

Fullbacks

Tactical and Positional analysis

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The attacking fullback is seen by many as the most important position in the modern game but in fact, fullbacks have been a big part of the game for quite a while now. Everybody knows about Maicon, Dani Alves, Ashley Cole etc but if you cast your mind back it's tough to forget fullbacks like the Brazilian duo Cafu & Roberto Carlos, or the French fullbacks Lilian Thuram and Lizararu who helped France to a World Cup in 1998; even the likes of Gary Neville and Paolo Maldini were overlapping, and bombing up the wing in the early 1990's

The attacking fullback is a demanding position because players have to be able to attack and defend throughout the whole game which is not only physically but mentally demanding. The influx of unorthodox wingers i.e left footed winger playing on the right side and coming inside has added even more need for fullbacks to provide width when attacking.



Attacking Qualities

- Desire to get forward/attacking mindset
- Attack with pace
- Understand when to get forward
- Always look to support teammates
- Understand triggers
- Quality passing at top speed
- End product i.e pass, cross shot
- Know when to overlap/underlap
- Fast transition when ball is won
- Give WIDTH



Defending Qualities

- Understand their defensive priorities
- Read the game well for interceptions
- Recovery runs after losing the ball
- Comfortable in 1v1 situations
- Confident in the tackle
- Fast transition when ball is lost
- Physically strong
- Blocking shots
- Know when to tuck in
- Know opponent to show inside/outside



Overlapping

In this picture Robinho is the player circled and he has the ball. He has come inside and the opposition FB has gone with him. As soon as the pass from the CM in the centre circle was played Maicon started his run. Robinho plays the ball 1st time to Kaka, who plays it into the path of the Overlap made by Maicon

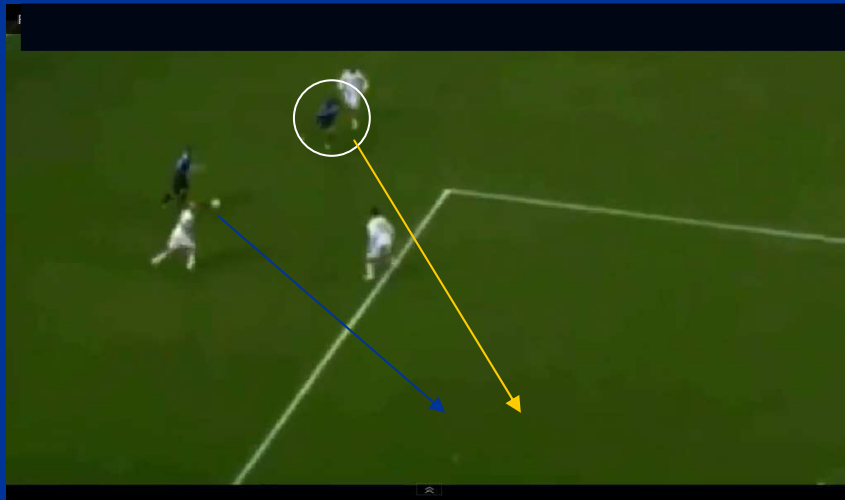


The player circled is Jose Enrique of Liverpool. His teammate has the ball and he overlaps at pace and his team mate plays the ball into space so that without breaking stride Enrique can drill the ball across the box.

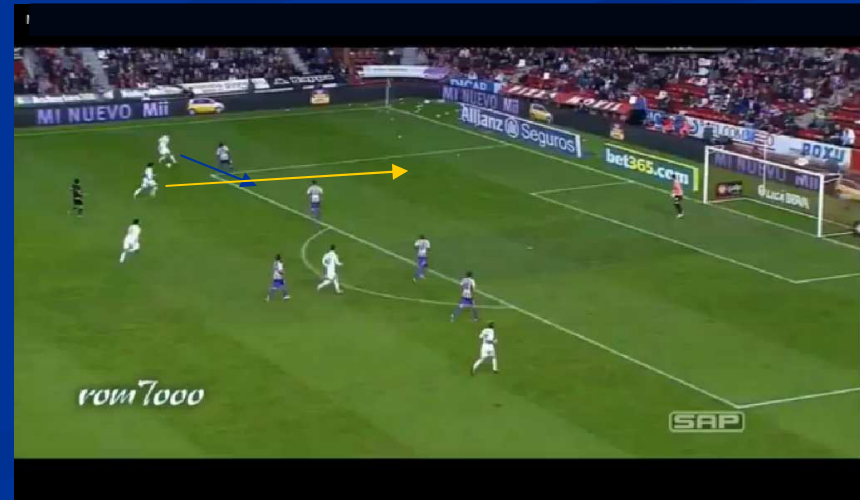


Underlapping

This underlapping run is made by Maicon when at Inter. The over lap is going outside and this shows Maicon running inside the wide player he passed to to exploit the space in the box. Once the pass through splits the defenders, can Maicon make the right decision?

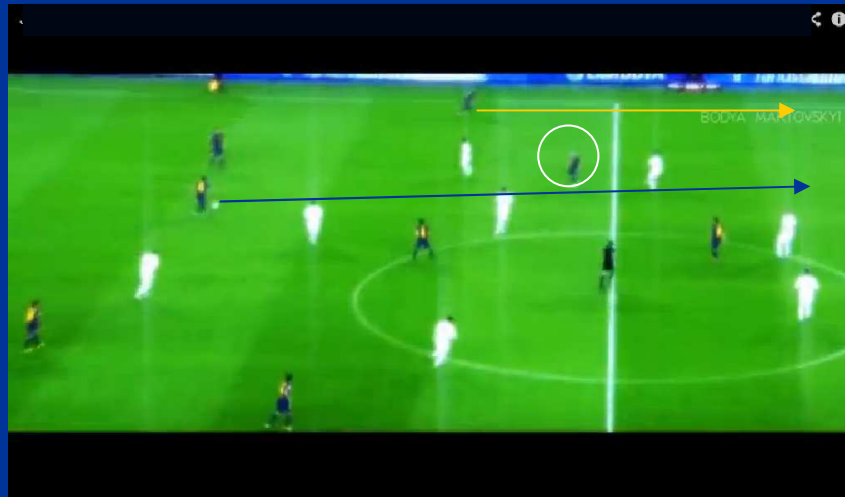


Real Madrid this time and after passing to the wide player Marcelo receives a pass into his stride and he drives through the gap into the box and into the space. This pass could also be made outside of the defender into the path of Marcelo.



Direct Play

In the picture below the FB is Jordi Alba. The CM has dropped in to make a back 3 & as soon as he receives the ball Alba sprints down the line before the opposition can shift over. The player circled is the LW who has created the space by occupying the opposition RB. This pass is played over the top into space.



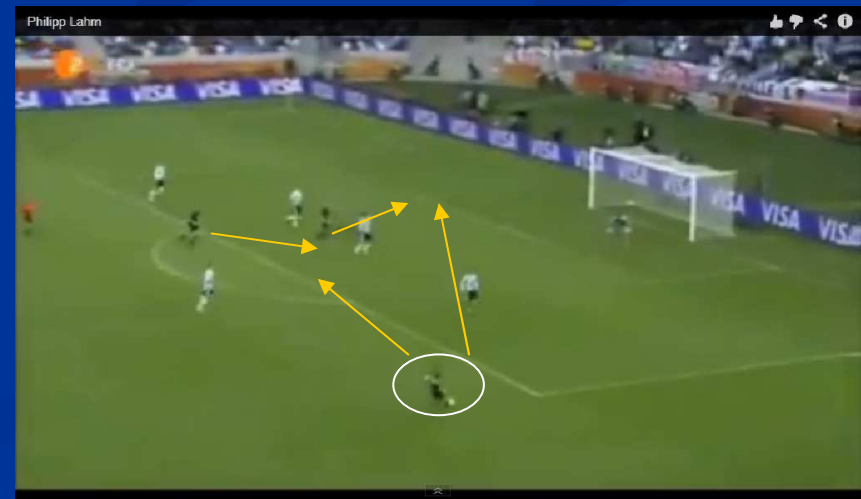
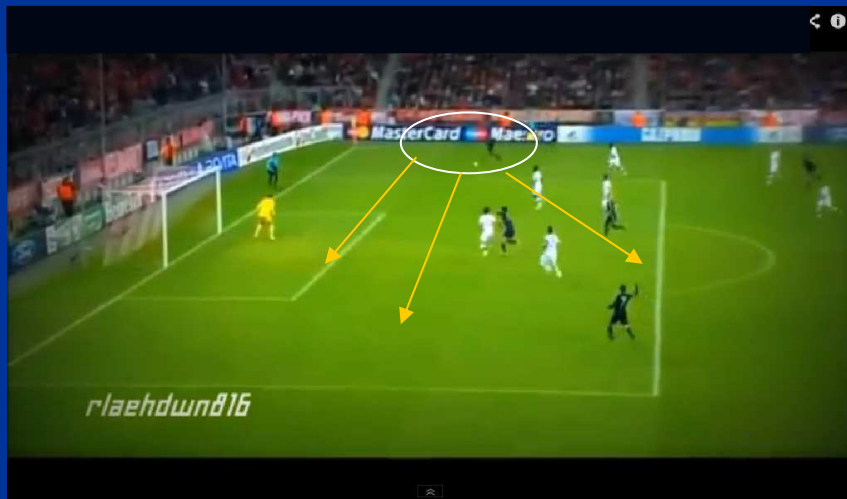
Barca again below and this time on the right hand side. Pedro has come inside so Alves has so much space to attack. The pass is played over the top for Alves to play across the box. The angle & weight of the pass is crucial because if it's too close to the GK the chance is gone & also if the pass is behind Alves.



Crossing

The fullback circled is Philip Lahm. He has completed the overlap and now has to make his choice of pass. Does he drill it across the box, chip it to the back post to the free man or drive on a little further and cut back for a late run to the edge of the box from a midfielder? The choice is important and the best players make the best choice CONSISTENTLY

Philip Lahm on the ball again but this time he can cross earlier, but what options are available. A cross round the first DEF into the “corridor of uncertainty”? Or a pass into the path of the late run for the number 10 to hit first time. The CB’s will likely go with the CF so more space will open up at the edge of the box.

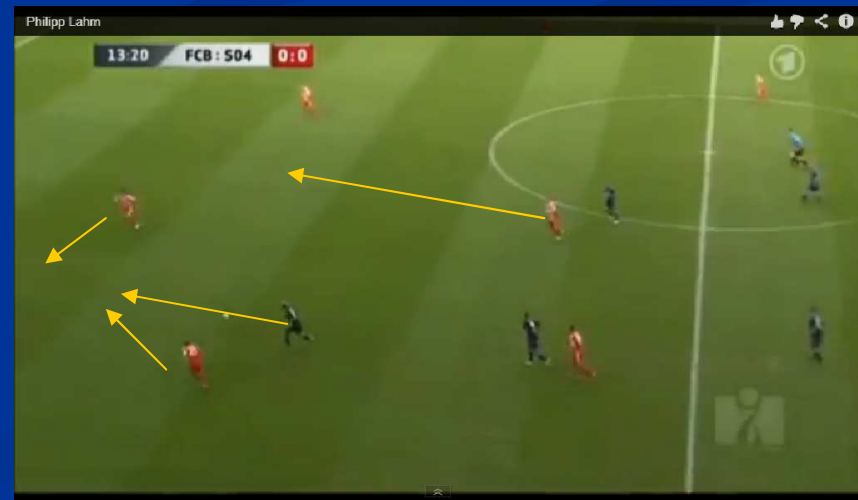


Blocks and Recovery Runs

In this situation Alves was tucked in a the ball was played to Ronaldo, who most people would fancy to score from this position. Alves, despite being behind play, sprints back and makes a fantastic last ditch block. Timing and confidence are crucial here because if he gets it wrong it's a penalty and a red card. Fantastic recovery run and block



Below Lahm loses the ball & the attacker is driving into the space he has left open. Lahm makes a great recovery run and wins the ball back with the help of the CB coming across to close the space. When the CB goes over to help close the space the CM will look to fill the hole left in defence.



Playing out from the back

Building from the back is something I strongly believe in and I think all youth teams should be coached to play from the back. Fullbacks can be vital to being able to build from the back, whether they touch the ball or not, and below is a couple of examples of how you can build from the back.



Playing out from the back in a 4-3-3 against a 4-4-2 (Fullbacks in Yellow)

- This is the most common way to start building from the back.
- FB's push high and wide
- CB's split and take the CF's
- DM drops in and gets on the ball and we play out



Playing out from the back in a 4-3-3 against a high pressure 4-4-2

- If you keep getting your DM in the ball the opposition will try to stop it.
- In this situation you can use the FB to start the play from the back
- When the opposition CM presses our DM, it gives the RM a problem
- The RM has two players to cover and stands off our LB
- LB drops back and gets on the ball and we play out from there



Playing out from the back in a 4-3-3 against a 4-4-2 using CM. Positional Rotation

- 1 of our CB's drops down the side of the box and gets on the ball
- Opposition LCF can't go with our CB or our DM gets on the ball
- When CB receives the ball our RB makes an aggressive forward forcing opposition back
- Our RW makes a run inside to occupy the opposition LCM
- Our CM drops into the highlighted area & gets on the ball, in a FB position, we play out from there

Tactical Formations Using FB's

Top coaches are top coaches because they can see something in a game and change to prevent it or to exploit it. I believe that all teams should be able to play more than one formation & also be able to change formation and tactics during matches. Below are a few examples of formations you can start with or practise to shift into should you have strong fullbacks. The full backs are in yellow again so you can see their relevance to each system.

3-4-3



3-4-3 Formation - A favourite of many teams including Barca, ajax and Dutch teams. Also easily switched to during a match when using 4-3-3

Starting with it

- 3 CB's can be used or a DM with 2 CB's

Using it mid match

- Both FB's push up the pitch higher and the DM drops back into defence.
- The FB's are very important in this formation because if they don't track back they can leave the defence exposed.

This is a very attacking formation

3-3-1-3



3-3-1-3 Formation. A favourite of Marcelo Bielsa with Chile, Argentina and Athletic Bilbao. A hugely tactical formation in which everyone needs to know and understand their role. Used for getting at opponents from the first whistle and is used with high pressure when the ball is lost.

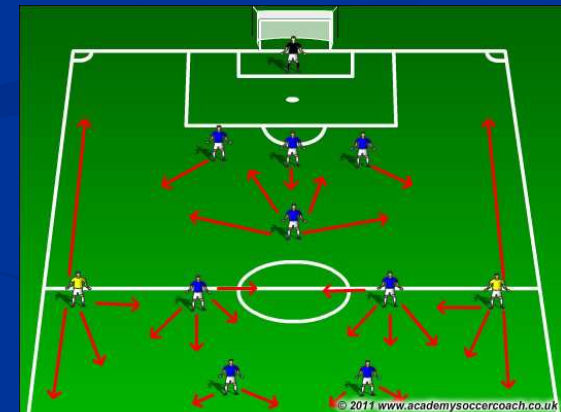
Set up

- 3 CB's is best and 1 DM focussing solely on defending.
- FB's play alongside and attack and defend.
- A No10 playmaker behind the front 3

Using it mid match

- It's probably easier to change to this when using a 4-2-3-1 because 1 DM can drop and the other keep his position.
- FB's push up alongside DM and still both attack & defend
- You could start a match with the 3-3-1-3 and switch to a 4-2-3-1 if you go ahead, or even intermittently throughout the match.

3-1-4-2



3-1-4-2 Formation. This formation has been used by Barca, Real Madrid & Universidad de Chile

Set up

- 3 CB's & 1 DM who work together in defence. DM does not have attacking ambitions
- FB's provide the width in attack & the cover in wide areas.
- 2 CF's could be left 2v2 with opposition CB's as the opposition will try to exploit our flanks

Using mid match

- You can switch to this formation fairly easily from a 4-3-3 & a 4-2-3-1 and back again depending on what happens in the match

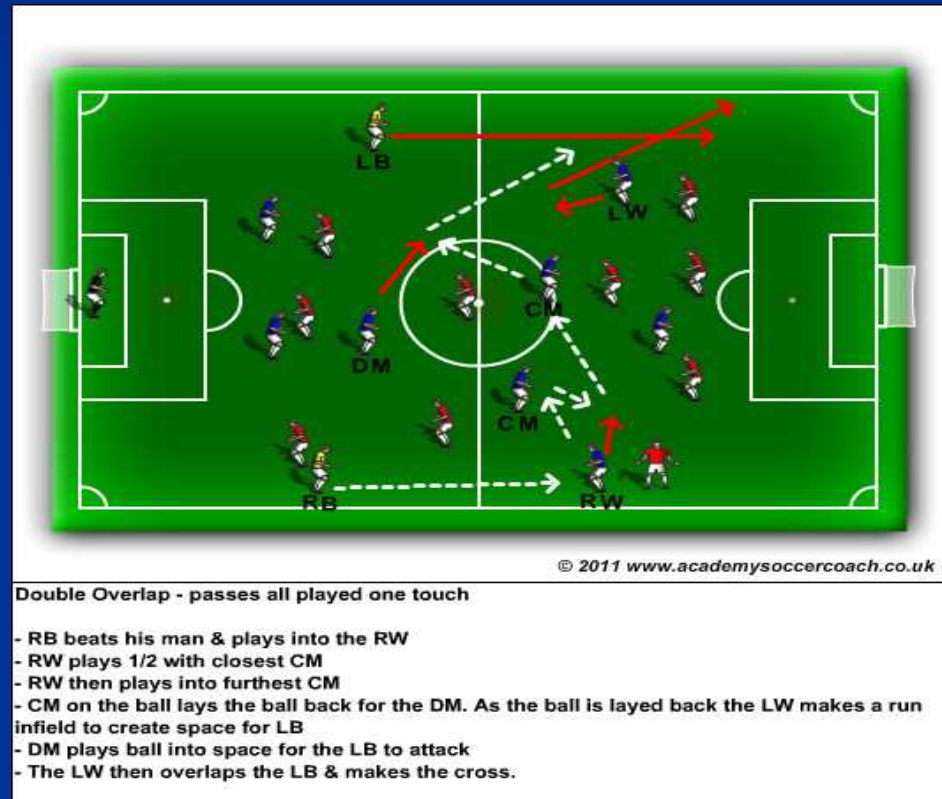
Could we see a rise in this formations use to combat the "false 9"? The DM can move around the defensive 3rd with 3 player behind him

Observations From Spain

I have been living in Spain for the last few months & I have been watching/studying as many sessions & matches as I can.

Fullbacks have always been used in Spain and since I've been here I have seen just how important they are. The main thing I've seen is the relationship between the FB's and the wingers, they often change positions during the game & stay that way for 10/15 mins. When 1 overlaps they just stay in the position.

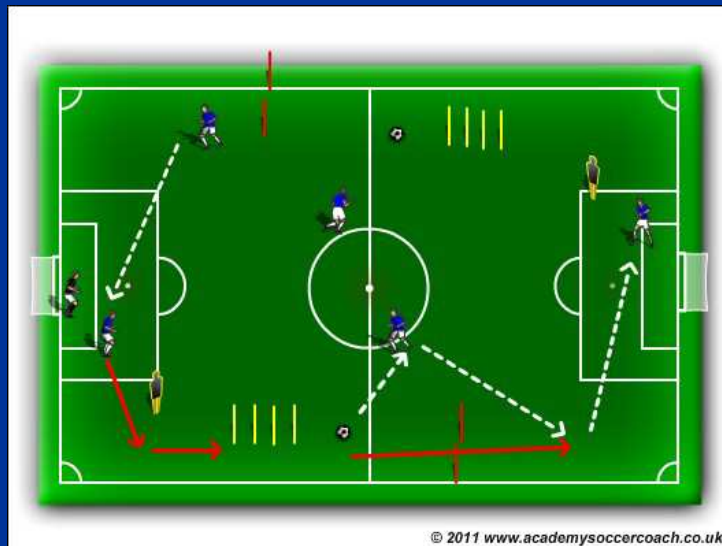
The other observation is the double overlap, which I have seen coached in at least 3 Teams. This is only 1 example of how they done it but the double overlap was coached & they wanted it to happen.



Drills to work with Fullbacks

Fitness Drills

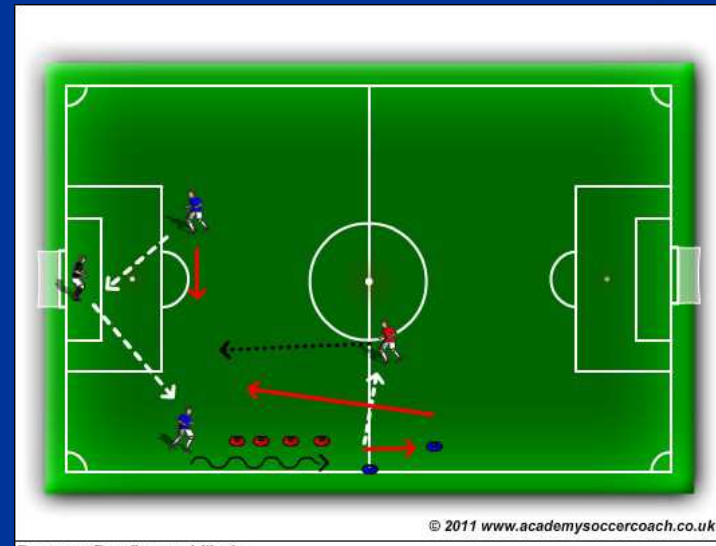
I believe in being position specific when coaching players, even when it comes to fitness work. Yes it's easy to have them run laps or shuttles but specific drill help with seeing the pictures in matches & trains the aspects that players need for their position. I've put a couple of examples for fullbacks below.



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Overlap fitness drill

- Starts with ball being crossed into the FB, who play back to the GK
- FB runs round mannequin in into pole
- Fast feet, zig zag etc through poles
- passes ball to team mate & sprints through gate to receive pass
- crosses the ball for drill to begin on other side



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Recovery Run fitness drill who

- Starts with CB passing the ball to the GK
- GK switches play to LB attacks the cones & dribbles through
- At the 1st blue cone the LB passes to the red player and runs to the next blue cone
- Red player drives forward with the ball
- LB sprints back from 2nd blue cone to make a recovery run and try to win the ball
- CB then comes across to close space as would happen in a match

Technical/Tactical Drills

Warm up/Technical

Warm Up



Warm up - AI Players

- Start with all the players having a ball and dribbling freely
- The half have a ball, half don't

Red cones - Ball must be passed thorough to another player, 1/2

Yellow poles - Agility run through the poles without a ball

Red poles - Drive through with ball

Blue cones - dribble through with ball.

Lots of touches of the ball, changes of direction, passing etc

Stopping to do dynamic stretches at certain intervals

Possession Game



Possession game with gates - 5v5/6v6/7v7

How to score

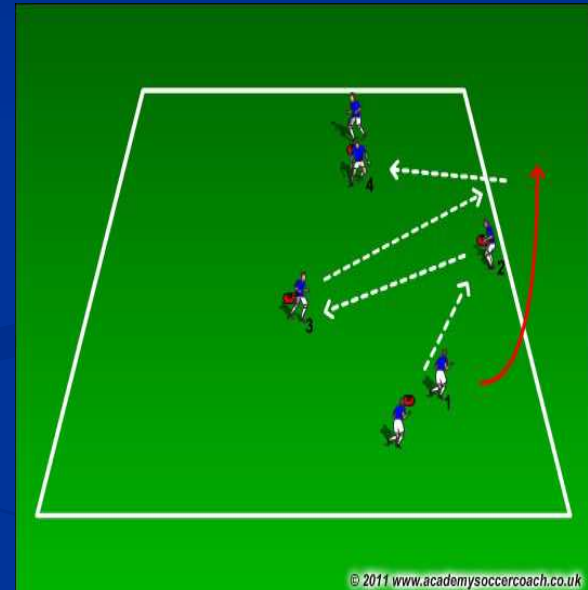
- Play a 1/2 or overlap & run through the gate
- drive through the gate

Simple possession game with gate on the edges of the square to encourage looking wide for a point.

Progressions

- 2 balls in the pitch
- Smaller pitch
- Adding neutrals(your wide players) and only they can score by the methods above

Diamond Passing



Diamond passing pattern - Overlap

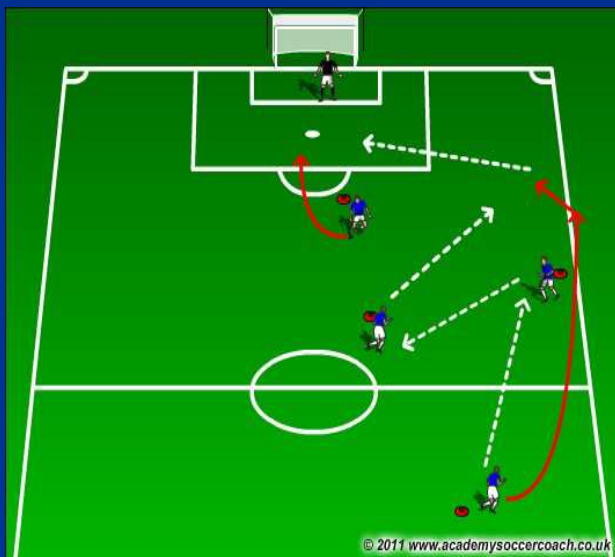
- Player 1 passes to player 2 & overlaps
- Player 2 passes to player 3
- Player 3 passes into the path of the overlap
- Player 1 passes into player 4 & the drill starts over.

Try to have the player think of the cones as opposition and to use realistic movement
I have the diamond off set because I prefer my players not to play straight lateral passes

Progressions

- All one touch
- Think of new combinations on their own

Passing Combinations



Diamond Combination 1

This brings the basic passing combination to life on the pitch and it's the same picture for the players.

- After the 1st player overlaps there is now needs to be an end product
- We need realistic movement in all players

Coaching points

- Quality of pass
- Timing of run
- Realistic movement
- Final ball



Diamond Combination 2 - Underlap run

To start take away the cones to see if the player understand what's needed and add in some opposition.

- RB passes to RW
- RW drives inside & lays off outside to the CM who has overlapped & has the ball
- The LCB will come across and the RB will time underlap to receive ball like Maicon in the earlier example

CF role

- When the 1st pass is played CF moves away from the ball to create space for the CM overlap
- When the underlap run is executed & RB has the ball CF makes an aggressive run

Coaching points

- Quality of pass, can you still do it with a little bit of opposition
- Timing of all runs
- Roles of players after rotation
- Communication
- Final Ball



Diamond Combination 3 - RB becomes CF

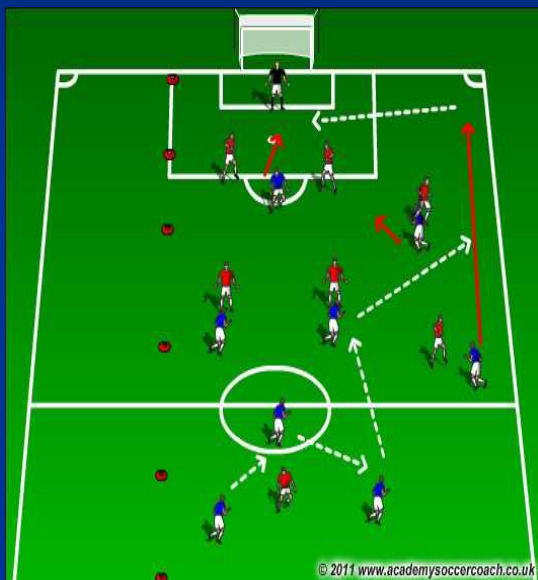
Not a very common passing pattern but maybe that's why it will work for you and your team if you work on it. Also doesn't the first 3 passes look a little like a 4v2 rondo.....

- CB passes to RB
- RB passes to CM, who plays to RW
- When CM looks to pass to RW, CF bends his run in behind opposition LB
- As the ball is travelling to the RW, the RB starts to jog forward and as RW gets the ball RB sprints at the heart of the box
- RW now has to pick the right pass to exploit

Coaching Points

- Quality of pass
- Timing of pass. Do you need to play 1st time or is it better to draw in the DEF
- Timing of runs
- Defensive responsibilities when using such an attacking combination
- Communication

Tactical Drills



Functional Practice - Finishing from crosses in a 4-3-3 v 4-4-2

Functional practice so only working down one side and nobody enters the coned off area

- Once passing combination is shown but you will need at least two others should you get this topic on a course.
- Lots of crosses are needed so if you don't get enough you might need to look at the formation of the opposition to work in your favour.
- If doing with your team use your own formation & the formation you come up against most so your players recognise the pictures come match day.

Coaching points

- Can we get an overload on that side(2v1)
- Quality of crosses/passes
- Communication
- CF movement
- Does anyone from midfield make a late run for a cut back



9v8 SSG working on Fullback attacking 4-3-3 v 4-4-2

Basic SSG with 9v8 in favour of blues. Coaching the blue team
I would usually use 18yrd box to 18yrd box with older age groups

- FB's should look to go high & wide through the blue cones team has the ball
- FB's should look to attack through the red cones with the ball & produce final product

Coaching points

- Do FB's take up good positions
- Do FB's drive through opposition gates
- Timing of runs
- Identify when to use FB's
- Can we get goals from wide areas
- Quality of play
- Communication



7v7+4 Neutrals SSG - Working on wide players in 4-3-3 v 4-4-2

Very simple SSG working on wide players & touch in the observation I made here in Spain about the wide players swapping positions throughout the match.

- Neutrals play for which ever team has the ball.
- Neutrals stay outside the square

Progression

- Neutrals can come in
- 1 player from inside can go outside the box to shut down.

Coaching points

- Combinations to get wide players on the ball
- Can we get plenty of combinations with the 2 neutrals on that side(over/underlap etc)
- Quality of crossing
- Communication
- Can we use the wide players as a decoy and play through the middle
- Do the players outside delivery quickly enough without the pressure

Thanks for reading

