



CC United Soccer Coach Education Systems of play, can we keep it flexible



Can we teach our players to adapt to ever changing tactical situations?

In our coach education program starting with the diamonds and triangles with the young first year players, I would expect we then progress to a back line of 3 and a diamond or a square in the front of it for the 8 v 8 U11 U12 soccer. Progressing to the bigger field 11 v 11, we need a system that is easy to understand and fits in with the strengths of the players.

Tactical flexibility is required for each positional group (defense, midfield or forwards) and also for the team as a whole. Our standard 4-4-2 system of play is an easy to understand, basic formation, how-ever at some stage in the game a team may have to adjust either to close the game up or add a more attacking shape to pressure the opposition.

Therefore tactical flexibility is a crucial aspect during a game or training and using a modern

4-2-3-1 shape as a basic attacking and defending structure provides a great deal of flexibility for the players.

Tactical flexibility in a system of play is important to all coaches and players to allow them to change their tactics quickly during the game.

For a strong defense switch from 4-2-3-1 or 4-4-2 to 4-5-1.

The 4-5-1 system provides a broader coverage in midfield and also allows the team to develop a defending box with the two central defenders and the two holding midfielders.

This tactical innovation is based on the concept of defending the main place from which most goals are scored, the zone in front of the penalty box.

For a stronger attack, switch from 4-5-1 to 4-3-3. This reinforces the attack with two extra forwards in the outside positions. Attacking from out wide is the best way to beat a compact, ball oriented defensive formation. In the midfield we now play one holding center mid and two supporting mids, the width comes from the fullbacks pushing forward.

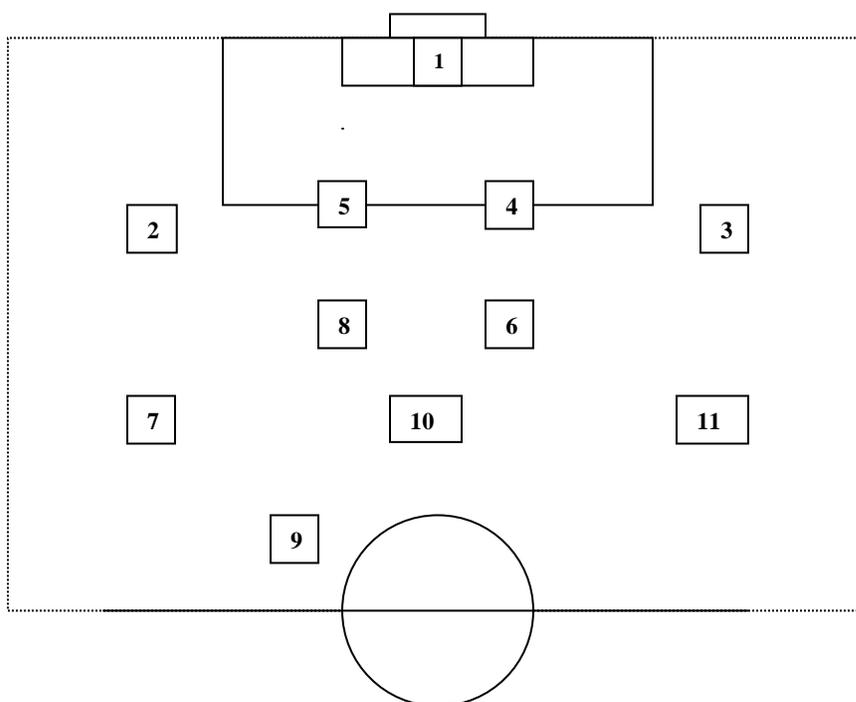
If we make it difficult for teams to get into the prime target areas i.e. the six yard box, we hopefully will prevent them from scoring goals. Likewise if we are able to make the oppositions play predictable, forcing them to play across their own defending zone we may be able to intercept the ball, or force an error and capitalizing on the mistakes and creating goal attempts for our teams.

Formation 4-2-3-1.

Primarily we are looking at a small box in a large box:

See diagram 1.

- 1 GK
- 2, 3, outside defenders
- 4, 5, central defenders
- 6, 8, defensive midfield
- 7, 11, outside midfield
- 10, attacking midfielder
- 9, center forward, attacker



Player roles in the 4-2-3-1 system:

The four phases of the game 1: (opposition in possession). 2: (winning the ball) 3: (gaining possession) 4: (losing the ball) all four entail different roles for each player in a 4-2-3-1 system.

OPPOSITION IN POSSESSION

Defensive play (ball-orientated defense):

- Defenders 2, 4, 5, and 3 form a single line of play in a zonal format covering each other defending from inside to the outside of the field.
- Defensive midfield players 6 and 8 create a compact formation directly in front of their goal, forming a screen in front of the back two 4 and 5. Along with the two center backs 4 and 5 they keep opponents from dribbling, passing or getting the ball into this vital space.
- Outside midfielders 7 and 11 drop back behind the ball and support the inside defensive midfielders, when the ball is on their side of the field, creating cover.
- Central attacking midfield player 10 covers the space in front of the middle of the field and uses positional play to deflect any attackers to the outside away from the box.
- Forward 9 is the first defender disrupting the oppositions attack in its early stages. The forward should close down passing lanes making the play predictable forcing the opposition to attack down one side of the field in order to create numbers up from team-mates, also use pressing tactics for quick transition from defense to attack when the ball is won.

WINNING THE BALL

Transition (get lots of players ahead of the ball and use through passes)

- First defenders 2, 4, 5 and 3 secure possession with safe diagonal wide passes.
- Only using through passes if there is no risk of losing the ball. If there is too much pressure on the defender who has the ball, that player should play a long pass forward turning the defense. Midfielders, 6 and 8 should also play safely and avoid losing the ball especially in the box zone. Otherwise keeping the play simple and safe playing out of the middle going for wide combinations, and forward balls in behind the opposition turning the defense.
- Outside midfield players 7 and 11 get ahead of the play and show for wide passes. These two players are supported from behind by the wide fullbacks 2 and 3, also getting forward on overlapping runs.
- Central forward 10 also gets ahead of the ball providing support to the lone forward 9. This player can move freely but must endeavor to force turnovers by spoiling the play.
- Forward player 9 attempts to create mistakes and be alive to the loose ball, isolating defends and make play predictable.

POSSESSION

Attacking combination play with increased risk:

- Outside fullbacks 2 and 3 move forward in order to create stations on the flanks looking to get forward quickly in support of the play and supplying width to the attack. Getting into wide positions early allows the team to change the point of attack.
- Defensive mid's, 6 and 8 take staggered positions in the middle, making sure they play wide and forward passes turning the fullbacks and central defenders.
- Outside mid's 7 and 11 move diagonally ahead of the ball and show for passes being aware of the fullbacks coming late from behind or on the blind side of play.
- Central midfielder 10 moves into gap trying to create triangle formations and passing angles. Getting forward into space created by the lone forward form deep trying to get onto through passes trying to score with long range shots and solo runs from deep. "The Playmaker"

- Forward 9 makes diagonal runs to show for passes. Holds up the ball so the midfield players can support. Player 9 must look to get into the penalty box as much as possible to finish.

LOSING THE BALL

Transition (getting lots of players behind the ball sealing up the middle of the field to prevent through passes) The first tactic is to keep the ball in front of as many players as possible and make the opposition play out wide or across the field.

Being patient and making the play predictable will allow the team to intercept and turn defense into attack.

- Defenders 2,4,5 and 3 return quickly to their starting positions and get back into their zones behind the ball without sinking too deep, maintaining a high line of defense is crucial when a team is looking to counter attack.
- Defensive midfielders 6 and 8 immediately return to their starting positions in front of the two central defenders creating the box platform to defend from.
- Outside midfielders 7 and 11 drop back and move inward in order to close down the middle.
- Central midfielder 10 supports the forward and tries to keep the opposition attack from moving into the middle.
- Forward 9 hunts down the ball forcing play onto the flanks and avoiding the ball coming through the middle of the field.

We have to remember that we are unable to play a system if we do not have the players to play that system. Players today however are more flexible and can operate in a number of roles. As they become comfortable in their role they will grow in confidence.

As a coach you may find that you have too many forwards or too many defenders, your first task is to find a system that suits your players needs.

World soccer today does not require defenders as we had 20 years ago. We now rely on players that are ready at all times to step in and intercept or steel the ball from the opposition then go forward and play.

The reason this is changing is because the rules of the game have changed and it is difficult now to tackle as the players are faster and more technically gifted and the laws do not allow tackles from behind or even the tackle head on is now being outlawed.

Yes we still need players to press and place the opposition's players under pressure to force them to give the ball away.

As coaches we must encourage all our teams to feel comfortable on the ball so they can maintain possession in our own half and the oppositions half of the field.

Pressing high up the field gives our teams the opportunity to steal the ball and if we happen to give the ball away we have 50 odd yards to get back. The keeper should also push up as high as he/she feels comfortable. Giving the ball away on the edge of our penalty box usually means a shot at goal, or an opportunity to create a chance to score.

Game stats show most goals are scored in or around 10 yards out of the goal. The rule of thumb would be, Don't let them in your box

I am at your disposal for any problems you may get please do not let a problem go for too long as it may become a crisis. Together we may be able to fix things before they become a crisis.

Thanks for your dedication to the children of our CC United Soccer Association

JT