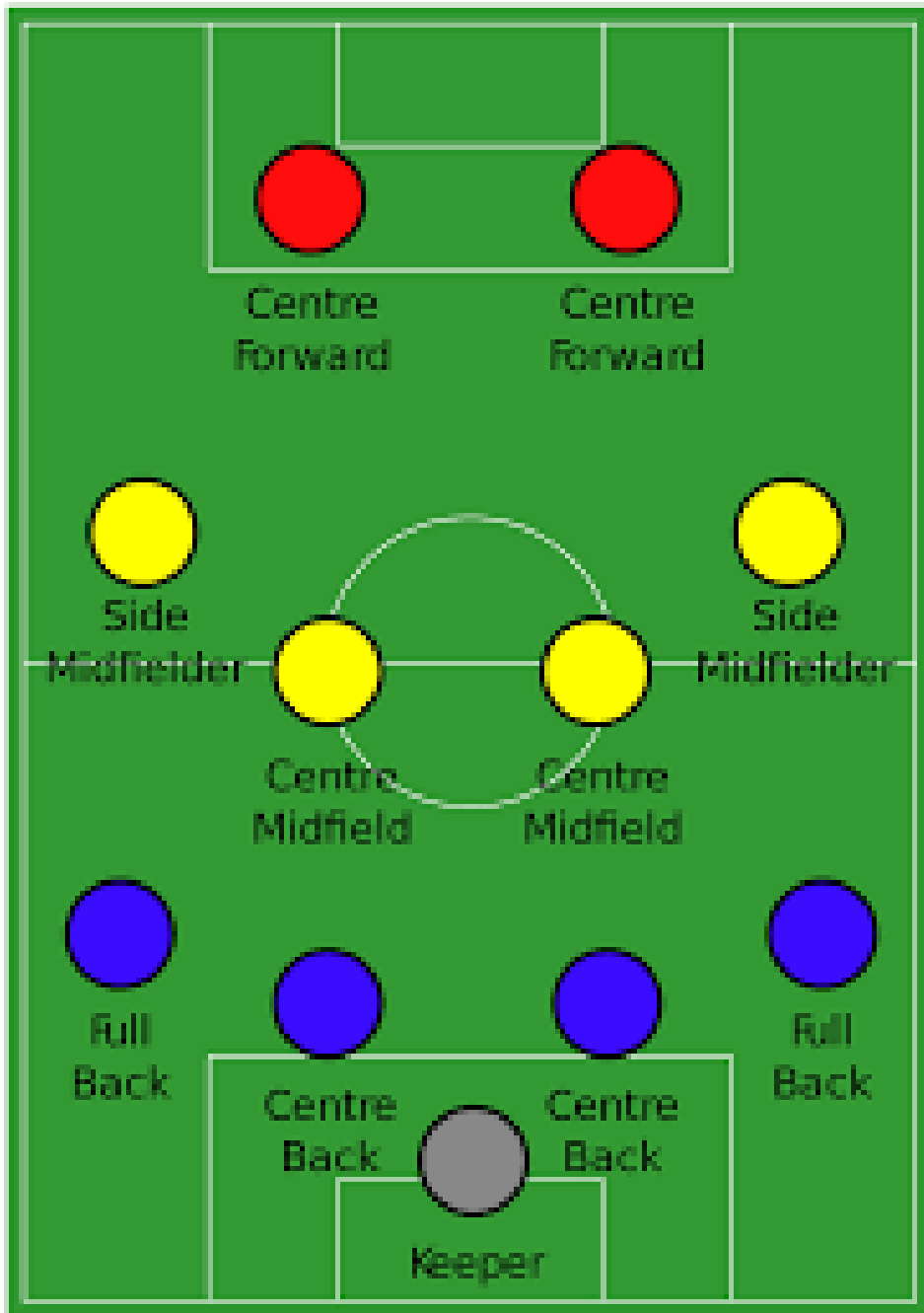


FCG Tactical Training – Systems of Play



- 4-4-2
- 3-5-2
- 3-4-3
- 4-3-3





4-4-2 Formation

- 4 Back Defenders
- 4 Mid Fielders – 2 Central Midfielders and 2 Wingers
- 2 Center Forwards

4-4-2 - Strengths

- Formation is about balance between two halves and 3 lines
- Team shape is easy to teach and understand for players
- 4 Midfielders provide passing lane support to both the defenders, other midfielders and attackers
- Fullbacks can also join in the attackers with overlaps and opposite field runs
- Formation also provides key passing lane blocks for tight defending
- Attacking space is on the wings, so wing play is key to success
- Center forwards have space in attack to move forward and sideways to support attack
- Formation can more easily hide weaker players

4-4-2 - Weaknesses

- 2 Central forwards must carry load in space and runs
- Back defenders and midfielders must work to create space in tight situations
- Communications is very important

4-4-2 - Defending

Advantages

- Easy to get 8 defenders behind the ball plus goalkeeper
- With four fullbacks the width of the field is more easily covered
- Easy for team to get into zonal defending shape
- Opportunity to play high pressure across the field

Weaknesses

- 2 Midfielders may be matched against 3 in other systems
- If both midfielders move forward in attack, team exposed to

Counterattack

- Two attack forwards can get isolated (too much space between attackers when defending)
- Not a good system if center forwards and wingers are slow
- How do four fullbacks match up against 2 attackers – can be confusing



4-4-2 Diamond

If you have a #10 type player. Someone with great ball control and instincts who can dribble and also pass into the attack, then diamond could be a great system.

Numbers 7 and 8 must be fast and cover a lot of ground. They must defend against the flat four wingers but also provide attacking support on the wings going forward

Attack is with 3-5 players, so more numbers up front and greater pressure.



4-4-2 Flat

Traditional 4-4-2 formation

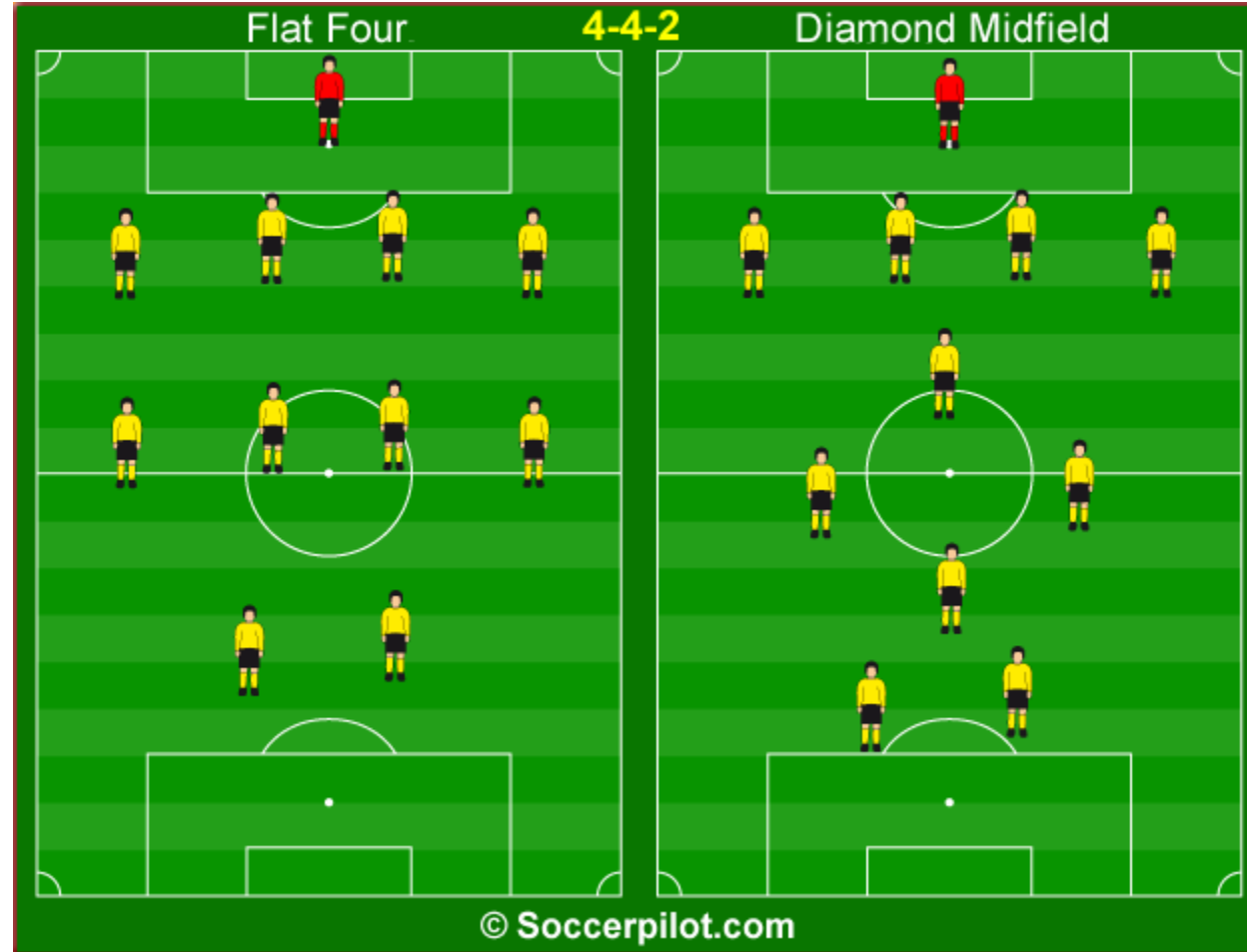
4 passing and defending Lanes Right, Right Mid, Left Mid and Left.

Allows teams without outstanding skill to organize defense and attacking by using numbers and passing lanes.



4-4-2 Flat Four or Diamond?

- Simple to implement
- Supports all passing lanes
- Provides triangular passing game
- Supports wings in attack
- Greater numbers behind the ball



- Allows concentrated or compact midfield.
- Attackers have close supporting midfielder
- Wings exposed in counter-attack
- Defending midfielder can better support attack and defending
- Better defense against passes between the lines

3-5-2 Formation

- 3 Back Defenders
- 5 Mid Fielders – 1 or 2 defending 1 or 2 attacking
- 2 Mid wingers
- 2 Center Forwards



3-5-2 - Strengths

- Loads the midfield with numbers and spaces in the attack and defending on the wings
- Can switch central mid-fielders are either defending or attacking. Allows flexibility against opponents to take advantage.
- Because 3 defenders, zonal preferred (working in close proximity with one pressing defender)
- Allows for greater team possession with 3 midfielders to expose flanks
- Forwards working in combination, one high and one low to draw into open flanks or spaces up the middle
- Flank / wingers responsible for attack and defending
- Formation conducive to high pressure in opponents defending third

3-5-2 - Strengths

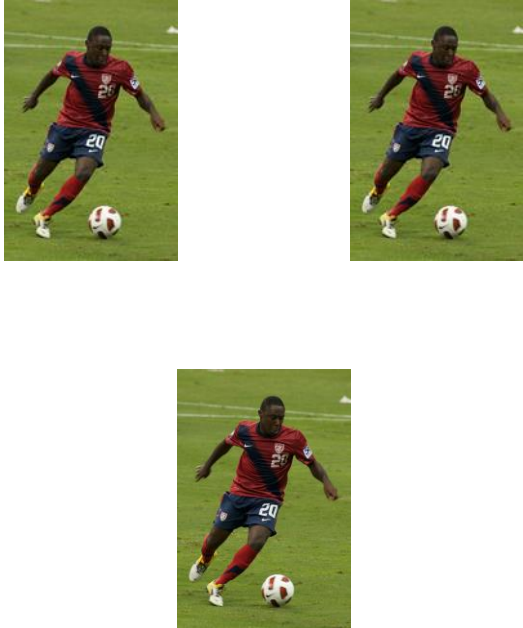
- A 3-5-2 can outnumber opponents in the midfield against 4-4-2 and 3-4-3.
- Tactical advantage on the flank. Opponents must pull a player to mark the attacking winger providing 1v1 opportunities
- Higher numbers in the mid-field allows for vertical (sideline to sideline) runs through and behind the opponent's defense
- Easier for central midfielders to combine with 2 attackers

3-5-2 - Weaknesses

- Players must be well at converting from attack to defending. If you have a team that is slow at converting you will be exposed in the counter-attack, especially on the wings
- 3 Defenders in zonal create large spaces on the wings for counter play
- Wingers must be athletic and well conditioned to cover great spaces on the flanks

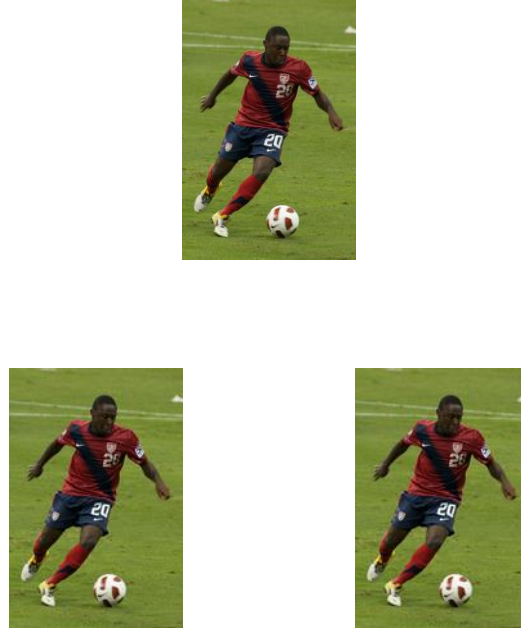
3-5-2 – Midfield Options

1 defending 2 attacking



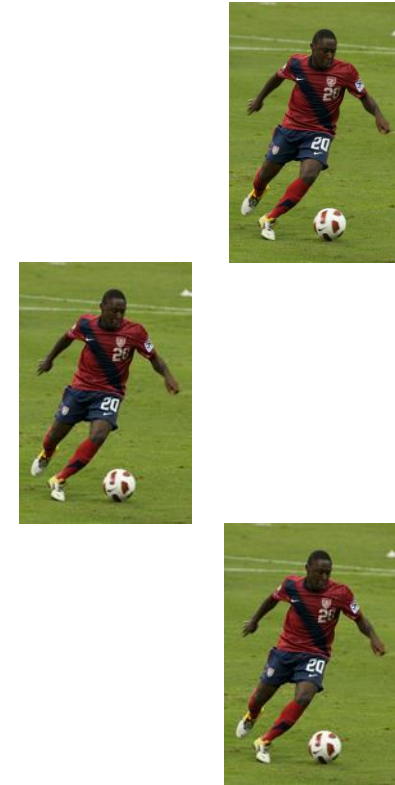
The defending midfielder is used to mark the opponents attacking midfielder. In Brazil this player is called “Talent Hunter” because he must mark out the opponent's best midfielder.

2 defending 1 attacking



The attacking midfielder is a powerful player either Running deep into opponent's defense, combining passes with forwards, and the ability to shoot from Distance or great touch in tight conditions.

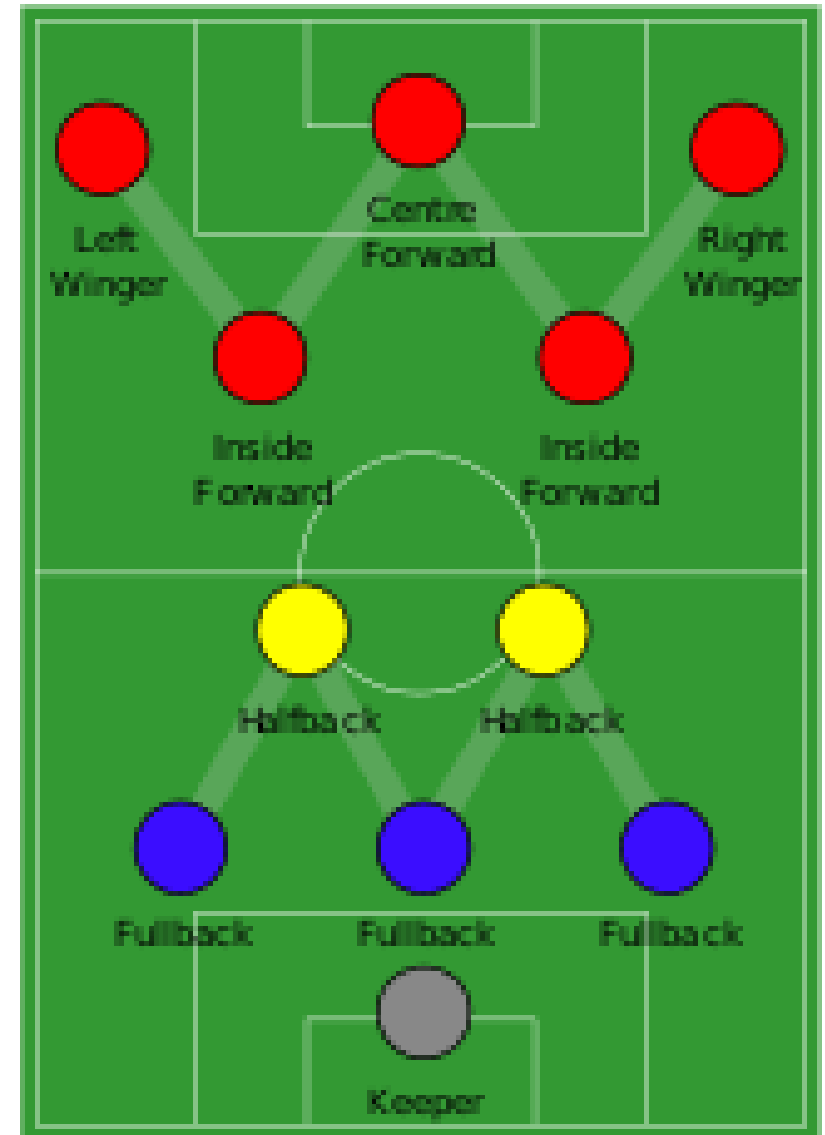
1 defending 1 organizing, 1 attacking



Organizing midfielder is a special player who's technical Ability can control a game and dictate the team' rhythm

3-4-3 Formation

- 3 Back Defenders
- 4 Mid Fielders – 2 Central Midfielders and 2 Wingers
- 3 Center Forwards



3-4-3 - Strengths

- A 3 front systems allows team to apply greater pressures to the opponents goal. Objective is to intercept the ball with pressure in the opponents defending third
- System encourages opponents to play the ball forward but difficult to play the ball sideways
- A three front system can hide a slow player both offensively and defensively
- A 3 front forces the opponent to adjust, making life difficult for defenders
- System is relatively easy to teach since both half's mirror each other and create high pressure training
- 3 Attacking players forces defenders to match up creating passing lanes through

3-4-3 Weaknesses

- Three players can be “played out” of the game with one forward pass
- Three players receive the ball with backs to the goal
- Team can be outnumbered in midfield with opponents who play with four or five
- Team generally defends with 7 players vs traditional 8

3-4-3 Attacking

- Front line is ready to attack when ball is won
- It is easier to play directly with three targets than with two
- A 3 front evenly spreads physical demands on strikers. The runs of strikers are shorter compared to a 2 front (4-4-2)
- A 3 front creates width as the forwards can go wide
- 3 Front can force a defense to move to one side exposing opposite side to attack
- Overall mode of the 3-4-3 is attacking, forcing the opponent into more defensive role



4-3-3 Formation

- 4 Back Defenders
- 3 Mid Fielders
- 3 Center Forwards

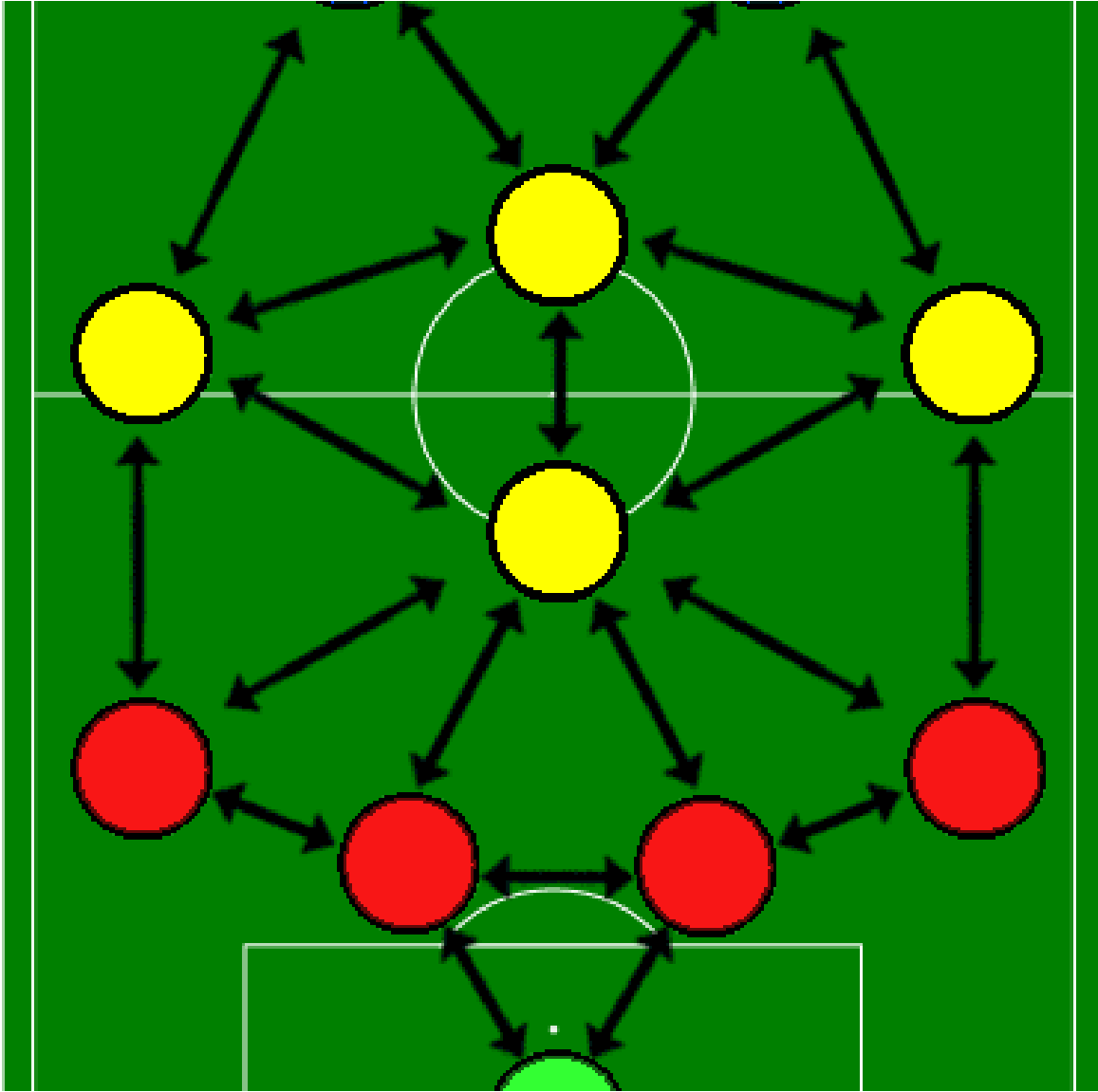


4-3-3 - Benefits

- Numbers are equally spread across the field
- Flexible for wide defenders to move into midfield
- 3 front pressure
- Back 4 can defend against 2 and 3 front systems
- Space for wide defenders to carry the ball forward
- Present opportunities for possession

4-3-3 - Weaknesses

- Lack of numbers in the midfield
- Open flank space in midfield

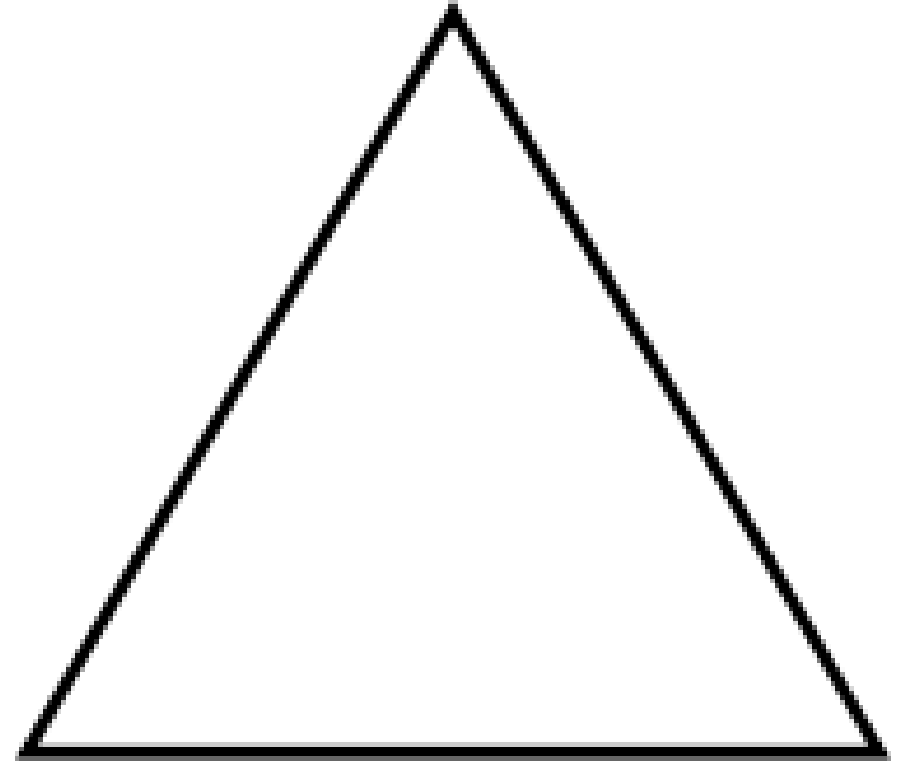


How many
Triangles do
you See?



Triangles are most Important Shape in both attack and defending

- Creates passing lanes through defenses
- Provides visual possibilities for attack
- Allows for correct runs through defense
- Defensive zonal shape
- One defender on the ball with two in support
- Blocks possible passing lanes
- Can be made compact



Exercise

- Using either a 4-4-2, 3-5-2 or 3-4-3. Draw how many triangles you can create in either formations.



Systems of Play do not dictate style of play

- Style of play could be possession, could be quick counter, could be slow buildup, could be direct.
- So do not think that your system of play will limit the style that you want.
- You may discover that some styles of play may fit better with a system, but ultimately this will be defined by the skill and ability of your players.

Which System is for you and your team?

- There are many factors to consider but for young teams that do not play often together it maybe easier to play a 4-4-2 system until you as a coach can determine if the team can maximize certain player(s) skills and abilities.
- The best teams actually can play more than one system and sometimes can play two systems in one game. But for most of us this is not possible with because of lack of training time.
- If you are more defensive minded coach, a 4-4-2 or 4-3-3 can be your best system. For more attacking, 3-5-2 and 3-4-3 are more aggressive.
- If you have one or more special players who can control the game you might want to consider the 3-5-2 or 3-4-3. These allow for more forward play and allow midfielders to have greater control over the flow of the game.
- If you have fast players, especially on the wings, then 4-4-2 or 4-3-3 are considerations.

Considerations

- How young and experienced is your team?
- How skilled are they and can they execute high-level passing combinations?
- What is the size of your home field? Can you take advantage?
- What are you, as the coach, comfortable teaching?
- Do you have one dominant player? Even a great GK can influence your system.
- Can you teach more than one system for your players? For example moving from a 4-4-2 to a 4-3-3 is not that difficult.
- If you have outstanding defensive players, then a 3 back system can afford more players to move forward
- Does your competition play only one system? Maybe this can be an advantage with a system that can exploit spaces against these teams (greater wing play)