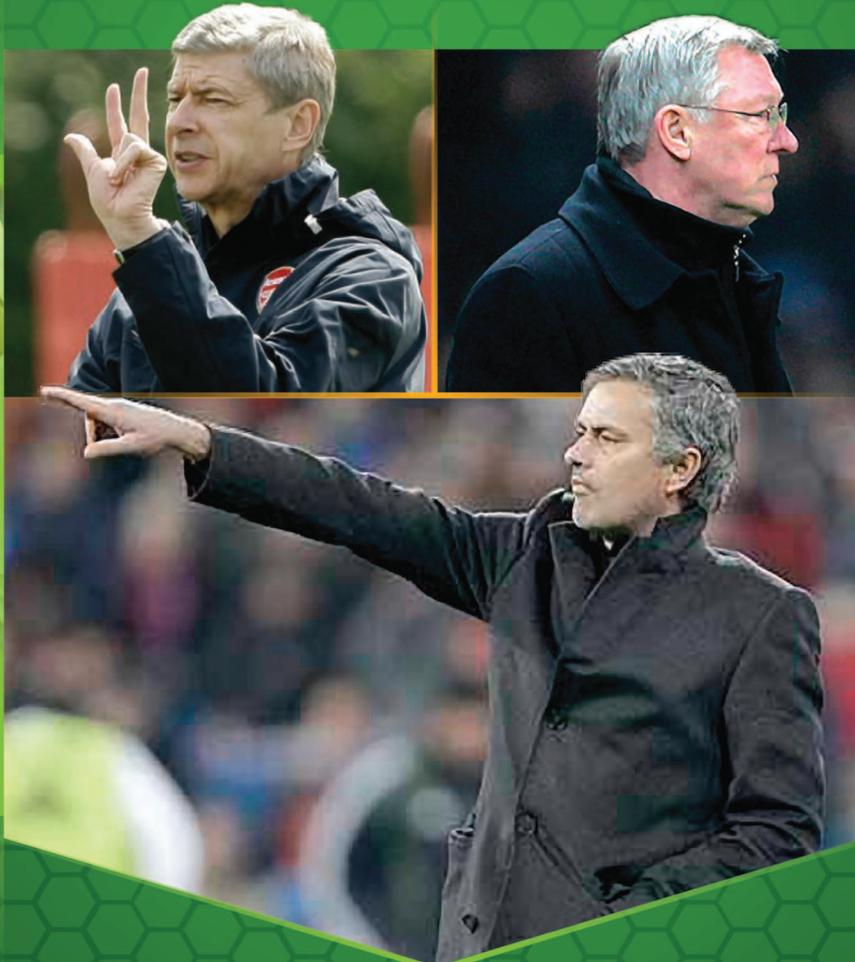


ATTACKING

IN THE 4-2-3-1



BY STEVIE GRIEVE



Attacking in the 4-2-3-1

By

Stevie Grieve

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Table of Contents

Chapter	Page
Introduction	4
Tactical Aspects of Attacking in the 4-2-3-1	5
Attacking in transition from high pressure defending	8
Attacking against the grain	10
Attacking through the sides – Inverted Wingers	16
Attacking through the number 10	21
Attacking through the striker	29
Training Sessions for the 4-2-3-1	36
Patterns of play for using the number 10	37
Patterns of play for using the sides	40
Patterns of play for using the striker	43
Attacking through the number 10	50
Attacking through the sides	54
Attacking in transition	60

Attacking in the 4-2-3-1

Stevie Grieve for World Class Coaching

Introduction

Hello, and thank you for choosing to buy this book; it is an honour for me and I hope you enjoy it.

This is my 10th book via World Class Coaching and each one gives me a chance to write about some of the things I have seen during matches, and break it down for you step-by-step; why it is effective or ineffective, relevant to the 4-2-3-1 and hopefully, help you in teaching your players to become better footballers within an attacking 4-2-3-1 system.

Alternatively I hope it will give you something to think about if you simply enjoy reading about tactical analysis!

In the training session part, you will find various patterns of play to help your players to play in a way which can give them ideas of what to do when the ball is in specific areas of the field. I have found that using patterns of play can help the players in game situation just as much as allowing them to play “off the cuff” and making entirely their own decisions, as it gives them clues and will trigger movements from some players to make runs off the ball to offer penetration, support, and look to find a way to score, but it can also be as simple as making a run to make space. The ones in the book I have found success with allow for a fluid style of play and allow for various solutions to the problems and questions the players will be asked in a game.

You will also find some small sided games based practices to develop using the #10, playing direct into the striker, and importantly in modern football – attacking in transition. You will also find some larger team based practices – in these sessions, please use them as a guide, add your own personality to them, adapt and make relevant to your players, these are just a guide and although most of them I have used and found success with, some of them will need adapted for your own players.

I believe that coaches must be creative to produce intelligent, creative players and simply by watching the games, analysing the opposition and your own team, you can tailor a training practice to every possible scenario possible that can happen in football – use your imagination and allow yourself to make mistakes to improve, learn and grow with the players, and the game.

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TACTICAL ASPECTS OF ATTACKING IN THE 4-2-3-1

- **Attacking in transition from high pressure defending**
- **Attacking against the grain**
- **Attacking through the sides**
- **Attacking through the number 10**
- **Attacking through the striker via direct forward passing**

4 Phases of possession to build an attack



When we are trying to make training sessions for the 4-2-3-1, we must be mindful of which areas we can take more risks in to try and score a goal.

Build Up Phase

When close to your own goal, you should try to build safe possession and ensure that the ball can be brought forward into the Consolidation phase. Players should look to keep the ball moving across longer distances across the defensive line and if possible, into the consolidation phase via either of the defensive midfielders

Consolidation Phase

In this phase, we need to ensure that we have gained control of possession and are looking to find a way into the penetration phase, but only at a time where an attacking player can receive in a dangerous position with options to attack. The ball can be passed forward and then back into the consolidation phase to keep the defence moving, but also to try and draw people out of position for another player to exploit the space. Possession should still be safe, but with more intent to get into an attacking position.

Penetration Phase

In this phase, players are encouraged to take more risks and find a way through the congested

Final 3rd area, with between 3-7 attacking players inside this zone, and between 3-9 defensive players, speed of thought, positional rotations, eliminating defenders via dribbling and quick passing is vital to being successful in the penetration phase. Players will look for diagonal through balls onto straight runs, straight through balls into diagonal runs, 3rd man runs, 1-2's, dribbles, overloads and overlaps to try and bring the game from potentially a 6v8 scenario, to a 2v2,3v3 or 4v3 scenario in one zone to make the game less complex and easier to find a way to penetrate the defence and make a scoring chance.

Finishing Phase

In this area, the aim is simple; to score. Players should look to get into scoring positions whenever possible, and offer different solutions to the problems players will face when the ball is close to the goal – how do I avoid being marked? How do I receive under no pressure? How do I create space for my team mates? How many touches can I take? Is the chance reaction based (rebounded chance), instinct based (little time to shoot under pressure), technique based (using the defender as a guide to curl the ball around and away from the GK), or is it a determination chance (fending off a defender using strength under pressure to shoot).

Players must be willing to be brave in this scenario, look to gamble on a slice of luck coming their way, and be willing to miss a chance by shooting – no shots = no goals.

Players can retain possession in this zone and pin the defence back, but always be on the move to lose the marker and find a way to get on the ball to score.

Attacking in transition from high pressure defending

As every team now knows that a Pep Guardiola team will in most cases, try to build from the back, even though now he has joined Bayern Munich, Borussia Dortmund will play their usual high pressing game but they know that they can now have some opportunities to win possession back in the final 3rd and exploit the chance to score.

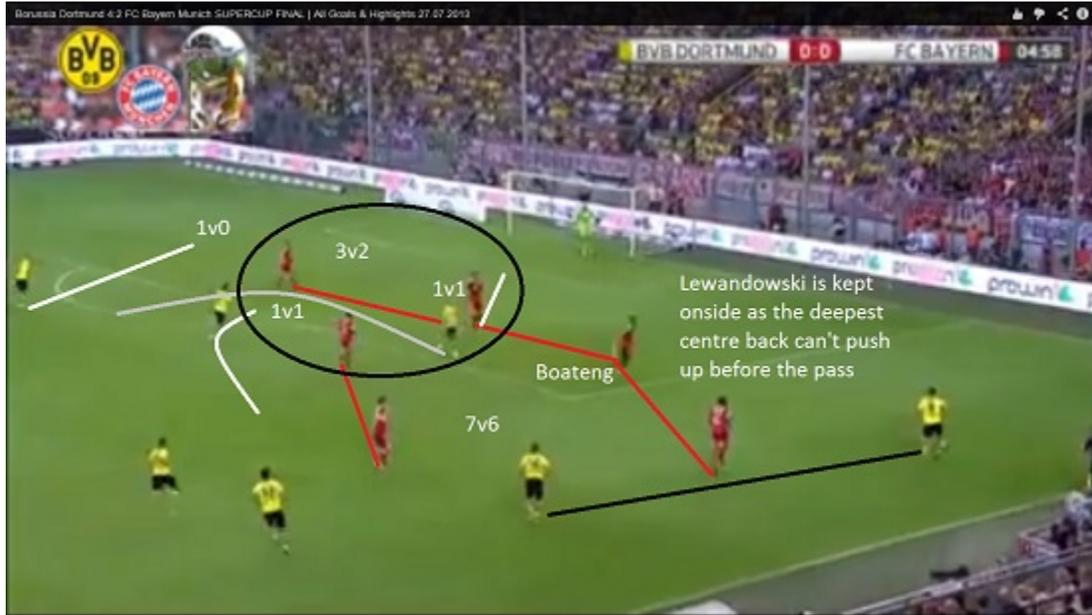
Dortmund are one of the best pressing teams in the world and given a slight hint of a mistake, they are more than capable of regaining possession to start a counter attack.

Dortmund score from regaining possession close to the opposition goal

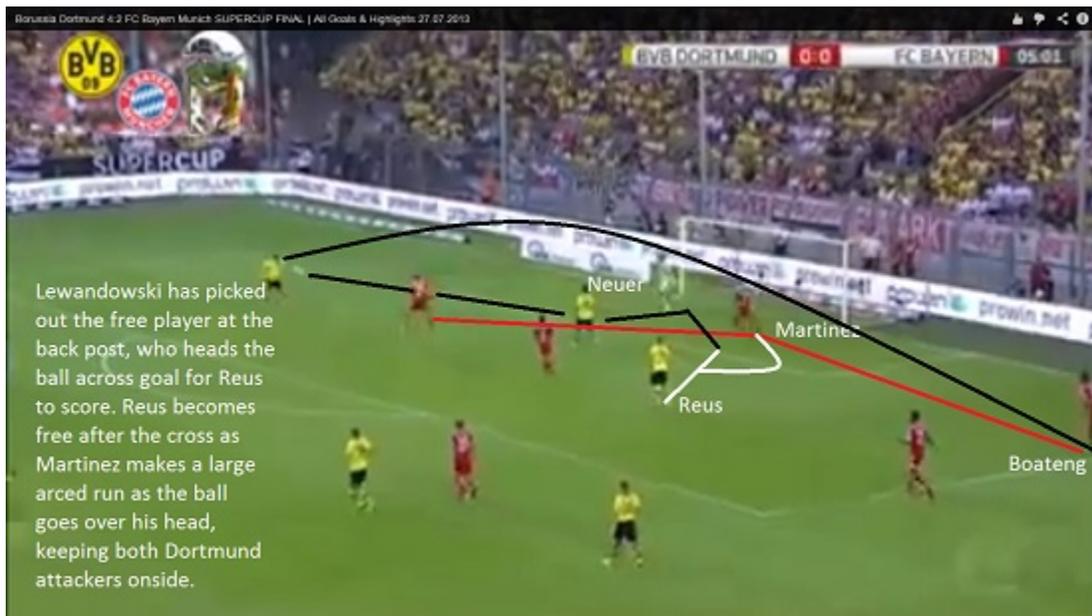


As Boateng passes out from defence, Aubameyang claims possession within 30m to the Bayern goal, and tries to volley a pass straight over to Lewandowski, but it bounces off an opponent and out to Kuba. As this happens, Lewandowski is aware of the movement of Boateng who is moving to recover into centre back.

Lewandowski presses then moves into a receiving position in the attacking transition phase



As Kuba receives, he quickly finds Lewandowski in the space behind Alaba who moved out to block the passing lane. Bayern are now in trouble as Reus and Lewandowski have changed positions which allows Lewandowski to know that although he would normally be the target inside the box, Reus is now doing his bob with the other 2 attacking midfielders in dangerous positions. Note the potential 3v2 inside the box – a player alone on the far side should be the target player for the cross.



As the ball arrives at the spare player on the far side, not Martinez's movement – he has needlessly arced his run inside the box, lost his man and kept both Dortmund attackers inside. Reus is free and scores after the ball is headed across the goalmouth into a position that draws out Neuer to claim but he

can only touch it into the path of Reus who scores unmarked as Martinez is not in a position to recover after his needless arced run inside the box.

Attacking against the grain

Attacking ‘against the grain’ refers to using the pressure and body position of the pressing players, which will trigger supporting and covering players movements to regain possession, to your advantage. This opens up space away from where the ball was being forced to, allowing for speed in attack.

To do this, players will analyse quickly where the opposition is trying to force play, and instead of making the easy pass and decision to the side where the pressure is forcing play, they will pass to the other side and try to take out multiple defensive players and open up attacking space on the other side.

Although Barcelona don’t play a 4-2-3-1 formation, Sergio Busquets is one of the best players at ‘passing against the grain’, and the lessons we can learn from his decisions can be applied to all formations and styles of play.

Busquets and Messi combine to eliminate Ozil and Benzema



Busquets receives a pass from Messi, who moves to split Benzema and Ozil. Ozil presses and tries to force a dribble into Benzema, but Busquets reads this and decides to pass 1st time, making it very difficult for either Benzema or Ozil to re-adjust and make an interception.

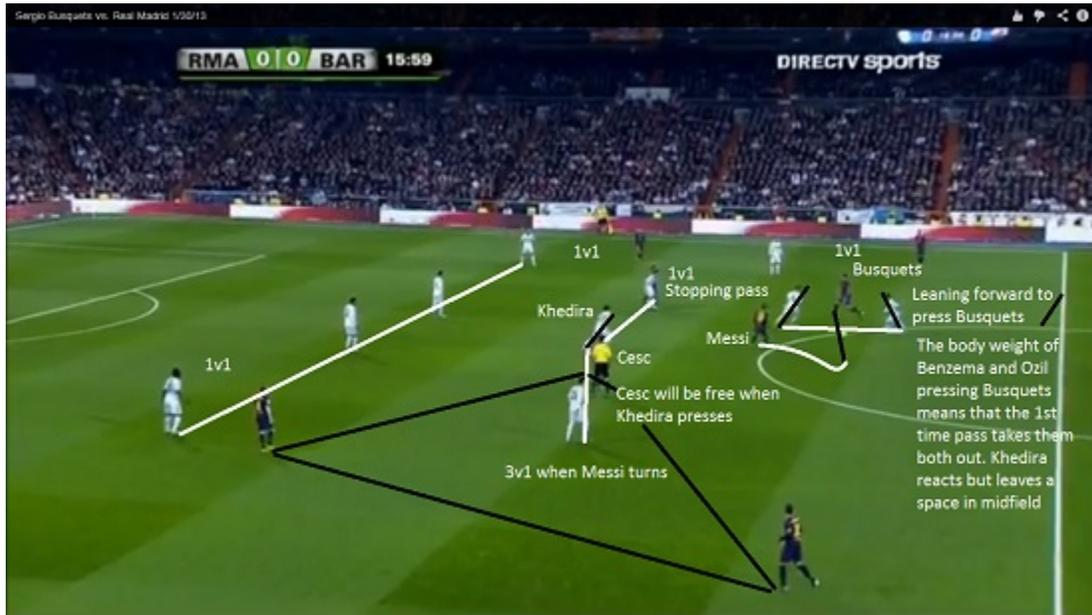
Note that Real Madrid are trying to play 1v1 in as many areas as possible, and try to force play into areas where they are comfortable dealing with the Barcelona attack – on the sides.

Messi and Busquets play a double 1-2 against the grain to escape pressure

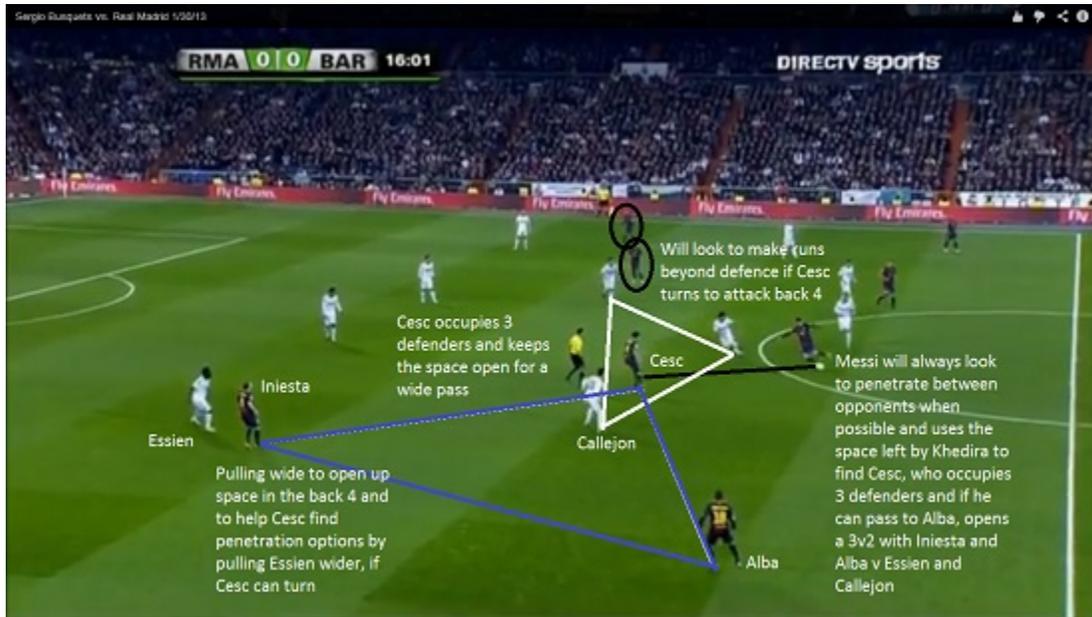


As Busquets plays 1st time to evade Ozil, Messi is pressed by Benzema. Busquets again makes a passing lane for Messi, but Messi will use Benzema's pressing of Busquets, and move between both Real Madrid players and eliminate them from the 1st pressing phase.

Note that Cesc is in position between Khedira and Callejon – if Messi can escape, Cesc will use the space if either Khedira or Callejon press next.



Busquets passes 'against the grain' and now Messi is free – Khedira reacts (as his body shape suggests) and presses Messi early – Cesc will now be free as Messi turns to offer a pass between the lines. If Messi can't find Cesc, Alba and Iniesta can play 3v1 on the side with Cesc if Messi finds Alba.

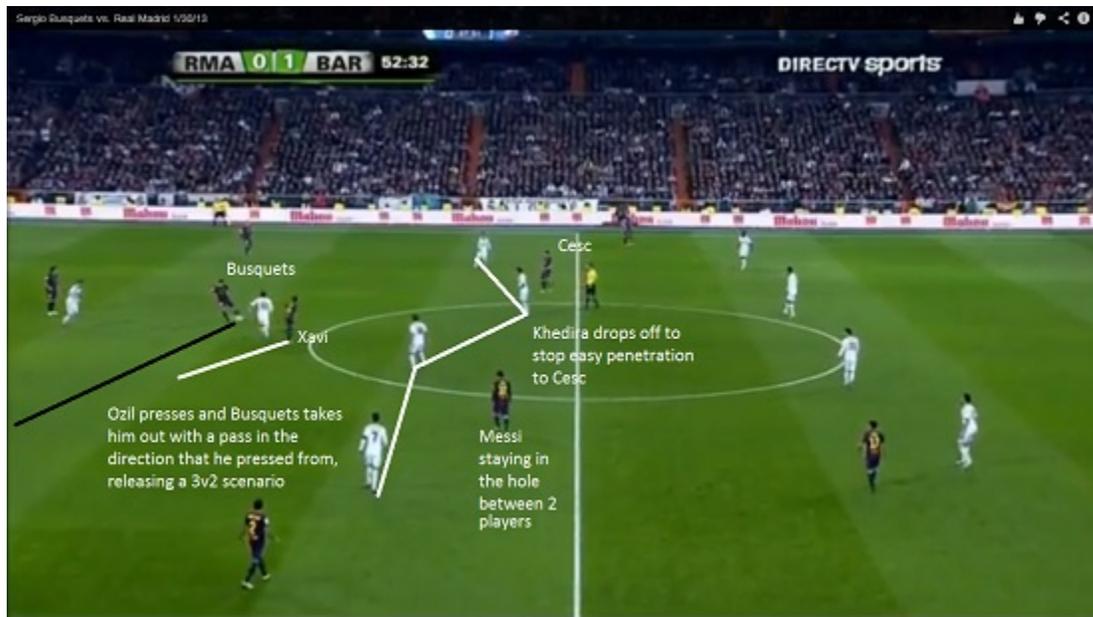


As Messi turns, he reacts to the pressure from Khedira and uses the pressure to find Cesc between 3 Real Madrid opponents. As Barcelona like to play and penetrate centrally, this is the preferable option for them, whereas Real Madrid would be more comfortable if the ball was passed to Alba.

Busquets and Xavi eliminate Ozil and Benzema from the pressing phase

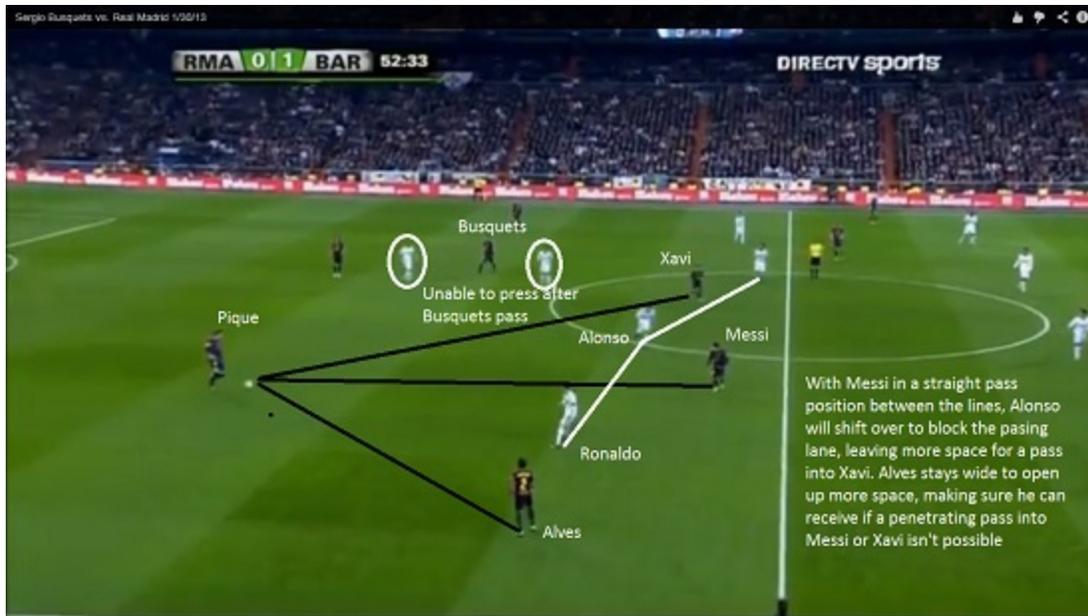


As Xavi has moved deep to help Busquets, Messi has filled in Xavi's zone behind the shoulder of Alonso. As Benzema forces play to Barcelona's left, Busquets chooses the pass to Xavi. As the pass is played, Ozil quickly presses to force play into Benzema. Benzema tries to read the next pass – back to Pique/Puyol and is taken out by Xavi's 1st time return pass.

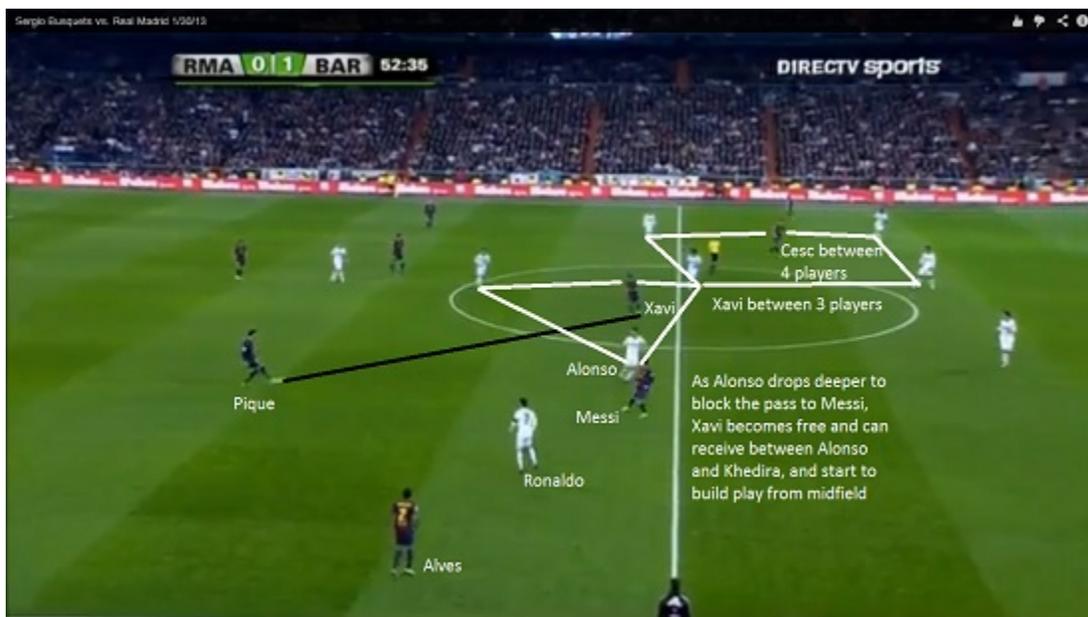


As Xavi returns the pass, he moves inside to offer another return pass, but opens up a space for a switch pass for Busquets. Ozil continues to press as its in his natural running path, but Busquets takes him and Benzema out of the defensive phase by passing away from where Ozil is forcing play.

As the ball reaches Pique, Messi and Alves' positioning means there is a possible 3v2 on the side.



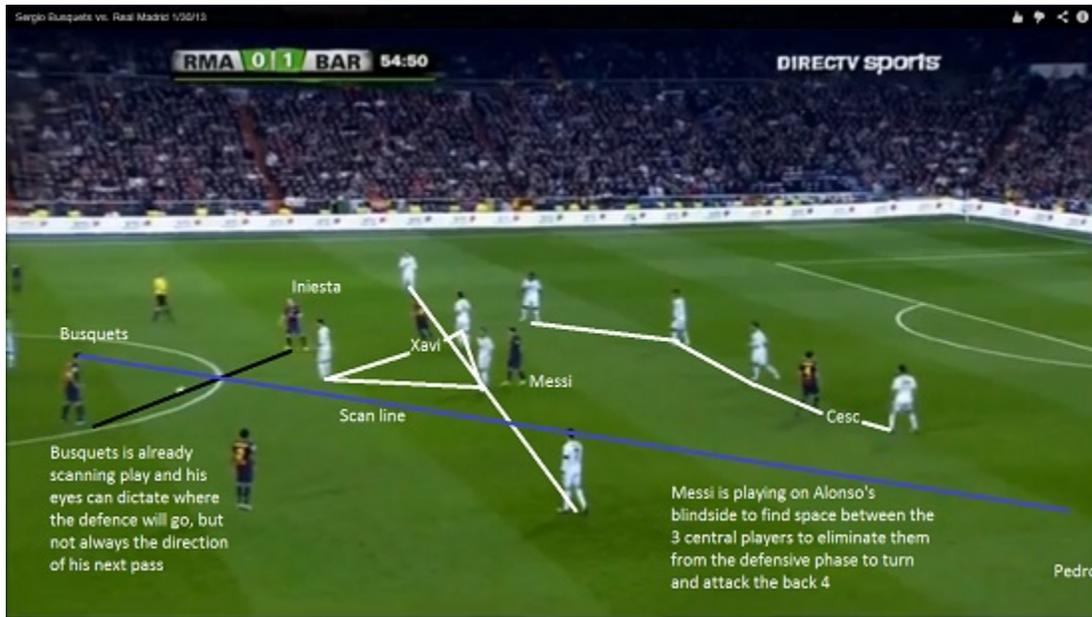
Now that Busquets and Xavi have released Pique under no pressure, Pique now has a 4v2 as Xavi has taken up position between Alonso and Khedira, giving him 3 passing lanes. As Messi is a priority to mark, Alonso shifts over quickly, leaving a space for Xavi to receive. If Messi was to receive, he would have pressure from behind and Ronaldo covering the pass into Alves on the side, so turning to dribble would be his main, and possibly only option as he can turn and attack the back 4 with Pedro ahead of him, able to make more space and offer a forward pass.



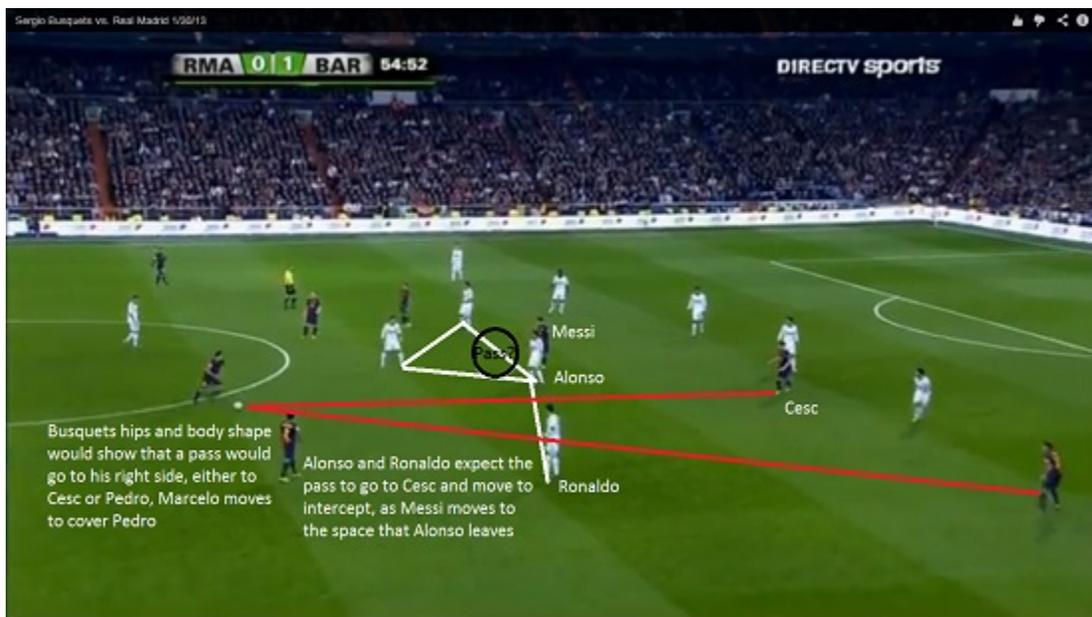
Pique makes the choice to find Xavi as Barcelona like to play diagonally across the field. With Xavi between 3 opponents, and Cesc behind with the position between 4 opponents, with Iniesta behind him

on the touchline, Barcelona are capable of building across and through Real Madrid, but also the pass into Xavi can release Messi in the inside right channel, between the lines that he enjoys playing in.

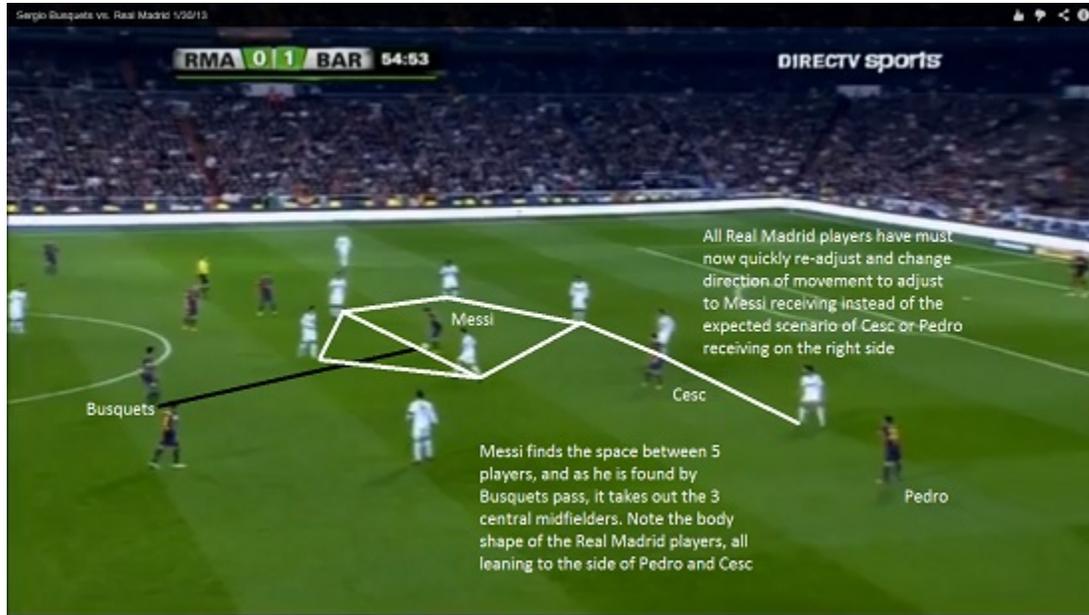
Busquets finding and unlikely pass against the grain by using his scanning line and body shape to move Real Madrid defenders and open up Messi's space to receive.



Iniesta passes back to Busquets who is scanning the field for options. He is under no pressure but the defensive block of Real Madrid's 4-4-1-1 dictates that he should pass wide into either Alba, Alves or Pedro.



As Busquets takes his 1st touch, he has 2 obvious passing lanes – Alonso starts to read the passing lane into Cesc and keeps it open to allow for an interception. As Busquets knows Alonso, and the likelihood of moving to block the pass into Cesc is high, he will likely find a different pass – probably to Pedro, which triggers the movement from Marcelo to start moving wide to get close to Pedro.



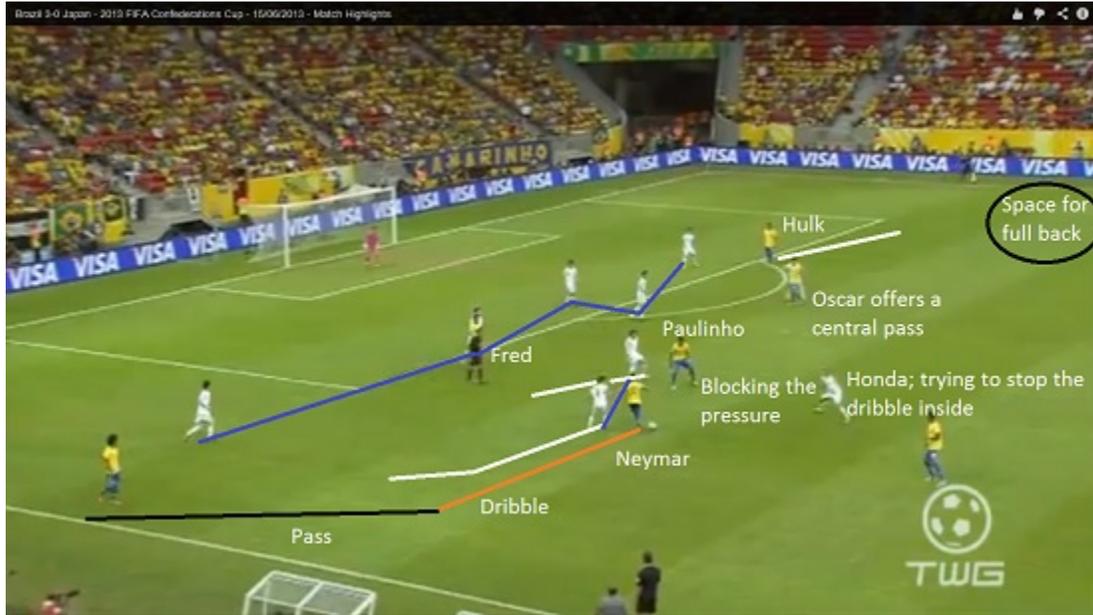
As Real Madrid have started moving before the pass is played, Busquets can use the movement of Alonso and Marcelo to open up space between the central midfielders, and find Messi in the space between 5 opponents. As this 'pass against the grain' has made 5 players slow down, re-adjust, change direction and then try to press the ball, giving Messi time to turn and attack the defence. Cesc and Pedro can now make runs off the ball to create space for a pass or dribble from Messi.

Attacking through the sides – Inverted Wingers

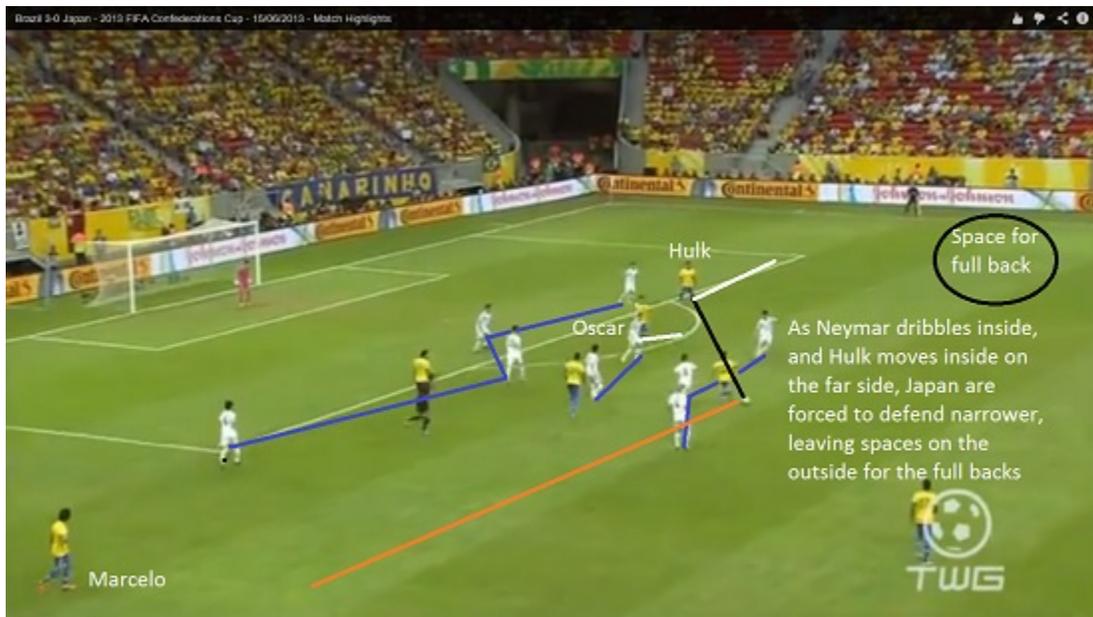
Commonly in modern football, wingers have become 'inverted' and often you will see a right footed winger playing on the left, especially with wide supporting attackers or overlapping full backs. As they cut inside, they can protect the ball easily and play with their eyes up and scan for movement, knowing that they should have the ball until they decide to pass or shoot.

Most creative attackers are players who are more comfortable playing on the 'weak side' as it gives them the ability to cut inside and play combinations, look for killer passes into diagonal runs, or even make inswinging crosses to the far post, which are more difficult to defend than traditional outswinging crosses.

Neymar cuts infield to trigger movements from Paulinho, Oscar, Fred and Alves via Hulk



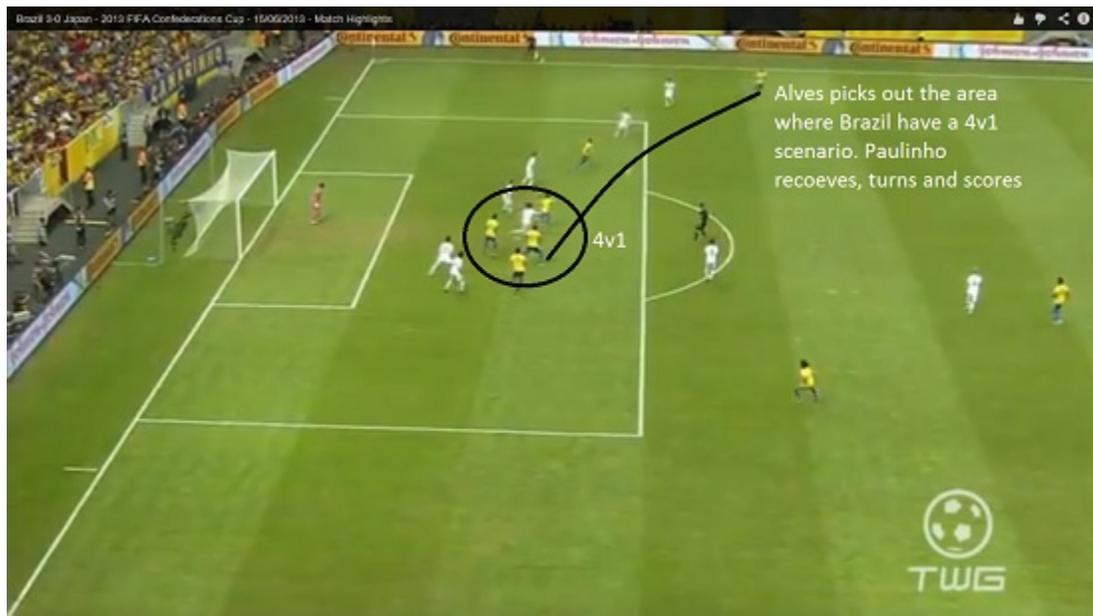
As Marcel throws the ball in to Neymar, he fakes the return pass and dribbles inside, protecting the ball from the opponent using his left side as he cuts in with his right. Paulinho is blocking an opponent from pressing Neymar, and this forces Honda to try and close the space down. Oscar is playing between the lines with Hulk behind him, coming inside from the right, leaving space for a switch pass to Alves, so Brazil can flood the box with attackers to attack a cross.



As Neymar has drawn in 3 opponents, now is the time to release a pass – Oscar has vacated the space, stopping the holding midfielder from pressing as he occupies his zone, and leaving Hulk free to receive. Note that Japan have 10 players within the width of the box, so Brazil must exploit the wide areas and fill the box.

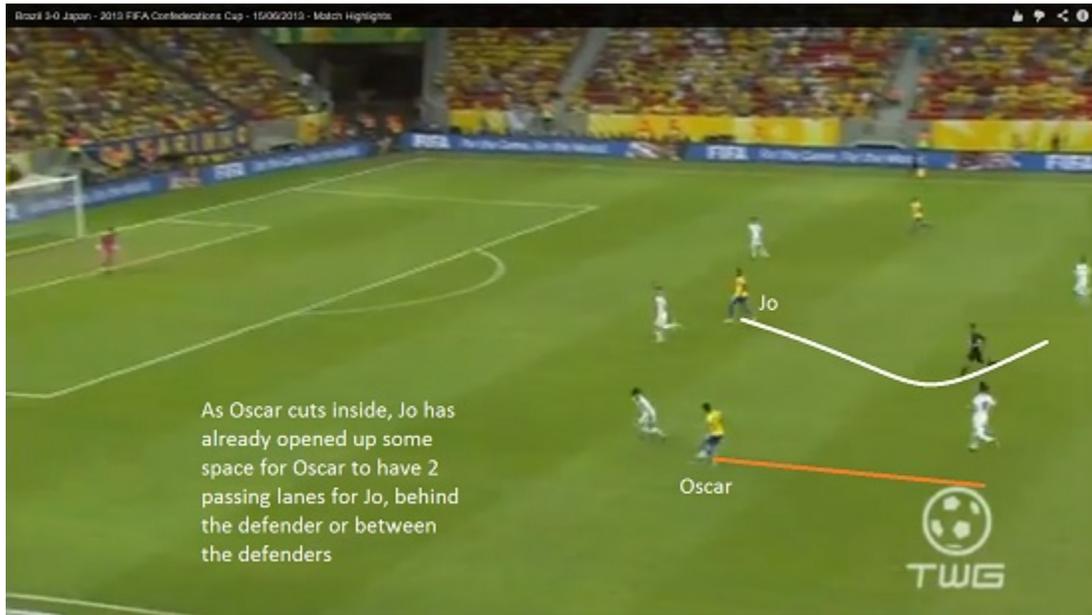


Neymar passes into Hulk who passes wide 1st time into the run of Alves in the space on the right. As this pass is played wide, Brazil have 5 players breaking into the box, ready for a cross from Alves.

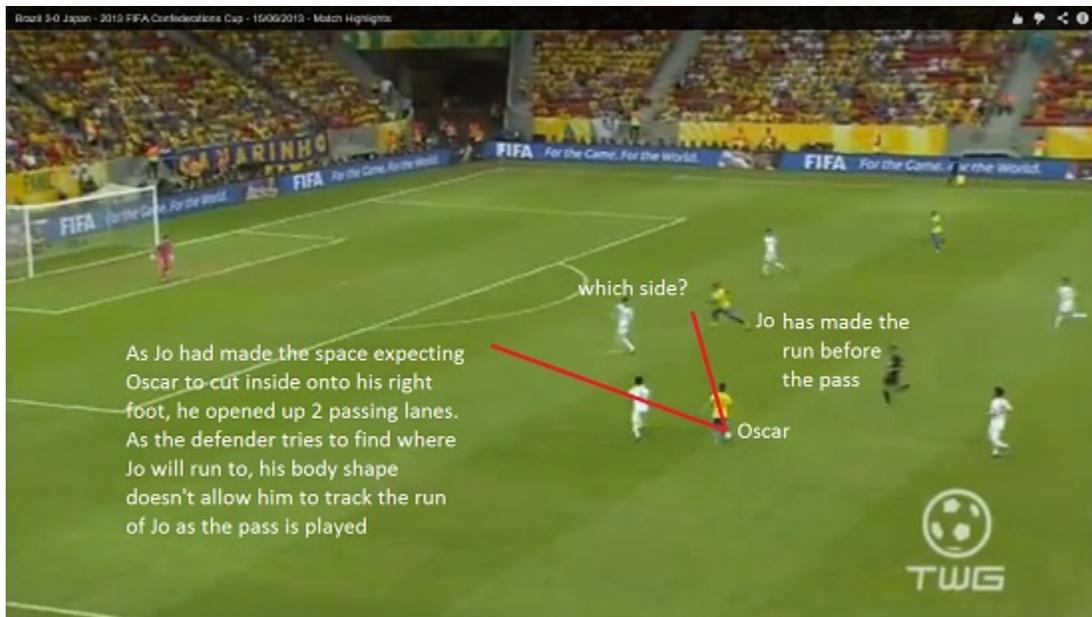


As Alves receives in so much space, he has time to scan, assess his target area and deliver the cross unopposed. The area he finds has a 4v1 advantage for Brazil, and it lands at Paulinho who has time to touch-turn and score. With 3 other Brazilians in this zone, a rebound would've been scored.

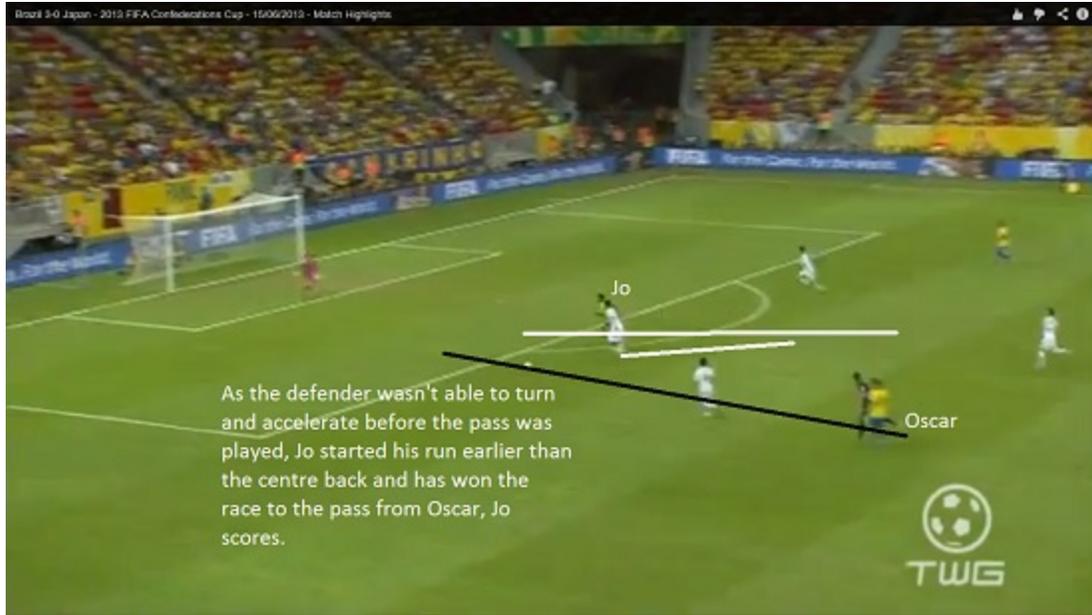
Oscar coming inside on the counter attack



On the counter attack, Oscar is forced wide, but by cutting inside he opens up space for himself and his team mate, Jo, on the defenders blindside. Brazil have a promising 3v3 here but speed, timing and accuracy of execution are vital to the conversion of this attack.



As Oscar cuts inside and has plenty of time and space, he is now in a passing position, with 2 passing angles – into Jo's feet, or into his stride? Oscar quickly assesses the body shape of Jo and releases the pass into the run of Jo. Note the marker's body shape, he is no longer running back, but turning to look at Jo, effecting his ability to re-turn and run, then attack the pass.

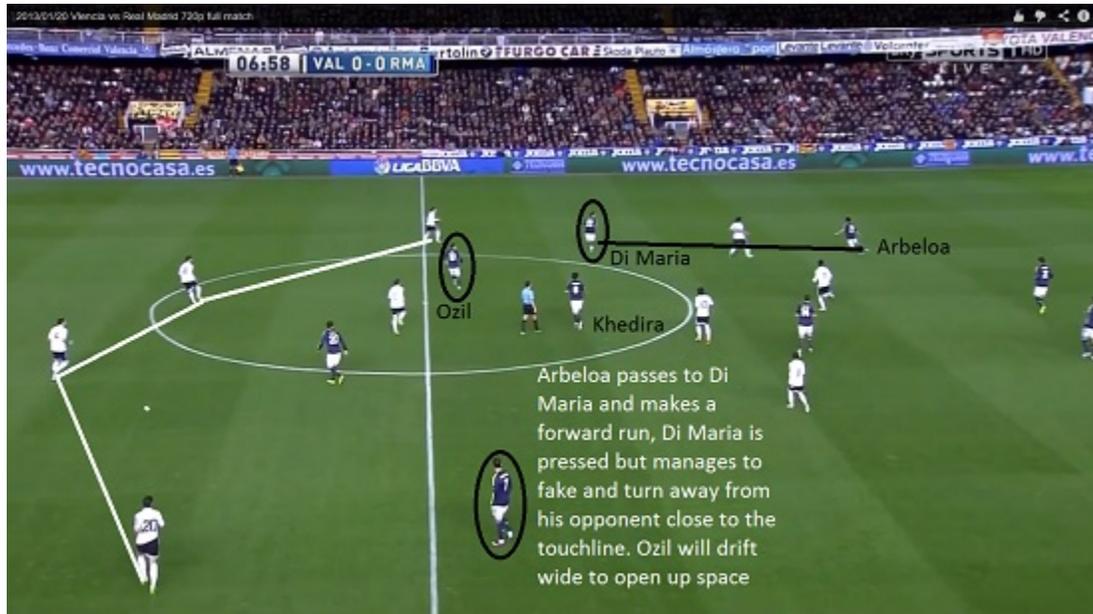


As the pass is released with the right amount of weight and angle, the timing of the pass is perfect. Jo has a run on the defender and as he gets ahead of him, he can protect the ball and score.

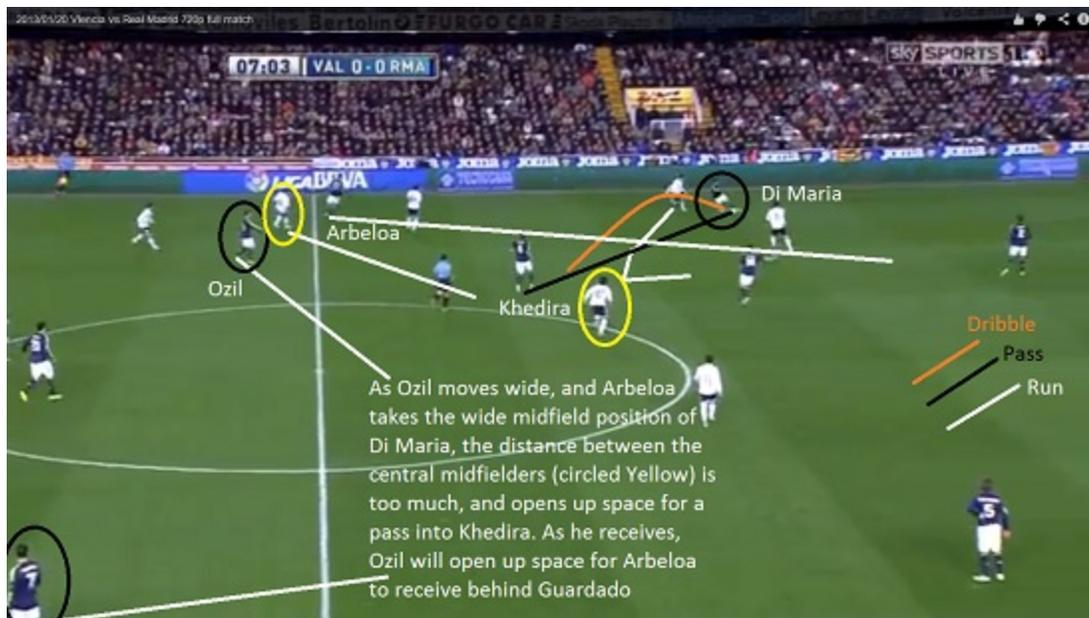
Attacking through the number 10 via through passes or runs from midfield beyond the striker

In Modern football, the number 10 is given a lot of freedom in attack, and although they contribute defensively, some teams allow the number 10 to conserve energy to make and use space created, but also to play killer passes to supporting attacking players.

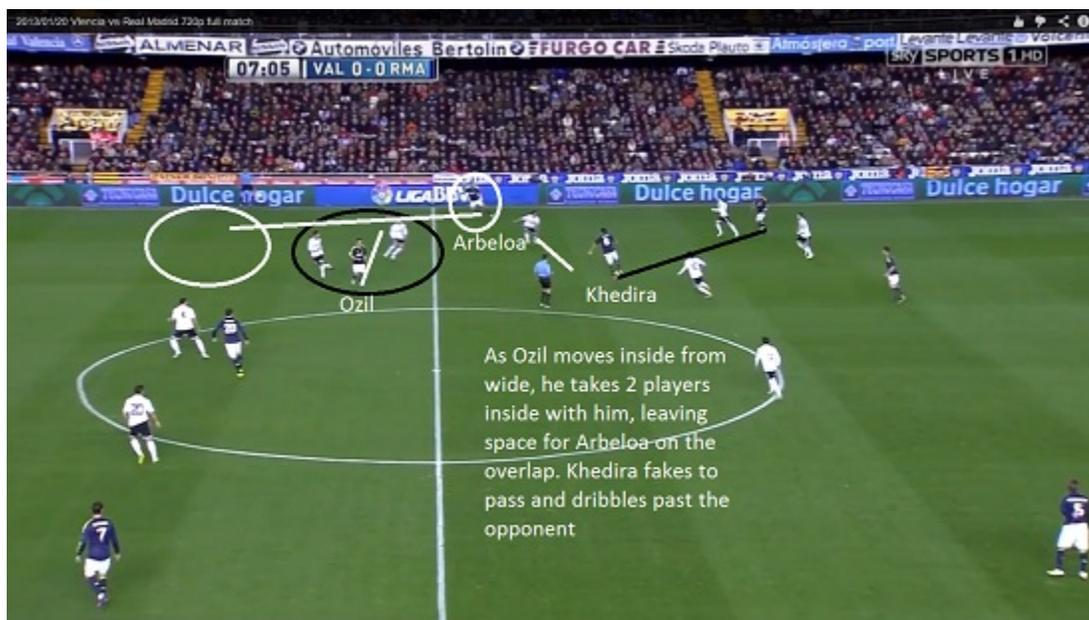
Indirect involvement - Ozil makes the space for players to receive in penetrating positions



As Arbeloa passes into Di Maria, Ozil knows he will be tracked by one of the central midfielders. Khedira is already in space between the 2 but Ozil can open up a larger gap to exploit and penetrate by moving wide, making a bigger space for Khedira. If he isn't tracked, he can be found in space.



As Di Maria dribbles to lose his opponent, he scans and finds Khedira in the gap between the 2 central midfielders (circled in yellow). The space is opened with Ozil's run and his marker trying to block the forward pass into him, while being able to double up on Arbeloa who has made a forward run into Di Maria's position after his pass.



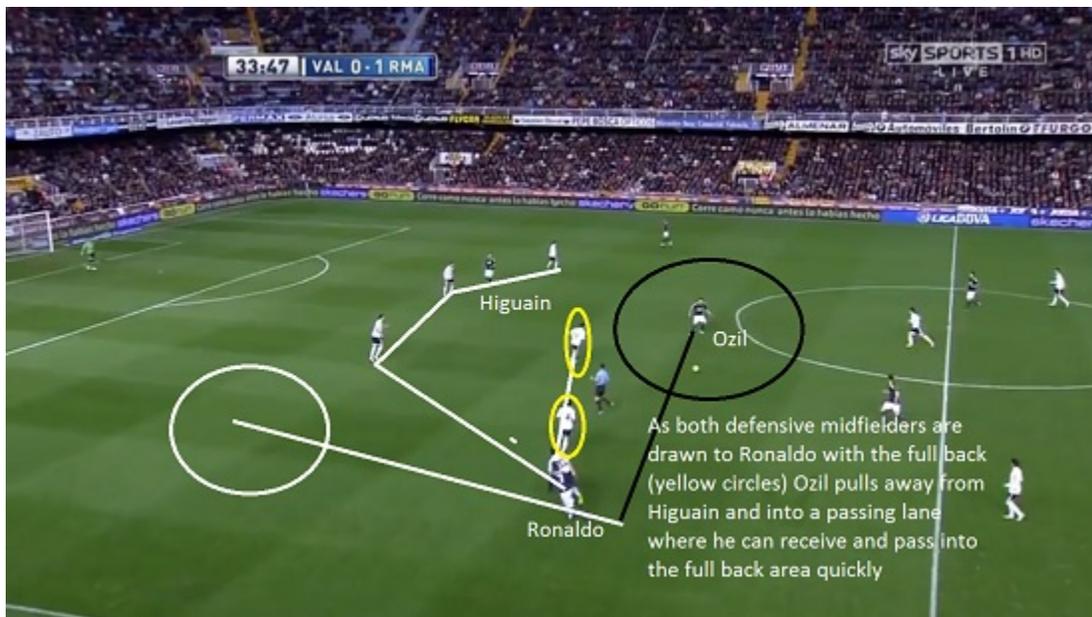
As Ozil has opened up the space between the central midfielders for Khedira to receive in the space between them, he now has to move inside to open up space for Arbeloa on the outside to offer Khedira a penetration option into the space behind the full back. As Ozil moves inside, the space behind the full back is open as he is now marking Ozil as he moves inside, leaving Arbeloa free on the outside.



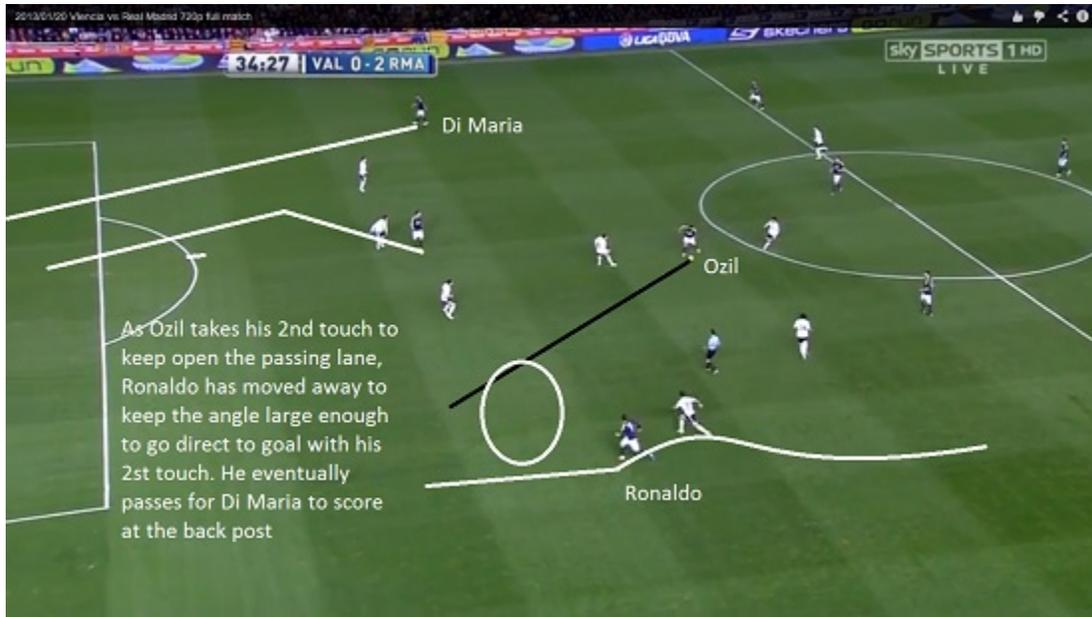
As Khedira fakes the early pass, the defender presses and tries to block the pass – the fake unbalances him and allows Khedira to dribble past and he can now play an easy pass to free Arbeloa on the far side. Real Madrid now have a 5v3 and Arbeloa plays a 1st time pass to Higuain who misses from 12 yards to end the attack.

The chance is created by the movement from the number 10 – although he is not directly involved in the attack through receiving the ball, it is the movement off the ball to create space for Khedira then Arbeloa that allows the attack to develop and should result in a goal from Higuain from 12 yards.

Direct involvement - Penetration through the number 10

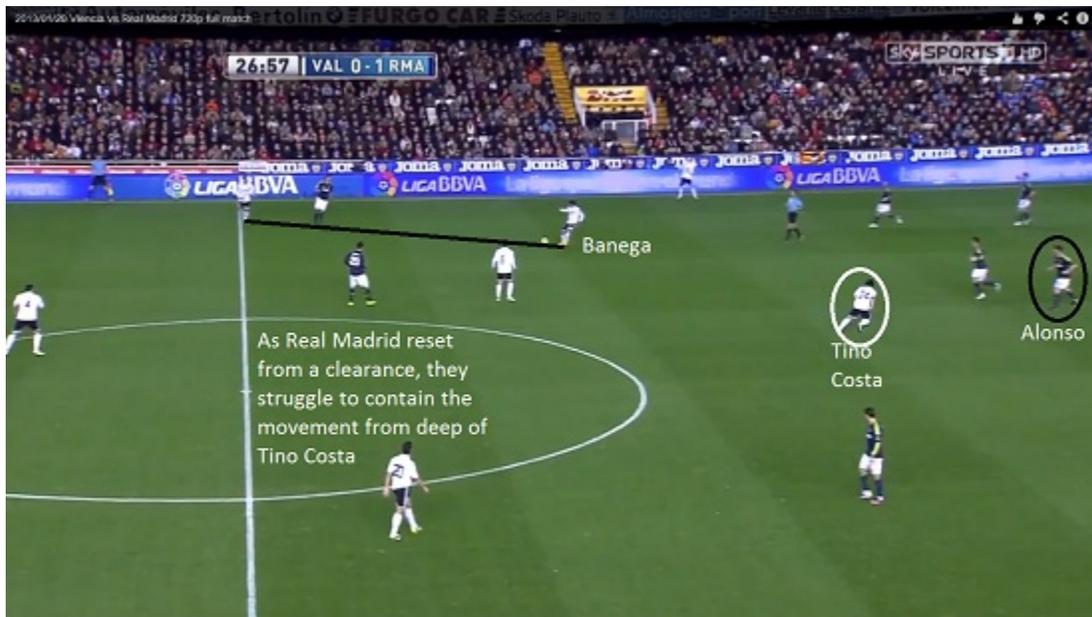


As Ronaldo has possession, both defensive midfielders (yellow) move over to help the full back, leaving Ozil free in space to receive and assess his options. As Ronaldo passes, he makes a run into the space behind the pressing full back, where a passing lane exists.



As Ozil receives, he orientates his 1st touch towards the passing lane to have minimal time between the touch and the strike, to ensure he can make the pass into the passing lane while it stays open and Ronaldo is onside, able to receive in his stride and go direct to goal.

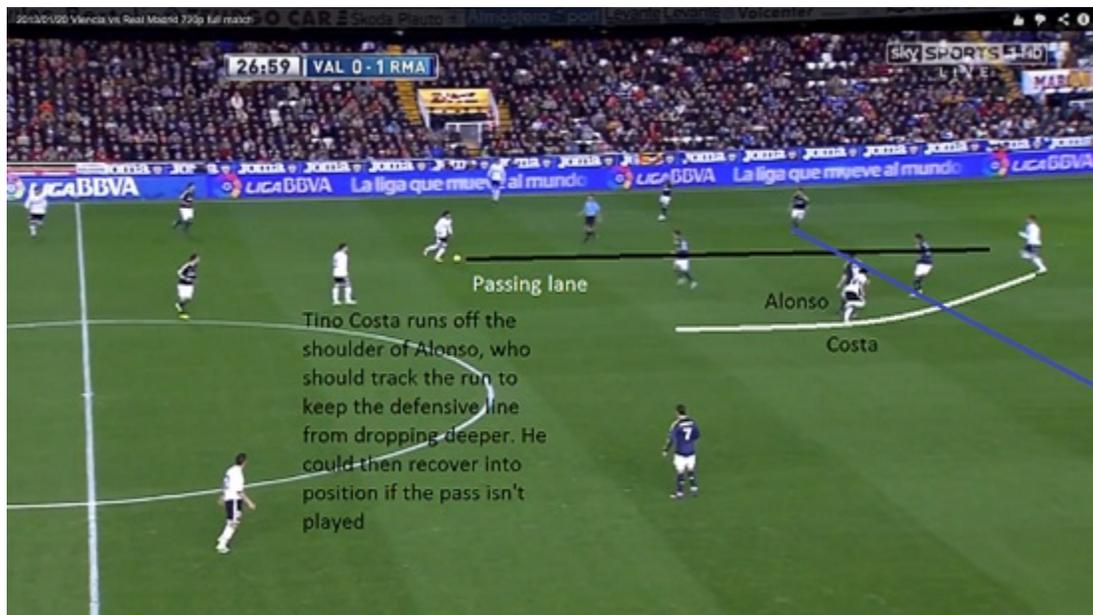
Runs from deep to penetrate the defensive line or move the defensive line deeper to create space



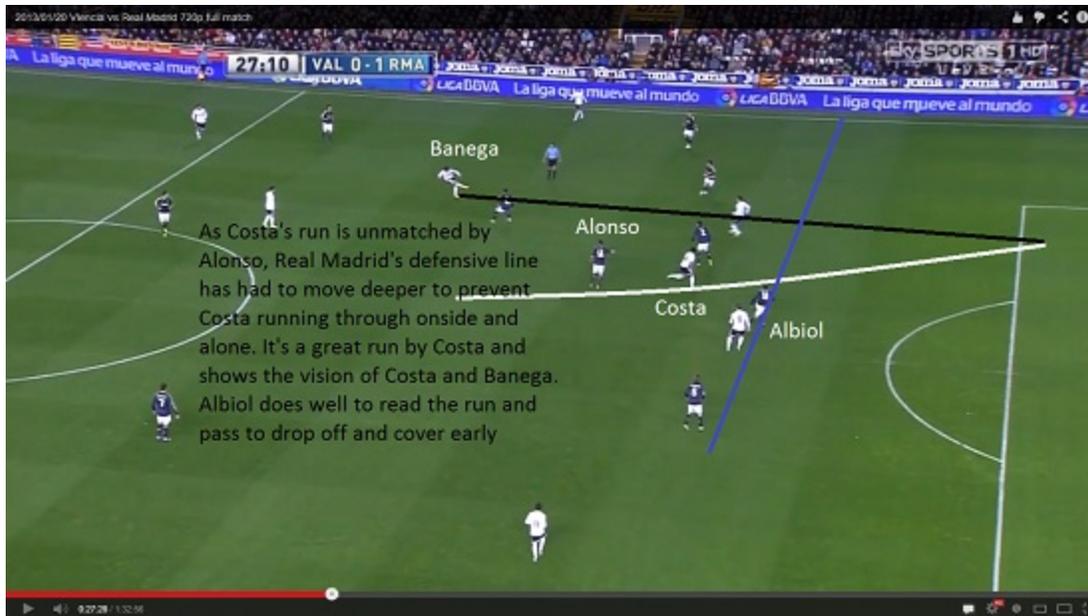
As Banega receives the clearance, Real Madrid quickly reshape. Banega turns and Costa makes an early run from deep beyond his marker, Alonso, towards the defensive line.

Commonly in modern football, players make these runs from deep, beyond the midfield and then the defensive line. There are three main reasons for this; penetration behind the defence to an unmarked runner, drawing a central defensive midfielder deeper to open space in the position the player just moved from with the runner, or moving the defensive line deeper to create space the back 4 drops off to cover the run and pass behind the defence

If the defensive line is moved deeper, this can trigger movements from players to exploit the larger space between the lines, and with increased space, good players can create goal scoring chances with pre-determined trigger runs off the ball, depending on who receives the ball and where.

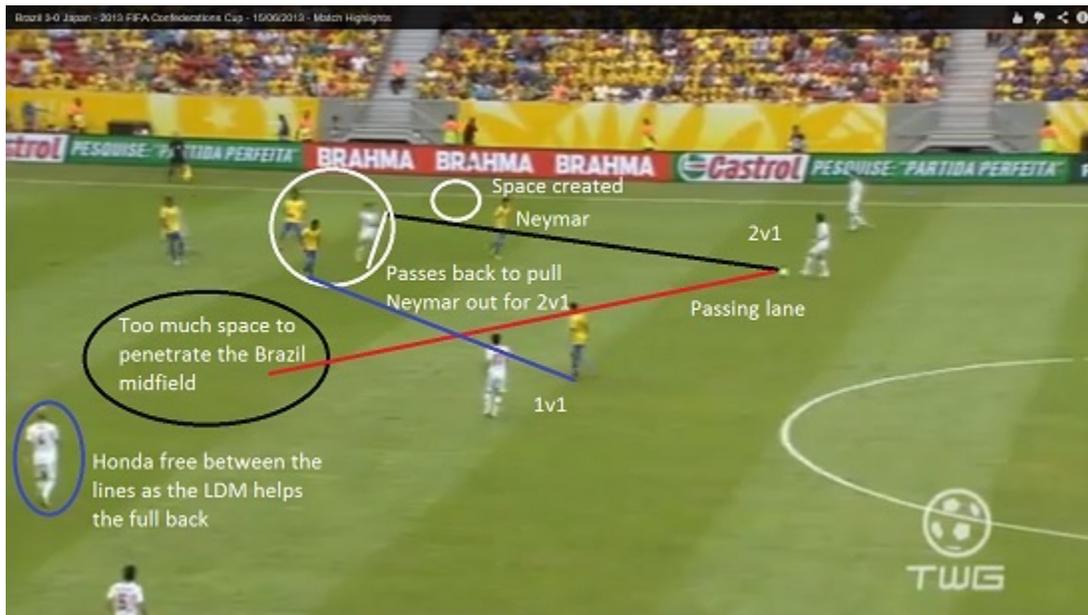


As Banega spots the run from Costa on Alonso's blindside, he knows he can penetrate behind the defensive line. Albiol also spots the run and the possibility of being penetrated from the run, so he drops off to be able to cover the pass and run from Costa.



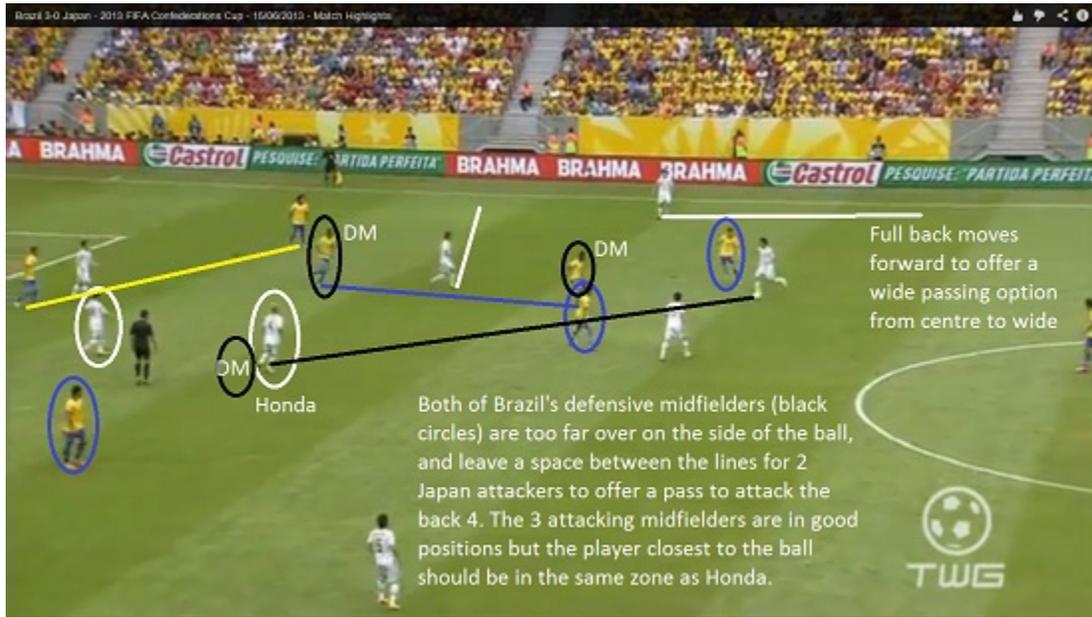
As Albiol drops off, this forces the defensive line deeper, which if Banega doesn't look for the killer pass, he could find Jonas in the previously offside position to turn. Alternatively, if this is a pre-designed pattern of play, the ball could be passed into a different player who may have different options to make sure they can enter the final 3rd and look to create a goal scoring chance.

Brazil v Japan – Honda exploits the positional mistakes of the 2 DM's



Japan have been patient in building the attack, and the ball is with the wide midfielder in an overloaded area. Instead of passing back to the full back who can be contained with quick pressure, he passed back

to the central midfielder who will have options with 3 angles – both sides and forward. Brazil’s DM’s have both come over to help on the side and leave space centrally.



As the central midfielder takes his 1st touch, he is pressed by Neymar, who leaves the full back free. Both DM’s (circled black) are too straight, and leave the space for Honda, who is in the zone the far side DM should be in. There is now an easy penetration pass for Japan to attack the back 4 with 2 players between the lines. The 3 attacking midfielders of Brazil (circled blue) and organised but one DM isn’t, and this leaves Brazil exposed centrally with no defensive triangulation.

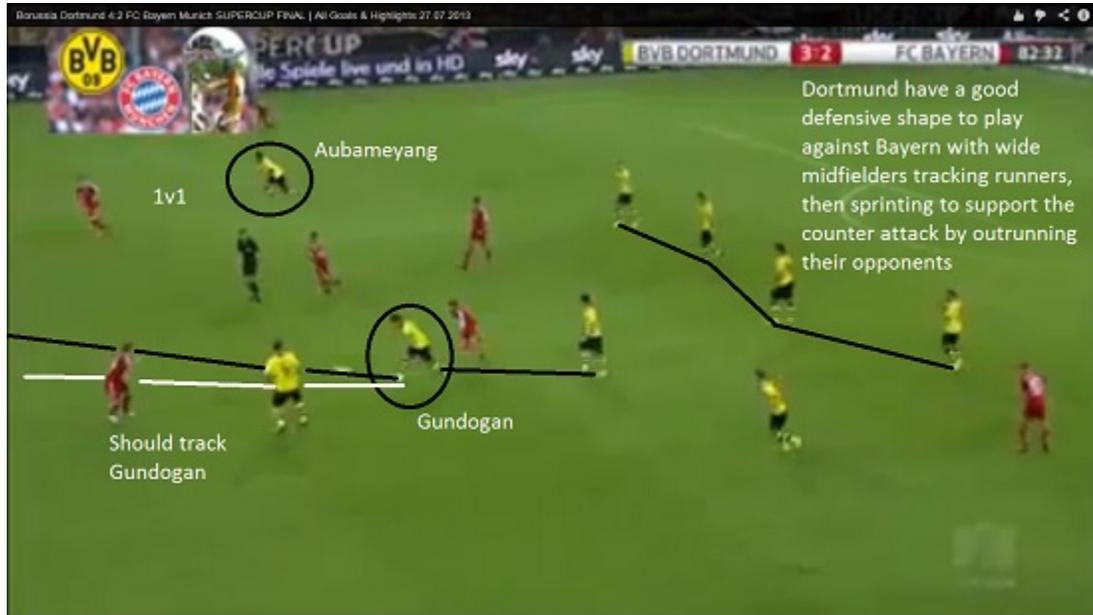


As Honda receives on the half turn, he has 2 options, and no pressure from a DM who are both too far away to close down the ball or the passing angles. Honda now has 2 passing lanes as there is a 2v1 on the far side CB.

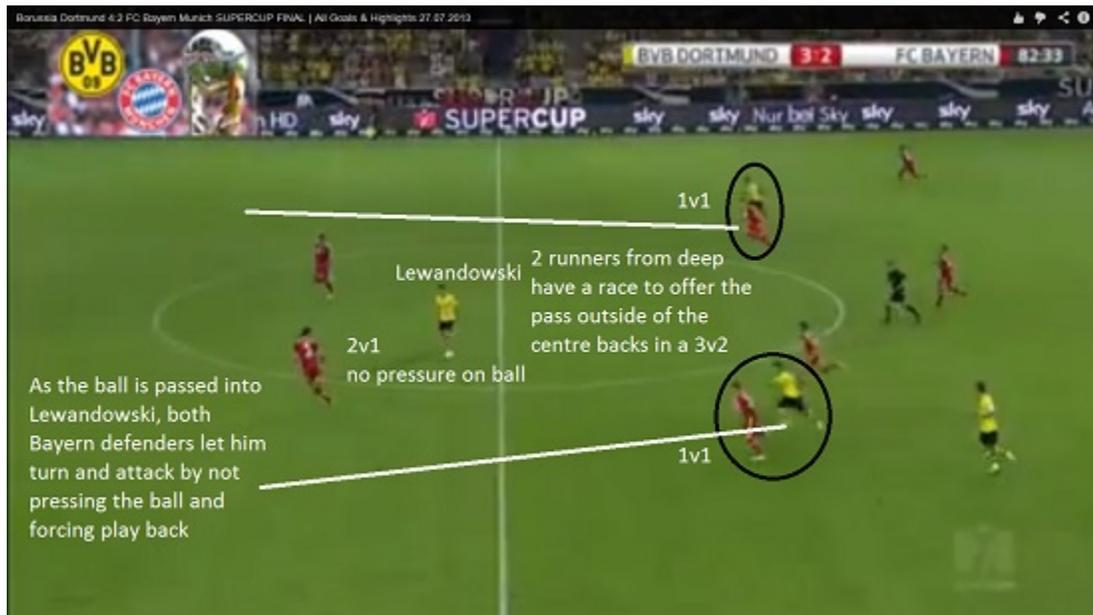
Honda decided to shoot from long range and Julio Cesar made the save; the wrong decision.

Attacking through the striker via direct forward passing

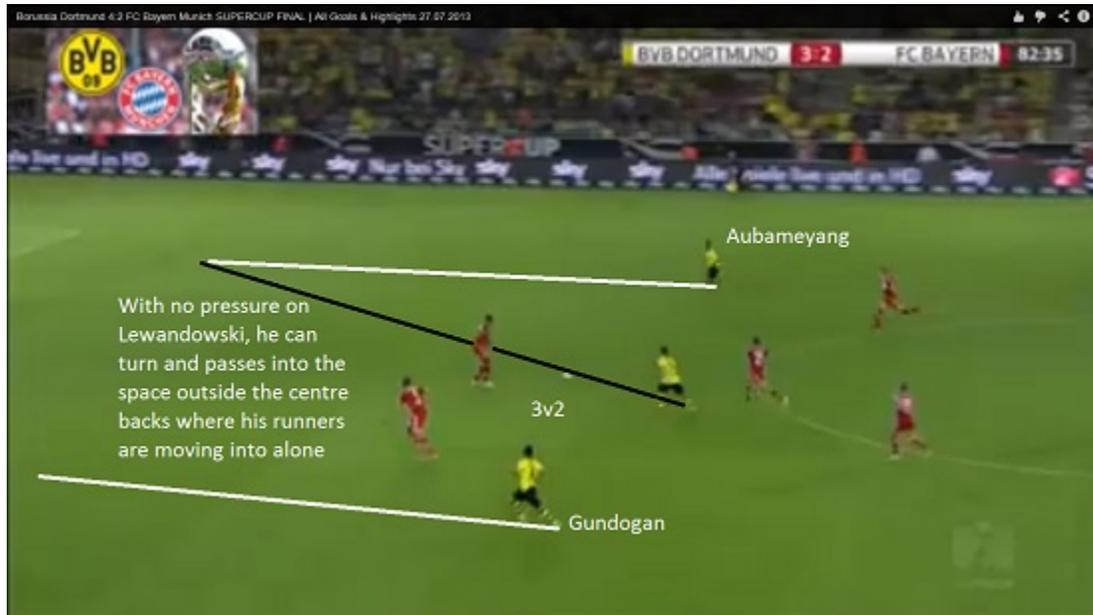
Direct passes into the striker need willing runners from deep to become effective



As Gundogan receives possession, he quickly initiates a new attack by passing directly into Lewandowski's feet to hold up play while 2 runners break wide from midfield to offer support on the counter attack.



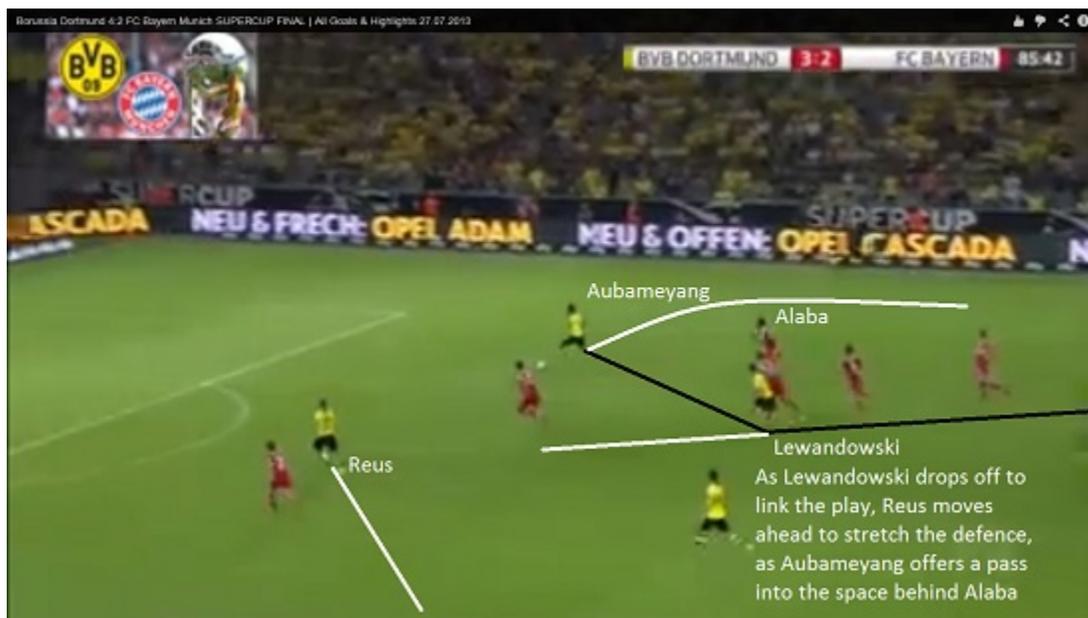
As Lewandowski receives with his back to goal, he is unpressured and can turn to look for options for a forward pass to attack direct to goal using the speed or the support runners who both have 1v1 races on the outside into the spaces left by the full backs.



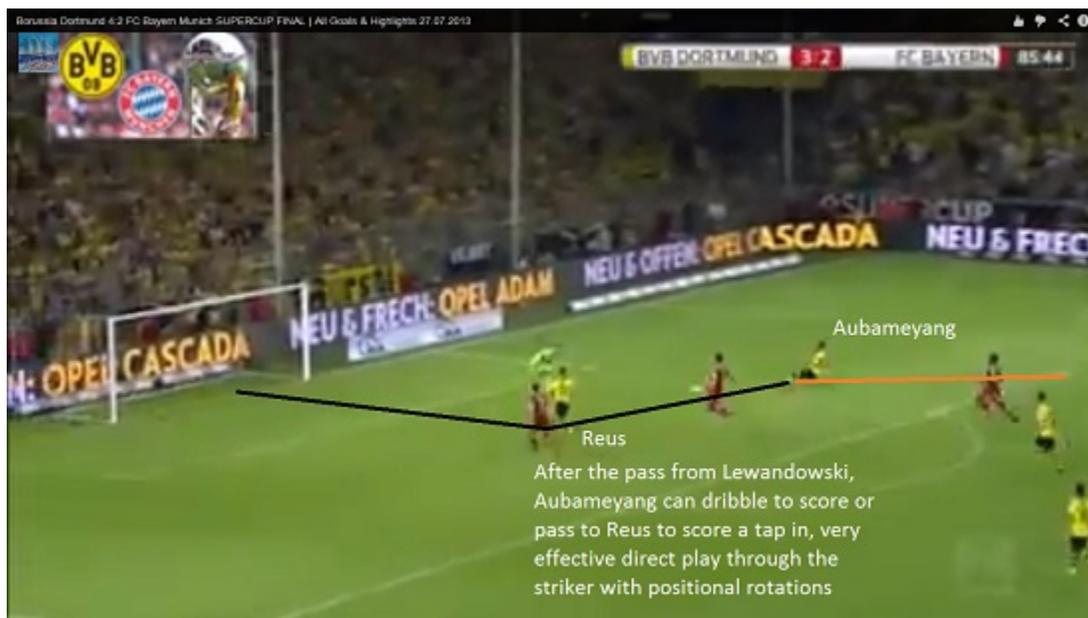
Lewandowski turns and has 2 options, but chooses the best one – right to the faster and in more space to attack, Aubameyang, who runs through 1v1 against the goal keeper.

The reason this was the best option is because the right of the 2 centre backs is able to intercept a pass between the central defenders into Gundogan on the left, and there is nobody who can do that on the right side. Unfortunately the pass is slightly over hit and Neuer can make the save.

Reus makes the blindside run as Aubameyang offers a 1st time pass round the corner



As Lewandowski drops off and brings the centre back with him, this is Aubameyang's trigger to sprint into the space behind Alaba as he knows Lewandowski will try to pass around the corner. On the other side, Reus makes a diagonal run from left to centre to find himself in Lewandowski's position between full back and far side centre back. As Aubameyang receives on the run, Reus must stay onside and in a receiving position to score, which he does for 4-2 Dortmund.



Aubameyang takes his 1st touch as he reaches for the ball, Reus stays in the space in front of the recovering defender and with Aubameyang's 2nd touch, he passes across the goal for Reus to tap into the goal.

Borussia Dortmund were in consecutive years, Bundesliga Champions, and showed one of the reasons why against Real Madrid. Unlike above where the passes into Lewandowski were into feet on the floor, through Lewandowski they have a striker who can deal with most types of service. Dortmund can mix their play up well because of this and some games require a different style to win. Jürgen Klopp decided that this game would require a solid base defensively, and a direct approach, specifically through Lewandowski using the speed of Reus, Goetze and Grossenkrautz to get the ball into dangerous positions behind the Real Madrid defence. Both goals came from this approach and all 3 players mentioned contributed to the goals.

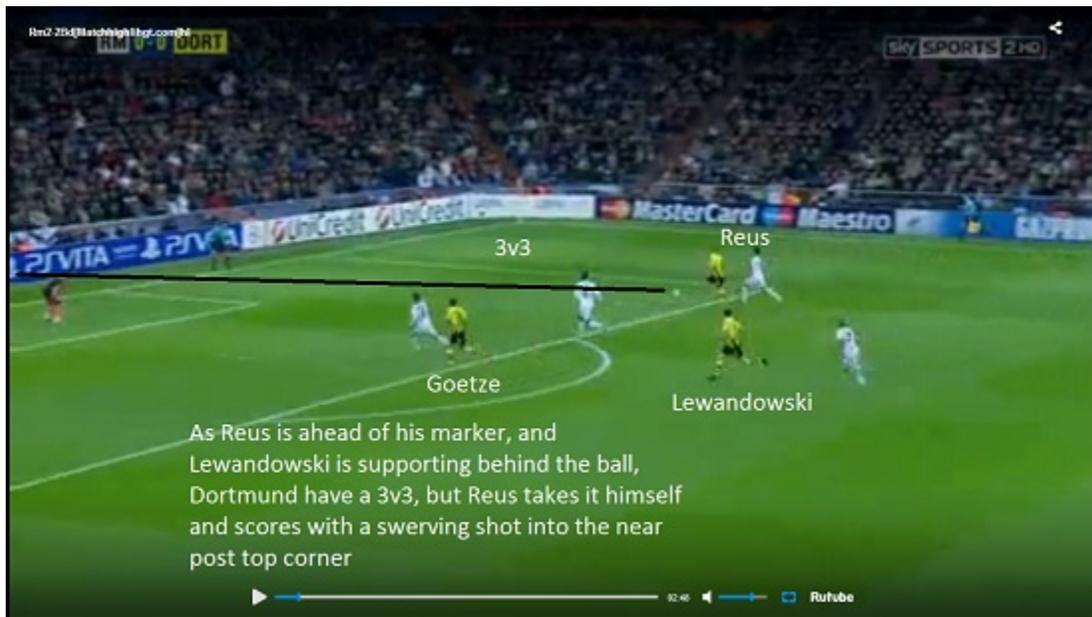
Reus loses his marker to give Lewandowski a passing option



As Piszczek has the ball, Reus drops off to offer a pass, but as he is pressured, Reus spins behind his marker and Piszczek plays the long pass to Lewandowski. Goetze is close to Lewandowski making a 2v1 on Ramos, now Pepe will have to attack the ball unbalanced as Ramos is needed to run with Goetze.



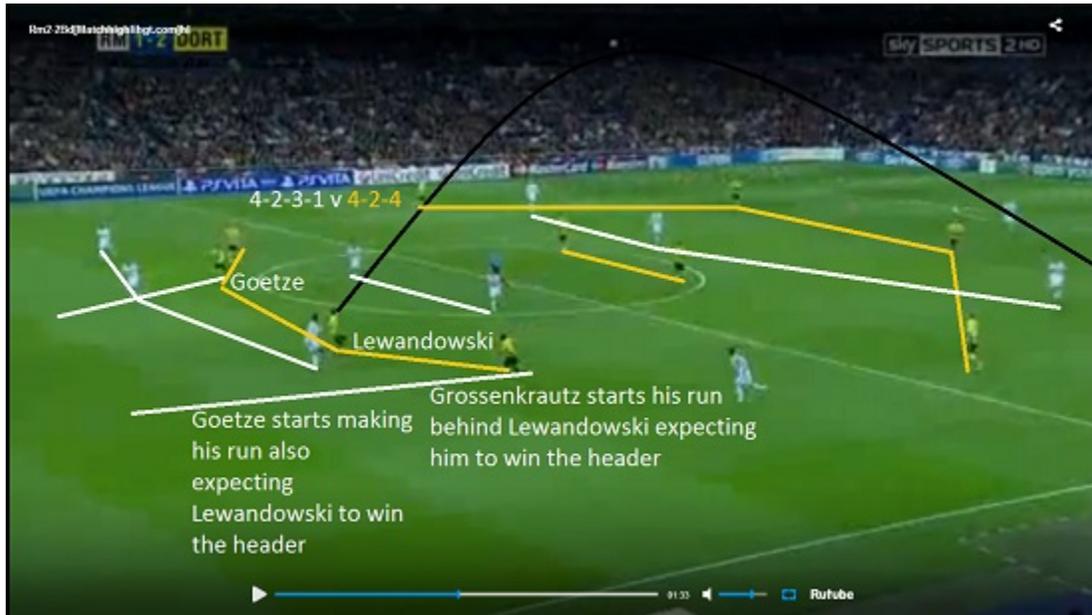
Lewandowski heads into the run of Reus who is away from his marker and touches calmly into space and looks to see his options with Goetze and Lewandowski supporting.



Reus decides that shooting is the best option and smashes a swerving volley past Casillas from just inside the box for 1-0 Dortmund from a simple but effective attack.

The goal comes from Reus recognising he needs to lose his marker and Lewandowski's accurate headed pass.

Dortmund's 2nd goal – Goetze and Grossenkrautz support ahead of Lewandowski to finish the attack



As we can see from the image, Dortmund have been instructed to be direct and have 2 players protect the defence as Real Madrid are fast on the counter attack. The front 4 know that any touch that takes the ball behind the defence gives them the advantage around the goal, so Reus, Goetze and Grossenkrautz all make early runs behind Lewandowski, the target man.



As Lewandowski again wins the header, Grossenkrautz is behind the defence and can dribble to the goal, knowing he will have Goetze in support centrally if he needs to use him. This is effectively a 2v1 against Pepe, the last defender.



As Ramos and Pepe both press the ball, Grossenkrautz lifts the pass away from the two defenders and gives Goetze a 1v1 against Casillas, he takes a touch forward before knocking the ball past Casillas for 2-1 Dortmund.

This goal comes from early movements ahead of the target man with the expectation that he will win the header. Also, with multiple players supporting this long pass and flick on game plan, there is more chance of success, especially with fast, decisive players like Reus, Goetze and Grossenkrautz.

Training Sessions for the 4-2-3-1

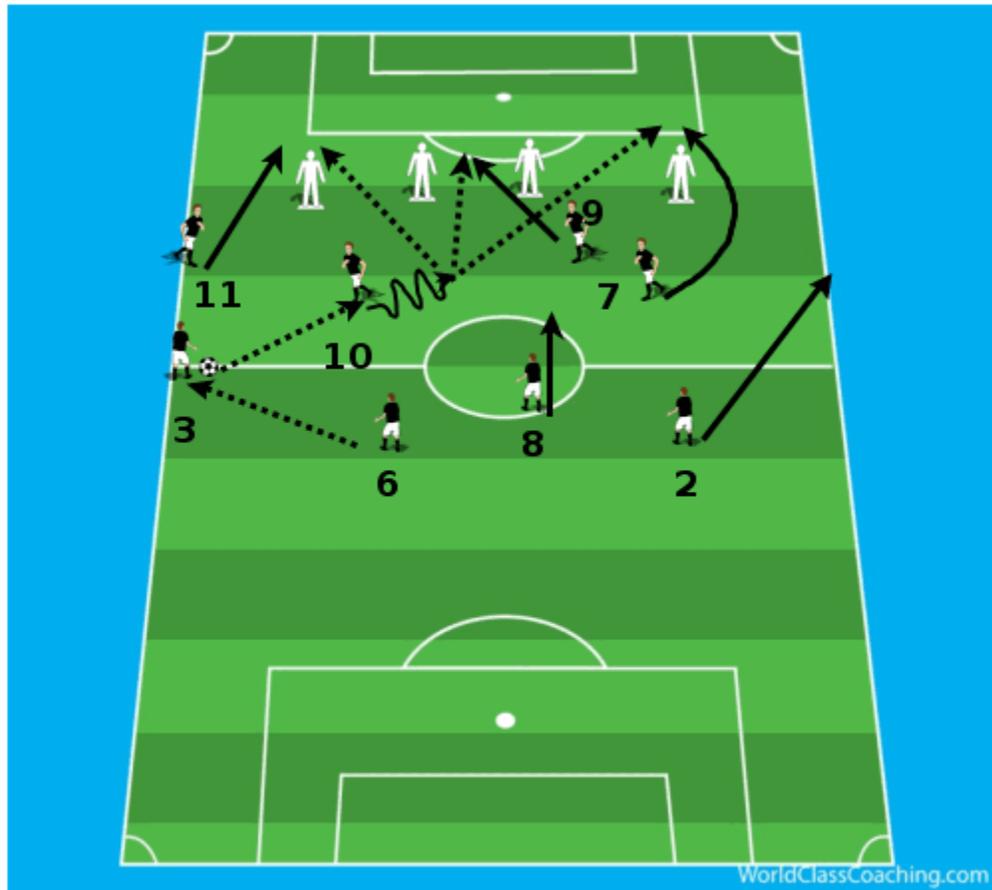
Patterns of play

- **Attacking in transition from high pressure defending**
- **Attacking through the sides**
- **Attacking through the number 10**
- **Attacking through the striker via direct forward passing**
- **Attacking with penetration exercises**

Patterns of play for using the number 10

Positions – Number; LB 3, RB 2, CM 6&8, LW 11, RW 7, AM 10, CF 9

Receive to dribble centrally and make a choice of 3 passing options

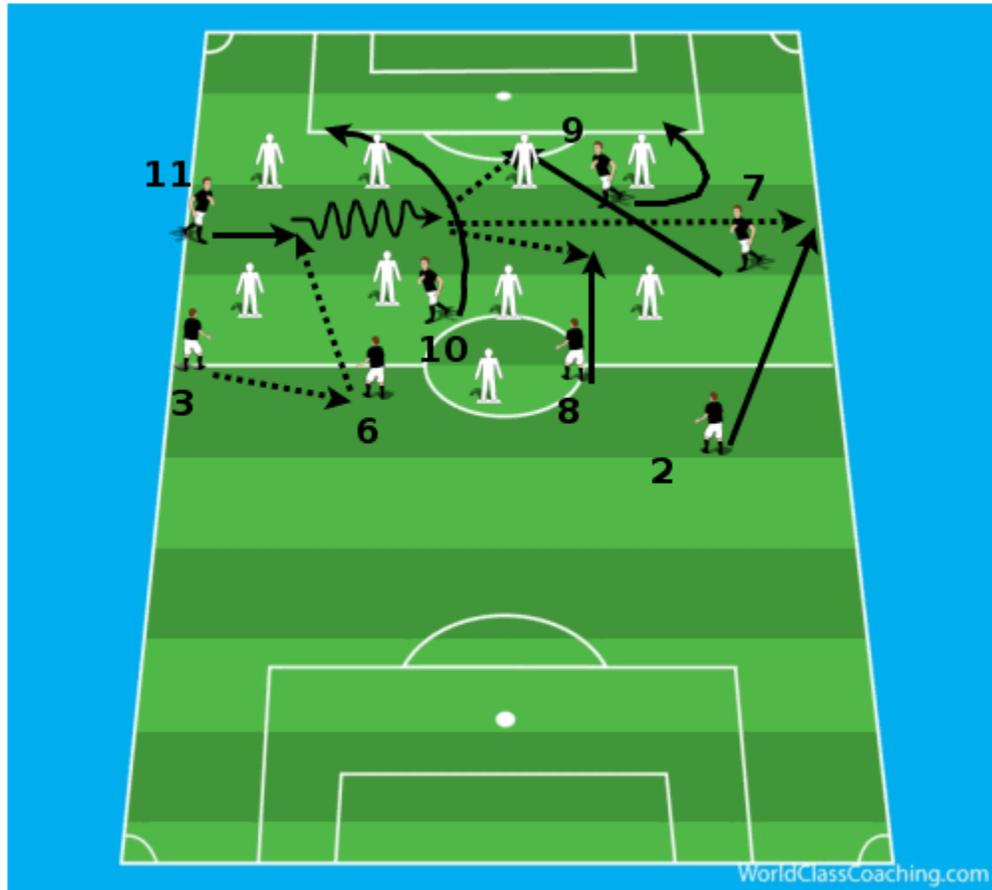


Pattern of play – 10 dribbles to find a penetrating pass behind the defence

Full back passes into 10 who is between the lines. 10 receives and turns, dribbles across the field to trigger movements from 7, 9 and 11. 8 will move forward to support the play.

When 10 turns, 9 will run across the front of the far side centre back, 7 will arc around the far side full back, 11 will make a run for a reverse pass between the near side centre back and full back. If these passes aren't possible, 8 and 2 will offer alternative passes to retain possession and try to enter the final 3rd to build an attack.

10 opens up central space by making a penetrating run beyond the back 4

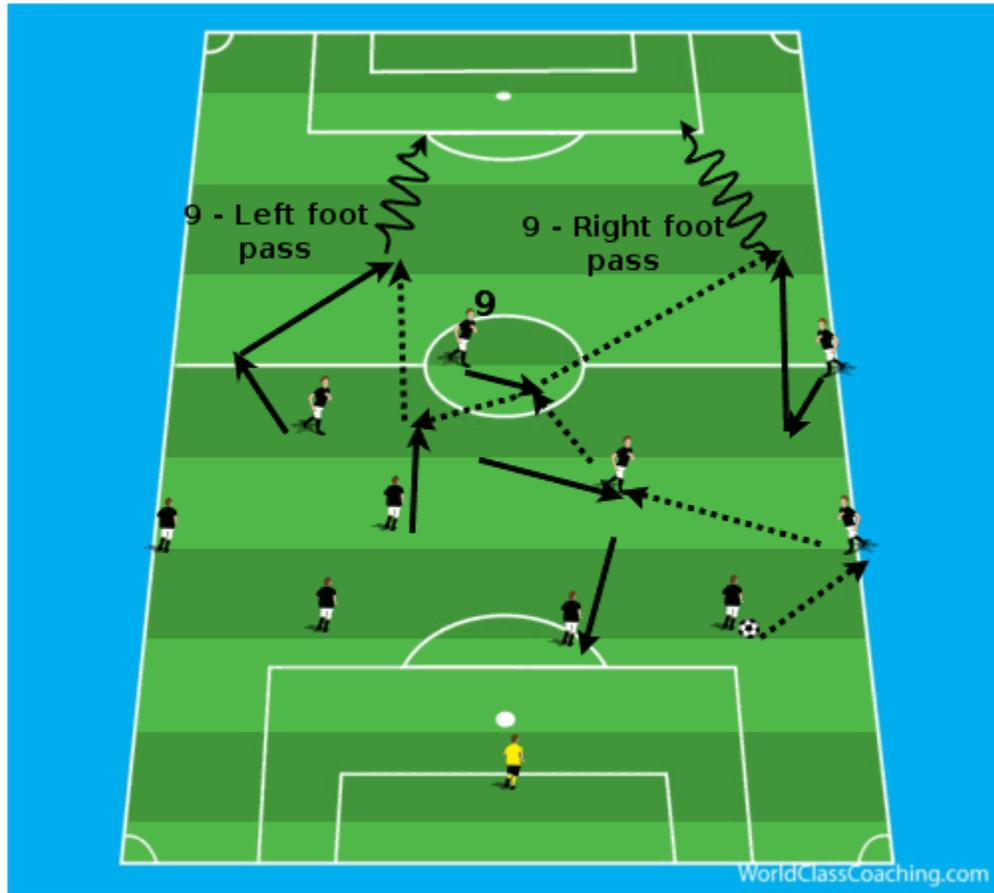


Pattern of play -10 stretches the space between the lines with a forward run.

Full back passes inside to the near side CM, as the 10 makes the run behind the centre back and full back. If in a game, the central midfielder runs with 10, the space will be left for 11, if the defence drop back to cover the run and possible long pass; the distance between the lines will be larger.

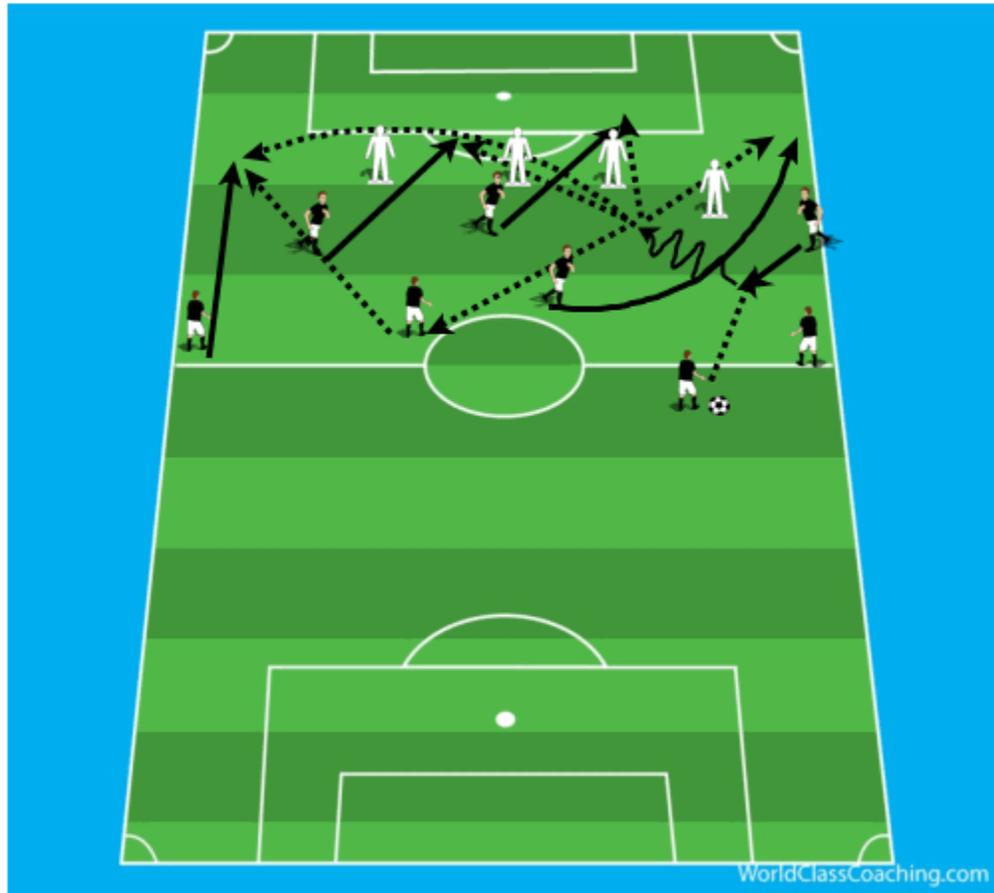
As the ball reaches 6, 11 will move inside to receive the pass and dribble inside. This will trigger movements from 8, 9 and 7. 8 will move forward to offer a short pass in case a penetrating pass to 7 who has run across the defensive line as 9 pulls wide onto the far side full back to offer a pass between the far side centre back and full back. If these options aren't possible, 2 will offer a switch to the far side to enter the final 3rd and maintain the attack.

Wingers look for the final penetrating pass from deep positions



The near side CM will drop deep to form a back 3 as the full backs play wide to draw the opposition forward. As the CB passes wide, the number 10 will move on the half turn to offer a pass inside. As he receives, the striker will drop short and then either play a 1st time pass around the corner into the run of the right winger with his right foot, or he will lay off to the CM with his left foot, who moves forward to pass behind the defence for the left winger.

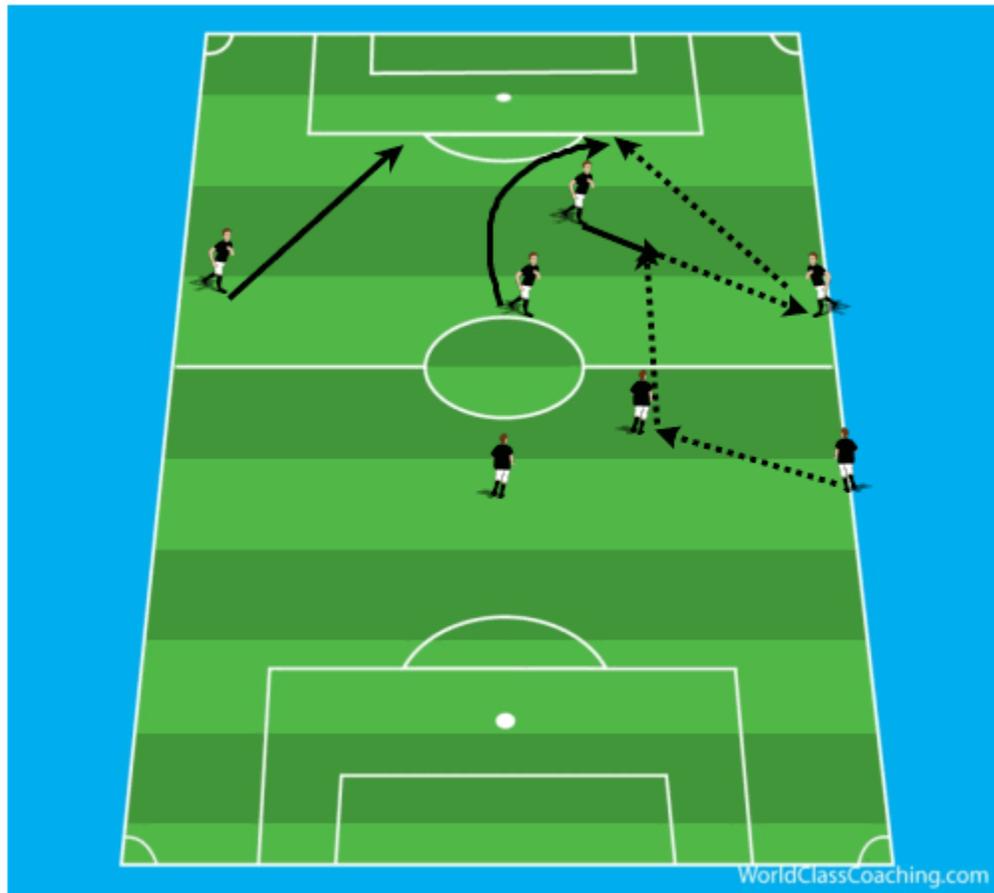
Winger and 10 change positions to offer multiple passing options



The CM will have an easy passing option to the full back, and the winger moving inside between the lines. As the pass is played to the winger, he will be overlapped by 10 who will offer a pass into the space created on the right. As the winger dribbles inside, 9 will make a diagonal run between the CB's, the far side winger will run between FB and CB. The far side full back should recreate the width by pushing forward and offering a switch pass if no penetration options are available. The other CM should be in a clear passing lane to offer a pass back and the attack restarts with the CM and the 4 attacking players in their rotated positions.

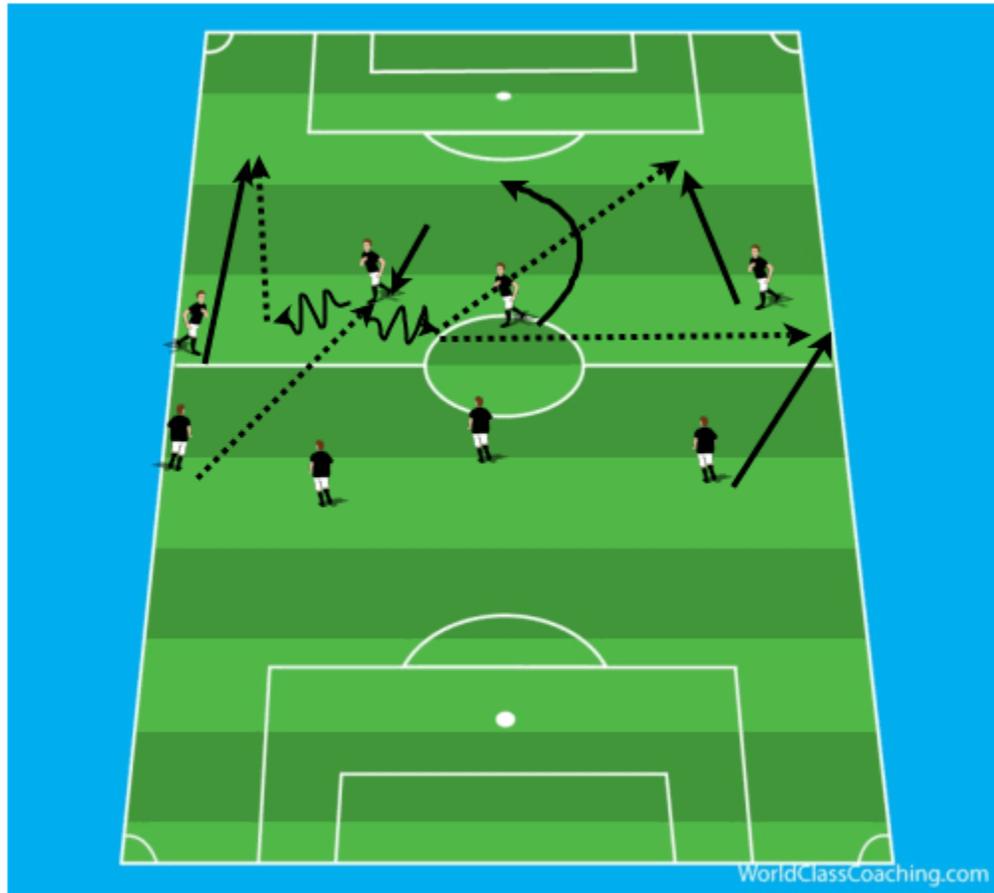
Patterns of play for using the striker

Playing from CM into the striker to trigger movement around the striker



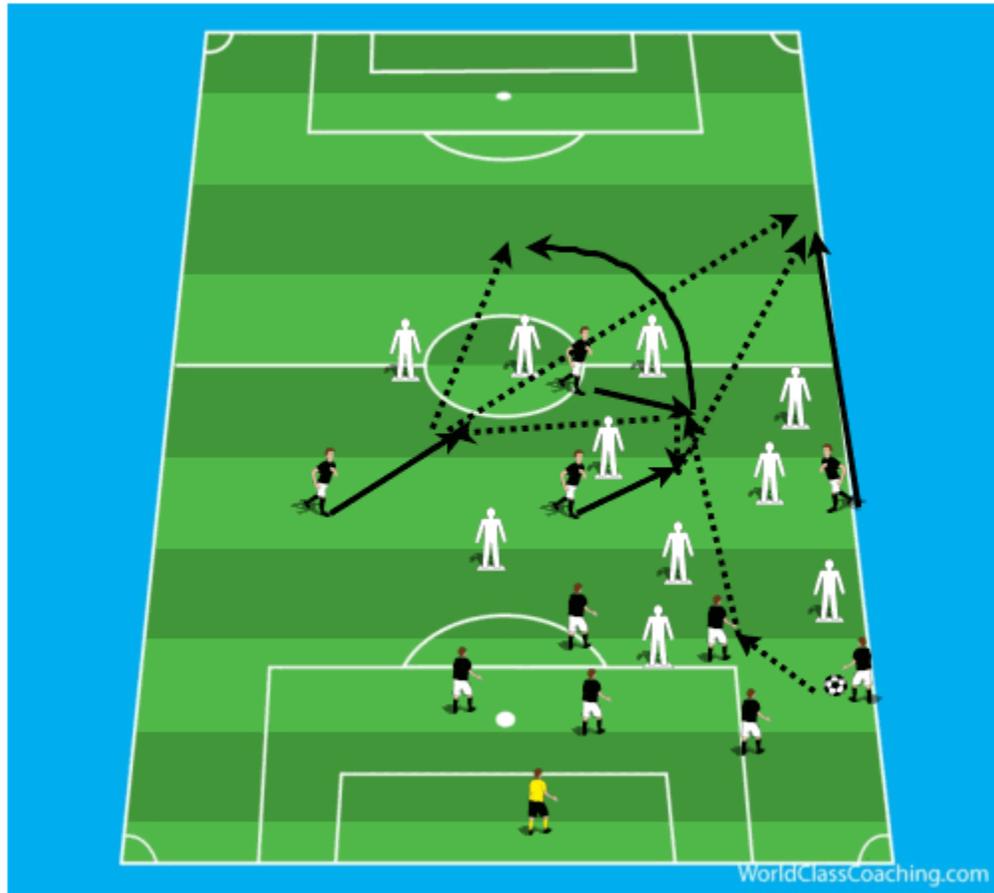
As the pass is played inside from RB to CM, the striker will move into a passing lane, drawing a CB with him. This triggers early movement from 10 and 11 as the striker lays off to the winger. The winger will try to play a 1st time pass into the number 10 who will have help at the back post via 11.

Striker creates space to turn and look for a killer pass, or to release the full back



Full back in possession with no short options; striker drops deep to protect and turn; number 10 will try to fill in the space left to occupy the defence. As the pass is played forward, the wingers both sprint into the space behind the back 4 and look for a through ball from the striker. If the through ball isn't possible, the far side full back can be released to start a phase of possession play.

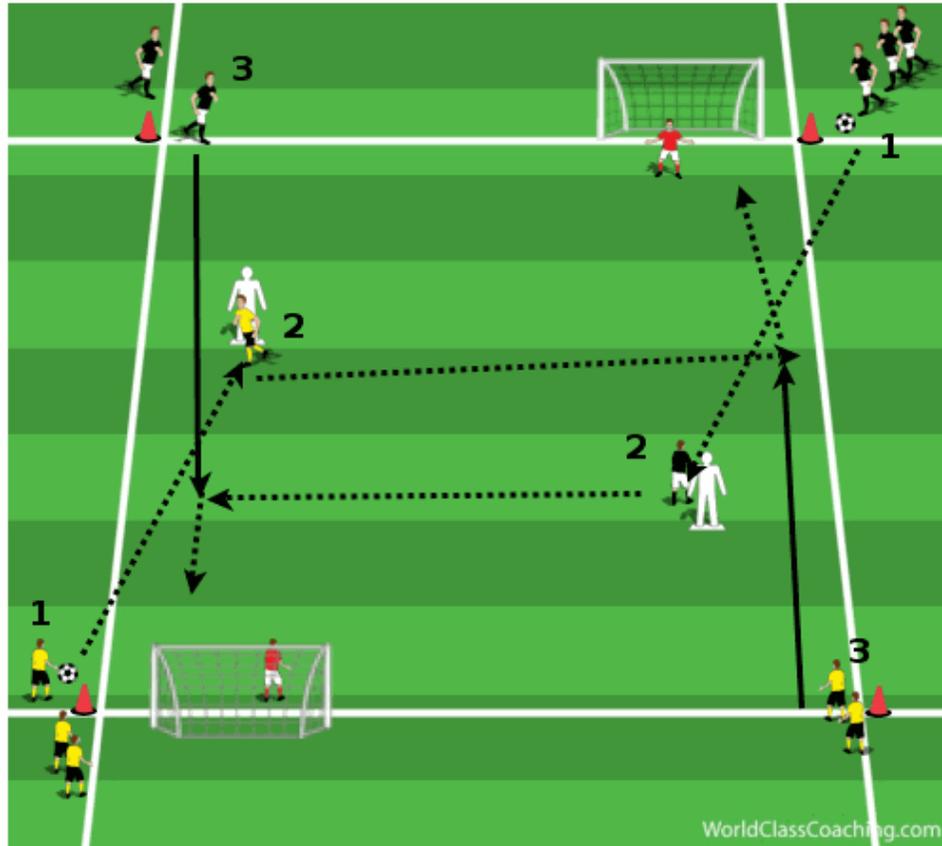
Finding the striker under high pressure within own half



Under pressure from the opposition, the back 4 and midfield 2 stay close to ensure they can recover if they lose possession, while the 3-1 attack look to be mobile and find space. The long option into the striker is a good option and can make the attack more unpredictable instead of always passing short under pressure.

The ball is passed into the near side CM in a little pocket of space, and on his 2nd touch, finds the strikers chest with a lofted pass. As this pass is played, the number 10 will get close and support, to offer a lay off to pass behind for the run into the winger. If the striker can turn, he can pass wide to the far side winger who can either pass behind the defence to 10 who makes the run behind the defence, or the far side winger on the other side.

Attacking through the striker – Developing technique – Receiving with back to goal



Pass in sequence – 1→2→3 in the triangle form.

FB/CM (1) will pass into the striker on the half turn, who will protect and turn with the outside of the left foot, then protect on the right side before turning to pass wide with the right foot into the run of 3 who will shoot 1st time from the centre of the goal from between 15-20 yards.

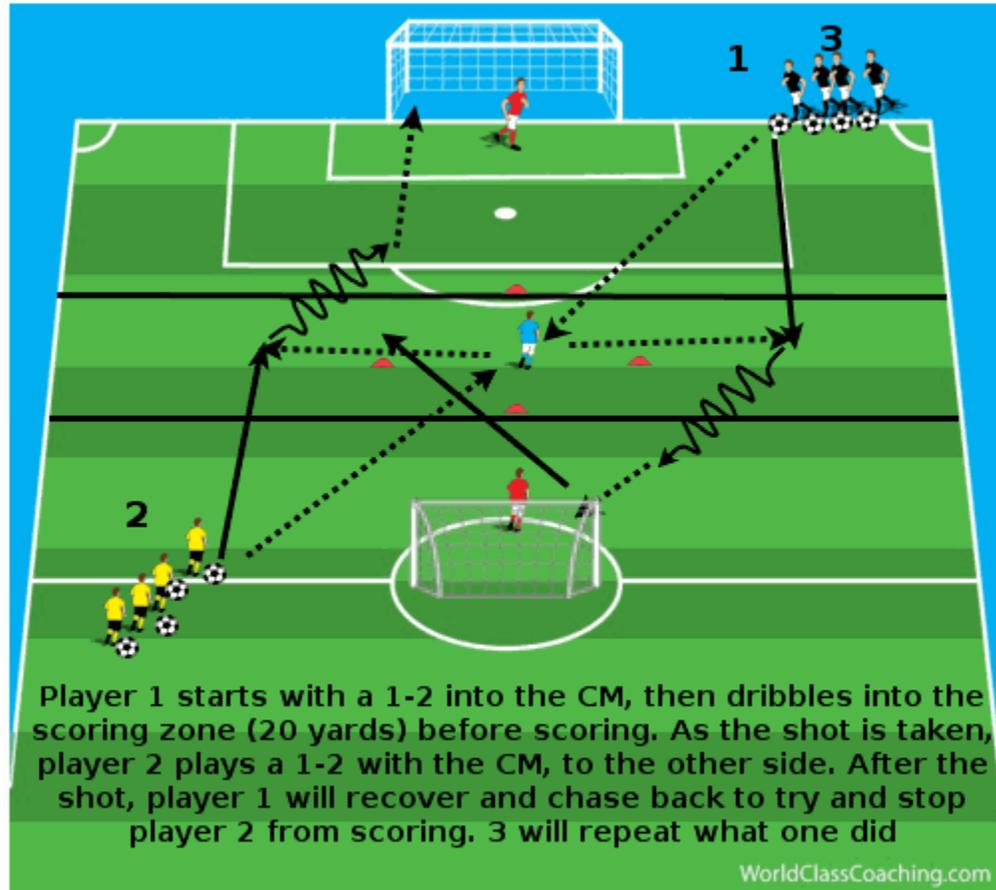
Coaching Points:

- Make communication with each player before the 1st pass, and before the receive
- Receive on the half turn, knees bent
- 1st touch should set up the next pass
- Pass should be into the stride of the shooter

Progressions/Variations:

- 2 can receive, protect, fake and spin the opposite way to the touchline and cut back for 3
- 1 can overlap 2, who will turn inside then play a reverse pass to cut back for 3
- 2 can spin and shoot, 3 will look for a rebound
- Add in a recovering defender to track 3

Finishing game – Finishing at speed on the break



Player 1 passes into the (blue) CM, plays a 1-2 then runs into the finishing zone to score. As this happens, player 2 (yellow) plays a 1-2 with CM to repeat. As Yellow starts, Black who scored will chase back in transition to help defend the counter attack and block the shot. When Yellow shoots, player 3 (Black) will repeat and try to score in the far side goal while yellow chases back to defend.

Coaching Points:

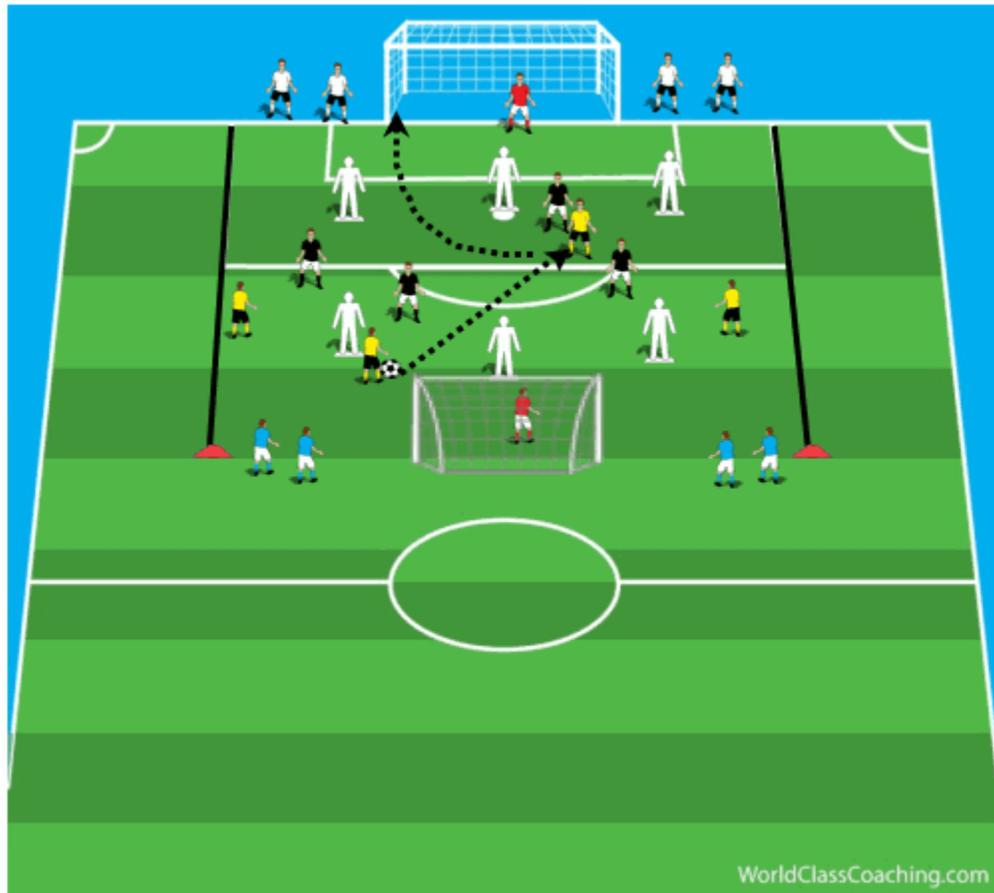
- Attack at pace
- Minimal touches to go direct to goal
- Give the GK 'the eyes' – look at one corner and shoot to the other
- Protect the ball if the defender chases back in transition to defend 1v1
- Assess GK position, fake shot to make him stall and take advantage
- Use different finish types; power, curved, placed, toe-poke, outside of foot, chip, lob etc

Progressions/Variations

- Play 2v2 – attacking support player comes from far side, defensive support player comes from diagonal corner from the ball

- Change CM each time – Attack, Defend, spare CM, CM, return to your group
- Time limit
- 1st team to x goals wins

Finishing Game 2 – 3v3/4v4 - Using defenders as guides



Mark out a 36x44yard field with 4-6 mannequins.

Players play 3v3/4v4 and try to avoid passing or dribbling into an opponent or mannequin - these are used to replicate extra defenders around the goalmouth that can be used as a guide to curl the ball in the goal.

If you score, you stay on and restart with a ball from your own GK and re-attack the next opponent.

Coaching Points:

- When possible, try to shoot
- If GK vision is blocked, use the mannequins/defenders as a guide
- Try to use a variety of strikes, far post high curved, far post low curved, near post blast, etc
- Play quickly and between the players, use the mannequins to block pressure

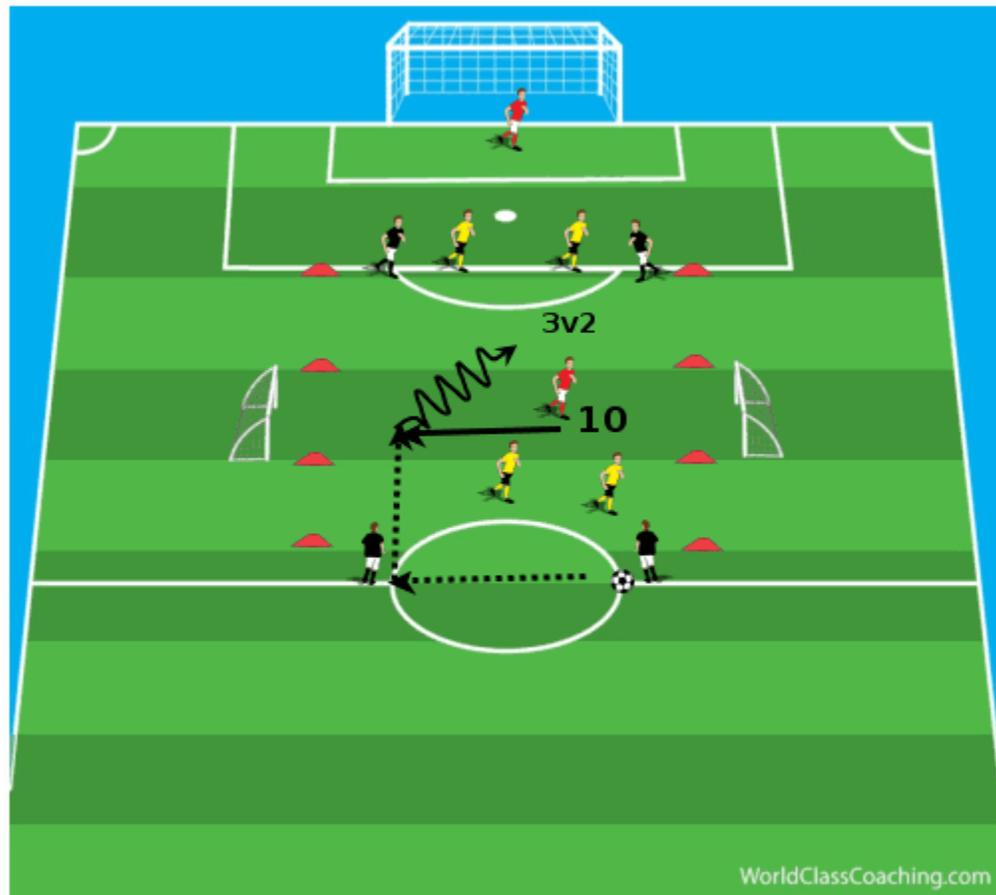
- Follow up on rebounds from the mannequin to shoot 1st time – reaction finishing

Progressions/Variations:

- Enforce a time limit if not enough shots are made
- Offer a playmaker or full time defender to play with/against an overload
- Add neutral wide players to cut back for late runs or crosses into the box
- Players have a maximum of 2 touches inside the box

Attacking through the number 10

Free the number 10 between the lines



Mark out an area 20m long by 12m wide.

The 2 central midfielders exchange passes until a chance to free the number 10 appears; when this happens, they will try to find the #10 who will play on the half turn and play 3v2 against the centre backs.

If the defence win the ball, they should pass into the small goals on the outside of the area.

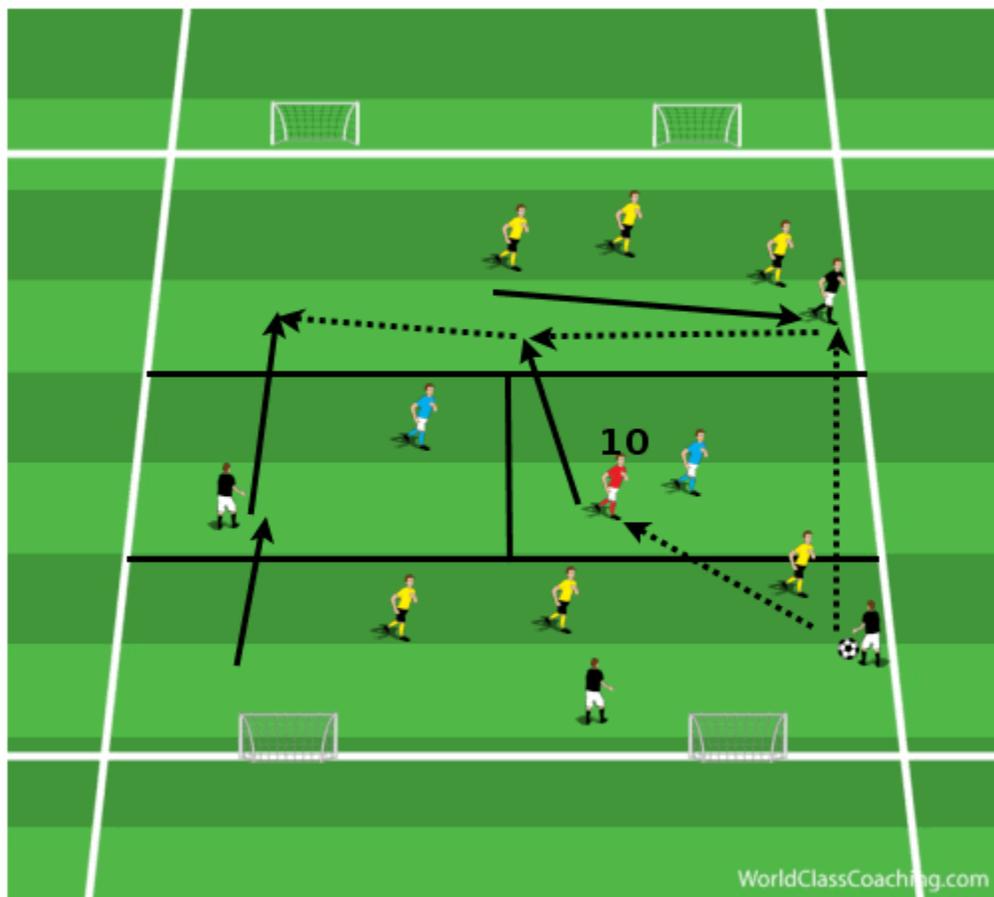
Coaching Points:

- #10 should be looking for the space between the 2 defenders
- Scan the play around to assess the movement of the 2 players with the centre backs
- Be decisive and creative around the goal

Progressions/Variations:

- Use a recovering defender to make a 3v3
- Add in an opponent to play v the #10
- Time limit to score
- Add in wingers and full backs on the side and attack in a 2-3-1 formation

Find the number 10 between the lines and support



Make an area of 30m, with 2x 8x10 boxes in the centre, with full-time defenders (Blue) and #10 (red)

In the main zones are 3v3 scenarios, the 3 defenders must find the number 10 inside one of the boxes, who should try to play on the half turn and either find the striker, turn and dribble to attack, or release the supporting player who should support on the far side.

between the lines to penetrate (penetration zone) or in-front of the midfield to play through and support off the ball, then the end zone is 3v1 where the #10s must support the attack in the finishing zone.

If the defence win the ball, counter attack and try to score into one of the 4 small goals.

Coaching Points:

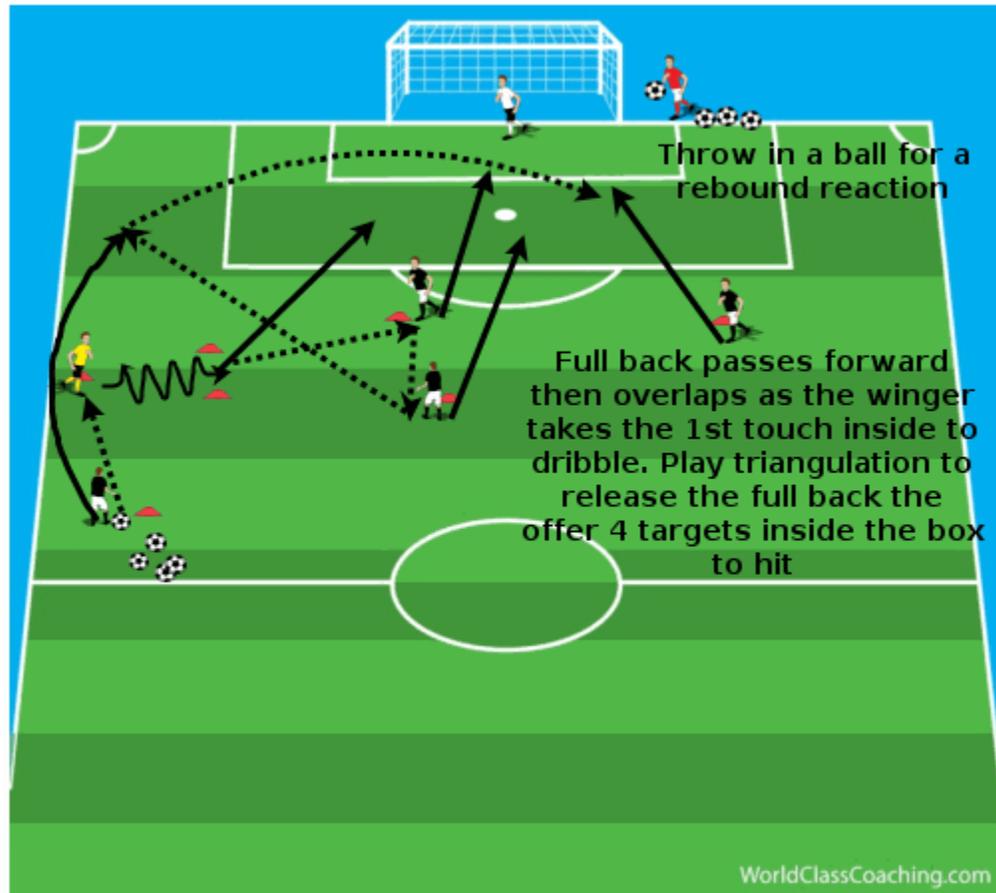
- In Penetration zone(with the 3 #10s) players should be patient and retain possession until a good penetration opportunity opens up to attack the finishing zone
- #10 should try to play on the half turn
- Rotate positions and try to draw 2/3 opponents to one side the exploit the space
- Quickly support ahead of the ball when a #10 can turn and attack the defence for a 3v3/4v3

Progressions/Variations:

- Allow a recovery defender to help in the finishing zone
- Allow a midfielder to press high and make a 3v2
- Change formation to 3-5/4-4/4-3-1/4-1-3 and alter the positions of #10s accordingly
- All 3 #10s must touch the ball before a finishing zone entry can be made

Attacking through the sides

Combination play – wide-central-wide switch play



Move the ball in a sequence from FB to winger, winger touches inside and dribbles between the gate, passes into the striker who lays off for #10 who passes ahead of the FB on the overlap. The wingers, striker and #10 all enter the box and attack the cross.

Coaching Points:

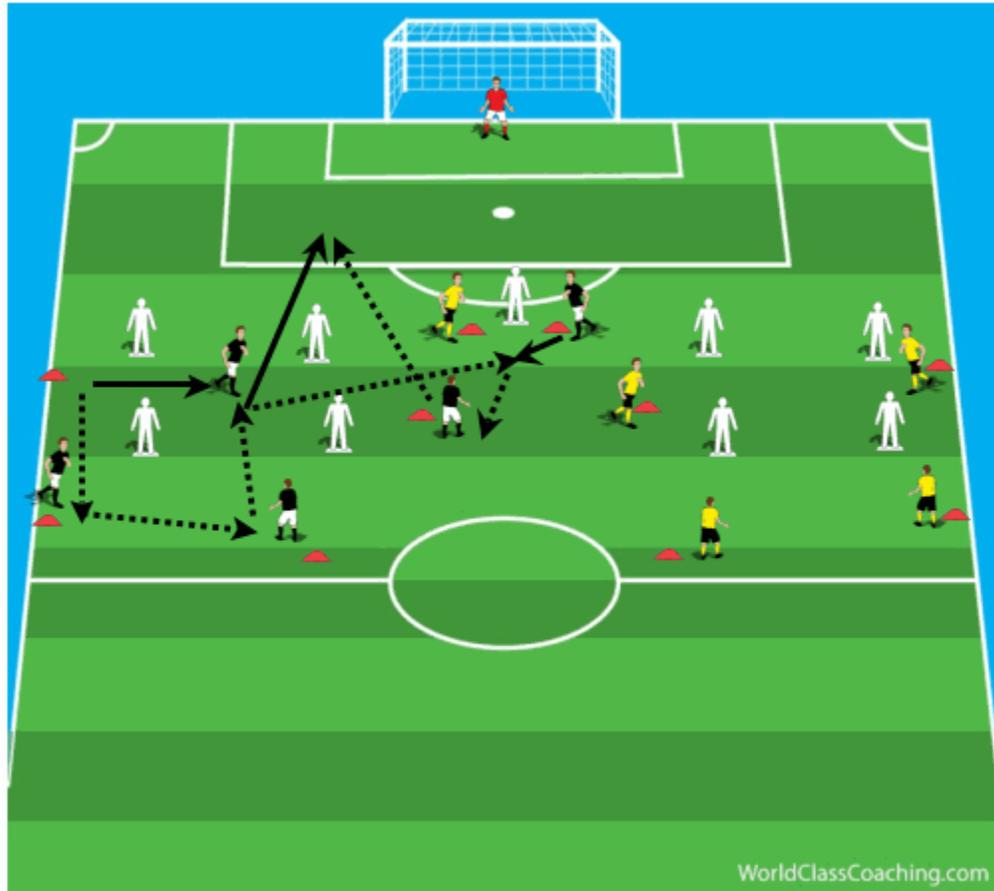
- Timing of movements after the winger passes inside
- Angle of pass – into the stride of full back for 1st time cross
- Crossing variations – long cross, near post low cross and cut back to #10 on edge of the box
- Communication on the run, timing and checking the runs to lose markers

Progressions/Variations:

- Striker can turn and release the far side winger himself
- Pass back to the #10 to play a through ball into the winger on either side or full back to cross
- Full back receives from striker, cuts back to the winger near corner of the box

- Winger passes into striker to #10 who passes wide to the full back for a 1-2 with winger positioned inside to cross or cut back

Finding the pocket of space between the lines – moving inside from the touchline

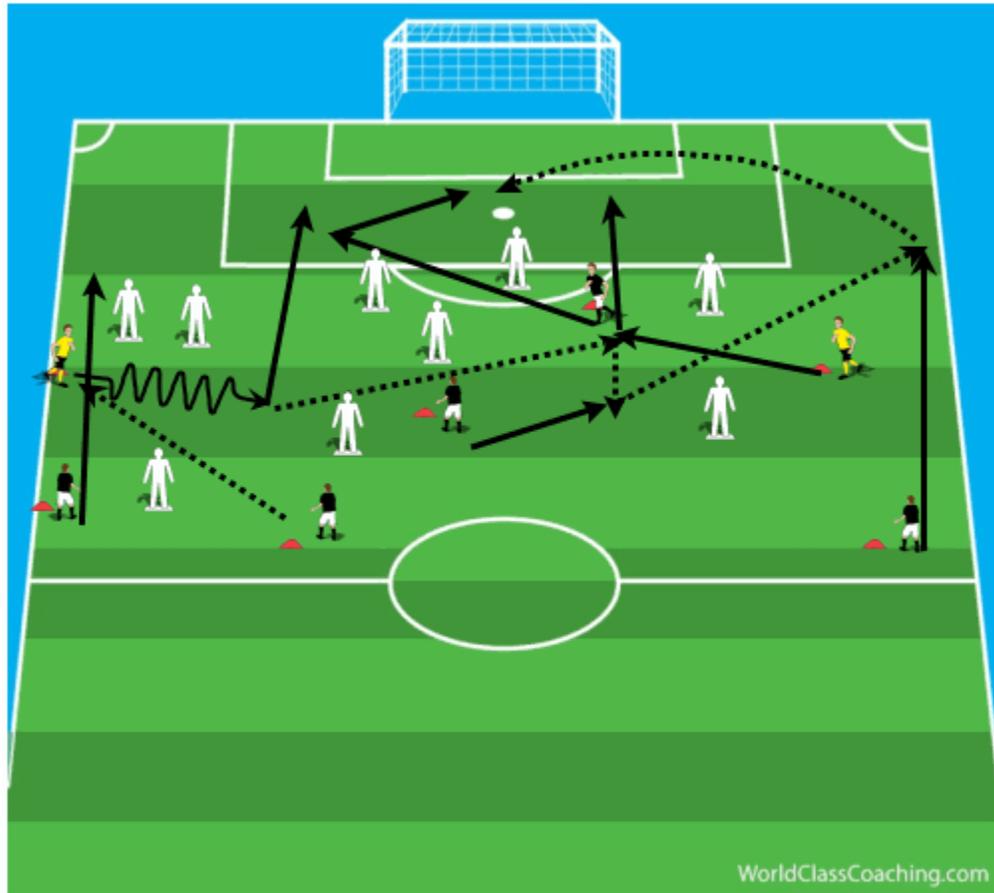


The winger will pass back to the full back, who will pass 1st time to the CM. as the ball is passed inside, the winger will jog into the space between 4 players, then pass 1st time into the feet of the striker coming to meet the ball, who lays off 1st time to the #10 who passes 1st time into the run of the winger who looks to score.

Coaching Points:

- Maintain fluidity in the attack
- Body shape on the run to receive and play 1st time and stay on the move
- Delay the sprint into the box – accelerate as the ball is passed
- Arrive on time to score, not too early, not too late
- Pass and move using the safe side – protect the ball on the move

Cutting inside to switch play to change the point of attack



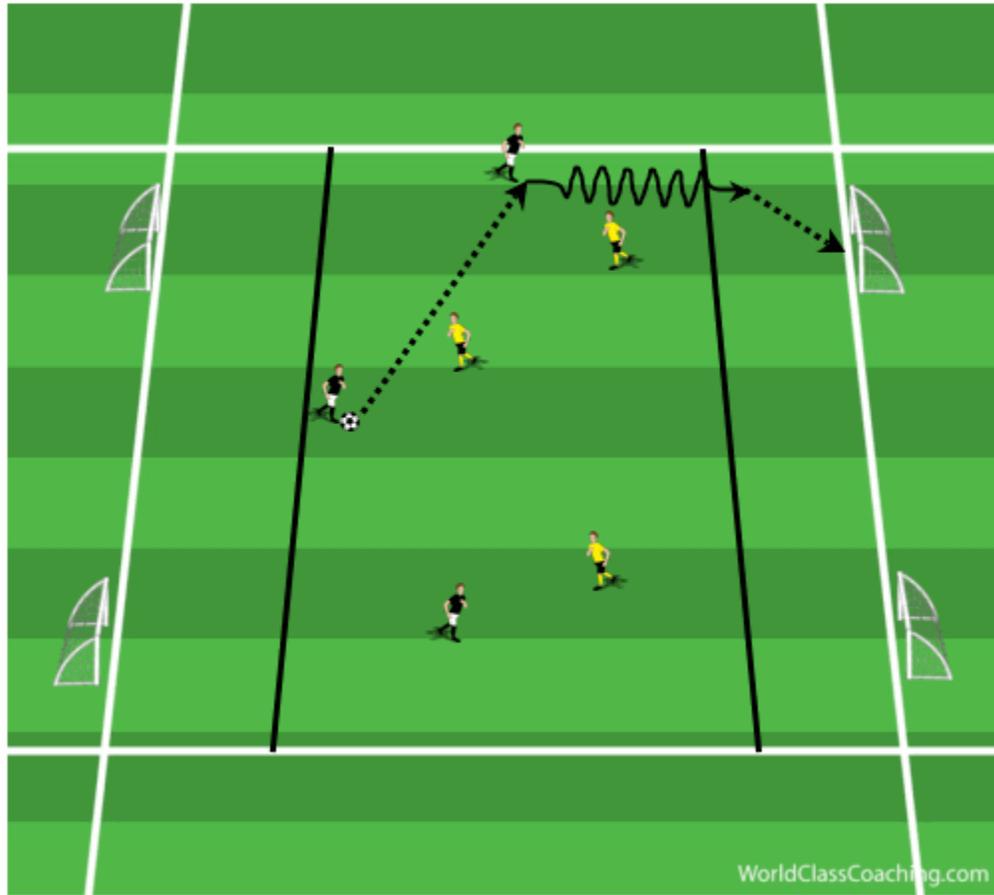
CM passes wide to the winger, who takes his 1st touch inside and attacks the space. The winger will then drive a pass into the striker who lays off to the #10 who then passes into far side overlap.

The winger will attack the box, the striker will attack the far post then the front, and the far side winger will fill the space of the striker then attack the cutback position or the front post.

Coaching Points:

- Players move into receiving positions on time to pass again 1st time
- Pass into the stride of the next player
- Striker receives with back to goal then blocks the defender from pressing (coach/ player)
- Full back picks out team mate with cut back if possible, if not, make decision on positioning

Wide Play 1 – 3v3 with 4 goals – Developing the basic principles of attacking width



Players play a simple 3v3 where the defence pass the ball out to the 3 attackers and then try to stop them getting over the scoring zone (6m from goal) to shoot.

If you need to, you can start 3v2 and make the wide pass obvious to exploit the spaces on the sides.

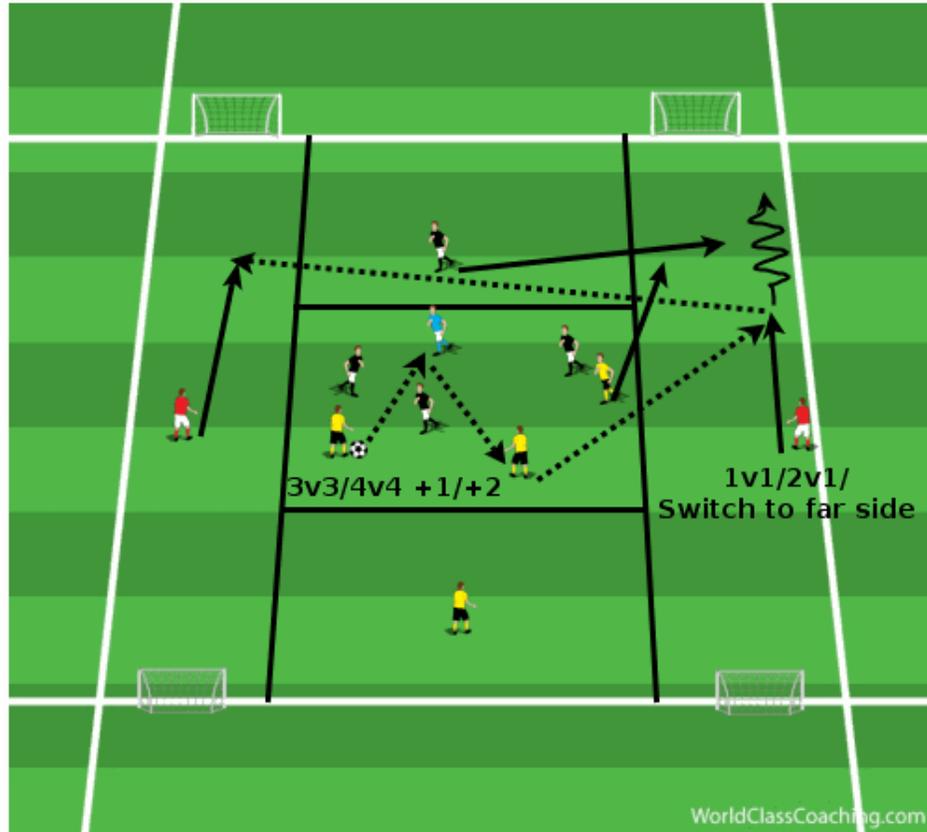
Coaching Points:

- Keep the ball moving, and look to create a 2v1 to isolate 1 defender and score
- Use different movements to find a way to score; diagonal runs, overlaps, 1-2's etc
- Look for through balls behind the scoring line, or aggressive 1v1 dribbles

Progressions/Variations:

- Add in a sweeper who patrols the scoring zone
- Add in a 3rd goal for wide-centre penetration possibilities
- Play with a large goal – pass/dribble through a gate before trying to score

3v3+1 with wide zone and covering defenders



Mark out a central zone with 3 areas (16x12), and 2 wide zones for outballs. (36x48)

Play 3v3 with a joker (blue) inside the main zone. To exit the box, play x passes then switch play to the winger (red). When this happens, the covering defender can sprint over and cover the space – the attack can help by making a 2v1, or the winger can switch play to the far side to score in the other goal.

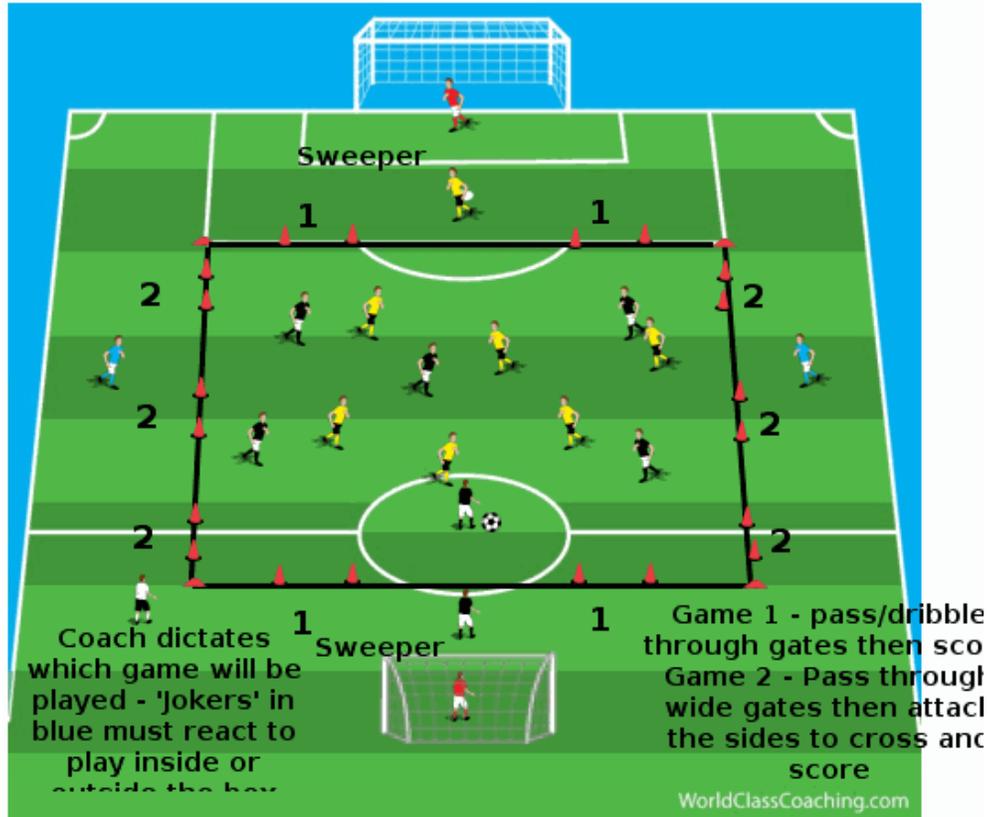
Coaching Points:

- Scan for the right time to pass wide and open up the attack
- Pass against the grain in possession box
- Wingers should move to keep open passing lanes
- Receive on outstep to get through acceleration phase quickly
- Offer support on overlap to create 2v1 – decisions- when to pass short, switch or dribble?

Progressions/Variations:

- Have 2 covering defenders to allow a press-inside cover scenario
- Add a 3rd, central goal to allow wide-central attacking
- Remove small wide goals and allow winger to play 1v1 to dribble and cross or dribble to score

Directional possession – Outball to attack



Mark out an area of roughly 45x45 yards, with goals 18 yards from the edge of the perimeter. Place 3 gates around the outside of both side lines and 2 gates at the top and bottom of the box.

To score, the attack must either pass the ball wide to one of the wingers through the gates, or dribble through the top of the box via a gate and attack the goal, depending on which game the coach has dictated by calling 1 or 2.

If the game is to attack the top of the box, the blue's will be jokers inside the box, if it is the wide game, the jokers play outside the box.

Coaching Points:

- Players should make the box as large as possible
- Balance play by being able to attack wide/forward and support the attack
- Play in a 4-2-3-1 based shape when attacking
- Quick recovery runs to defend or support the attack
- Use the spare players in transition to counter attack into the wide spaces

Progressions/Variations:

- Players can attack via any gate

Attacking in transition

3 zone wide transition game



The defence plays with a 2-1 formation, with 2 wide outball players. The attack play as any shape they want as they have a 1 player overload in the central zone.

To start, the attack tries to score into the central goal inside the main zone. If the defence win possession, they have 3 goals to counter and score into in transition. If the attack loses possession, the team in the attacking transition can now score into any of the 3 goals on the far side.

Coaching Points:

- Try to find a way to penetrate the centre in the team of 4
- Occupy multiple players by playing between the lines
- Move the ball quickly and use the spare player until penetration is possible
- When the ball is won, transfer the ball wide and attack the spaces on the side
- When the ball is wide, offer 2v1 possibilities and offer central penetration

Progressions/Variations:

- Play 4v4 in the centre – when possession is won, attack the spaces on the sides (both teams)
- Place a large goal 15 yards behind the line and score into a GK

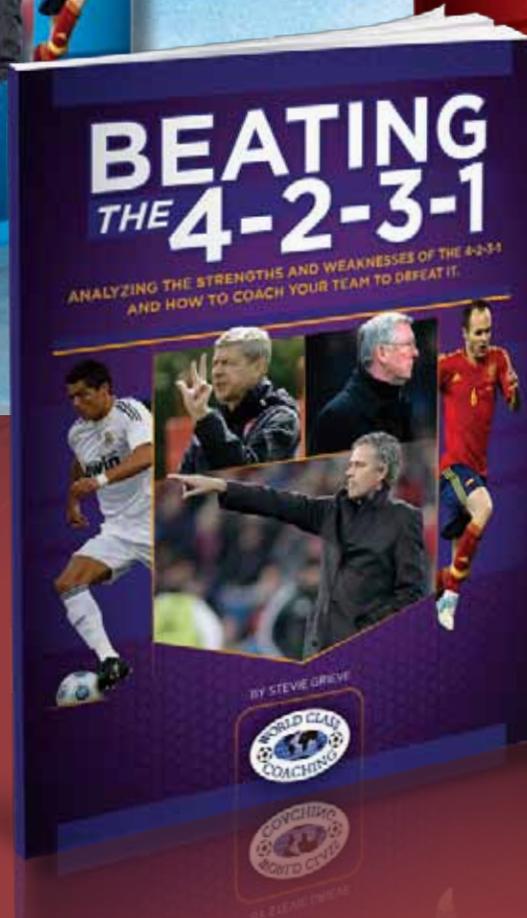
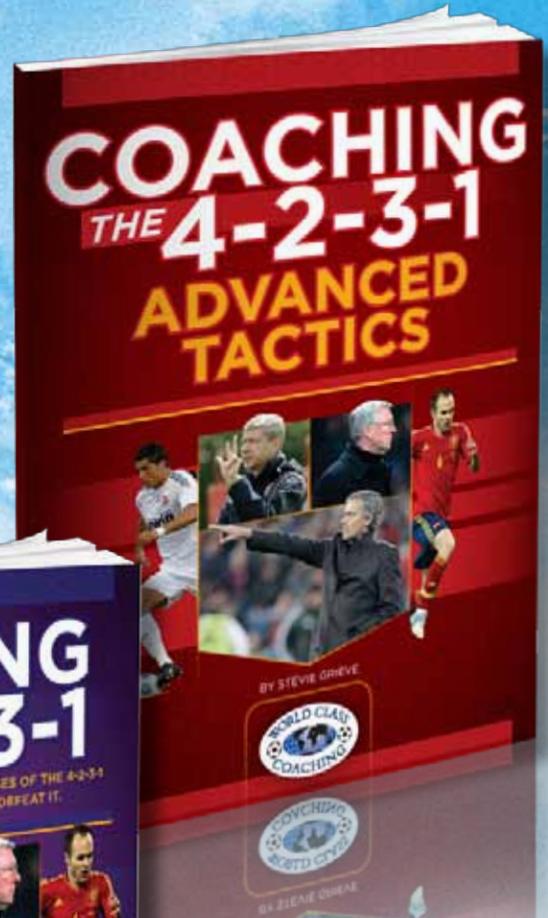
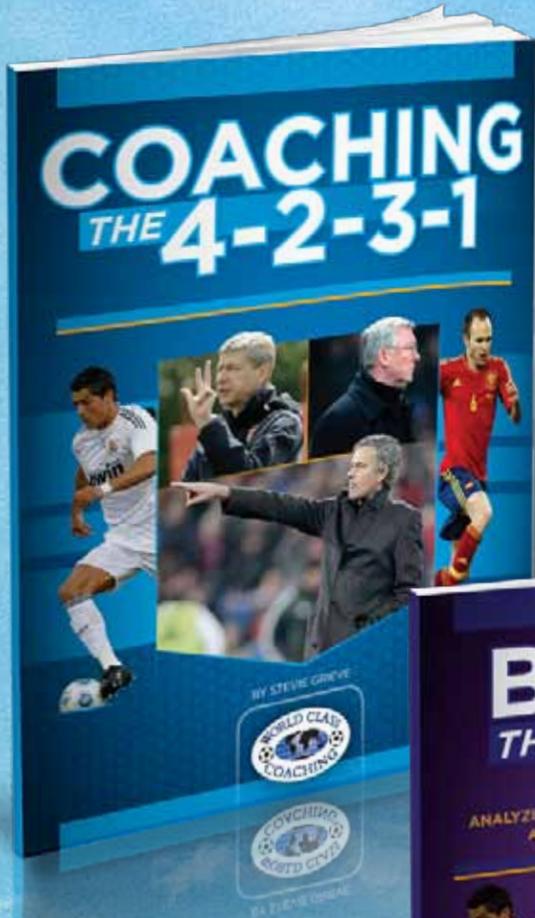
Full field transition to attack game – central attack focus scenario



Mark out a field with a zone between the width of the box from the edge of the box to the halfway line. On the inside; defending team plays in a 4-2 formation, defending against a central attack. On the outside, the wingers will play in a box alone, ready to counter attack in transition when possession is regained.

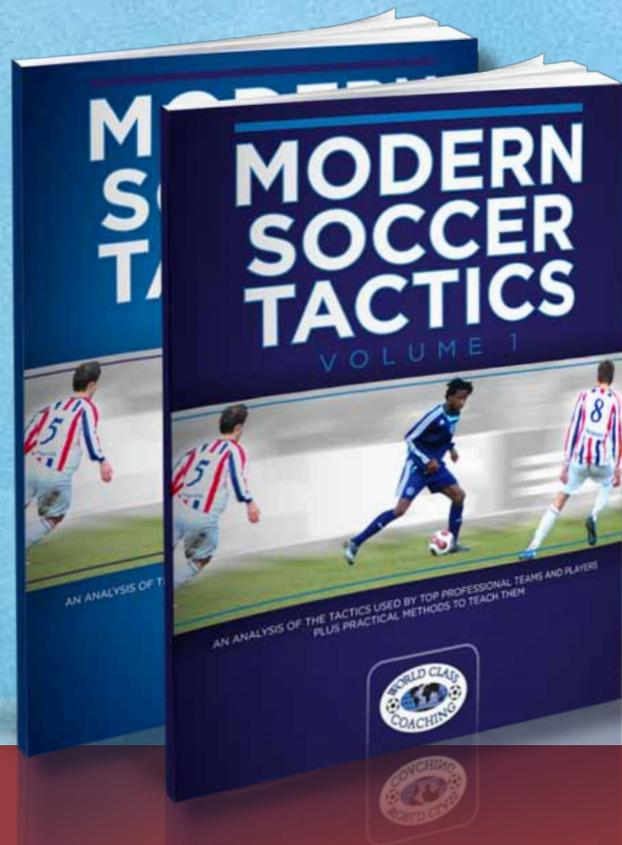
As you can see from the diagram above, in transition, the full back can choose to come inside and help defend, which may release the winger on the outside, but leaving the full back in a central position to then reshape the defence before pressing again. If the full back stays wide, the defence could be weak centrally; the number 10 could turn and look to penetrate directly into the strikers run beyond the centre backs with more central space with the full back covering the winger.

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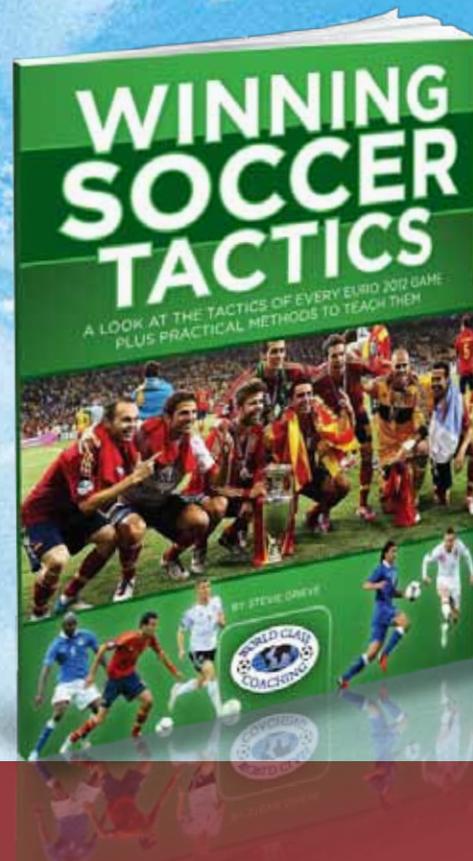


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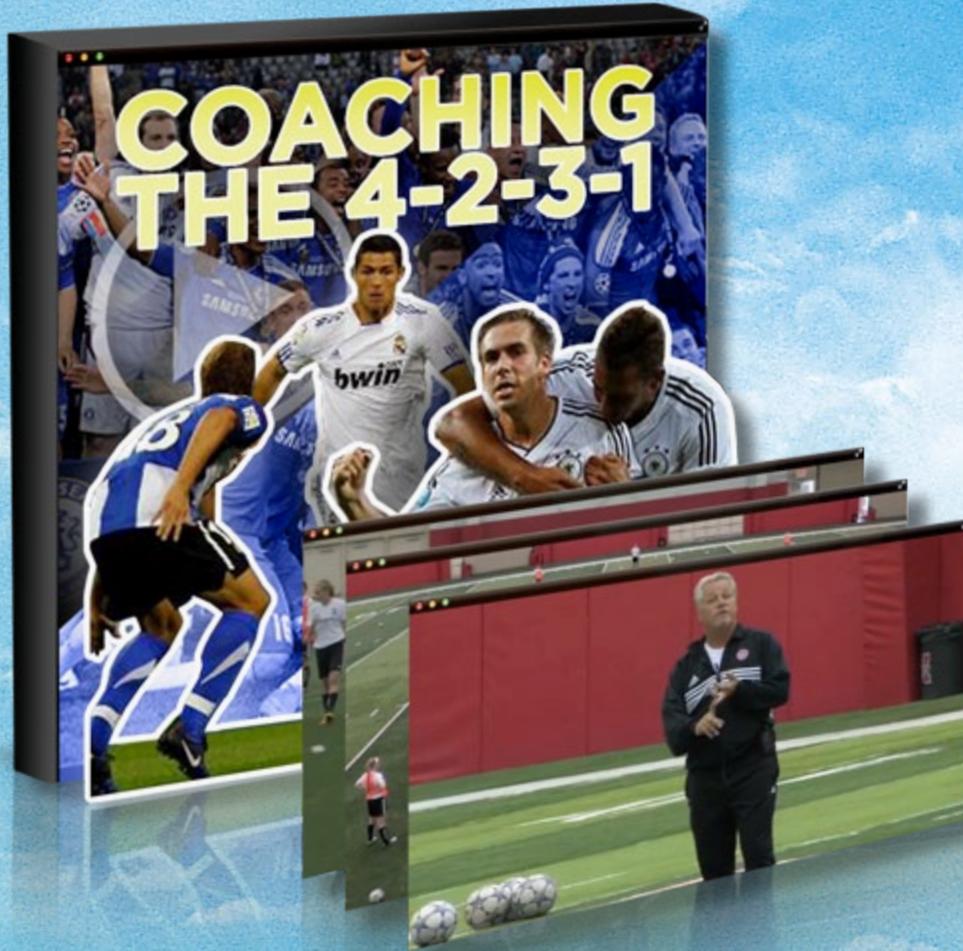


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