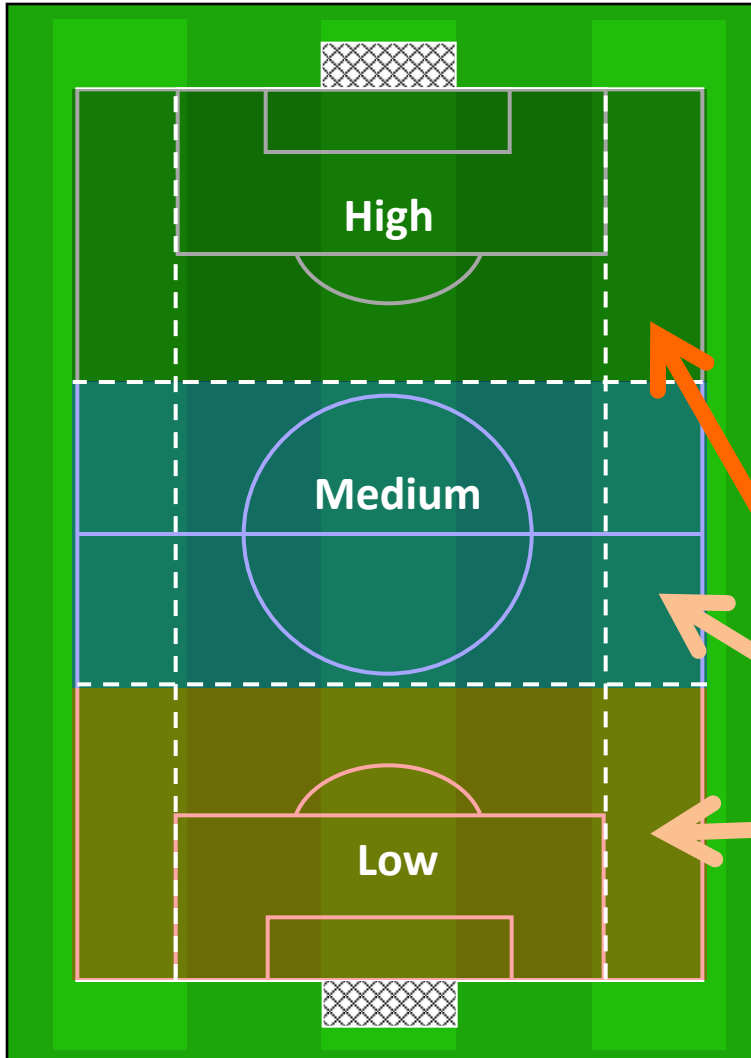




The High Defensive Block

Style of Play

Introduction – What is it?



WHAT?

Rational;

The modern game has become a game of increasing limited space and time. In 2013 Bayern Munich have been one of the teams to highlight an obvious advantage that is enjoyed by teams that are capable of winning the ball back in advanced positions on a regular basis.

Two games stood out to me this season that involved this style of play. Bayern VS Braca (4-0 Champions League Semi Final, April) and Brazil VS Spain (3-0 Confederation Cup Final, June)

76% of all goals are scored within 16 seconds of the regain or within 3 passes or less passes

- **There are three types of defensive blocks – High/Medium/Low**
- **High** – Pressing with a high line. Pushing up and denying the opposition space to work in when they have the ball.
- **Medium** – Most balanced of the three, not leaving gaps behind the defensive line, nor are you sitting back and inviting increased pressure upon your team.
- **Low** – Deep defensive line that in turn encourages the opposition to try and overload your defensive unit, HOWEVER it can be an effective when used in a counter attacking system.

Background

A Brief History



Past & Present

Overview

This is not the full History, but a snapshot of some key points that helped develop this system.

- 1950 Hungary National team introduce a high pressing system
- System was brought to Ajax and the Dutch National Team
- It is developed into the **'Total Football'** module in the 1970s – A system that involves players interchanging positions, creating space and pressing high
- It is then picked up by Barcelona around 1990s
- From this the **'Tiki Taka'** style of football was developed. Most famously by Barcelona and the Spanish National Team (2000-present) - This involves dominating possession and pressing to win the ball back early

Latest Trend?

'When you think of the **athleticism and energy** of the **Bayern Munich** and **Borussia Dortmund** midfields, you think of Roy Keane, Patrick Vieira, Steven Gerrard or Michael Essien at their best.

These sides are actually being more British than the British.'

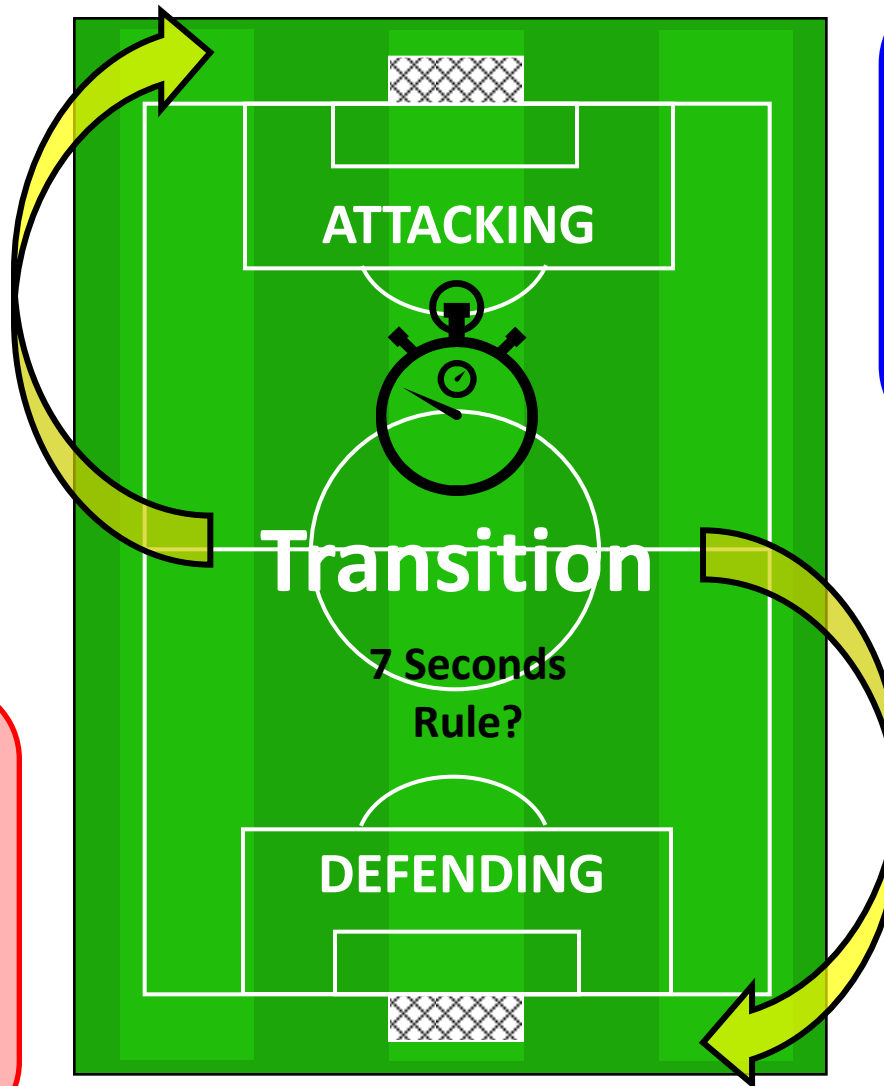
(Gary Neville 2013)

Transition

Game Principals – Where it fits in?

WIN Possession
OPPOSITION
ORGANISED?

- Pressure
(Regain/Dictate)
- Delay
- Compactness

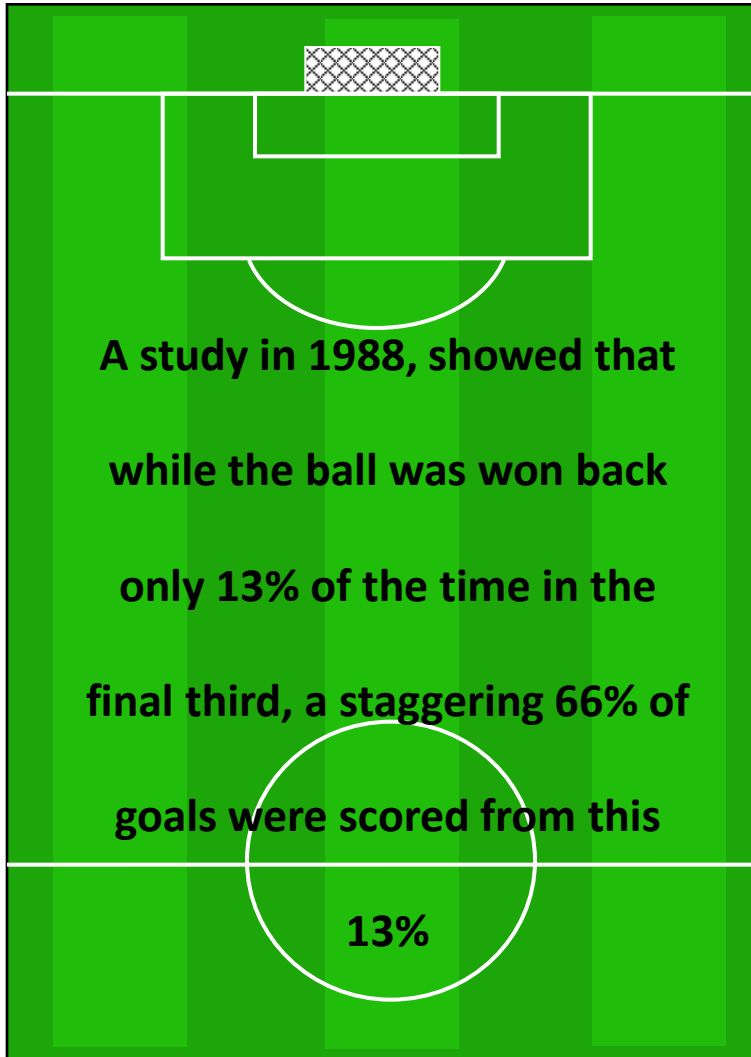


- Exploit space
(Counter)
- Create space
- Retain possession
(Construct)

LOSE Possession
OUR TEAM
ORGANISED?

The High Defensive Block

Why Use this Style?



WHY?

Positives and Negatives

With any system, tactic or style of play there will be positives and negatives to it.

- **Positives**

- Win the ball as high up the pitch as possible, to allow for scoring opportunities
- Dictate play without having the ball
- Forces opposition to make quick decisions that can lead to mistakes being made
- Decreases time and space for attacking team to complete their passing or dribbles

'You win the ball back when there is 30 meters to their goal not 80'
(Pep Guardiola)

- **Negatives**

- Leaves space in behind that can be exploited with a long ball or quick forwards
- If opponents have good possession there is a risk of being played through and around
- System requires physically a lot of hard work - Players need to be very athletic and physically fit
- Requires very good team understanding – all players need to know their roles, work as a unit and understand the correct triggers

The High Defensive Block

How it works?



VS



HOW?

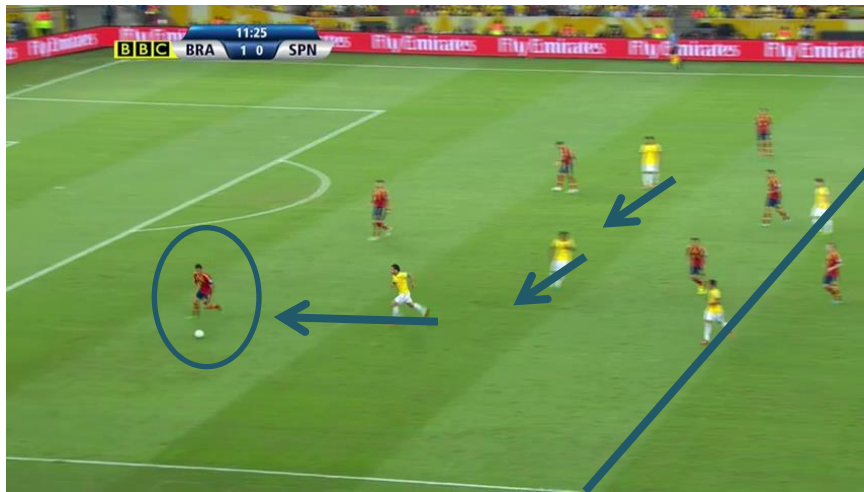
Players/Unit Roles;

‘Pressing – a way of slowing down or forcing opponents into areas you desire, keeping the pitch narrow and to win the ball back. A way of control without the ball’.

It is often not the first man who wins possession but the second or third.

- **Attack** – Usually the first phase of pressure and line of confrontation. They often start the press and are first to react to triggers as they are the closest players. They will either look to win possession if possible or try to dictate and force play.
- **Midfield** – the second phase of pressure comes from midfield players, looking to apply pressure to cut out medium length passes out of defence.
- **Defence** – Defence move up with play, pushing the defensive line higher up the pitch making it more compact. They also must be able to deal with any balls played long out of defence.

Here is an example from the confederation cup final Brazil Vs. Spain



Trigger [Backward pass]. Front three press, cover and slide. Midfield also tight to opposition midfield (all inside the final third)



Spain are unorganised Brazil commit players to try and win back possession



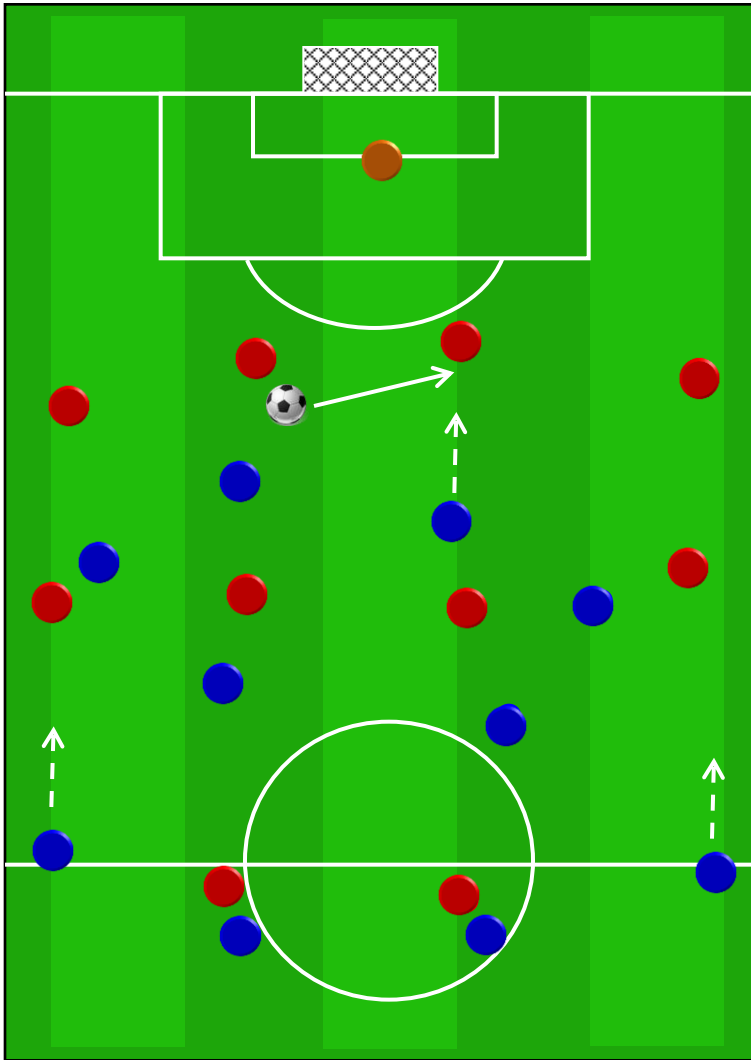
Front three dictate play forcing Spain to play backwards and sideways



[Set Traps] Ball out wide next to the touch line Brazil pressing high trying to force mistakes

The High Defensive Block

When Might you use it?



WHEN?

Key Factors

It's important to remember that even the best teams do not look to apply high pressure all of the time. The best teams, players and coaches understand when to use this style of defending.

- **Factor that might affect this;**

- Weather and/or pitch conditions (i.e. high wind, poor surface)
- Match situation (i.e. winning or losing a match with 3 minutes to play)
- Your players (i.e. their abilities, physical or technical. Their understanding of this style)
- Opposition players (i.e. their abilities, physical or technical)

- **Some Key cues during a game;**

- Possession by technically inferior players
- Long square passes
- Balls played behind the defence
- Transition moments
- High pressure zones (i.e. flank areas etc.)



These cues can help to create triggers, that can be used as coaching points for player to bring into the **Real Game!**