have no immediate recognizable #9 central striker to battle.

However, a **False #9** does not necessarily mean no #9. The term '*false*' is perhaps a little misleading and even incorrectly named. The term '*false*' alluding more to the notion that no #9 central striker has specifically been assigned as opposed to a total absence of a #9 central striker presence.

The Spain team during the **UEFA Euro 2012 Final** set up with a starting formation with a recognizable back four and goalkeeper. The two deep-lying screening midfielders fulfilling the #6 roles were *Sergio Busquets* and *Xabi Alonso*. In a more advanced attacking midfield role was *Xavi* playing as the #8. The remaining three players *David Silva*, *Cesc Fàbregas* and *Andrés Iniesta* playing as attacking midfielders / forwards in a #10 '*playmaker*' characteristic with *David Silva* favoring the #7 wide right position, *Andrés Iniesta* favoring the #11 wide left position and *Cesc Fàbregas* favoring a more central #10 position. With no recognizable #9 central striker in starting XI the Italian opposition defense could only assume that *Cesc Fàbregas* would be the highest and most obvious forward.

However, as you can see from [Screenshot A](#), it is in fact *David Silva* who is playing as the #9 central striker and occupying the opposition Italian central defenders. *Cesc Fàbregas* has rotated out to function more as a wider right attacking midfielder. The presence of *David Silva* highlighting how the name **False #9** is misleading, there is nothing '*false*' about it, you can see him playing as the #9 central striker. The only thing '*false*' about it is that the opposition wasn't expecting it to be *David Silva* fulfilling that role.

In [Screenshot B](#), *Cesc Fàbregas* has made a penetrating run from an attacking midfield position beyond *David Silva*. *Cesc Fàbregas* making his run from an inside right attacking midfield / forward location, more of a #10 and #7 combined position, a role that *David Silva* was assumed to play.

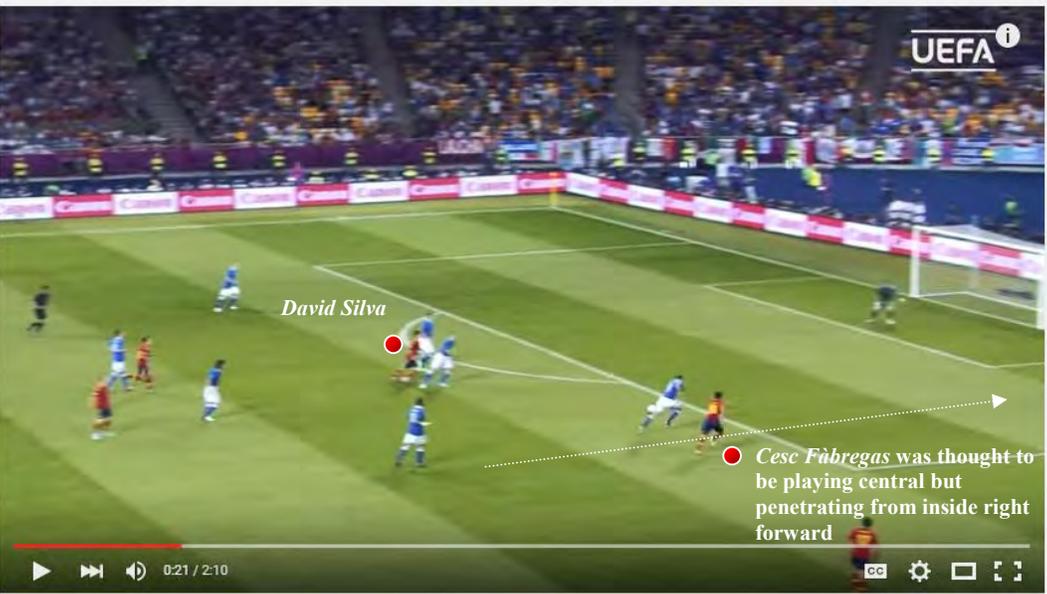
In [Screenshot C](#), *Cesc Fàbregas* cuts the ball back from the goal line for *David Silva* to score who is arriving into the penalty box, inside the width of the goal posts, with movement characteristic of a recognizable #9 central striker.



David Silva clearly playing as a #9 Central Striker

Spain v Italy: UEFA EURO 2012 final highlights

Screenshot A | UEFA Euro 2012 Final



David Silva

Cesc Fàbregas was thought to be playing central but penetrating from inside right forward

Spain v Italy: UEFA EURO 2012 final highlights

Screenshot B | UEFA Euro 2012 Final



In the next example, with the second Spain goal highlighted in [Screenshot D](#), Spain are in secure controlled possession of the ball in their own half, all of their attacking principles are in good order with width, depth and support very evident; what is not evident is a recognizable #9 central striker providing the height.

However, the central forward position and role of the highest player on the field will be assumed by *Jordi Alba* who is playing the left fullback #3 role and offering great attacking width to the narrow midfield. *Jordi Alba*'s amazing penetrating run puts him directly through the centre of the field and in direct confrontation with the opposition Italian central defenders, [Screenshot E](#). This run in-behind in this area of the field is again characteristic of a recognizable #9 central striker, but has been made by the #3 left fullback.

The type of attacking mobility and the location on the field of the finish, as seen in [Screenshot F](#), suggests all the characteristic of a recognizable #9 central striker.

The reality of the **False #9** is not so much that the system of play does not have a #9, but rather that the identity of the #9 is not clearly defined. In these two referenced example goals, the team sheet suggested that there was to be no #9 central striker, but the reality was that there was, it just wasn't who you expected it to be. There is nothing '*false*' about the **False #9**.



UEFA

Jordi Alba providing good width from #3 left fullback

Controlled possession in Midfield | Attacking Principles well established

No #9 Central Striker providing height

adidas is all in

adidas

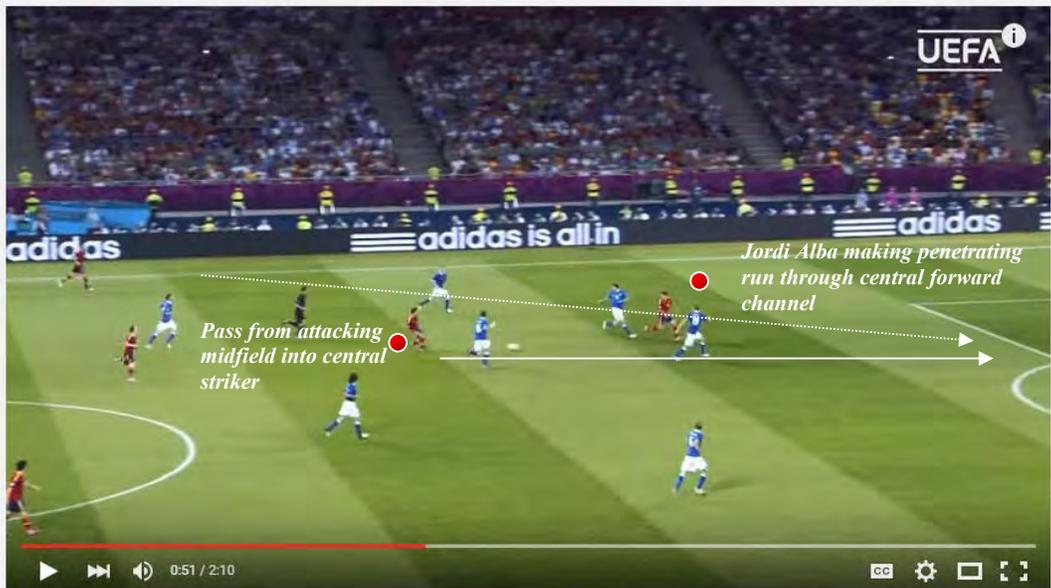
UEFA EURO 2012

adidas

0:43 / 2:10

Spain v Italy: UEFA EURO 2012 final highlights

Screenshot D | UEFA Euro 2012 Final



UEFA

Pass from attacking midfield into central striker

Jordi Alba making penetrating run through central forward channel

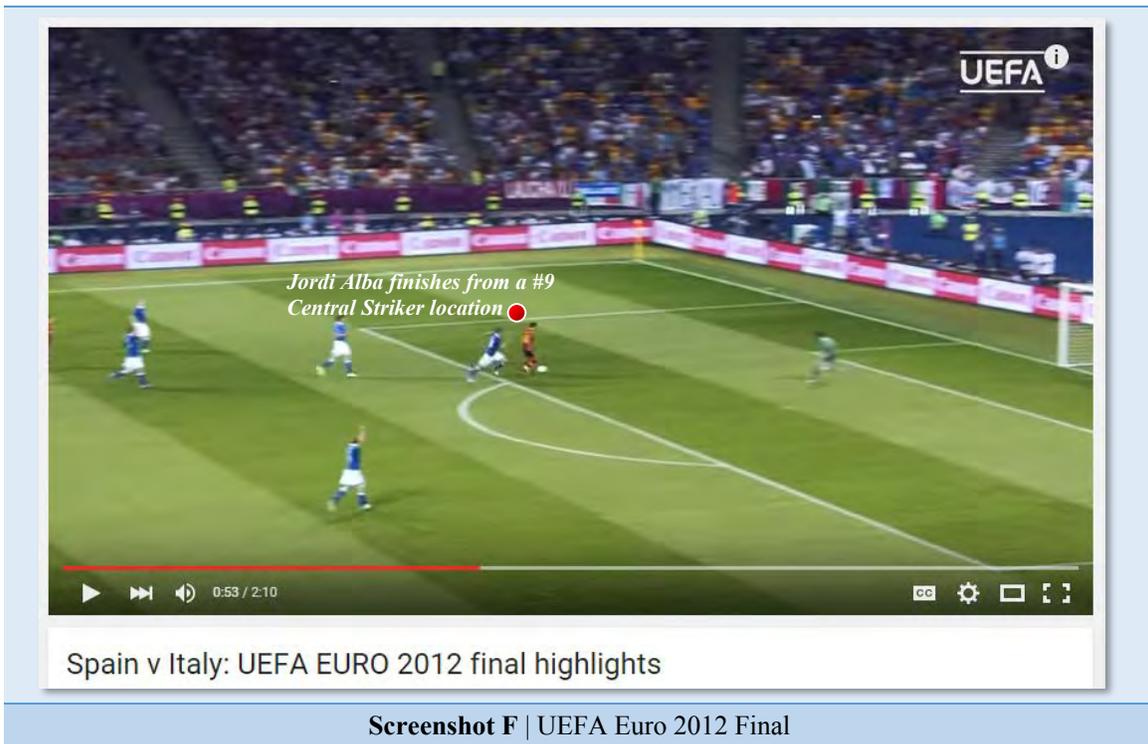
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0:51 / 2:10

Spain v Italy: UEFA EURO 2012 final highlights

Screenshot E | UEFA Euro 2012 Final



UEFA Euro 2012 Final
1st July 2012
Spain v Italy @ Olympic Stadium, Kiev
Spain team in a **False #9** formation



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3-5-2 | Mexico & Juventus FC 2015 Serie A League Champions

Formations that use three defenders are very much less common in world football today, with very few international teams deploying three defenders and only occasionally Champions League and Premier League teams using a formation with only three defenders.
(See diagram A.)

Defense |

With three defenders conventionally deployed in a left #3, central #4 and right #2 arrangement we see a removal of the traditional fullbacks in both a defensive and an attacking perspective. The three central defenders are very much **stoppers** with the primary objective of defending the width of the 18yrd penalty box and really only contributing to the attack on certain offensive set-pieces.

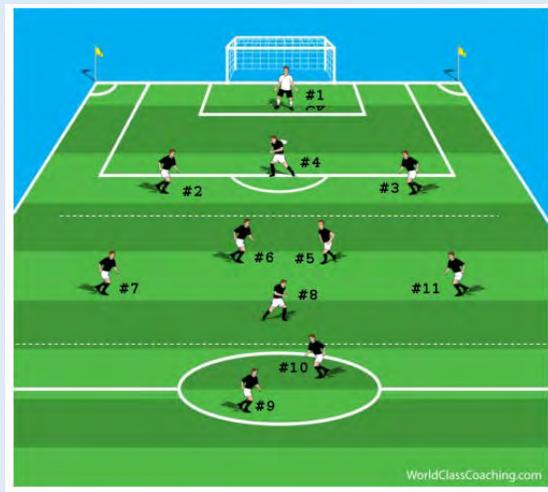


Diagram A



Diagram B

The three defenders can be deployed with a sweeper #4 behind two central defenders #2 & #3

But this does leave the defensive group very narrow down the centre of the field and susceptible to be exploited in the space out wide.

On the limited occasions where this system is played it is usually always more effective with the three defenders marking left #3, centre #4 and right #2 zones.
(See diagram B)

Midfield |

The strength of any five man midfield is that you have the benefit of dominant numbers in the important centre midfield without compromising the width. The three central midfielders will almost always be in a dominant numbers-up, or at worst an even number, scenario against most opposing formations, particularly the popular 4-4-2.



Diagram C

The three central midfield players can be deployed in either an attacking perspective or a more defensive perspective. Rarely are the three central midfielders arranged as a flat three. Diagram C shows a positive approach with one defensive holding midfield player #6 and two more positive attacking #8 midfield players.

With the centre of midfield secured the wide midfielders, #7 & #11, are able to penetrate down the flanks providing natural width in the midfield third.

However, the #7 & #11 wide midfielders will have the expectation to track opposition players when they attack; perhaps it should read more like #7 & #11 wide midfielders when in possession and on the attack and #2 & #3 recovery fullbacks when defending and out of possession.

Forward |

With two forwards deployed within the 3-5-2 formation the sacrifice of numbers is in the defensive group and so the attackers should be able to play with whatever combinations of forwards the coach decides. Unlike other systems of play that deploy dominant numbers-up in midfield, the 3-5-2 potentially allows six or seven forward players to contribute to the attack and so suits a very attack-minded philosophy should a team wish to be so bold.

Typical **Juventus FC** starting XI during their successful 2015 *Serie A* Championship winning campaign



Defensive Patterns |

The danger with only three defenders is that the defensive unit is one short from the conventional back-four. This means that **group** and **team** defending becomes a priority when out of possession and is subject to the work ethic of the midfield players, particularly the wide midfield players.

When out of possession the wide midfielders #7 & #11 are expected to track back and support the three defenders, essentially making a five man defense. (See diagram D). The physical requirements of the wide midfield players to fulfill such a task are demanding and explain why not too many teams play this system.

When defending an opposition attack down the wings the **weak-side midfielder** is asked to **tuck in** around the back to create a more conventional back four. (See diagram E). However, this position is often played by players with creative attacking instincts and so the danger is that lazy players can decline their responsibility or recovering midfield players potentially lack the natural instincts to defend a situation as a true fullback would.

As referenced, very few teams play the 3-5-2 system today when compared with the more popular 4-4-2, 4-3-3 or 4-2-3-1 with only some South American and some Central American teams still utilizing an increasingly rare system of play.

Very few Premier League teams have used the 3-5-2 formation to any great success and it's not expected to become a popular system of play in the future of English football.

Perhaps *Juventus FC* in recent times have seen any semblance of success with the 3-5-2 with continued European advancement and prolonged domestic achievement.

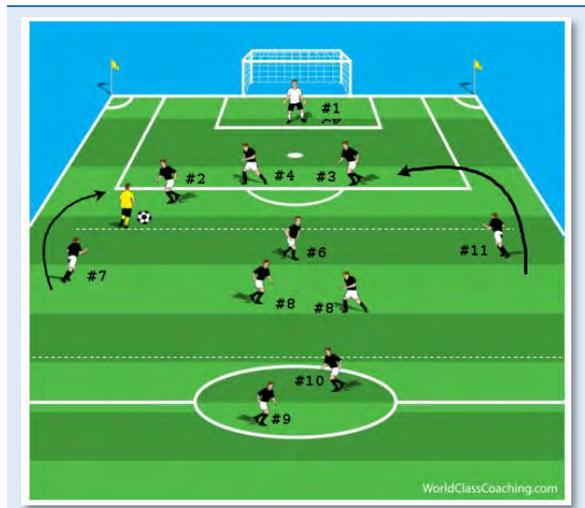


Diagram D

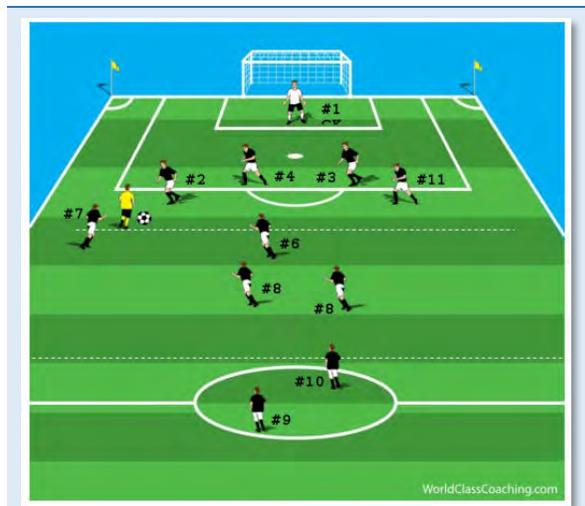


Diagram E

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3-4-3 | Anson Dorrance; University of North Carolina, Wigan Athletic FC's Relegation Season 2012/13, Chile National Football Team - *Copa América* Champions 2015 & Phnom Penh Crown FC u15 Academy 2014

Another adaptation of the three central defenders is to use the ultra positive 3-4-3 formation. Again, not too many teams deploy this system as the conventional back four is very much entrenched as the preferred defensive system of contemporary football. But as with all formations there are tactical benefits to be considered with the 3-4-3.

Defense |

The defensive arrangements are identical to all formations that have a three player defensive unit. The standard three defenders are regarded as best deployed in a left #3, central #4 and right #2 zonal marking formation.



Diagram A

Midfield |

As with most systems of play the preferred alignment of the four man midfield is at the preference of the coach and dependant on certain factors. The most conventional way to deploy the midfield four is similar to the 4-4-2 diamond midfield with one designated **defensive holding midfielder** and one **attacking midfielder**, allowing the two wide midfielders to operate on the left and right wings (wide or narrow as specified by the coach).

Given the attacking philosophy of the 3-4-3 formation the wide midfielders can be encouraged to stretch the opposition as wide as possible when in possession of the ball, unlike the rather narrow 4-4-2 diamond.

Forwards |

The most significant advantage of the 3-4-3 system is that the optimistic shape allows for three forwards to remain high and positive without the compromise to the midfield numbers. All the sacrifices are at the back and so when a team is in possession the forward options are plenty. The natural staggered nature of the formation both vertically and horizontally introduced **lines in-between** and makes for natural triangles and diamonds that contribute to a possession-oriented philosophy. (See diagram A)

The three forwards are most conventionally deployed with the same concepts as the 4-3-3 with a central high #9 striker complimented by right #7 and left #11 wide players stretching the opposition defense with great natural width.

However, during their relegation season 2012/13, Premier League club *Wigan Athletic FC* under the guidance of *Roberto Martinez*, who has subsequently moved on since to Premier League club *Everton FC*, often opted for a forward three consisting of two central forwards #9's *Arouna Koné & Franco Di Santo*, with a deeper lying #10 *Shaun Maloney* tucked in behind. (See diagram B) The width was provided by the wide midfielders *Jean Beausejour* and *Callum McManaman*, #7 & #11.

Wigan Athletic FC won the most prestigious of domestic cup competitions by triumphing in the English FC Cup final 2013; however, success was tempered by relegation from the Premier League and the departing of manager *Roberto Martinez*. The system of play that *Wigan Athletic FC* deployed was rather radical at the time whereas the actual success of this formation can be debated.



Diagram B

Attacking Patterns |

A team playing with a 3-4-3 formation is often able to attack with seven players though it should be recognized that at least one midfield player is assigned a defensive holding midfield role primarily to protect against the counter attack. This positive intention to attack means that a team can aggressively impose their style of play on an opponent rather than be dictated to by the opposition's formation.



Diagram C

One significant benefit of three forwards is that when playing against the usual four defenders there is opportunity to create 1vs.1 situations on the **weak side** by effectively **changing-the-point-of-attack**. The commitment of players forward by the attacking team can more easily unbalance the defensive shape of the opposition.

The *Phnom Penh Crown FC u15 Academy* of 2014 utilized a very fluid version of the 3-4-3 system of play that is becoming ever more commonplace in contemporary football. The starting positions of the players resembled more of a recognizable 4-3-3 formation. With two central defenders #4 & #5, two fullbacks #2 right & #3 left, three central midfield players in a conventional #6, #8 & #10 triangle, and three forwards #7 right, #9 centre forward & #11 left. (See diagram C)

With a restart from the goalkeeper, the two central defenders #4 & #5 would split wide to the width of the 18yard box, the two fullbacks #2 right & #3 left would play the full width of the field taking their starting point from the height of the #10, the #6 deep-lying central midfielder would drop in to the defensive

group centrally and look to collect possession either direct from the goalkeeper or from an inside pass from the central defender, the #9 centre forward would play high on the two opposition central defenders to occupy them, leaving the wide forwards #7 right & #11 left to play inside the opposition fullbacks. (See diagram D)

This transition from the 4-3-3 formation into the 3-4-3 system of play can be most effective. Please note the caveat that the profile of the players at the disposal of the coach plays a significant part in any decision to deploy such a strategy. (See diagram E)



Diagram D

Defensive Patterns |

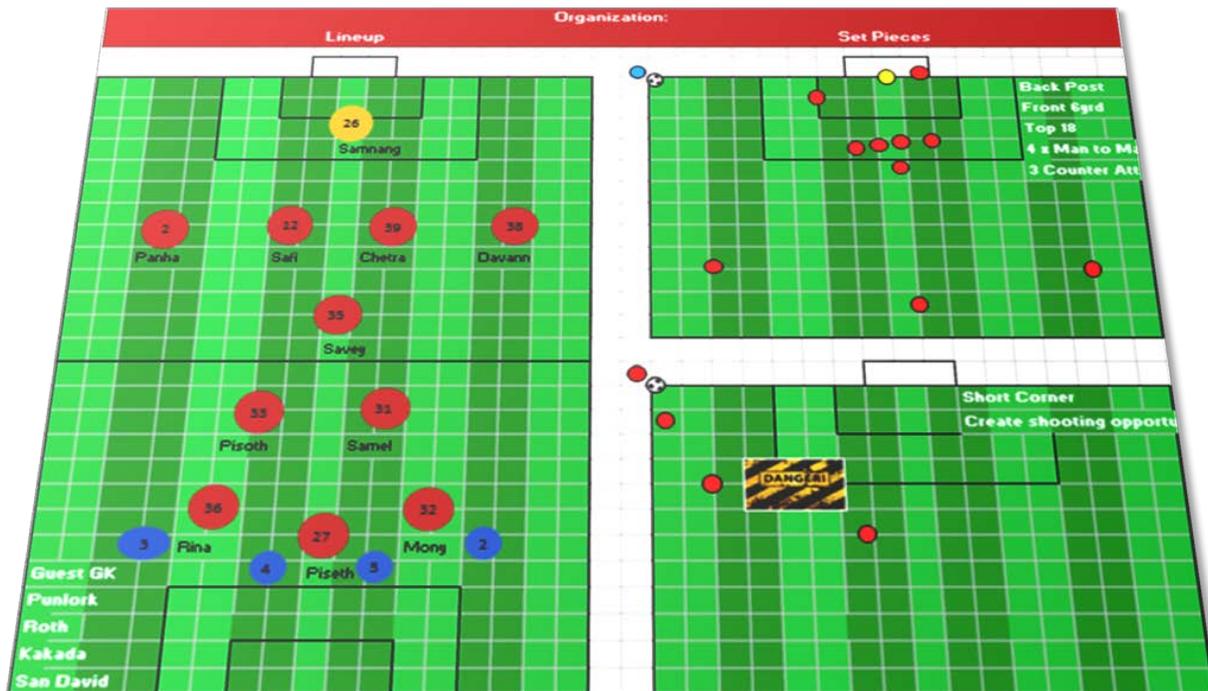
The 3-4-3 system requires the team to defend in a very positive manner with relentless high pressure defending in order to win the ball back early and suffocate any opposition possession. High pressure defending requires good organization along with fit and willing runners. If the team playing a 3-4-3 formation is not organized enough or not willing to work enough then the vulnerable nature of the fragile defense can be exploited.



Diagram E

Phnom Penh Crown FC u15 Academy | **Sample Match Planner**

Available		Injured		Away / Rest		Different Team		
Defenders				Midfield		Forward		
Yue Safy	12	CB	San David	29	CM	Mao Piseth	27	ST
Sok Panha	2	FB/WB	Lim Pisoth	33	CM	Sin Kakada	5	FW
Yet Chetra	39	FB/WB	Nann Punlork	34	CM	Tong Chommony	32	FW
Chea Savy	35	CB	Nop David	24	CM	Mit Salmel	31	FW
Chriv Sokundavann	38	FB/WB	Pich Sovannarath	25	B FB / CD	Kie Rina	36	FW



Tactical Soccer Coaching Vol. 1 | **Field Notes**



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Education Football
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Section #3
National Stereotypes

Section #3

National Stereotypes

There are systems of play and team formations that just seem to suit the psychology and physiology of an entire nation when it comes to representing themselves at football. The world superpowers of football such as Brazil, Netherlands, Germany, Italy, England and now Spain each have an identity and a personality in the way that both their domestic and international teams play. And while globalization, media and economy has diluted or perhaps integrated national football stereotypes there is certainly a history that national identity has followed, and even still follows.

As football has grown, evolved and developed with a rapid cadence the stigma of national stereotype has been more difficult to lose when in concern of the national football teams and those who represent their domestic leagues. The entrenched philosophy of a nation can be adjusted, amended, tempered and occasionally abandoned by the foreign coach, the foreign player or even by the foreign revolution, but underlying and occasionally undermining most national squads is a natural seam of recognition that shapes how a country or even a continent plays their football.

Some of the most salient examples of national stereotype are discussed.

4-3-3 | Holland

For as long as football has been recognized as football the Dutch have chosen to deploy a very positive 4-3-3 formation. Perhaps in recent times as the evolution of football has shown massive advancement the Netherlands national teams has moved away from the traditional 4-3-3 and more towards the very modern 4-2-3-1 that the majority of elite teams are playing in contemporary football.

But the roots and origins of Dutch football are firmly cemented with the 4-3-3; and for well justified good reason. *AFC Ajax*, Amsterdam has a great reputation within world football for developing talented players through its revered youth academy system. The fruition of which was most evident with *AFC Ajax* winning three consecutive European Cups* 1971, '72 & '73.

* *The European Cup changed its name and format to the UEFA Champions League in 1992*

The success of the *AFC Ajax* first team was a direct descendent of a meticulous club structure that showed a clear route from the academy youth teams to the first team. Across all age groups and throughout the entire club every player at *AFC Ajax* would be playing in a 4-3-3 system of play. This meant that when players were elevated to the next echelon they were inherently comfortable with the team formation and the **individual, pair, group** and **team** requirements as a consequence. Players graduating to the first team would find adaptation to the playing standard much easier as integration into the starting XI was not hampered by an unfamiliar recognition of the team agenda.

Many clubs have copied the *AFC Ajax* template of structuring an entire club's youth program of abiding to one chosen and clearly defined playing concept. *FC Barcelona* is very much the contemporary version as its youth training facility '*La Masia*' continues to produce exceptional talent through its development system. It is



a highly regarded achievement of the club's structure to note that when winning the UEFA Champions League in 2010/11 *FC Barcelona* fielded seven starting players who were coached through the club's youth system under the 4-3-3 formation.

It must be recognized that the common link between *AFC Ajax* and *FC Barcelona* is that of legendary Dutch forward *Johan Cruyff* who has remained very influential to football matters at *FC Barcelona* through his capacity as player, manger and now as honorary president.

FC Barcelona | '*La Masia*'



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Total Football | **Holland 1970's**

Perhaps the most radical development of modern football maximized the benefits of the 4-3-3 formation and came with the Holland teams of the 1970's and the revolutionary concepts of **total football**. Under the guidance of coach *Rinus Michels*; celebrated as Fifa's 'coach of the century' in 1999; and deployed through modern, cerebral players such as *Johan Cruyff*, *Johan Neeskens* and *Johnny Rep*, the relatively small nation of Holland revolutionized modern football.

Up until the **total football** concept football had traditionally been a game of predictable strategies, basic positioning and rudimentary tactics. Little consideration had ever been given to well-structured plans in a world where physical dominance was important. There were many and varied formations that a coach could choose to play, as we have discussed, but almost all of the formations were played with a very rigid structure with players assigned their roles with little imagination permitted.



What *Rinus Michels* asked of his players under the **total football** concept was to break away from the stoic structure of past formations and bring much more fluidity to the football field. Under the **total football** concept players were not pigeonholed into one position or asked to fulfill merely one task. Players were encouraged to swap on-field roles with other players, to embrace all aspects of the game regardless of what was conventionally expected. Defenders were asked to be more than just defenders and contribute to the attacking passages of play with silky football skills to compliment the more brutal traditional aspects of defending.



This fluid approach and seeming disregard for the established structure of formation rendered the opposition confused and bewildered by the innovation. Suddenly it was not clear for a defender to recognize which player he should be marking or exactly what his assigned tasks might be. Previously a formation would be predictable and plans could be made to defend against it, but with the ever-changing **total football** concepts the predictability was removed with great effect.

The **total football** concept requires players of excellent technical ability and a willingness to understand and recognize intricate theories. The Dutch players of the **total football** generation fulfilled this specification wonderfully well. The most salient icon of the **total football** concept is *Johan Cruyff*, but a whole catalogue of world-class players contributed to a period of football history that has undoubtedly shaped the modern game.

In 1974 and 1978 the Holland team reached consecutive World Cup finals bringing the **total football** concept to the global game. Sadly Holland could not make the ultimate step that their revolutionary concepts deserved and lost both finals, to West Germany '74 and Argentina '78.



AFC Ajax | European Cup 1972 & '73



Libero | West Germany 1970's

A sweeper system has occasionally surfaced throughout the history of football, with perhaps the most success and popularity in West Germany through the 1970's. Often termed **Libero** the sweeper is all but extinct today and even though a few teams have experimented with the **Libero** since the 1970's it has failed to eclipse the standardized **back-four**.

'**Libero**' is derived from the Italian translation meaning 'free'.

The concept of the **Libero** is that he remains as the last and deepest defender playing behind a conventional defensive **group**, usually four defenders.

(See diagram A.)

The **Libero** laterally patrols the area behind his defensive group providing additional cover and security should the opposition attack penetrate the defensive group. This sweeping-up behind the defense lends itself to the term '**sweeper**'.



Diagram B | Libero

can be caught unprepared for such a positive passage of play from a defensive player. This ability to be a catalyst for the attack means that the **Libero** requires a complete range of skills to compliment the defensive and offensive requirements of the position.

The most prominent example of the **Libero** was West Germany's legendary player and coach *Franz Beckenbauer* who very much popularized the '**sweeper**' throughout the 1970's. *Franz Beckenbauer*



Diagram A | Libero

The **Libero** does not have an opposition attacking player to mark; rather the **Libero** always remains spare. This freedom from specific marking duties allows the **Libero** to drift across the full width of the field in relation to the play. The **Libero** can position himself relative to the ball, to the opposition attacking players and indeed in a position to cover a breakdown in the defensive group.

The most positive benefit of the **Libero** is that he is able to '**step-out**' of the sweeper position when in possession of the ball and initiate attacking phases of play.
(See diagram B)

This ability to join in with the offensive play causes problems for the opposition defense who

perfectly embraced the **Libero** with frequent and majestic forays into dangerous areas to initiate the attack for *Bayern Munich FC* and the West German national team. The successes of *Franz Beckenbauer* as the **Libero** were most evident with the World Cup final winning performance of 1974.

1974 World Cup Final | Holland 1 vs. 2 West Germany



Catenaccio | Italy

The **Catenaccio** concept was floating around Europe in the 1930's and 1940's but it came to most prominence in Italy, specifically with *Inter Milan FC* in the 1960's. Italian translation of the term '**Catenaccio**' references a 'door bolt' or a 'lock' and aptly suggests that a **Catenaccio** style is a very defensive system of play. The successful *Inter Milan FC* team of the 1960's would look to win with uninspiring 1-0 score lines built on a foundation of an ultra-defensive game plan. Italian football is still stereotypically a defense orientated game though the severity of the **Catenaccio** philosophy is much reduced in modern Italian football.

The **Catenaccio** concept is to deploy the **Libero** behind the 'man-marking' defensive group. (See diagram A). The early origins of the **Catenaccio** concept placed the Libero very deep, almost as an additional goalkeeper, while the true **Catenaccio** concepts refined in Italy would have the Libero more connected to the defensive group. The defensive group can be played with three or four 'man-marking' defenders and a narrow midfield ahead of the defense. This defensive attitude and the high numbers of players deployed in defensive berths really does strangle the creativity of the opposition forwards.



Diagram A



The **Catenaccio** concept requires the 'man-marking' defenders to tightly man-mark their opposition attackers. The concept of man-marking defenders was dismantled by the **total football** concept when players were free to frequently change their field position and responsibility. This ability of total football doomed the **Catenaccio** man-marking system and rendered it obsolete. However, *Inter Milan FC* had managed to win the 1963/64 & 1964/65 European Cup with the **Catenaccio** concept.

The failure of the man-marking defensive systems gave way to the more conventional '**zonal defending**' that we see as prevalent throughout modern football.



4-2-2-2 | The Brazilian Box

The Brazilian style of football will always be synonymous with attacking flair. However, to compliment this offensive philosophy a foundation has to be set. The Brazilian's have evolved an interesting system that allows them to play to their strengths but with better consideration to defending, particularly the defending of the counter attack. Despite the formation reading numerically with four defenders, it is worth considering that the perception of the fullback is looked upon differently in Brazil compared with outside football convention. Traditionally the fullbacks #2 & #3 are defensive players first and then attacking players second. Only when the defensive duties are complete and only if the correct opportunity presents itself are the fullbacks encouraged to advance forward. In Brazil the fullbacks are seen more as attacking players than defenders. *Dani Alves, Maicon, Roberto Carlos, Cafu, and Marcelo* are some of the most positive attacking fullbacks in world football and are the modern examples of offensive fullbacks that Brazil has developed over the years. In order to balance the attacking instincts of the fullbacks more solidity is given to the central spine of the team with the regular occurrence of two #6 defensive midfield players deployed just ahead of the regular central defenders #4 & #5.

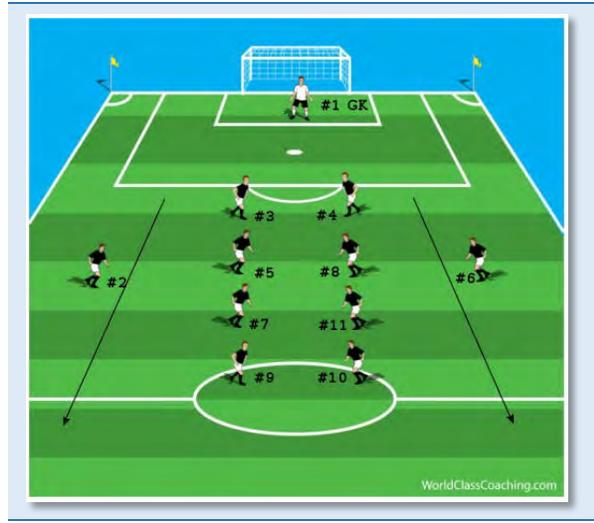


Diagram A

However, in Brazil the tradition of the numbering system assigned to players would read with #2 right fullback; *Cafu*. Central defenders #3 *Thiago Silva* & #4 *David Luiz*, and the left fullback #6; *Roberto Carlos*. The #5 viewed as the deep-lying screening defensive midfielder.
(See diagram A)

Effectively these two defensive midfielders become additional central defenders and take the place of the absent fullbacks who are on the attack. This set up allows a defensive unit to stretch four defenders across the width of the field when the fullbacks are in a conventional defensive position and yet allows the defense to remain compact in the vital areas through the centre of the field when the fullbacks are higher up on the attack.

Ahead of the defensive midfield the front four provide additional lines and greater depth to the team shape by adding in two attacking midfield players and then another two forward players. All the time the width is provided by the marauding fullbacks. This system is very demanding on the fullbacks as they have to provide the attacking width the entire length of the field; only special players have the physical ability and the technical proficiency to make this system work. If the fullbacks are able to fulfill the task then the narrow midfield and forward lines can create excellent passing opportunities in attacking territory.

#9 Centre Forward | England

Traditionally English football has been synonymous with a direct approach and the utilization of the '*back-to-goal target-man*'. As modern football has evolved in England, mainly due to the intake of foreign talent, English football is now somewhat more refined. However, there are still English clubs who actively deploy a classic #9 centre forward and look to utilize superior size and strength with '*long-ball*' tactics.

The physical demands of a **target-man** mean that a classic #9 centre forward needs to be able to impose his strength on the opposition defenders, and frequently the defenders will outnumber the centre forward. If a forward player can hold off the physical attention of the opposition defenders and still command the technical skill to collect a ball played into them, frequently in the air, then this does create an attacking platform with which to initiate the play in dangerous areas.

Perhaps the most required skill of the #9 centre forward is sound heading ability, either to '*flick-on*' aerial balls played into him for teammates to run on to or to head direct at goal from crosses.

See Section 2 | Contemporary Systems of Play & Team Formations

4-4-2 | Forwards

Pictured | *Duncan Ferguson, Alan Shearer, Emile Heskey, Andy Carroll, Peter Crouch & Didier Drogba*



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Section #4
Balancing the Team Shape

Section #4

Balancing the Team Shape

A system of play alone cannot guarantee success and while much theoretical consideration can be given to discussing the merits of certain formations it is vital to consider that tactical concepts drawn on the chalkboard will need to be delivered by actual human players on the field. Individual talent will always be the most important deciding factor in football. The best intentions of a coach can become redundant if the capabilities of the players cannot fulfill the obligation required of the system.

Equally if an adopted system of play is inappropriate for a certain situation then the results can be disastrous. Having a cavalier attitude to attack and deploying a formation to promote such a strategy is all well and good, but if the opposition are of superior talent, superior fitness or of superior organization then the wrong formation can leave you susceptible to danger.

It is generally regarded that much consideration be given to **balancing** a team formation to protect against a range of situations and in an effort to increase the potential for success. Merely adding more forwards to the team sheet does not necessarily equate to more goal scoring opportunities, but might conversely contribute to a lack of defensive numbers when not in possession. Finding the balance between attack and defence; between left and right; within a system of play that is suitable for a given team of players is the magic formula.



Diagram A

Pairs |

Across the field **pairs** of players are working together to fulfil their aspect of the **group**, followed by the **team** agenda, when either in possession or out of possession. The 4-4-2 formation has clearly defined **pairs** in very linear straight lines all over the field. The two central defenders #4 & #5, the left fullback and the left sided central defender #3 & #4, the right fullback and the right midfielder #2 & #7, the two central midfielders #6 & #8, the two forwards #9 & #10 etc; are just some of the many **pairs** easily visible in the 4-4-2 system of play. (See diagram A.)



When **balancing** the team formation there is heavy consideration given to the **pairs** in an effort to ensure that the individual players composite of any **pair** complement each other rather than negate each other. For example, two defensive holding midfielder players #6 & #6 in the 4-4-2 might be regarded as too defensive and detrimental to the attacking passages of play; whereas two attacking midfielder players #8 & #8 in the 4-4-2 might be regarded as too adventurous.

By playing one defensive and one more attacking midfielder #6 & #8 could be regarded as logical **balancing**. When **pairs** are perfectly **balanced** the results can be very rewarding, some of the most revered **pairs** have contributed heavily to the success of Premier League football and continue to do so.

Some well **balanced pairs** from the Premier League |

Pairs	Club
<i>Roy Keane & Paul Scholes</i>	Manchester United FC
<i>Dennis Bergkamp & Thierry Henry</i>	Arsenal FC
<i>David Beckham & Gary Neville</i>	Manchester United FC & England
<i>Nemanja Vidić & Rio Ferdinand</i>	Manchester United FC
<i>Ricardo Carvalho & John Terry</i>	Chelsea FC
<i>Steven Gerrard & Fernando Torres</i>	Liverpool FC



Why do these some **pairs balance** so well?



	Strengths	Weakness
<i>Nemanja Vidić</i>	Excellent heading ability	Basic technical ball skills
<i>Rio Ferdinand</i>	Excellent technical ball skills	Poor heading ability



	Strengths	Weakness
<i>Ricardo Carvalho</i>	Very fast	Poor heading ability
<i>John Terry</i>	Excellent heading ability	Very slow



	Strengths	Weakness
<i>Jamie Carragher</i>	Aggressive in the tackle	Very slow
<i>Martin Škrtel</i>	Aggressive in the tackle	Very slow

	Considerations	Description
1	Individual	The individual technical ability to manipulate defend the ball
2	Pairs	The understanding of the technical and tactical relationship between two players in response to the play
3	Group	The appreciation of the group, unit or department tactics in the context of the game situation
4	Team	The tactical agenda of the team as specified by the collective strategy

The '*individual*' ability to manipulate the ball as desired in the context of the game is the biggest separation of players. Technical skills allow a player to have command of the ball permitting them to focus on other decision-making aspects of the game. Those players with limited technical skills will struggle to move into a decision-making phase while still being preoccupied with the ball manipulation.

All over the field sets of '*pairs*' work together both in an attacking sense and when defending. '*Pairs*' of players are required no matter what formation or strategy the coach deploys. The right fullback and the right midfield, the two central defenders, the two central midfielders, the two forwards are all classic examples of '*pairs*' working within the team structure.

'*Group tactics*' play a significant part in the outcome of a game and strategists go to great lengths to unravel the merits of each different idea. Under *Carlo Ancelotti Chelsea FC* started the 2009/2010 Premier League season with the diamond midfield and quickly reverted to their more recognisable three midfielders. It's not just a case of throwing players onto the field. How a '*group*' work together within the team agenda is a vital component to success and is the reason why '*group tactics*' consumes large amount of training time at the professional levels of the game.

The acquisition of the '*individual*' technical skill, the '*pairs*' work, the '*group*' tactics are all foundations to delivering within the context of the '*team*'. Much time is spent on many details to ensure that the '*team*' objective is clear, understood and ultimately correct.

Groups |

After the **pairs** the next consideration to the team formation will be the **groups**, units or departments that cover the field i.e. the defensive **group**, the midfield department, the attacking unit; (see diagram A) As well as the left **group**, right **group** and the central **group** or spine. (See diagram B)

Early formations were very lopsided in terms of heavy numbers in attack, while other systems of play that we have discussed are very defensive orientated. It is usually regarded that some **balancing** of the attacking desire and the defensive necessity of the team be compromised. Ideally a formation should allow for coverage over the field both when in possession and when out of possession.



Diagram A

It must be considered how many players should be involved in a **group** and what the detailed arrangement of that deployment should be. The midfield three in the 4-3-3 formation, favoured by *Chelsea FC*, can be worked in a number of different ways. The success of the Premier League winning *Chelsea FC* team under *José Mourinho*'s first period as manager carried excellent **balance** within its midfield **group**; with *Claude Makélélé*, *Michael Essien* and *Frank Lampard* frequently complimenting each others natural game and guiding the club to unprecedented success. The same Premier League winning *Chelsea FC* team also displayed excellent **balance** through the central spine of the team with *Petr Čech*, *John Terry*, *Claude Makélélé* and *Didier Drogba* all playing at the peak of their game.



Diagram B

Team |

So once the **pairs** and the **groups** have been considered with **balance** then the decisions can be made on which of the many referenced full-sided 11 vs. 11 formations or systems of play are best suited to the profile of the players at the

disposal of the coach. Part of that consideration is to factor in an alternative potential solution or plan 'B'. Considering where tactics might be successful or why they might fail and being able to find the strategic solution is a key element of success. The **pairs** and **group** structure might well be **balanced** but it also might not be successful; the capacity to recognise this and action successful change is the craft.

Failures |

When a team fails to deliver on their expectation there is usually an inherent flaw in the **group** shape. While technical skills, physical superiority or sheer good fortune might be able to overcome such tactical blemishes the errors are often very obvious and can undermine the entire team effort.

Of course, a coach is subject to variable factors and frequently has to make do with the playing personal at his disposal; players get injured, suspended or sent off and immediate repairs to the formation are made in haste. Other mistakes are just misjudgments or an overestimation of players' abilities.

England | Fifa World Cup 2010

During the Fifa World Cup 2010 in South Africa the England national team were dumped out at the first knockout round stage after enduring an uninspiring tournament. The indignity of a heavy 4-1 defeat to Germany raised many questions about the tactics and formation deployed by England coach *Fabio Capello*. One contributing factor to England's failed World Cup tournament was a clear lack of **balance** to the formation.



The favored formation of *Capello* at the tournament was a very standard 4-4-2, with the midfield four of *Steven Gerrard* | *Liverpool FC*, *Frank Lampard* | *Chelsea FC*, *Gareth Barry* | *Manchester City FC* and *James Milner* | *Aston Villa FC*. At the time of the World Cup all four players were regular starting players in central midfield for their club teams. And while *James Milner* was able to play the wide right

midfield berth with some familiarity the same could not be said of the right-footed *Steven Gerrard* deployed on the wide left midfield berth. The **balance** in the midfield was wrong. (See diagram A.)



Diagram A

The natural instinct of *Steven Gerrard* playing the wide left midfield #11 role was to move in-field and adopt a more central attacking midfield position and thus abandoning the duties required of the wide left midfielder. As a consequence *Ashley Cole*, playing as a regular left fullback #3 role in the 4-4-2, was the only left footed, left sided player on the entire length of the field. As well as *Ashley Cole* played in the 2010 World Cup he was not able to fulfill this unachievable task.

The lack of a genuine left-footed player occupying the wide left midfield berth hampered

England resulting in no significant width when in possession of the ball and no proper defensive coverage when not in possession. The England team were eliminated from the competition after the heavy defeat.

Louis van Gaal | Manchester Utd. FC 2015

During the second season of *Louis van Gaal's* three year contract with *Manchester United FC* of the English Premier League, the much travelled and well experienced, former Netherlands national team coach, former *Bayern Munich FC*, former *AFC Ajax* and former *FC Barcelona* coach struggled to find the correct **balance** within his squad and team selections.

Despite having spent millions on mostly left footed players such as *Daley Blind* £13.8 million, *Marcos Rojo* £16 million, *Luke Shaw* £30 million and *Ángel Di María* £59.7 million the 2015/16 season was rather disappointing, punctuated by an alarmingly unsuccessful festive period of fixtures through December 2015. The most salient reasoning for such a massive failure was often referenced as the starting XI lacking any coherent or logical balance.

Despite the rich number of left footed players *van Gaal* frequently set up *Manchester Utd. FC's* defensive group with no left footed #3 left fullback; often selecting right footed players such as *Matteo Darmian* to operate out of position in at left fullback, puzzlingly, even though *Daley Blind* could have, should have and often has played this position. The vacated #2 right fullback position was often given to *Ashley Young*, who is more frequently acknowledged as a #11 left winger. Not having recognized defensive players with the dominant left or right foot is a massive detriment to the welfare of the team and a tactical faux par.

Many knowledgeable students of the game commented that *Manchester Utd. FC* lacked the traditional **width** of the historical cavalier playing style that represented the club to such distinction before. Established natural wingers such as *Nani* and *Adnan Januzaj* were loaned out, sold or dismissed, leaving unfamiliar, inexperienced or out-of-position players to unsuccessfully provide the required attacking width.

The #10 'playmaker' role in the 4-2-3-1 system of play was never truly defined by *van Gaal* and frequent chopping and changing provided no stability or familiarity to any one incumbent. *Juan Mata*, *Ander Herrera*, *Anthony Martial*, *Memphis Depay* and *Wayne Rooney* were all sampled in this crucial #10 role despite little evidence to suggest that some were capable of the task. The compromise of **balance** to the team shape was often predictably tragic.

Perhaps the most caustic lack of team balancing displayed by *van Gaal* was the #9 centre forward striker situation. With many educated observers voicing opinions that *Wayne Rooney* was perhaps better suited to the fulltime role of the #10 'playmaker' in the 4-2-3-1 formation; and perhaps that *Anthony Martial* was better suited to the #11 left forward responsibilities; it was surprising that seasoned #9 central forward goal scoring players such as *Danny Welbeck*, *Robin van Persie* and 'Chicharito' were not retained for first team action. The makeshift strikers selected by *van Gaal* in the absence of these listed players contributed heavily to the demise of the team.



Conclusion |

By '**balancing**' the '**pairs**' and the '**groups**' a formation should be able to keep the '**height**', '**depth**' and '**width**' within the team shape creating opportunity to deliver on the '**Principles of Football**'.

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Section #5
Principles of Soccer | Attack & Defense

Section #5

Introducing the Principles of Soccer | **Attack & Defense**

A team's system of play or formation is just a template, a theoretical concept that provides structure to how a team will attempt to impose their '*philosophies*' or '*attitude*' on any given game. Well considered theory of a team formation will enhance the chances of a team's success but the arrival of success is dependent on the player's capacity to exercise the '*Principles of Soccer*' regardless of the team formation.

The basic primary objective of soccer is to score goals. Given the rather low scoring nature of soccer this task is harder to achieve than first might be thought. In order to score goals a team must first have to create goal scoring opportunities, while limiting the opposition attacks and protecting their own goal. There are considered defensive and attacking principles that provide tactical structure towards achieving the primary objective of scoring more goals than the opposition.

Introducing the Principles of Soccer | **Terminology**

When discussing the **Principles of Soccer** there is certain recognized terminology that allows for greater understanding and limited confusion. It is common in soccer to refer to the defensive and attacking **groups**; however, it is worth noting that when discussing the **Principles of Soccer** it is better considered to assume that all players are attackers when their team is in possession of the ball and that all players are defenders when their team is not in possession, regardless of a player's evident **individual** position or **group**.

For an example to ensure perfect clarity |

If *Lionel Messi* is playing for *FC Barcelona* and he is playing as a #7 right forward, but his *FC Barcelona* team is out of possession he and all his teammates are regarded as defenders, despite his evident forward attacker role within the team structure.

Equally, if *Messi's FC Barcelona* teammate *Gerard Piqué* was in possession and attempting to build the attack from his #5 central defensive berth he and all his teammates are regarded as attackers, despite *Piqué's* evident defender role within the team structure.



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<http://www.coachingadvancedplayers.com/coaching-the-principles-of-soccer-attack-and-defense/>

Introducing the Principles of Soccer | **Attack & Defense**

Terminology	Definition
1 st Attacker	1A The player in possession of the ball is the 1 st attacker - Black Players - See Diagram A
1 st Defender	1D The nearest defensive player goal-side of the ball is the 1 st defender: ' Pressure ' - Yellow Players - See Diagram B

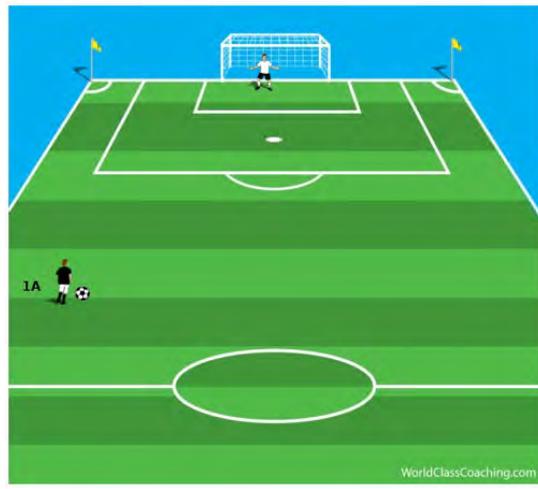


Diagram A

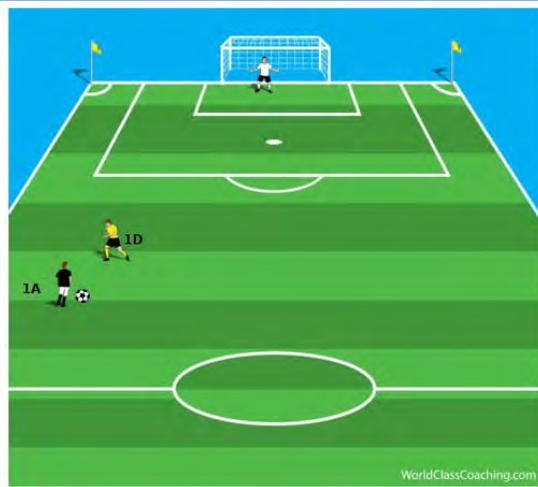


Diagram B

Introducing the Principles of Soccer | **Attack & Defense**

Terminology	Definition
2 nd Attacker	2A The player or players in immediate support of the 1 st attacker See Diagram C
2 nd Defender	2D The nearest defensive player or players goal-side in immediate defensive support of the 1 st defender: ' <i>Cover</i> ' See Diagram D

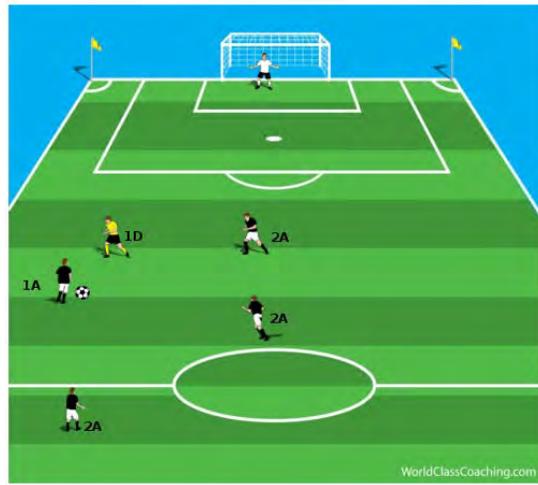


Diagram C



Diagram D

Introducing the Principles of Soccer | **Attack & Defense**

Terminology	Definition
3 rd Attacker	3A The player or players providing depth, width or height not in immediate support of the 1 st attacker See Diagram E
3 rd Defender	3D The defensive player or players goal-side providing depth and width not in immediate cover of the 1 st defender: <i>'Balance'</i> See Diagram F

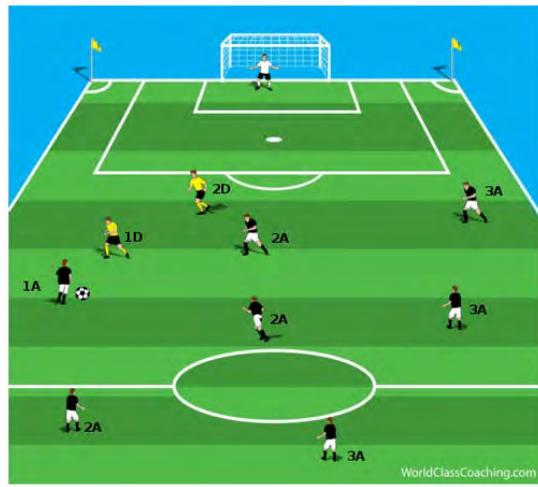


Diagram E



Diagram F

Defining the Principles of Soccer | **Attack**

- Penetration** | The first '*Attacking Principle of Soccer*' is to play the ball forward; termed '*penetration*'. The opposition goal is forward and so the ball will need to be played forward in order to score goals. **Penetration** of the opposition defense can be achieved in a number of different ways.
 - **Dribble** | the ball can be moved forward up the field very effectively on the dribble
 - **Passing** | the fundamental foundation of the game and the most effective way to penetrate
 - **Throwing** | from set-piece throw-ins and the goalkeeper
 - **Shooting** | striking the ball at goal, inclusive of heading
- Support** | The arrangement of teammates and their availability to receive a pass from the player in possession; 1st attacker **1A**. Passing '*angles of support*' should be offered ahead of the ball to allow **penetration**, to the side of the ball to facilitate a change to the '*point-of-attack*', and behind the ball to provide an option to abandon, reset and re-launch an attack while retaining possession of the ball. The '*distance of support*' by the 2nd attacker/s **2A** is another vital consideration. (See diagram A). A supporting player will require '*mobility*' in order to keep creating **angles of support**.
- Width** | By providing width to an attack an offensive team look to stretch and '*unbalance*' the opposition defensive structure and ultimately create situations through which to **penetrate**. Providing attacking width is a direct contradiction to the defensive principle of '*compactness*' and often more space, fewer defenders and less **pressure** on the ball can be found out wide. (See diagram B). Also the delivery or crossed ball from wide areas can be particularly potent for an attacking team if executed correctly.
- Depth & Height** | The arrangement of players behind the ball – '*depth*'; and players ahead of the ball – '*height*'. Though perhaps not immediate passing options in support of the 1st attacker the capacity to hold **depth** and **height** allows an attacking team to play expansively and is in direct contradiction to the '*Defensive Principles of Soccer*'.
- Imagination** | All the structure and '*Attacking Principles*' can be overridden and negated by creativity, inspiration and imagination.

Defining the Principles of Soccer | Defense

- 1. Pressure** | The nearest defensive player to the ball, the 1st defender **1D**, must apply immediate goal-side '*pressure*' to the ball in an effort to deny the attacking **penetration** from the 1st attacker; **penetration** being the number one '*Attacking Principles of Soccer*'. The role of the 1st defender – deny the **penetration**.
- 2. Contain & Delay** | Meaning to slow down or delay the opposition attack, denying the opportunity to **penetrate** and allowing the defensive players to recover '*goal-side*', '*funnel-back*' and reorganise into correct shape. Competent defenders tend not to rush into physical confrontation rather choosing to use delaying tactics and ushering the 1st attacker to less dangerous situations on the field. (See diagram C)
- 3. Cover** | Defensive players in defensive support of the 1st defender are referred to as the 2nd defender/s **2D**. These '*covering*' defenders are close enough to the 1st defender to assume the 1st defender responsibility should the 1st attacker be able to **penetrate** beyond the 1st defender.
- 4. Depth** | The remaining defensive players behind the ball providing 3rd defender **3D** defensive coverage '*goal-side*' of the 1st attacker. Recovery runs allow additional defenders the opportunity to work back and contribute to the defensive effort away from the immediate '*pressure*' on the ball. (See diagram C)
- 5. Compactness & Concentration** | Refers to how '*narrow*' and how '*deep*' the team '*groups*' are across the field both laterally and vertically negating the most immediate risks. The defensive team wish to close the gaps denying space or opportunity for potential '*penetration*' against them and so they '*pinch-in*' tightly consolidating in the most dangerous area in front of their goal. (See diagram D)
- 6. Balance** | Refers to the positioning of 3rd defenders in relation to the positioning of the attacking players. 3rd defenders **3D** need to be deployed consistently across the '*width*' and '*depth*' of the field to provide defensive coverage on the '*weak-side*' for a change to the '*point-of-attack*'.

Principles of Soccer | **Attack & Defense**

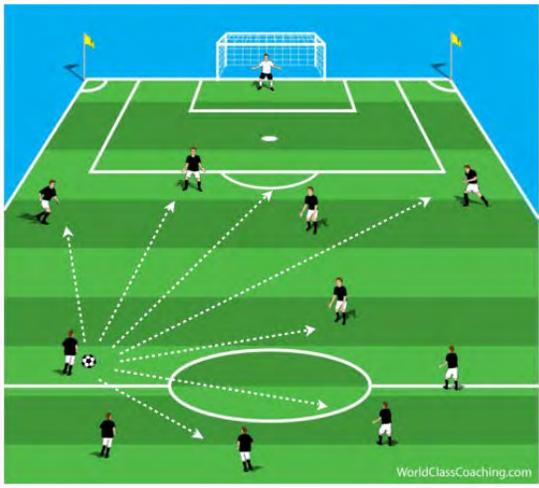


Diagram A



Diagram B



Diagram C



Diagram D

Tactical Soccer Coaching Vol. 1 | **Field Notes**



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