TACTICAL PERIODIZATION

A Proven Successful Training Model

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COACH PROFILE: Vitor Frade "The Father of Tactical Periodization"

Manuel da Costa (Vitor) Frade is the creator of Tactical Periodization. He invented a training methodology 35 years ago, which is now internationally known through the success of several Portuguese coaches like José Mourinho, André Vilas Boas and Vítor Pereira among others. He is known in Portugal, Brazil and Spain as one of the world's greatest experts and thinkers when it comes to football methodologies.

Vitor Frade has been teaching the theory and methodology of football training at the Faculty of Sport of the University of Porto for 35 years. José Mourinho was a student of Vitor's at the University of Porto and his influence has widened to impact the whole football world - see page 13 for details.

Vitor revolutionised football coaching by combining all phases of the game, making sure that the tactical dimension is at the forefront of every training session - there is no need for specific physical, tactical or technical training.

The "Game Model" guides the entire training process.

This philosophy is based around getting the players to think, learn and develop, to make the right decisions based on the coach's style of play. This leads to performance stabilisation throughout the season.

Vítor Frade has been an assistant coach at several teams in the Portuguese Primeira Liga:

- Boavista F.C. (6 seasons) where he also served as the head coach for short periods
- Rio Ave FC (3 seasons)
- FC Felgueiras (1 season)

He then went to **FC Porto** where he has remained for over 20 years. He worked with the first team from 1993 to 1999, in 1999 and 2000. Currently, he is the technical advisor to the club's board.

As an assistant coach, Vitor has worked with the following managers: Henrique Calisto, Mário Wilson, João Alves, José Torres, José Macia (Pepe), Augusto Inácio, Vieira Nunes, Tomislav Ivić, Bobby Robson, Jorge Jesus, Carlos Brito and Fernando Santos.

Honours:

- 3 x Primeira Liga winner
- 4 x Taça de Portugal (National Cup) winner
- 4 x Super Cup winner
- UEFA Champions League and UEFA Cup semi-finalist

WHAT IS TACTICAL PERIODIZATION?

What does Tactical Periodization mean?

Using Tactical Periodization, the game model and its principles guide the process from the start. Training must "model" the game through specific practices that include all the tactical game principles designed by the coach. Tactical Periodization uses the tactical dimension as the main focus and driver for all dimensions of the game (physical, mental and technical).

What are the Key Features?

- The logical structure of the game revolves around the four phases of the game (attacking, defending, the transition from defence to attack and the transition from attack to defence).
- These four phases of the game have to be represented in every single training practice, following the **Principle of Specificity**.
- Every training practice relates directly to the principles of play and global framework: **The Game Model**.
- The Game Model and its principles guide the training process from the very beginning.
- Tactical Periodization understands that training has to "model" the game through specific practices that include all the game principles relevant for the coach.
- This periodization is called "Tactical" because, according to Victor Frade (the father of Tactical Periodization), "the game's expression is tactical: the way we want and the way we do play."
- Every game action, regardless of which phase of the game we are in, involves:

  - A decision **(tactical dimension)**
  - An action or motor skill **(technical dimension)**
  - A particular movement **(physiological dimension)**
  - Being directed by decision making and emotional states **(psychological dimension)**

- A good football player is first and foremost, an individual able to choose the most appropriate action to respond to the different game scenarios, and these actions are always determined by a tactical context.
- Accordingly, it is the tactical dimension that leads the players to achieve the targeted goals.

What are the Key Terms?

Game Model:

A set of match-play patterns (specific principles of play) that the coach wants their team to adopt in any of the four phases of the game. In simple words, how the coach wants their team to play: Their conception of the game.

Methodological Principles:

To make a game model operational, Tactical Periodization has defined and developed its own unique methodological principles. These are fully explained later in the book.

Principle of Specificity:

Specificity is arguably the most important principle of Tactical Periodization. Specificity arises when there is a permanent relationship between all the dimensions of the game (tactical, technical, physical and mental) and the training sessions are specifically representative of the desired game model (style of play).

INTRODUCTION

What's Included in this Book?

Firstly, this book provides an overview of the theoretical roots of Tactical Periodization, to enable readers to understand how the Methodological Principles were developed and refined later on.

The book also provides detailed and extensive information on the Methodological Principles, the Game Model and Tactical Organisation in the 4 Phases of the Game. Lastly, a number of real-life, practical examples are provided in a training week format.

Arguably, this book provides the most comprehensive reference on Tactical Periodization available today. Without disrespecting other books, we certainly believe so!

How is Tactical Periodization Used?

Tactical Periodization provides tools to organise the whole football training process - from full season planning to planning one specific training practice.

How Can Tactical Periodization Help Coaches?

Tactical Periodization provides the most comprehensive framework to integrate the club/coach's style of play with the actual physical planning.

Tactical Periodization demands the coach to think, define and carefully organise the training contents in a way that allows the players to improve from a *holistic* perspective. This means that the players are instilled with belief that the training sessions, training weeks and the full season are interconnected and constantly reference the team's style of play and game model.

However, we don't want to go too far - Tactical Periodization is one way to approach football training. We believe it to be the best but there are many ways to train football. Actually, with all of them you can be successful or unsuccessful!

Nonetheless, Tactical Periodization will provide the framework where weekly training practices/sessions and training loads can be organised to create the "behaviours" and actions that coaches want to see in competitive matches.

What Coaches Use Tactical Periodization?

During the last decade, the Tactical Periodization method has been applied by a group of successful coaches, with **José Mourinho** (Porto, Chelsea, Inter Milan, Real Madrid & Manchester Utd) being the most influential and successful of them.

Apart from José, the following top coaches are also using the principles of Tactical Periodization to prepare their teams:

- **Vitor Pereira** (Porto, Fenerbahçe & 1860 Munich)
- **Leonardo Jardim** (Braga, Olympiacos, Sporting CP & Monaco)
- **Brendan Rodgers** (Watford, Reading, Swansea City, Liverpool & Celtic)
- **Marco Silva** (Estoril, Sporting CP, Olympiacos, Hull City, Watford & Everton)
- **Nuno Espírito Santo** (Rio Ave, Valencia CF, Porto & Wolverhampton Wanderers)
- **André Villas-Boas** (Porto, Chelsea, Tottenham Hotspur & Zenit Saint Petersburg)

Other successful coaches (**Pep Guardiola** among them) have adopted part of the Tactical Periodization principles, building their training method around the development of a game model and its principles, using the tactical dimension as the one leading the development of the other football dimensions (technical, physical and mental).

CHAPTER 1

FOOTBALL AND COMPLEXITY

FOOTBALL AND COMPLEXITY: INTRODUCTION

"At first glance, the operations of a symphony orchestra, a football team, a scientific team, and a nation seem incomparably different."
(Damasio, 2006)

BUT are these things really so different?

Look at their general actions in pursuit of the best performance, such as their different characteristics. We believe this question will find answers in the definition of a complex system.

A Complex System

A **Complex System** is a system composed of interconnected parts that, as a whole, exhibit one or more properties (action among the possible properties) that is not obvious from the properties of the individual parts (Chu, D. 2011).

A football team is a community made up of individuals. The team is the whole, but this whole consists of essential individual parts which are all different.

The more we know about the parts, and their individual qualities and actions, the better we understand the whole. Likewise, the more we know about the whole, the better we understand the parts.

The relationship between these terms allows us to understand the limitations and transformations that affect both the whole and its components (Fortin, 2005).

How is Complexity a Key Part of Tactical Periodization?

Complexity sciences offer a set of principles, concepts and methodological tools that can provide significant advances for the study and understanding of football as a complex system.

Under the influence of the set of constraints that occur in competitive matches, we can adjust our training sessions. Training examples, such as the numerical imbalances in small-sided games or the restriction of space during a training practice - a hierarchical structure of behaviour can be identified in which a player, group of players or team explores many different tactical solutions.

The correct management of these constraints requires the coach to shape a structure and dynamics of behaviour more regular and/or stable, or more variable and/or flexible, depending on the established objectives.

The Tactical Periodization Approach offers a method to shape these behaviours, directly linked with the ideas of the coach and the desired style of play.

PARADIGM OF COMPLEXITY: A PHILOSOPHICAL UNDERSTANDING OF THE REALITY

Thomas Kuhn's Paradigm

Thomas Kuhn, a philosopher of science, gave paradigm its contemporary meaning in 1962 when he used it to refer to the set of practices that define a scientific discipline at any particular period of time. In his book 'The Structure of Scientific Revolutions', Kuhn defines a scientific paradigm as:

- **What needs to be observed and scrutinised**
- **The kind of questions that are supposed to be asked and probed for answers in relation to this subject**
- **How these questions are structured**
- **How the results of scientific research should be interpreted**

One important aspect of Kuhn's paradigms is how paradigms have no common basis, measure, or standard of comparison.

This means two paradigms cannot be reconciled with each other, because they cannot be subjected to the same common standard of comparison. For this reason, paradigm as a concept in the philosophy of science might be defined more meaningfully as a self-reliant explanatory model or conceptual framework. Under this view, a new paradigm that replaces an old paradigm is not necessarily better, because the criteria for judgment is determined by the paradigm itself, as well as by the conceptual framework that defines the paradigm and explains it.

Thinking Outside the Box

A simplified analogy for a paradigm is a habit for reasoning. For example, take the commonly used phrase "thinking outside the box". Thinking inside the box relates to accepted science, while "thinking outside the box" would be what Kuhn calls revolutionary science. Revolutionary science is usually fruitless and rarely leads to new paradigms. However, when it does yield results, it leads to large-scale changes in scientific thinking.

Once a large-scale shift is accepted and incorporated by the majority of scientists, it then becomes "the box" and science progresses within it. We all perceive the world around us to be very complex, whether it be the biological structures, anatomical structures, or elementary particles; we find complexity everywhere (Prigogine, 2002).

Complexity

In general, complexity tends to be used to describe something with many parts in an intricate arrangement. Definitions are often tied to the concept of a "system", a set of parts or elements that have relationships with each other.

Many definitions tend to claim or assume that complexity describes a situation where there are numerous elements in a system, with countless relationships between the elements.

Warren Weaver (1949) put forward the idea that the complexity of a particular system is rather the degree of difficulty in predicting its properties. Weaver's work influenced contemporary thinking about complexity. He proposed that complexity comes in two forms:

1. Disorganised Complexity

Disorganised complexity occurs when a particular system has a very large number of parts, such as a million or more. Although the interactions of these parts appear to be largely random, the properties of the whole system can be understood using probability and statistical methods.

2. Organised Complexity

Organised complexity, meanwhile, involves nothing other than non-random, or correlated interactions between the parts. These correlated relationships create a different structure that can, as a system, interact with other systems. The coordinated system produces properties not carried by, or dictated by, the individual parts.

THE GAME AND ITS COMPLEX NATURE

The Competitive, Complex and Random Nature of Football

Football is a collective sport where players are grouped into two teams. The two teams become adversaries as they constantly fight for possession, while respecting the rules. Each team's objective is to score as many goals as possible, while preventing their opponents from doing the same (Teodorescu, 1984). There are particular properties, currently being studied in depth, to explore the specificity of the game's components. A deeply competitive relationship develops between the elements of two teams, while there is a cooperative relationship between the elements of the same team. These occur in a random way and reflect the essence of the game (Garganta, 2002).

Therefore, football certainly has a random nature, with a high probability of situations happening beyond the equilibrium (when opposing forces are balanced). Garganta (1997) adds that football depends on tactical choices and players' decision-making, with these holding a number of constraints and different possibilities. Football is understood to be an open system, where a team is organised by several elements behaving dynamically in an interrelated and overlapping manner (Gaiteiro, 2006).

Oliveira (2004) argues that the complexity of the game lies within the game itself. In other words, the interactions between the two teams and players on the same team, the predictability and unpredictability of events, and the quality of the game and its players, all make for a complex and chaotic environment that is difficult to fully understand.

Consequently, training processes must acknowledge this unpredictability and incorporate it, rather than ignore it. Cunha (1995) argues the importance of the "communication-relational element", which only works in a framework that goes beyond isolated formats. Therefore, modelling match tactics in football enables the delivery of profitable teaching and training processes that are coherent and effective when they use models that are appropriate to the complexity of the game (Garganta, 1996).

Football Specific System

Indeed, once we recognise the systemic nature of football, our training approach should consequently focus on processes that cause players to learn about the actions of the game. This then makes the players more efficient and effective in a particular match situation.

Bertrand and Guillemet (1988) argue that the systemic approach involves the analysis, design and coordination of human and physical resources in order to achieve the objectives of the organisation or system, whether it be a family, a political party or a football team. According to Bertrand and Guillemet, this approach includes four elements that characterise any organisation:

1. **Objectives / Targets:** In football, this is the specific aims of the players, staff, team and club.
2. **Culture:** In a football team, this influences the adopted style and principles of play. Combining this with the players' abilities gives the team its identity.
3. **Human Resources:** This includes the various elements comprising the team, such as players, technical staff, administrators, board members and supporters.
4. **Knowledge:** In this particular case, the expertise is specific to football.

It is therefore necessary to integrate all these elements into our planning and management, so we can modify the system's organisation (Frade, 2006; Guilherme Oliveira, 2006; Ilharco & Lawrence, 2007; Olafson, 1995).

Conversely, when a system is broken into isolated elements, all the emergent properties are lost because they are properties of the whole that no particular element has alone (Capra, 1996). We can therefore say that the whole is not equal to the sum of its parts, because the properties of a living system belong to the whole (Capra, 1996). These properties come about based primarily on the properties of each element, but the interaction between the various elements promotes the emergence of certain properties that do not belong to a particular element.

Concept of "Emergence"

Another important concept to understand when using this approach is that of emergence. This has been used since the time of Aristotle. Goldstein defines emergence as "the arising of novel and coherent structures, patterns and properties during the process of self-organisation in complex systems" (Corning, 2002).

Goldstein's definition can be further understood with the following example from Corning (2002): "The game of chess illustrates precisely why any laws or rules of emergence and evolution are insufficient. Even in a chess game, you cannot use the rules to predict 'history'—i.e., The course of any given game. Indeed, you cannot even reliably predict the next move in a chess game. Why? Because the system involves more than the rules of the game. It also includes the players and their unfolding, moment-by-moment decisions among a very large number of available options at each decision point. It is not simply a self-ordered process; it involves an organised, purposeful activity."

For example, it is essential for a football coach to know the best attributes of each player. However, the action of each player must always be contextualised by the coach's ideas about the game. This leads to the evolution of something greater: the team. Therefore, we can say that **the collective characteristics show that a football team does not necessarily correspond to the sum of the features and capabilities of its individual players, but rather to the set of all the relationships and interactions between the elements of the team**. In a football game, what makes the game a collective activity are the relationships and interactions between players (Cunha, 1999), and all these relationships established throughout the game are expressed through individual actions.

Therefore, all the elements that constitute a system should be seen as parts of a whole that cannot be addressed in isolation. For example, we can view a footballer as a subsystem of the entire team. The game is then a combination of wholes that create a much larger whole.

How do you Organise Individual Elements to Create a Successful Team?

When applying a systemic training approach, we need to analyse the game as a whole and try to understand the interactions within it. We need to know how to organise them, target them, and develop them, so we can understand its dynamics and complexities (Oliveira, 2004). In this respect, Gréhaigne and Garganta (1999) state that a football team can be defined as an open system because it permanently interacts with the specific medium and there is an exchange of information in order to adapt to changes. The aim is to promote more productive and effective actions.

The game seems to involve a multitude of relationships, both cooperative (between team members) and in opposition (between players in opposing teams). This multitude of relationships enables each team to produce a particular organisation.

Garganta (1997) reinforces this idea by saying that football teams act as systems whose constituents are organised according to a particular logic, in terms of principles and requirements for cooperation and opposition. This organisation sets up the interactions within the team, which in turn leads to certain actions that identify the team (its style of play).

According to Durand (1979), the organisation of systems comprises two distinct aspects:

1. **Structural**

Accordingly, Morin (1982) states that the structural side of the system is the most solid. It is possible to transfer this idea to football, because this structural side corresponds to the structured system of play that shapes a team on the pitch.

2. **Functional**

However, we also have the functional side. When referring to a particular way of playing, we cannot focus solely on the structure (the system of play), because the concept of organisation becomes too restrictive. It seems to be crucial to consider the functional side as well, because from this we can include the entire network of relationships and interactions in the system.

The concept of organisation clearly exceeds the static structural dimension, especially when referring to the dynamic functional dimension. Therefore, when it comes to a system, it is essential to put both sides (functional and structural) in context in order to establish the complete set of relationships included in the system (Capra, 1996).

REASONING FOR APPLYING A SYSTEMIC VIEW TO UNDERSTAND THE GAME'S DYNAMICS

As already mentioned, the game of football is characterised by many unpredictable elements and randomness, as well as a competitive relationship between the two teams (Gréhaine & Godbout, 1995). A team (complex system) interacts directly with another team (another complex system), with both needing to follow a set of rules.

In this context, the environment has an enormous influence on the performance and actions of a football team and its players due to all its constraints (Garganta, 2006). This is seen on a macro-complexity level as two dynamic systems (teams) in interaction. Each system has its subsystems that relate to each other at a collective level, both on an intersectorial level (e.g. Interaction between defence and midfield) and on a sectorial level (i.e. Interactions between players in the same sector). Each player is also seen as a subsystem from this perspective and perceived to be dynamic and complex (Oliveira, 2004). The dynamics of the system are guided by the game model and its principles of play.

Organisation and Interaction

Every football team wants to win matches and be successful, so the focus (in the context of the game) is on the ability of a team to score and not concede goals, by using different paths and strategies.

According to Guillemet & Bertrand (1988), the notion of synergy is intimately linked to the characteristics of the organisation and the interactions between the elements (players). This results in a greater effect than the sum of the effects of the individual elements, so a team can score goals that no individual player would be able to.

Communication

The flow of information is another feature in the system and this is relevant because it allows communication. Communication can be defined as the process of exchanging information, and this causes changes in the participating elements at a given time, space and context. This is what happens in a football team. The coach expresses their ideas about the game (i.e. Game model and principles of play), and the players take the information given to them. This later enables them to communicate with their teammates at a given time and situation, by taking into account the coach's overall directives. Therefore, the channels of communication represent a key to any given system (Guillemet and Bertrand, 1988).

Feedback, Regulation and Control

Finally, combine the characteristics of feedback, regulation and control, because there is a reciprocal relationship between them. Like any system, a football team needs a control unit to regulate its operation. The coach is responsible for making strategic decisions and setting goals and targets.

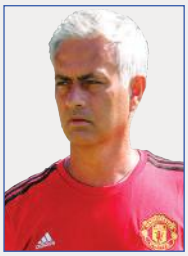
In this regard, Bertrand and Guillemet (1988) state that "The regulation and control assumes that the actions will be undertaken in accordance with the original plan and that deviations will be corrected."

These corrections assume the existence of a feedback mechanism, and this is very important to the game model because it allows the coach to gather information about what is happening within his team and adjust his intervention.

According to Queiroz (1986), if a team is considered a system, then the systemic approach appears to be the best way to model the style of play. This way, the game will always be considered as a whole and retain its functional characteristics.

GRAPHICAL REPRESENTATION OF THE PARTS THAT FORM THE COMPLEX FOOTBALL SYSTEM

FOOTBALL'S TACTICAL DIMENSION



"In football, tactics is everything. It is the most important, truest essence of a team sport."

(**José Mourinho**, 2005)

Football, like other team sports, thrives on open-ended skill, because involvement in unpredictable situations is inevitable. The interpretation and implementation of opportunities for participants in a particular time and situation are part of every moment of the game (Graça, 1994).

Decision Making

Football is predominantly a game of judgments and decisions (Hughes, 1994). It requires its participants to have an appropriate decision making capacity and this is preceded by an ability to read the game. This is an indispensable quality over a football match, because the average time that a player has the ball in a ninety-minute game is less than two minutes. In the remaining time, the player must select, judge and decide. Mastering specific techniques and making good decisions depends on a player's suitability to the game situation. **A good performer is able to select the most appropriate techniques to respond to repeated game settings, with these techniques always being determined by a tactical context** (Garganta & Pinto, 1998).

Conditioning

A constant demand to increase teams' athletic performances led to the development of different methodologies and concepts for training. As stated by Pinto (1996), "Football performance valued different factors throughout its history: first the technical and then the conditioning aspects held very significant weight in the effectiveness of the game."

The first approaches focused on isolating its parts. Although separation is necessary for a better understanding, we should understand that this division hinders its transfer to competition. Making the game a subject of study is fundamental to the extent of learning about its logic and principles, because these can have importance for training and player/team performance.

Therefore, a player's performance level is strongly conditioned by the way he conceives and realises the game. This influences his decisions, which are conditioned by his perception and understanding of information and motor response mechanisms (Garganta, 1998).

Tactical Training

Today, there seems to be a consensus that the tactical dimension plays an important role in achieving high performance. As Pinto (1996) states, "It's increasingly assuming the role of tactics as a centre and coordinator of the different factors of performance. Tactical training therefore plays a decisive role in the education of football players. The development of tactical approaches implies the development of the attitude to decide quickly, and this depends on the capacity to create solutions. It means that the development of decision making abilities requires the development of tactical knowledge."

Therefore, following Frade (1998) and Faria (1999), the aim of any tactical training should be to make the team play the way the coach wants them to (i.e. The Game Model).

From these different interpretations of tactical training, there appear to be two lines of understanding that are distinguished. On one hand, we can accept the existence of a tactic as an abstract-global concept. On the other hand, we have an interpretation that uses the specific game model as the core of the whole process.

Paradoxically, tactical factors are still poorly investigated due to the difficulty in studying them scientifically (Garganta, 2002). Regardless, experts have sought to improve and expand the knowledge in this area, and multiple lines of research use different methodological processes to try to understand the logic that governs the game of football. It becomes important to think about tactics "as the dimension that coordinates the game" (Frade, 2006).

Oliveira (2004) states that "Any game action is conditioned by an interpretation that involves a decision (tactical dimension), an action or motor skills (technical dimension) that required a particular movement (physiological dimension) and was directed by volitional/cognitive and emotional states (psychological dimension).

In fact, the tactical dimension does not exist by itself. It makes sense only when it occurs through interactions of the other three: the technical, physical and psychological."

Similarly, Frade (quoted by Rocha, 2000) adds that the physical is not tactical, technical, psychological, nor strategic, but it needs all four to appear. According to the author, and given the constraints the game always demands, the tactical aspect should be the dominant training component.

Constructing a Tactical Training Process

From **José Mourinho's** point of view, tactics are something very concrete. They are the actions that you want your players to produce on the pitch, the set of principles that give shape to your game model, and a specific behavioural culture that needs to be learned over time (Amieiro et al., 2006).

Oliveira (2004) adds that the training process is a construction. It is necessary to give coherence and meaning to that construction, defining a set of guidelines, both collective and individual. In other words, the construction of a style of play (the game model) is based on a well-defined set of ideas from the coach. It constitutes a framework that promotes the learning of everything that is being developed.

Oliveira (2004) distinguishes between two concepts that are often confused with tactics:

1. The **Organisational Structure** (the system of play or team shape).
2. The **Game System**.

The first refers to the initial starting positions of the players, while the second refers to the entire dynamic organisation (structural and functional), which includes specific individual and collective functions that give meaning to the way of playing.

Therefore, building a team needs the players to unify their actions. They need to look the same way at a given situation and select the same answers (Pereira, 2005). We can therefore say that a team must build a specific organisational culture that distinguishes it from others and acts as a unifying factor for its individual elements.

Oliveira (1991) corroborates this view by saying, "Who is going to have more chance to win a football match? Who can jump longer? Who can run faster? Or who usually plays better and scores more goals?".

FOOTBALL'S STRATEGIC DIMENSION

To Gréhaigne (1992), Hernandez Moreno (1994) and Riera (1995), strategy represents what is planned in advance, while tactics are the instant adaptation of the strategy to different game scenarios and variations, such as the position and movement of the ball, teammates, and opposing players. The actions and behavioural patterns of the players and the team are the consequence of an order and **self-organisation**[1]. It should not cause any individual (or collective) limitations, but rather promote creative actions aimed at reaching the desired standards (Oliveira, 2003).

Following Bayer (1994), cooperation is a specific feature of a team sport. This means that any player within the team should help and communicate with teammates according to the predetermined common objective. To communicate, it is necessary to speak the same language, or in this case, have a common reference system. It means following the same principles and using a common language that allows mutual understanding. Complying with these operating principles, players must constantly understand and anticipate the situations they are involved in and act in a manner that gains advantages for the team. This is only possible when all team members act on a similar and meaningful basis.

Accordingly, Teodorescu (1984) mentions that in team sports, strategy actively contributes to the awareness factor, both during the game and while preparing for competition. The same author refers to the importance of tactics in achieving victory. According to Teodorescu (1984) and Riera (1995), individual tactics are the basis of the collective tactics, because they are the way to discover solutions to overcome the opposing team, both in attack and defence, according to the strategic game plan. For Garganta and Oliveira (1996), the construction of this tactical attitude and the development of players' possible choices obviously depends on the knowledge they have about the game.

Football is characterised by numerous unpredictable actions, and you cannot calculate in advance the frequency, duration, or timing of these actions. Within the unpredictability of a football match, the coach and players try to create **predictability** through preparation, planning and training. This enables them to successfully interact with the unpredictability of the game.

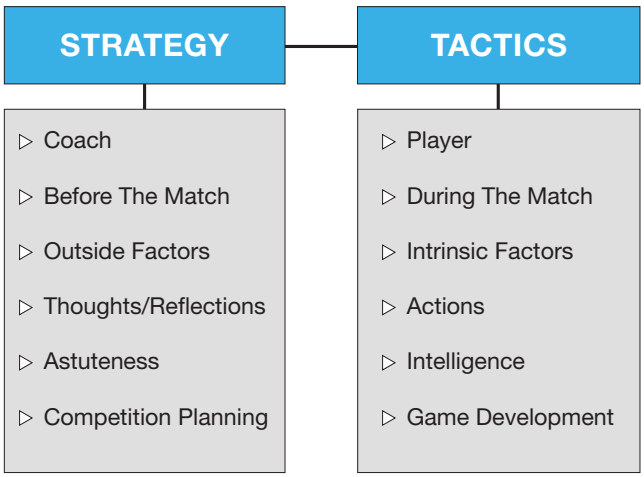
Strategy and tactics are two concepts used in sports to explain the logic of any activity. The strategy acts as a guide and the tactics evolve in order to play appropriately and achieve the objectives (Tavares, 1993). According to Garganta (1997), the strategy is the process that from a set of data, defines scenarios, targets methods, and establishes the management, rules and principles of action. It requires skill and initiative by combining a set of decisions and choices.

Such a strategic approach obviously depends on the knowledge that the coach and players have about the game. Therefore, the strategic and tactical dimensions emerge as something that gives meaning to the players' functions over the course of the game. According to Arda (1998), the logic of strategic and tactical factors can be explained by the following two foundations:

- The set of possible actions and decisions the team can exhibit and accomplish during the course of the game.
- The actions performed by the player to solve a certain game situation.

Divided View of Strategy and Tactics

(Adapted from Garganta & Oliveira , 1996)



1. Self-organisation is the process where a structure or pattern appears in a system without a central authority or external element imposing it. This globally coherent pattern appears from the local interaction of the elements that make up the system, thus the organisation is achieved in a way that is parallel (the entire elements act at the same time) and distributed (no element is a coordinator) (Wikipedia, 2011).

CHAPTER 2

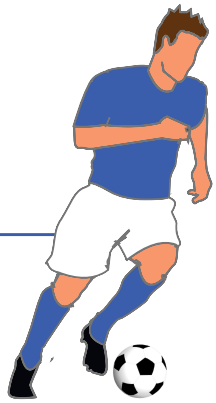
FOOTBALL TRAINING AND PERIODIZATION APPROACHES

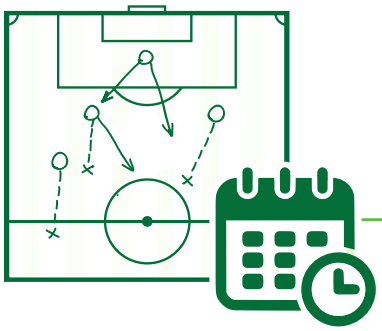
FOOTBALL TRAINING AND PERIODIZATION APPROACHES (3 FOOTBALL METHODOLOGIES)

1. Analytical Trend

Focus on physical preparation to achieve "Peak Performance" for competition

- This trend came from Eastern Europe and was characterised by dividing the season into periods.
- Aimed to achieve "peak performances" at certain major competitions.
- Priority was physical conditioning by focusing on general preparation that is unconnected to the way of playing (game model).
- Process based on isolated performance factors (fitness, technical, tactical, psychological).
- Related training through analytical training approaches, where the decision making process plays a secondary role.





2. Integrated Trend

Training specific to the sport

- Appeared as a reaction to the analytical trend. The physical, technical and tactical aspects are developed together.
- Greater resemblance to the demands of competition by placing more importance on the game and its specificity.
- However, its level of specificity is only related to the sport, not to a certain style of play (game model).

3. Tactical Periodization

"Game Model" guides the process

- In modern Portugal and Spain, they proposed a new way of approaching football training known as 'Tactical Periodization'.
- The game model and its principles therefore guide the process from the start.
- Training must "model" the game through specific practices that include all the tactical game principles designed by the coach.

I. Analytical Trend: Physical Preparation to Achieve "Peak Performance" for Competition

In an attempt to simplify the complexity, sports and training methodologies came under the "analytical" way of thinking. These processes consequently suffered from a separation of their various dimensions (physical, technical, tactical and psychological). In the case of football, the game was dissected by isolating its various phases (attack, defence, transition phases and set pieces) without considering the principle of an "unbroken wholeness" as put forward by Frade (1990). When analysing historical training methodologies for team sports, Filipe Martins (2003) identified three main trends:

1. **Analytical Trend**
2. **Integrated Trend**
3. **"Tactical Periodization"**

This Analytical Trend came from Eastern European countries and was characterised by dividing the season into periods. This periodization aimed to achieve "peak performances" at certain major competitions. The model gives priority to the physical variable by focusing on general preparation that is unconnected to the way of playing. It is based on isolated performance factors (fitness, technical, tactical, psychological) and related training through analytical training approaches, where the decision making process plays a secondary role.

Lev Matvéiev developed this theory initially for individual sports and later transferred it to team sports. Over time, various sporting successes were attributed to this theory, so the training system advocated by Matvéiev was taken as a template for sports preparation processes all over the world. In the opinion of Matvéiev (1981), sports training includes several components (physical, technical, tactical, moral, volitional and theoretical), with the concept of performance being closely related to a set of adaptive biological changes that occur in the body (functional and the form and structure of organisms).

It is easy to see the influence of reductionist concepts (simplifying a complex idea by isolating and analysing the simplest, most basic mechanisms), because realities are transformed into performance factors worldwide. These factors are firstly trained separately and later applied in combination during competition. Tactical-technical factors are trained in isolation (the analytical approach) by looking at their individual development to promote an "expected" improvement in collective performance.

In this regard, **José Mourinho** (Lourenço & Ilharco, 2007) comments, "Who is the fastest man in the world? Let's assume it's Francis Obikwelu, who takes less than ten seconds to run one hundred metres. This is very fast, and I do not know any football player that can beat him in a one hundred metre run. However, in a football match, in a team trained by me, Bolt would be the slowest. Let me give you another example: a case of a current slow player is Deco. If we put him in a hundred metre race with track and field athletes, he would seem ridiculously slow. He has an uncoordinated running style, no good values for maximal speed, and for sure his muscles are loaded with slow contraction fibres. However, on a football field, he is one of the fastest players I know, because pure speed has no direct relation with the speed in football. The speed in football is related to the capacity to analyse game situations and react to specific stimuli and the ability to identify proper responses."

As a follower of Tactical Periodization, **José Mourinho** promotes an approach with a different design, where speed gets a new dimension in a specific perspective. When analysing speed this way, a slow player from a mechanical point of view can be a fast player from a more complex perspective, because with proper timing, this player can move where the opposition least expect it and be where the teammate with the ball needs him to be (Lourenço & Ilharco, 2007). In this context, playing with or without speed is related to the decision-making process. It is linked to the decision-making efficiency, previous experience and tactical culture of each player and the team as a whole (Araújo, 2004). Therefore, the speed we want to develop in our training process is a speed specifically related to our way of playing.

*"For me, things are very clear. There is traditional-analytical training, there is the integrated training system that is done with the ball but where the fundamental concerns are not very different from traditional practice, and there is my way of training called '**Tactical Periodization**,' which has nothing to do with the other two. The only difference between traditional training and integrated training is that in the latter, players are mentally deceived by giving them a ball, but the training consequences are exactly the same as with traditional training."*

José Mourinho (Bruno et al., 2006)

2. Integrated Trend: Training Specific to the Sport

In opposition to the analytical approach, a trend called integrated training appeared as a reaction to the analytical trend. In this proposal, physical, technical and tactical aspects were developed jointly. This approach sought a greater resemblance to the demands of competition by placing more importance on the game and its specificity (Martins, 2003).

However, even the so-called 'Integrated Practice' does not address the environment and the specific characteristics of all the game's elements. Its level of specificity is only related to the sport, not to a certain style of play (game model).

As highlighted by Guilherme Oliveira (2004), integrated training does not use the tactical dimension to lead the entire training process, so the game model is not used as a guideline. The "integrated" approach is therefore less specific than Tactical Periodization, because the decisions taken by the players at different times are not regulated and coordinated by a common tactical language (the game model). This does not encourage the players to think in harmony and learn the optimal collective actions we want to happen in each moment.

Finally, we can consider the declaration of Carvalhal (Amieiro, 2005): "There are two types of work with the ball: integrated and systemic (Tactical Periodization). In the first integrated type, the ball is present, but it is not supportive of the game model. We advocate the systemic type in which the ball is present from the first day in order to create a model for how we want to play (collectively and individually).

Thus, the team is organised to play from the first day and at the same time, and performance is modelled at all levels: physical, technical and psychological. We pay attention to all dimensions, but what coordinates all of them (physical, technical and psychological) is the tactical work."

We accept that these methodologies have evolved and improved greatly over time, but they continue to approach different aspects of the game analytically, in a decontextualised manner (Tamarit, 2007).

*"We practice our game model, we practice our principles and sub-principles, we adapt our ideas to our players and vice versa, in order to establish a common actional language. However, this learning and creation of habits is more than the result of systematic repetition. It is a guided discovery that happens not because I told them '**we will go this way**.' I want them to find out whether this way gets them not only a 'know-how' (which comes from systematic repetition) but also a "**know about know-how**," where they are discovering it through their self-belief, because they believe it is the best way to succeed. That is, they feel good when they play this way because it gives them pleasure and positive emotional reactions, with all the advantages these bring."*

José Mourinho (Lourenço, 2003)

3. Tactical Periodization Approach: The "Game Model" Guides the Process

In recent years, along with the changing demands of football, there was a break with the previous training concepts and methodologies. Perhaps the biggest change took place in Portugal and Spain. The conventional periodization models designed by Matvéiev in the 60's and 70's were rethought by some football training theorists. Vítor Frade has often been referred to as the main driver of this conceptual transformation, because he proposed a new way of approaching football training known as 'Tactical Periodization'.

In the Tactical Periodization approach, the tactical dimension is not reduced to a system of play or team shape (spatial organisation). As stated by Mourinho (2002), "Tactics is understood as a well-defined set of principles of play, both for attack and defence (and their transitions), that are in accordance with the idealised way of play desired by the coach. The ultimate goal is to determine an order out of chaos."

Periodization is tactical because, according to Frade (2004), "The expression of the game is tactical: the way we want to play and the way we do play. It aims to make an operational game model that is constituted as a causal future element (prognosis)."

The Game Model and its principles therefore guide the process from the start. Tactical Periodization understands that training must "model" the game through specific practices that include all the game principles designed by the coach. As Gomes (2006) points out, the specificity of practices should not just cover the structural configuration and functional events—the coach should also direct players' attention to those actions he wants developed. Therefore, Tactical Periodization asserts that specificity needs to be contextualised to not just the practice design, but also to the coach's intervention.

Training then inserts the players into a pattern of play, an organisation aimed at developing a collective and individual identity. This collective identity can be verified by the interactions between the elements of the system, which should be regular and show a behavioural trend. As Frade (1998) states, "The game is an ongoing phenomenon and its construction is created by the habits we want to happen, which are acquired through actions."

According to Gomes (2006), the process of Tactical Periodization contextualises all situations, regardless of complexity, according to a global concern, namely the game model. It develops a common significant language where the players with their different roles constrain the properties of the whole. This function of a player within the team results in collective references. The set of references and principles then guides a collective idea of the game that should be trained on all levels of complexity. This enables the players to develop strategies that enable the team to maintain its identity (the regularity of interactions in the system).

According to Mourinho (Barreto, 2003), he pays attention to all the factors. The physical aspect is still important, but what coordinates the entire process (the physical, technical and psychological aspects) is the organisation (the tactical dimension). Any practice they do must be related to the ideas of play. This is why this approach differs from integrated training, because integrated training uses the ball but often forgets the way of playing (style of play).

TRAINING PERIODIZATION MODELS

Enhancing the potential performance of an athlete or team is only possible through the proper application of training load methods and content. These should be framed in Tactical Periodization models, which combine contributions from different fields of knowledge, such as applied sports science and the opinions of recognised sports training theorists. These systematic plans are determined through different factors, such as the specific type of sport, the level of competition, the athlete's functional status, the internal logic of sport, the competitive calendar, and so on.

A periodization training model is a theoretical plan for a complex real system. It is constructed to facilitate an approach, whether from a theoretical or a practical perspective (Manso et al., 1996).

In team sports, this subject has been largely ignored (Woodman and Pyke, 1991), with researchers typically directing their attention to developing fitness components within a macro-cycle (Jenkins, 1995; Stapff, 1996). We therefore see a clear conflict between the demands of football, such as the tactical dimension and weekly competitions, and the proposed models. In this regard, Rowbottom (2003) considers it extraordinary that team players need to compete at peak performance (or as close as possible) every weekend, or even every few days.

Dawson (1996) also points out one of the major problems in football, which is the need to achieve mini-peaks in performance every weekend. This means having to combine post-game recovery, training and game preparation sessions in just 2 to 6 days (between games). Rowbottom (2003) states that optimising the athletes' performance would need matches to be more spread out, which is obviously not possible within the current football calendar.

However, the scientific community is uncertain about which of the different models provides valid scientific arguments for the development of the game in terms of the "art of play." In our opinion, this means the current models should be reviewed to give special treatment to the tactical component. In this sense, there is concern about the amount of existing research into football training periodization.

Throughout the history of sport, training has developed and employed a variety of periodization models that have evolved and been modified, according to the body of available knowledge at the time. Having the methodological aspect as the main criteria, we can identify three stages in the historical development of periodization models:

- **1st Stage:** From the origins to 1950 (beginning of training systematisation)
- **2nd Stage:** From 1950 to 1970, when the so-called classical models were reviewed and new models appeared
- **3rd Stage:** From 1970 to present, when there has been a great revolution in this kind of knowledge

According to this historical development, we suggest the following classification:

- **Precursors of Training Periodization**
- **Traditional Periodization Models**
- **Contemporary Periodization Models**

Within each group, we have highlighted the ones that have most influenced the periodization of football training. These are outlined in the following sections.

PERIODIZATION TRAINING MODELS: Precursors, Traditional & Contemporary

Precursors of Periodization Training

Gomes (2002) lists some researchers such as Kraevki (1902), Tausmev (1902), Olshanik (1905), Skotar (1906), Shtliest (1908) and Murphy (1913)—who contributed to the concept of sport periodization. Murphy and Kotov (1900–1920) divided training contents into phases to improve athletes' fitness progression (Fox, 2002). Kotov (1916) initiated the concept of continuous training divided into three levels: general, preparation and special training (Smith, 1998; López et al., 2000; Gomes, 2002). In 1922, Gorinevski wrote the first book about this subject, titled 'Basis of Sport Training' (Gomes, 2002).

Pihkala proposed in 1930 that weekly, monthly and yearly training loads should have a wave-like nature, alternating work and recovery. He also stressed that the training load should be decreased in terms of volume but increased in terms of intensity (Gomes, 2002) during long periods of training and that specific training should be undertaken after broad work on general physical conditioning (Lopez et al., 2000; Gomes, 2002).

Grantyn (1939) proposed classifying training contents and general training principles, and maintaining a link between specialisation and general preparation (Gomes, 2002). He continued the division of the season into cycles (preparation, main and transition) with the durations and objectives of these cycles being determined by the characteristics of the sport (Silva, 1998).

In 1949, Ozolin proposed that the training period should have two stages, a general and a special period. The competitive period was divided into six stages:

1. **Initial Period**
2. **Competitive Period**
3. **Unloading Period**
4. **Immediate Preparation Period**
5. **Conclusive Period**
6. **Main Competition Period**

He also argued for complete rest to be limited to special cases for a limited time (5–7 days), saying that the stages of the season should have the same length for all sports but with different content distribution.

In 1950, Letonov criticised the planning models, especially the lack of physiological bases and individualisation in the processes. In his proposal, he incorporated knowledge about biological adaptation to training models and divided the season into periods of general and specific training, the competitive period, and another period to decrease fitness levels (Silva, 1998; López et al., 2000; Gomes, 2002).

Traditional Periodization Models

These models were designed long ago, but some coaches still use them. The most significant models in this group (described in full in the next section) are:

- **Matveiev's Model**
- **Pendulum Model** (Aroseiev)
- **High Training Loads Model** (Tschiene)

Contemporary Periodization Models

Contemporary models have moved away from previous rigid structures to more open theories. We will cover the following:

- **Training Blocks Model** (Verkhoschansky)
- **Integrator Model** (Bondarchuk)
- **A.T.R. Model** (Kaverin and Issurin)
- **Extended Performance Model** (Bompa)
- **Cognitive Model** (Seirul-lo)
- **Six-Week Periodization Model** (Verheijen)

TRADITIONAL PERIODIZATION MODELS

MATVEIEV'S MODEL: "The Father of Modern Sports Training Periodization"

Unity of Specialised & General Training

Incorporating specialised (game specific) training into general training

- The volume of game specific training prior to Matveiev's Model was relatively small, so it was insufficient to achieve an overall development of the athlete.
- Uniting specialised and general training creates and expands the potential for specific training for a particular sport.
- Even though general and specialised training are very different, training processes should try to include both of them.

Variation of Training Loads

The training load changes day-to-day, week-to-week, to achieve optimum performance for competition

- The training structure must always have a dynamic variation in all its components. Matveiev highlights 3 basic variations:

1. Small variations inside micro-cycle (week).
2. Medium amount of variations (composed of several small variations) that express the general overload trend, over several micro-cycles.
3. Large variations occurring across the season and reproducing the load trends used in the medium variations.

MATVEIEV'S MODEL

Systematic Combination of Load & Recovery

Structured work and rest intervals to allow full recovery

- All training sessions must be related to the previous ones and the following sessions, to create positive conditions for achieving stable and progressive results, switching between work and rest intervals.
- Any training load must preferably be applied after a complete recovery from the previous load to avoid over-training.

Division of the Season into Cycles

Micro-cycles: Week
Meso-cycles: Month
Macro-cycles: Season

- Training cycles represent successive structures that are repeated periodically (e.g. Training sessions, micro-cycles, meso-cycles and macro-cycles).
- Some of the contents and methods employed will however be partially modified.

Progression of Training Efforts

Increasing training loads

- Maximum overload is a load that reaches the body's limits of function without exceeding the barrier of adaptation.
- Any maximum load is relative, because after a certain time, the adaptation processes transform it into a sub-maximal load.
- Volume and intensity are the basic parameters of a training load, and these are inseparable, yet simultaneously opposed.

PENDULUM MODEL (AROSEIEV): Rhythmic Varied Training to Maintain Performance Levels

Aroseiev (1971) proposed a non-traditional planning method for the training season, which he called the Special Preparation Training System. Below we outline his 'Pendulum Model':

Accumulation & Realisation Phases

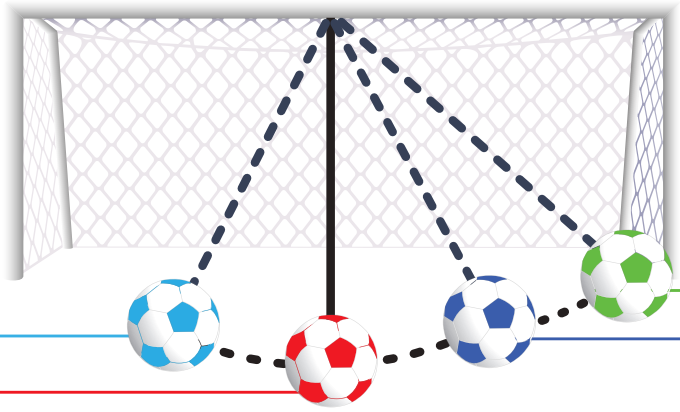
Combining physical & technical capabilities w/ high load training

- 2 different phases (Accumulation and Realisation) are constantly developed and alternated.
- 2 types of micro-cycle (training week) are run alternately: The main micro-cycle and the regulation micro-cycle.
- **Accumulation Phase:** Aims to expand physical and technical capabilities using high training load volumes.
- **Realisation Phase:** Specialised training is increased to stabilise technical and tactical performance levels.

Alternating Main & Regulation Micro-Cycles

Enabling recovery and increasing fitness levels

- Regulation Micro-cycles enable the recovery of muscle capacity and increase general fitness.
- Meanwhile, the main micro-cycles aim to meet the needs of special capacities.
- The number of alternating micro-cycles is determined by the duration of the training process, considering that the minimum number of paired micro-cycles needed to achieve the "Pendulum Effect" (see below) should be between 3 and 5.



The 'Active Recovery'

- The "Pendulum Effect" is based on two concepts: The 'Active Recovery' & 'Biorhythms'.
- The **'Active Recovery'** phenomenon (Sechenov), shows that working capacity is at its highest during physical activity, not during passive rest.

Biorhythms

The body's fitness "swings like a pendulum" creating a more effective recovery

- This is linked to the reality of life on this planet, which is subject to a sequence of different rhythms.
- The sequence of main (basic) and regulation micro-cycles causes the body's fitness to swing like a pendulum, ensuring a more effective recovery and creating rhythmic increases and decreases in general and specific capacities.
- "The greater the pendulums are, the greater the possibility of sustaining sport performance" (Forteza de la Rosa, 1999).

HIGH TRAINING LOADS MODEL (TSCHIENE): Continuous High Intensity Training

While seeking to maintain high levels of performance throughout the season, Peter Tschiene conceived the 'High Training Loads Model'. This keeps both training volume and intensity high throughout the season.

This model is based on the rigorous control of an athlete's functional capabilities to achieve their expected performance levels in competitive matches. Throughout training, the focus is on finding execution models that can be adapted to the competition itself, using specialised equipment.

Specific Competitive Training Content

Preparation (Training)

▸ Preparing for competitive matches using continuous high quality and intense training.

Continued Use of High Intensities

▸ Continued use of High Intensities (over 80% of maximum intensity).

Continuous Short Phases

▸ Load variations with frequent changes in the total amount and quality of training. These are all planned into Continuous Short Phases.

Minimal Difference in Loads Between Training & Matches

▸ Minimal difference in load volume between the training (80%) and competitive matches (100%).

CONTEMPORARY PERIODIZATION MODELS

CONTEMPORARY PERIODIZATION MODELS

The advances in the traditional models contributed to the later development of new models, including ones for specific sports. The duration of each season period has been, and continues to be, a matter for considerable debate.

On the other hand, there is an increasing movement away from previous rigid structures (i.e. Non-individualised planning) to more open theories, due to the influence of systems theory and breakthroughs in biological adaptation.

In this group of contemporary periodization models, we will cover the following:

- **Training Blocks Model** (Verkhoschansky): Lower Volume, More Intense Specific Training
- **Integrator Model** (Bondarchuk): Development, Maintenance & Recovery Periods Combined
- **A.T.R. Model** (Kaverin and Issurin): Accumulation, Transformation and Realisation
- **Extended Performance Model** (Bompa): Progressive Training to Reach Peak Performance
- **Cognitive Model** (Seirul-lo): The Importance of Interactions and Athlete's Talent Factors
- **Six-Week Periodization Model** (Verheijen): Football Specific Practices to Improve Fitness
- **Tactical Periodization Model** (Vitor Frade): Optimise Training to Produce Maximum Performance Gain while Avoiding Overload

TRAINING BLOCKS MODEL (VERKHOSCHANSKY): Lower Volume, More Intense Specific Training

Dr. Yury Verkhoshansky was a Russian scientist and coach for the Olympic track and field team. His work into plyometrics attracted much interest. In Verkhoshansky's opinion, the specific laws that characterise and determine sports performance are based on long-term adaptation processes in the athlete's body. These depend on intense muscular work and the organisation of training loads with different physiological orientations, volumes and durations.

Intensify Specific Training Loads

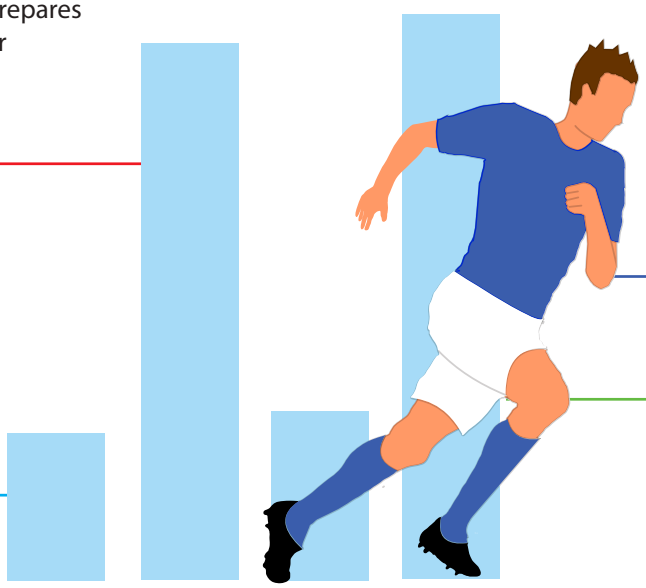
▶ This is called the **Method Preparation Concept** - it claims that it is necessary to intensify specific loads, because elite athletes have extremely high levels of training.

▶ The athlete's should use specific training for their sport and training at a high intensity prepares them very well for competition.

Positive (Delayed) Effect of Long Term Training

▶ The 'Training Blocks Model' determines the specific performance capacity after the application of high training loads. It involves an initial decrease in performance levels, which is consistent with the use of concentrated training loads.

▶ The greater this decrease in specific conditioning levels (within reasonable limits), the greater the subsequent increase in performance will be.



Concentrated Training Loads

▶ To maximise the adaptation of the athlete, it is necessary to implement concentrated loads over a sufficiently long period (up to 20 weeks), during which the following principles are applied:

▶ Each block is divided into two phases:

1. Large volume of specific (specialised) training.
2. Lower volume, but more intense, specific loads.

(Concept of "concentrated training loads" characterises both phases)

▶ The training volume increases and decreases more rapidly than in traditional models, leading to a more intensive training load.

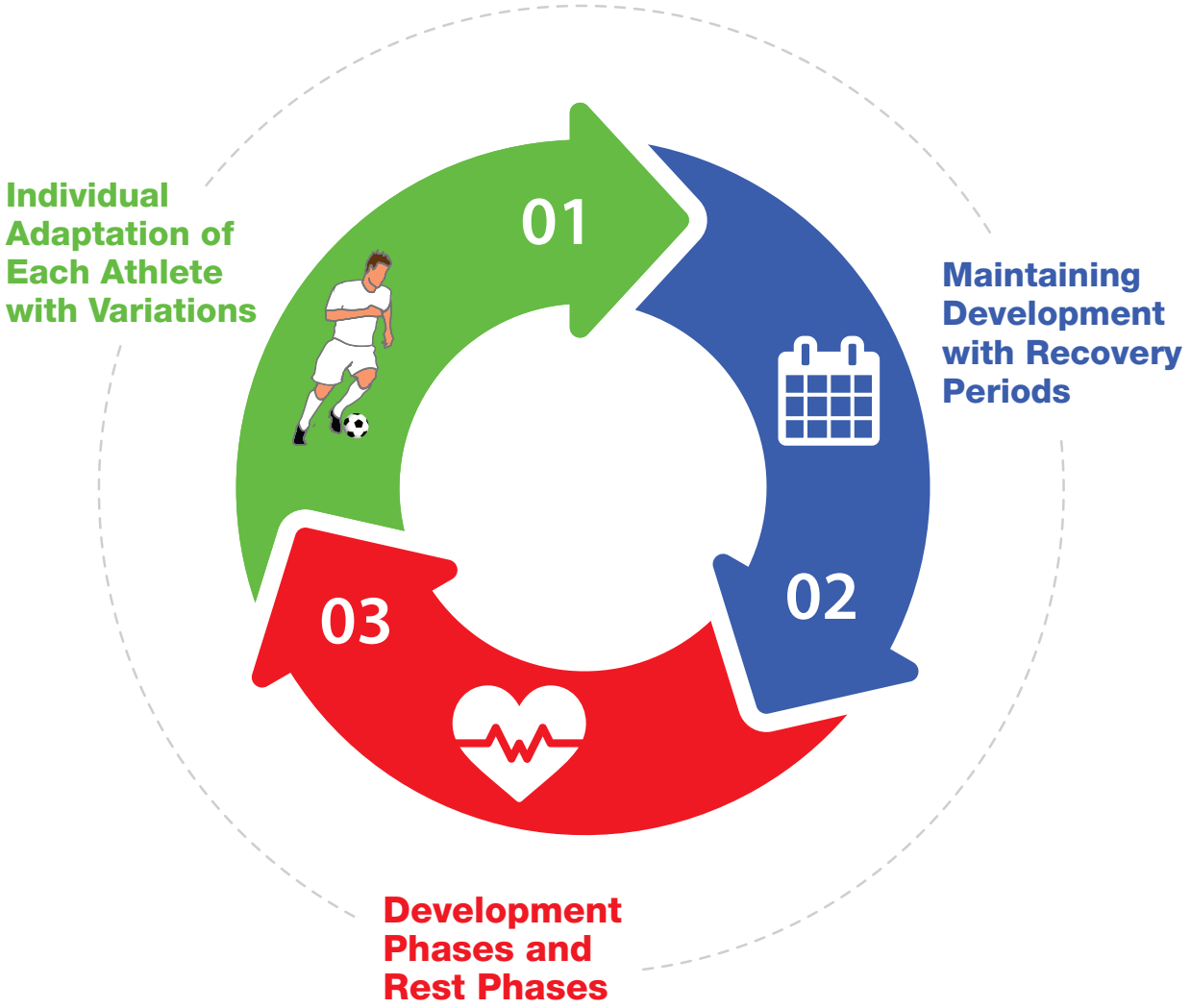
▶ Training and competition loads do not conflict. They are combined to first achieve a functional adaptation (development), which is enhanced later in the physiological process by using intense training loads.

Speed of Movement

▶ Sporting results often depend on the speed by which movements are executed, or on the ability of the athlete to increase speed. For a high-level athlete, this should also be combined with a high level of accuracy (technique).

INTEGRATOR MODEL (BONDARCHUK):

Development, Maintaining & Recovery Periods Combined



For Bondarchuk (1988), the process of developing sports performance has a three-phase character. These sequential phases, namely development, maintenance and rest, supply the classic phases of learning, maintenance, and loss of performance, depending on the planning model and the characteristics of the athlete.

Individual Adaptation of Each Athlete

The 'Integrator Model' considers the set of individual adaptation characteristics for each athlete. It puts forward that adaptation is achieved in a period ranging from two to eight months, depending on the athlete's age, years of training experience, and the level and characteristics of this training.

The innovative aspect of this model is how development and maintenance periods are mixed together with recovery periods.

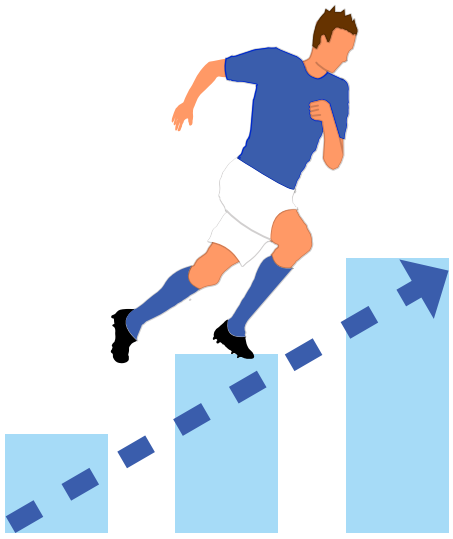
Knowledge about an athlete's individual adaptive responses can determine precisely the competitive stages that can be reached over a season, therefore allowing higher levels of performance to be achieved.

The athlete's adaptation is achieved through the parallel application of training loads with differing orientations along the entire macro-cycle (full season), taking into account only whether these loads can trigger a suitable organic (physical) response.

A.T.R. MODEL (KAVERIN AND ISSURIN): Accumulation, Transformation and Realisation

Concentration of Training Loads on Specific Capacities

▶ **Concentration of Training Loads on Specific Capacities** or specific training objectives.



Blocks of Specialised Training

▶ Consecutively developing certain capacities or objectives in **Blocks of Specialised Training** across meso-cycles (months).

Residual Training Effects

▶ Sequencing meso-cycles (months) based on **Residual Training Effects**.

▶ Aerobic endurance training and maximal strength have the greatest residual effect, so this kind of training should act as the basis for the training to follow after.

1. **Accumulation:** Training should start by developing the skills that generate the greatest residual effect.
2. **Transformation:** The next phase should then aim to develop capacities with moderate residual effects, such as strength-endurance and speed-endurance.
3. **Realisation:** Finally, the realisation meso-cycle should develop capacities with minimal residual effects (speed reactions, agility, and coordination).

Concentrated Meso-Cycles (Month):

1. Accumulation
2. Transformation
3. Realisation

▶ The different macro-cycles are managed throughout the season. This 3 part structure follows:

1. **Accumulation:** Enhancement of technical and motor skills. High training volumes and moderate intensities. Focus mainly on strength, aerobic fitness, basic technical skills and error correction.
2. **Transformation:** The transfer of basic motor skills previously accumulated into more specific (sport related) technical actions. A great emphasis is put on fatigue resistance and the stabilisation of sport-specific skills. Training volume and intensity are both high.
3. **Realisation:** Optimisation of performance to achieve the best possible results, according to the moment of the season. Training contents refine competitive performance with highly specific exercises, performed at high intensities with long recovery periods.

The duration of a meso-cycle depends on the number of phases (i.e., macro-cycles) in the season, the fitness level of the athlete, and the specificity of the sport.

EXTENDED PERFORMANCE MODEL (BOMPA): Progressive Training to Reach Peak Performance

In 1983, Tudor Bompa, after considering training as a complex process that must be organised and planned in sequential phases, proposed his periodization model. According to Bompa, through the training and competitive phases, an athlete or a team can and must reach certain states of performance. These states are described below:

Adapting to the Reality of Team Sport

Adapting training to best cope with long competitive periods

- Bompa adapted this proposal to the reality of sports with long competitive periods (most team sports).
- Assuming a general training period when the athletes reach high, but not peak levels of performance, they must maintain this fitness level throughout the season and achieve maximum performance when the competition calendar demands it.

Fitness Level 2: Athletic Shape

A level of performance close to peak performance

- During this stage, practices are applied in real match situations involving opponents and/or teammates, but these should not be overly difficult or complex.

Fitness Level 1: Degree of Training

Conditional factors & training for specific requirements of sport

- The first fitness level is the level of general sports performance which features a very high level of physical conditioning for the specific requirements of the given sport.
- The achieved high level of performance will support the later stages. If performance is low, the other states will be negatively affected, significantly reducing their potential.
- Analytical practices are used and transferred to the game.

Fitness Level 3: Peaking

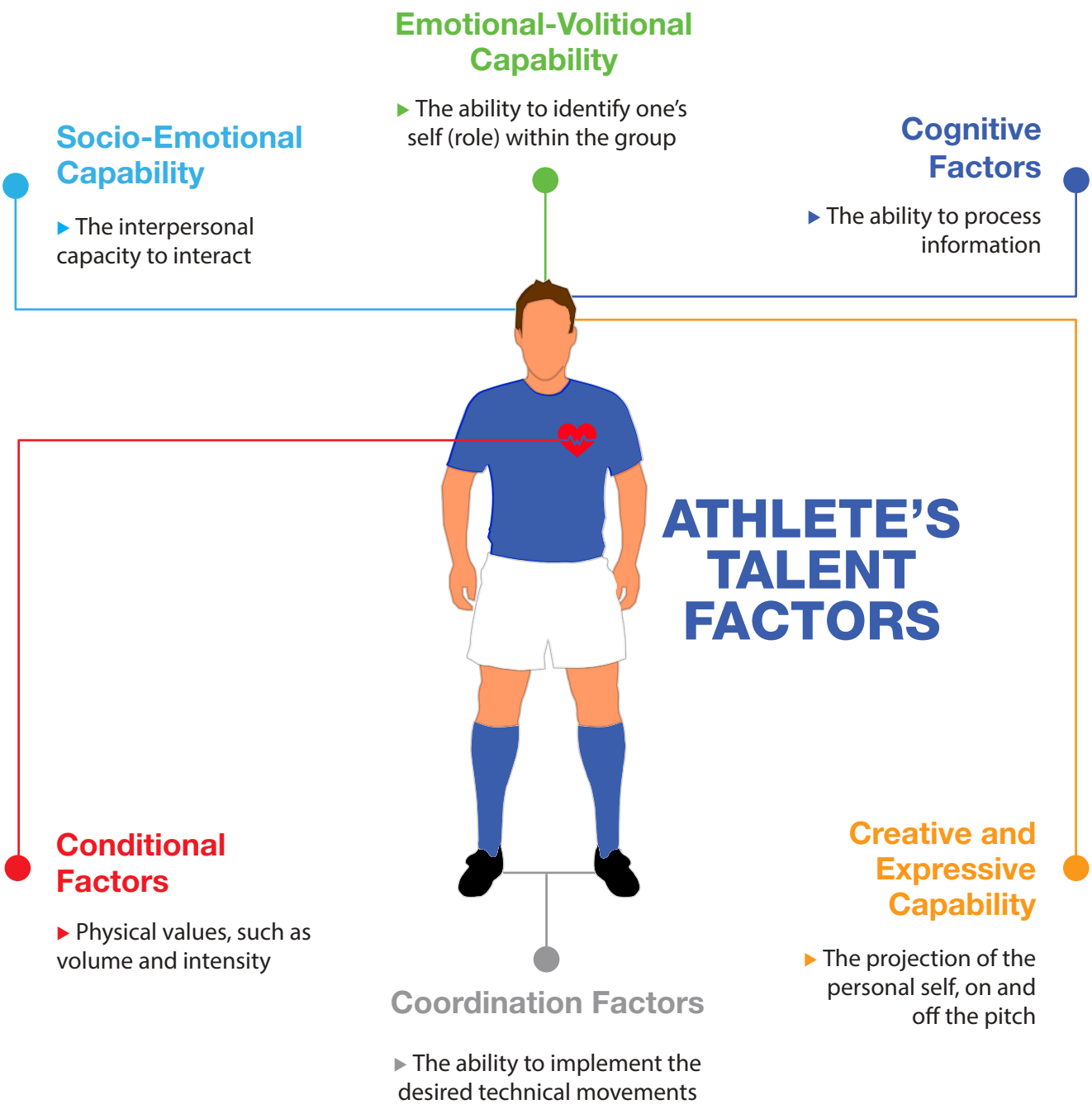
Reaches maximum sporting performance

- A state of maximum athletic performance, which unfortunately cannot be maintained for too long, making it necessary to quickly return to the previous fitness level.
- The practices are equivalent to the requirements of competitive matches in terms of complexity.
- However, even though the tactical and technical aspects are taken into consideration, the emphasis is still on the conditioning part of each action.

SEIRUL-LO'S COGNITIVE MODEL AND THE IMPORTANCE OF INTERACTIONS

This model is more applicable to sports where the competitive situation is unstable and there is a large degree of interaction. It is dominated by intrinsic motivations, such as personal satisfaction with a job well done, eagerness to investigate, self-esteem, and so on. Coach–athlete relationships optimise the athlete, not the competition model.

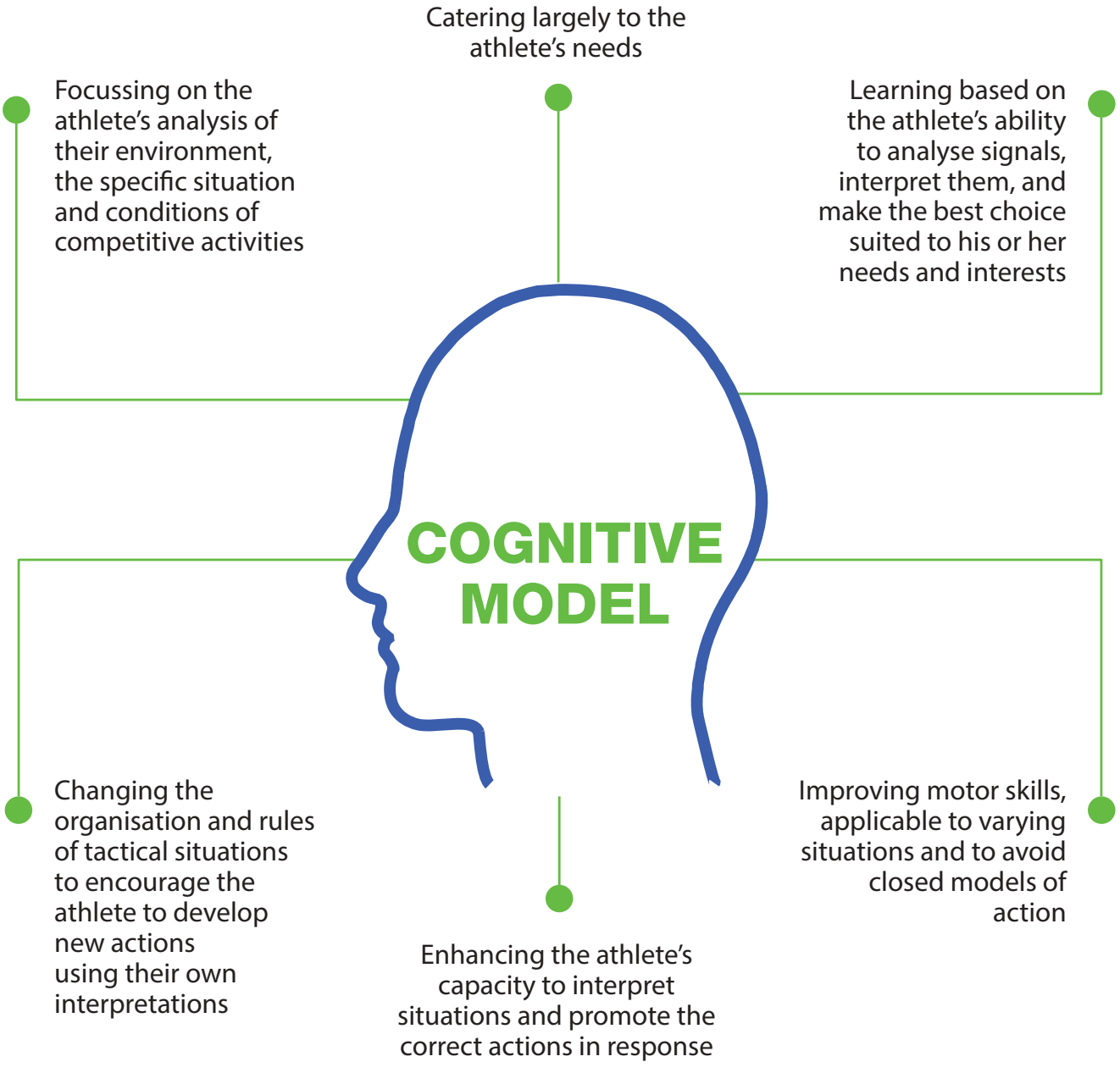
The athletes organise themselves into a particular speciality and follow their own personal interests. This model groups the factors that determine the talent of the player **(Athlete's Talent Factors)** into the following:



SEIRUL-LO'S COGNITIVE MODEL: THE MAIN FEATURES

Francisco Seirul-lo, a professor of the National Institute of Physical Education (University of Barcelona) and **Fitness Coach at FC Barcelona for more than 20 years**, unveiled this planning model in 1996. The name comes from its theoretical basis, Cognitivism (constructive - steady process of learning). Seirul-lo's Cognitive Model is based on a critique of the Actional Model traditionally used in individual sports and often transferred to team sports training.

The position of actionism theorists is that only the observable conduct should be taken into account, focusing on the stimuli and responses and completely ignoring the feelings, images, desires, and even the thoughts of the subject being observed. For Seirul-lo, this was too reductionist and did not suit the complex reality of team sports. From his perspective, we understand reality through models constructed by human beings, and these are always subject to changes and improvements.



TRAINING LOADS WITH DIFFERENT TYPES OF PRACTICES

The orientation of training loads is subject to the conditional, coordination and cognitive training structure. It is not possible to optimise conditional qualities, regardless of coordination and cognitive skills, because these always occur simultaneously during the execution of any action. **LOAD ORIENTATION** comes in four levels (from general to specific), regardless of the conditional, cognitive or coordination objectives, and matches the real needs of competitive matches. It is applied according to the following standards when designing practices:

General Practices

- These approximate the sport's specificity to a basic ability (e.g. strength, speed or endurance).
- They bear little relation to the context of the specific sport, and the objective is to provide athletes with an adequate basis level to perform.
- There is no decision-making involved.

Special Practices

- The game itself is used as the main element and goal of the work, with the training load similar to competitive matches and decision-making specific to the game.
- This approach allows technical-tactical levels to be optimised for each player.
- An example practice is a 4 v 4 game with 3 neutral players.

Directed Practices

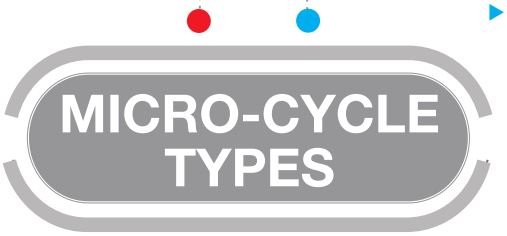
- Focuses on aspects necessary to develop specific positions in relation to the movement structure in a sport.
- The training load is similar to the load during competitive matches and it includes specific coordination and non-specific decision-making.
- An example practice is a technical circuit that combines the ball with elements of strength, such as jumping, resistance, running or shooting at goal.

Competitive Practices

- Attempt to surpass or equal (at least partially) the quality of situations that occur in competitive matches.
- These consist of competitive practices, such as an 8 v 8 (+ GKs) or 11 v 8 practice using specific tactical principles i.e. Specific positions and roles.

MICRO-CYCLE (TRAINING WEEK) TYPES

The core unit of planning is the micro-cycle (the so-called structured micro-cycle). The training week varies depending on the objectives and the stage of the season. Below we have outlined five different micro-cycle types:



Preparatory Micro-Cycle

Rest period & start of preseason

- This is normally applied in the regenerative phase (the rest period between two seasons).
- It is characterised by general practices, but as preseason begins, general and directed sessions are alternated and combined with some special practices.
- Purely generic exercises, such as cross country or swimming, are completely ignored.

Directed Transformation Micro-Cycle

Starts second week of preseason

- Directed/special practices from the second week of preseason until the final micro-cycle before the first week of the season.
- Few muscle and physiological adaptations are lost in high-level professionals. Therefore, there is no need to abuse general sessions and/or use generic methods that are difficult to transfer to football (e.g. Maximum strength, extensive-continuous endurance, etc).
- We need to achieve good fitness levels as quickly as possible and try to maintain them throughout the season.
- Used strategically in micro-cycles with less competitive activity.

Special Transformation Micro-Cycle

Throughout Competitive Phase

- This is dominated by special and directed sessions.
- This micro-cycle prevails throughout the competitive phase.

Maintenance Micro-Cycle

Throughout Competitive Phase

- Special and directed sessions are balanced with competitive sessions.
- This micro-cycle also prevails throughout the competitive phase.

Competitive Micro-Cycle

Important game/s or a high number of games

- Special and competitive sessions dominate here.
- This is used when a team has very important upcoming games or a higher number of games during the week (such as three games).

SIX-WEEK PERIODIZATION MODEL (VERHEIJEN): Maintaining & Increasing the Speed of Play

In 2003, Raymond Verheijen presented his periodization model (Six-Week Periodization Model), which was specifically developed to suit the demands of football periodization. The model is based on a cycle of six weeks that is repeated at regular intervals, as well as the principle that tactical sessions can become physical sessions when the intensity is enhanced appropriately.

This method uses only football-specific practices to improve the fitness of players, and the role of the coach is crucial in controlling the training intensity. A coach cannot allow the intensity to drop, because there would be no overload during training. He should ensure that all players do exactly what they are expected to do within the playing style of the team. The coach should remind players to focus on their duties, especially toward the end of the training session when players are tired.

When training sessions have a primarily physical objective, the training intensity should be kept high. Therefore, although the practices are the same as for tactical sessions, there are no stoppages in play. As a result, tactical training sessions become physical training sessions. The players are tactically instructed while play continues, with rest periods between games being used for coaching purposes.

Verheijen states that there is a definite hierarchy within football. Firstly, a coach relies on the available players. Next, the coach must formulate a playing style that suits these players, both tactically and technically. Within this hierarchy of football, fitness only plays a supporting role.

The two main objectives in this approach are:

1. **Maintaining the Speed of Play:** To sustain the speed of the game by "maintaining a quick recovery" and "maintaining explosiveness".
2. **Increasing the Speed of Play:** To increase the speed of the game by "maximising a quick recovery" and "maximising explosiveness".

Note that if one of these elements improves e.g. Maintaining a quick recovery, the other three do not automatically improve. There are special training methods for all four elements.

1. Maintaining the Speed of Play

An important aim, in terms of improving physical fitness, is to increase the players' ability to maintain the speed of the game. Thanks to their fitness levels, professional players are usually able to pressure their opponents at the start of a match. However, in the second half, the intensity of the game often drops dramatically. Both the quantity and quality of actions also usually decrease in the latter stages of a match. With the players being less able to make frequent/explosive running actions, the speed of the game inevitably drops.

To maintain the speed of the game, players should be able to make frequent actions (a "quick recovery" between actions) and explosive actions (an "explosiveness" during actions), even in the second half of a match.

In terms of physiology, in the second half of a match, it is very hard to maintain recovery speed between actions, especially in the final 30 minutes of the game. Players simply need more time to recover than in the first half of the game. It is also difficult to maintain the explosiveness of actions. The ability to maintain the speed of the game during the latter stages is particularly important if a game in a cup competition goes to extra time.

Training Methods to Maintain a "Quick Recovery"

The objective of these training methods is to increase the recovery speed between actions.

Extensive Endurance Training Example:

- 3–9 games of 11 v 11 for 10 minutes
- 2 minute rest between games

Intensive Endurance Training Example:

- 5–9 games of 7 v 7 for 8 minutes
- 2 minute rest between games

Training Method to Maintain "Explosiveness"

The objective of this training method is to improve the explosiveness of actions.

Repeated Short Sprinting Example*:*

- 2–4 series of 6–10 x 15 metre sprints with opponent and finishing on goal
- 10 second rest between each sprint
- 4 minute rest between each series

2. Increasing the Speed of Play

When the players are able to make more frequent/ explosive running actions, the speed of the game will increase.

From a physiological point of view, a higher game speed means that players should be able to recover even more quickly between actions. In other words, after explosive running actions, they are able "to catch their breath" more quickly. A higher game speed also means that players should be able to make running actions with an even higher level of explosiveness.

To increase the speed of the game, players should be able to make actions even more frequently (a quicker recovery between actions) and demonstrate actions that are even more "explosive".

Training Method for Maximising a "Quick Recovery"

Extensive Interval Training Example:

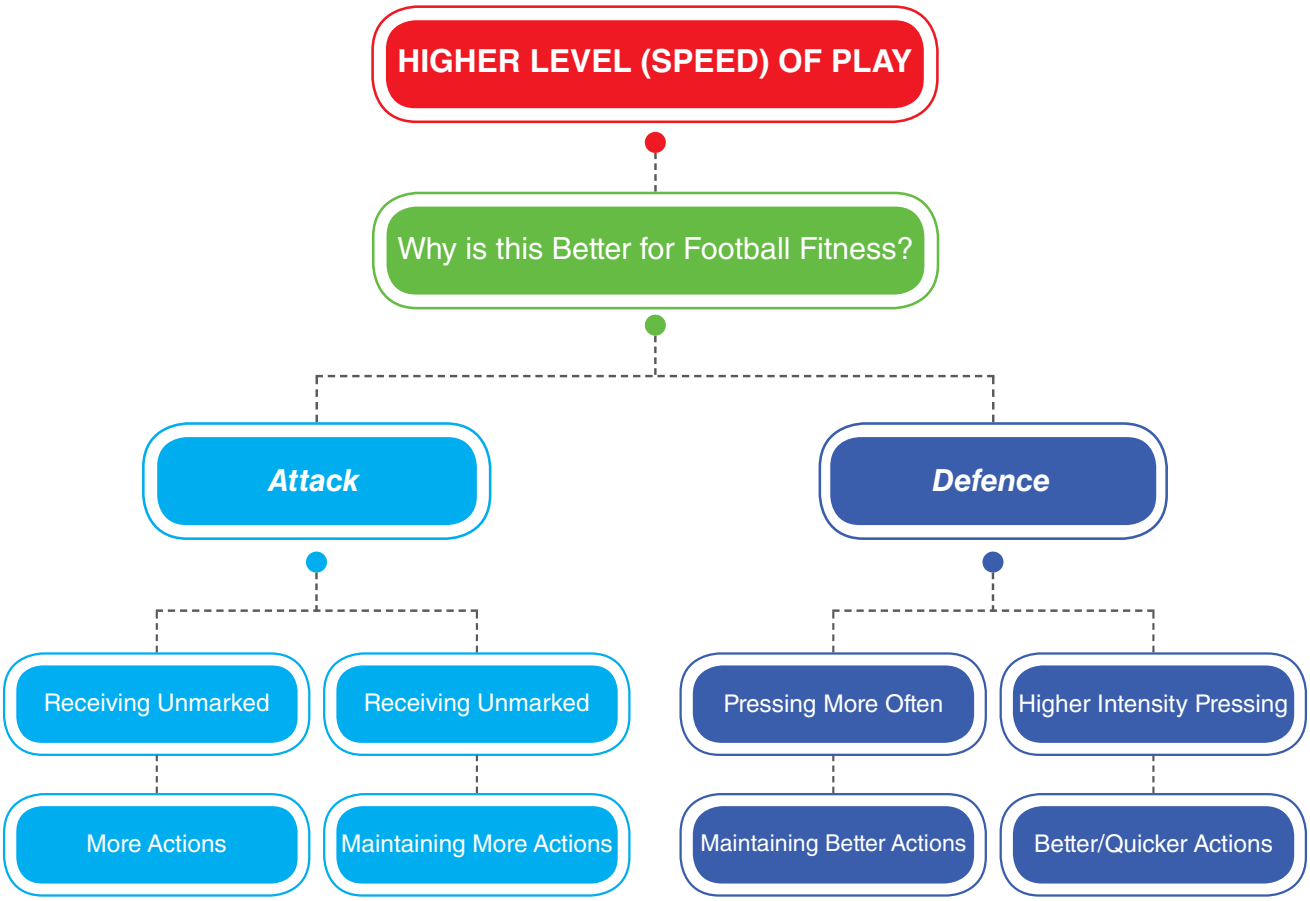
- 2 series of 6–10 three-minute games of 3 v 3
- 1–3 minute rest between games
- 4 minute rest between each series

Training Method for Maximising "Explosiveness"

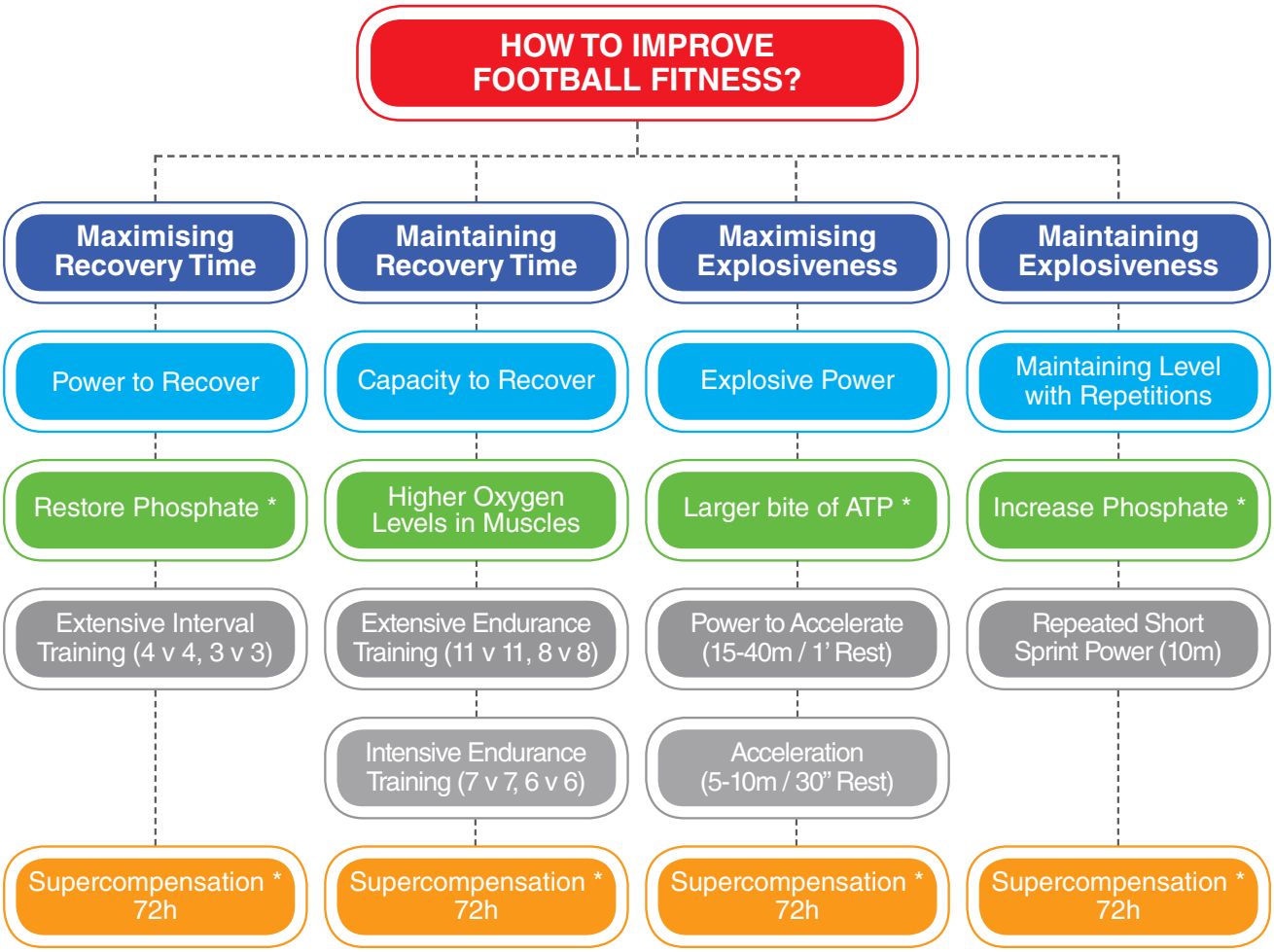
Sprinting Speed Training Example:

- 2–4 series of 8–10 x 5 metre sprints with opponent and finishing on goal
- 30 second rest between sprints
- 4 minute rest between each series

Higher Level (Speed) of Play = More High Quality Actions



How to Improve Football Fitness (Maximising / Maintaining Recovery Time and Explosiveness)



* **Phosphate** is an essential mineral which is the basis for biochemical energy in your body. A lack of phosphate in your body can cause weakness and fatigue. Training (see above) can help restore and increase phosphate levels, thus increasing strength and fitness.
* **Adenosine Triphosphate (ATP)** is the source of energy that is used to power the movement of muscle contraction.
* **Supercompensation** is the time it takes (after recovery period) to attain a higher performance capacity than before the training. In the diagram example, this would be achieved after a recovery period of 72 hours.

- **Six-Week Training Cycle:** As mentioned before, this model is based on a six-week cycle that is repeated at regular intervals, so the preseason period should ideally last six weeks.

When the preseason is shorter, the preparatory cycle can be continued into the season. Similarly, if it is not possible to reach the fitness goals in a certain week (e.g. Because of midweek matches), the solution is to move the week back in the cycle. For instance, if it is not possible to apply week three of the cycle, it will be executed one week later instead.

The training effects of preparation should be documented every six weeks, so it is necessary to trigger each conditioning football characteristic (through overload) every cycle. From this perspective, a football season is therefore built up around blocks of six-week cycles.

TACTICAL PERIODIZATION MODEL (VITOR FRADE):

Optimise Training to Produce Maximum Performance Gain while Avoiding Overload

From our perspective, the previous proposals for dividing the season do not match the competitive demands of modern football fully. According to the aforementioned authors, athletes need regular periods of recovery all through the season, because football players need to be constantly close to peak performance to be effective, both in practice but especially in competition. It seems to be a complex problem to find the right timing and method for recovery, suitable to the current demands of football.

The proper use of recovery time may influence parameters that directly affect the quality of the team's play. One of the challenges in any training program is to optimise training stimulus, so the maximum performance gain is achieved while avoiding training overload (Rowbottom et al., 1998). We agree with this and add that it is especially relevant in football because of the concentration of competitions. We also believe that the **Tactical Periodization Model** has the potential to help in this regard. Some questions remain unanswered, however, such as the precise point at which the training load should be suspended or reduced and recovery emphasised (Mujika et al., 1995).

Combining All Football Elements into Training

Vitor Frade (in Martins, 2003) states that a new way of thinking for football training methodologies is needed, because the current models do not fit the requirements of football. Frade, a pioneer in the implementation of the Tactical Periodization Model, defends the need to emphasise the tactical dimension at the expense of isolated conditioning factors, because only the intentional actions are educational (Martins, 2003).

Faria (1999) believes there is a direct relationship between the concept of Tactical Periodization and the game model of the coach (the style of play). He considers it essential to first clearly define the adopted game model before starting any periodization. From a similar perspective, Carvalhal (2002) puts forward the need to understand football training as a "whole," neglecting the isolation of the individual components (tactical, technical, conditioning, psychological) that are advocated by previous periodization models. According to Carvalhal, these structures do not fit the complex nature of football. Carvalhal (2002) also notes that in the Tactical Periodization Model, the tactical component acts as a coordinator for the adopted game model and its principles in a dynamic planning and periodization process. The remaining components appear overwhelmed by the tactical component, with no need to maximise each of them separately. Recovery is also an integrated element in the training process.

The qualities and capabilities required in a match are indivisible—they never appear separately, so they should also be unified in training practices.

Training Volume and Intensity

According to Forteza (2001), Matvéiev is still the founder of a valid scientific theory about structuring and planning sports training, even with extensive modifications. Several authors (Bompa, 1983; Gambetta, 1990) have criticised Matvéiev for defending the use of general loads and high volumes in the basic stages of training. This is an undeniable argument that cannot be ignored, because the general contents depend on the specific contents and vice versa. Other criticisms include some of the big questions that prevail in football training periodization. Regardless of these, consider the following questions:

- **How much training volume needs to be applied during different periods of the season?**
- **What is the relationship between volume and intensity during different periods of the season?**
- **When and how should specific preparation be used?**
- **Is general preparation less important than specific preparation?**

In this regard, Carvalhal (2002) puts forward that training volume should be subordinate to intensity in football. However, when training with high intensity, there must always be recovery between practices to maintain the intensity of each repetition.

On the other hand, Tactical Periodization questions the logic of dividing the season into general and specific periods, as used in the traditional periodization models. When asked about how to structure a football season, Frade (In Viera, 1993) answered that he does not divide the season using the traditional approach (macro-cycle, meso-cycle and micro-cycle) and defends the importance of performing without fluctuations over the season. He also feels there is a need to change the logic of the traditional periodization, where specific training (quality) only takes place after a large amount of general training (quantity).

Specificity

When approaching football training, we should consider specificity to be a crucial factor, so training should be as specific as possible in order to enhance team and player performance during competition.

Regarding the preparatory period, Frade (in Vieira, 1993) states we must work according to what needs to be done in the competitive period. Nevertheless, the author states that anything done during this period is never responsible for what happens five months later.

Regarding the competitive period, Frade (in Vieira, 1993) states that it is the fundamental period and stresses the importance of characterising a dynamic working model by establishing a micro-cycle pattern. This pattern then allows the distribution of training contents to be stabilised. Consequently, the specific training load is also stabilised.

Frade believes that football is mainly a tactical process, so the traditional view of the relationship between general and specific preparation needs to be reviewed. He truly defends the necessity to train with specificity (according to the style of play) from the very beginning. This helps the players adapt to the specific requirements of "our game."

Performance

In regards to performance, Frade (In Vieira, 1993) considers that "it results from a continued manifestation of regularities expressed by the team, which define its identity." It can be divided into three phases:

1. **Development**
2. **Maintenance**
3. **Loss**

However, from a Tactical Periodization point of view, performance stabilisation is achieved by distributing selected content over the week in the same way (in a weekly pattern).

We will explain the above concepts in more depth in the following chapters.

CHAPTER 3

TACTICAL PERIODIZATION METHODS AND PRINCIPLES

INTRODUCTION TO FRACTALITY

WHAT IS THE PRINCIPLE OF FRACTALITY?

We introduce '**FRACTALITY**' as the new way of thinking about the collective behaviour of many basic interacting units. In this instance, the units are football players. The whole is more than the sum of its parts.

Fractality in relation to football is all about breaking down all parts of the training process, at least approximately, into miniature copies of the club's/coach's game model.

Fractality happens when there is a set of behavioural foundations (actions and correct decision making) that exist throughout, on a collective, sectorial, inter-sectorial and individual level (Tavares, 2003; Oliveira, 2004).

This is why Oliveira (2004) believes that the processes of teaching, coaching, and learning the game of football should fit within a fractal organisation at four levels (see diagram below).

The Four Levels of the Fractal System for Football

FRACTALITY: BREAKING DOWN TRAINING WHILE ALWAYS REPRESENTING THE LARGER GAME MODEL

"The game is the mirror of training, so training cannot be anything other than playing."
(Guilherme Oliveira,1991)

A fractal is a rough or fragmented geometric shape that can be divided into parts that are, at least approximately, miniature copies of the original. Approximate fractals are common in nature, with organisms displaying self-similar structures over an extended, but finite, scale range. Examples include clouds, river networks, fault lines, snowflakes, crystals and ocean waves. DNA and heartbeats can also be analysed as fractals.

In the context of football, and from the perspective of Guilherme Oliveira (2004), the fractal organisation of a training practice is a methodological requirement, because fragmentation enables the coaches' interventions to be more effective. It is therefore crucial that the practices represent the way we want to play. Given this line of thinking, we should promote the randomness and unpredictability present in the game, especially when planning practices. This means that ***each proposed practice has to include something the players do not control***. If the game is nonlinear (contains unknowns), the training practices, even though they are less complex, should be nonlinear as well and prevent any direct cause-effect relationships.

The interactions between the subunits of a fractal system determine properties in the larger units that cannot be reduced to subunits. One level of organisation determines the level above it, and that level then determines the features of the level above that. This happens when there is a set of behavioural foundations that invariably exist, either on a collective, sectorial, intersectorial or individual level (Tavares, 2003; Oliveira, 2004). This is why Oliveira (2004) believes that the processes of teaching, coaching, and learning the game of football should fit within a fractal organisation at four levels.

Four Levels of Fractal Organisation

1. **Game Phases**: **Attacking phase, defensive phase, transition from defence to attack, transition from attack to defence and set pieces.**

   The first fractality level is related to breaking down the game into its different phases, even though it is worth mentioning that from our point of view, the game is a continuing phenomenon. It is also worth mentioning the actions that players should exhibit during these phases on a collective, intersectorial, sectorial and individual scale. The training practices should therefore enable the players and the team to act in these four different phases of the game under certain constraints, with a collective idea matched to a certain style of play.

2. **Game Model**: **The main principles, sub-principles, and sub-sub-principles of play.**

   The second level of fractality refers to our **specific style of play** (the game model). Guilherme Oliveira (2004) says about this, "The principles of the game can be considered features that the team shows during the different phases of the game, such as behavioural patterns (tactical and technical) that may take various scales, but which are always representative of the style of play. From this understanding, these principles have a fractal configuration and organisation, as they invariably display our style (the game model), regardless of the scale that is represented. The principles of play or patterns of actions can be broken up further into sub-principles until they reach a minimum scale as well. However, this breaking up can only be fractal, meaning that the sub-principles or sub-sub-principles should always represent the larger model. Only in this way can there be a development of specific knowledge and the highest possible improvement in a player's performance."

3. **Specificity**: **Specific methods that should lead both the planning and training processes.**

   The third level of fractality concerns the ***Concept of Specificity***. Guilherme Oliveira (2004) states, "The concept of specificity should also take a fractal organisation. Regardless of a certain principle or sub-principle (whether it be more or less complex) and the coach's intervention (whether it be more general or more detailed), specificity should always be present and should represent the style of play (the game model). This specificity must always be invariable and constant at all possible scales."

4. **Practices**: **"Reflect and replicate" the intended style of play.**

   The fourth level of fractality relates to modelling practices. This modelling is based on the previous three fractalities, because the planning of the training process is closely linked to the style of play (the game model), the specificity, and the different

phases of the game. The structural and functional practice configuration should therefore be matched to players producing specific actions that represent the tactical play of the team (the game model). In addition, the coach should intervene in a specific way in order to encourage appropriate actions and prevent inappropriate ones (Guilherme Oliveira, 2004). To make this happen, specific and appropriate intervention is needed.

Collective Tactical Principles

We need to break the game down through the training process without reducing the quality of the game (Frade, 2006). In this context, the fractality approach allows the construction of a tactical culture (Frade, 2006). It lets players learn specific knowledge that allows them to efficiently manage game situations, to make proper decisions, and to act according to the style of play and its principles. Eventually, they achieve an effective collective communication by building up a common behavioural language (Frade, 2006).

The fractal condition of training practices therefore relates to the need for a global understanding of the team's tactics. Practices should aid the development of the correct decision-making that takes into account the principles, sub-principles and sub-sub principles of our style of play (Frade, 2006). In this sense, the coach has to be able to develop his players' understanding of the game, leading them to a form of collective thinking where individual interpretations are matched with the collective idea of the game. Therefore, the fractal organisation of practices arises from the fractal logic that the training process should follow, regardless of what you want to teach or train, whether it is a principle or a sub-sub-principle of play.

Training Example 1

For example, imagine that one of the team's principles is ball circulation through the different thirds and channels of the pitch:

- A sub-principle of this would be the positioning and coordinated movements of different players.
- A sub-sub-principle could be the types of pass and the relationships that systematically develop during the game.

This way, when we want to create a pass, move and support practice, it has to take into account the type of pass, any relationships, the preferred pass direction and the expected positioning of the different players. If it does not, it will be unrepresentative of the whole game model, so fractality is not being followed and the desired actions for the game are not being learned.

Training Example 2

As another example, imagine that one of our principles of play is Zonal Defending:

With the aim of training another principle (ball circulation), the coach designs a possession practice based on 6 v 6 in a certain space. He instructs the team with the ball to circulate it among all players using all of the available space. The team without the ball hinders their opponents' actions using man-to-man marking. Although the main objective is to improve ball possession, the defending team is behaving contrary to the game model of the team. Therefore, the adjustments being created do not reflect what is intended and compromise the players' development under the game model.

Training Example 3

Imagine that the coach wants to work on defending depth, especially with the centre backs, because they are having problems covering each other when the ball is played in behind. As a principle of play, the coach has decided to defend zonally, meaning they defend the zone independently of how the opponent acts. Therefore, the coach creates a practice that promotes very deep passes to encourage the centre backs to adapt and work on their defensive positioning.

However, for a more effective defence, he decides that one of them must always mark the opponent's forward, while the other ensures the defensive depth, covering his teammate. This is an inappropriate action because no one is being forced to adjust their position according to the location of the ball. There is a player responsible for marking the forward and another just covering. This practice would not promote the zonal defending principle for the two centre backs.

Conclusion

The three examples above underscore the idea that even in very particular ways, it is important to always ensure a relationship with the specific style of play and its principles. When properly built, applied and corrected, a practice clearly helps the achievement of high levels of performance. Therefore, practices should contain a certain degree of complexity (in terms of randomness and unpredictability), approaching the reality of the game as much as possible.

To make a game model operational, the Tactical Periodization Approach has defined and developed its own and unique methodological principles ***(see next section)***.

METHODOLOGICAL PRINCIPLES OF TACTICAL PERIODIZATION

METHODOLOGICAL PRINCIPLES OF TACTICAL PERIODIZATION

2. Making Principles Operational (Propensity)

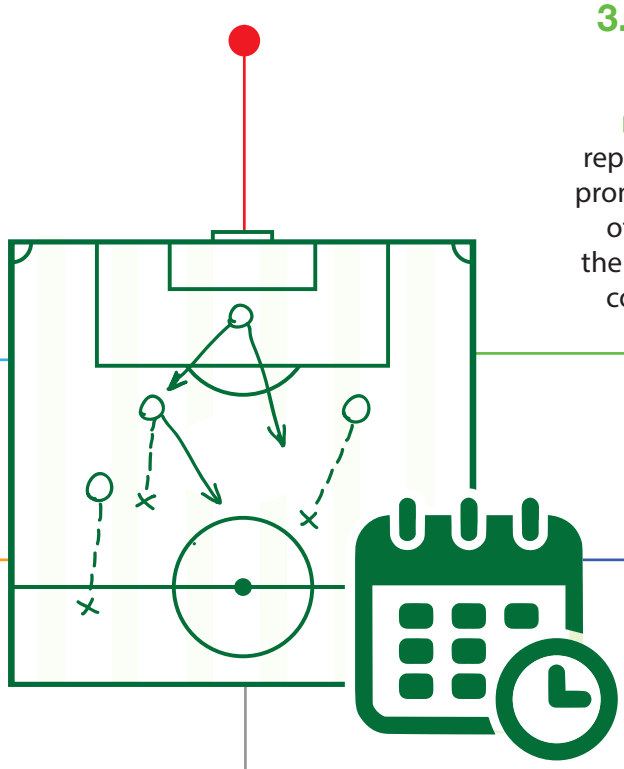
▶ Ensuring that specific player behaviours/actions we are aiming for during a specific practice/drill appear more often than others

1. Specificity

▶ Practices should always be designed in a way that allows our principles of play to be transferred directly to competitive matches

3. Systematic Repetition

▶ Methodical and repetitive practice to promote the learning of habits related to the performance in a competitive match



4. Complex Progression

▶ Prioritising the principles of play that are most important for the intended game model and increase the complexity of the practices as they are well integrated (reducing the space, increasing opposition)

5. Tactical Fatigue and Concentration

▶ Players' capacity to focus on the actions that characterise the team's style of play and ability to maintain focus over 90 minute matches

6. Performance Stabilisation

▶ Maintaining optimum performance levels through the organisation of training contents and loads around a structured and regular weekly pattern

▶ This must respect the alternating demands of training and recovery

1. PRINCIPLE OF SPECIFICITY

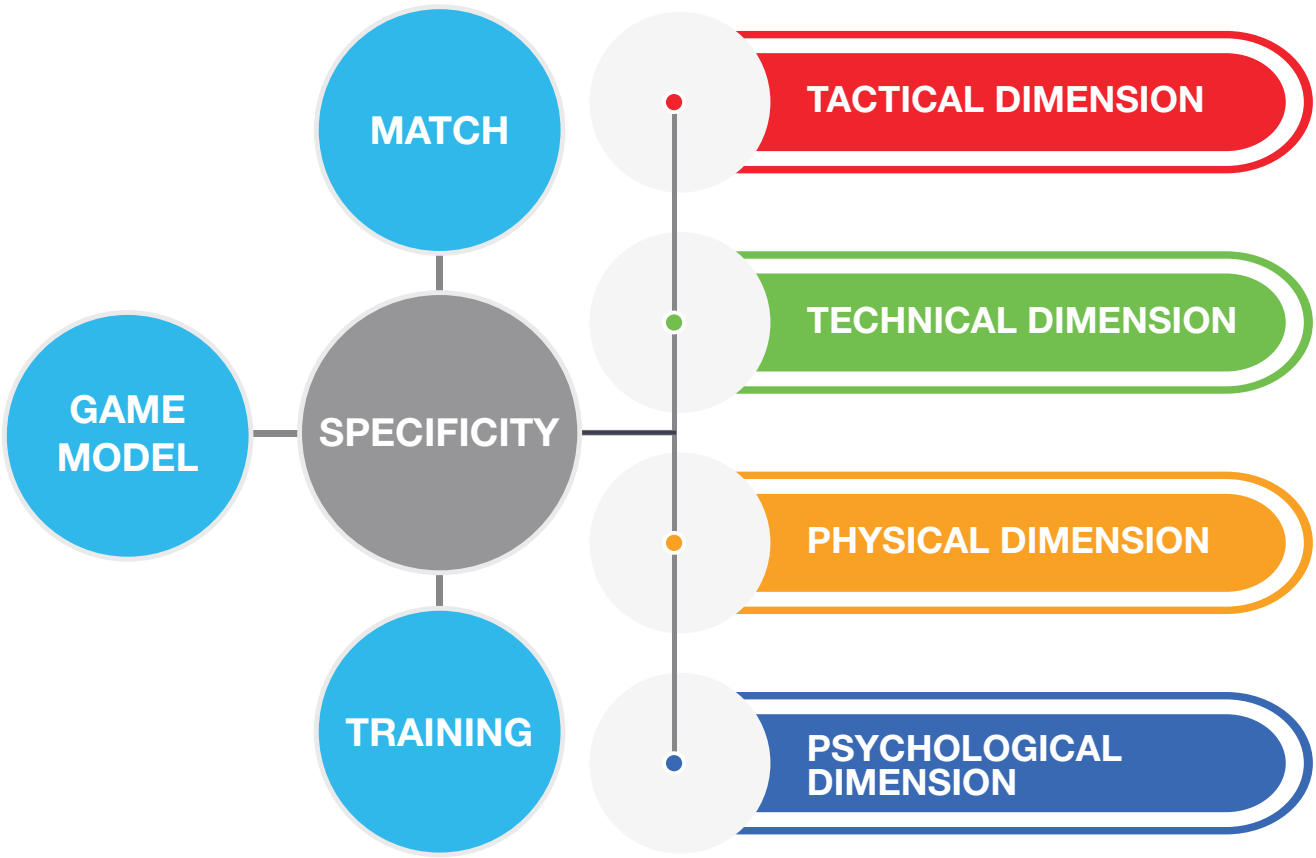
WHAT IS THE PRINCIPLE OF SPECIFICITY?

PRINCIPLE OF SPECIFICITY: Training should be as specific as possible in order to enhance team and player performance during competitive matches. There should be a permanent relationship between all the dimensions of the game and the training practices/drills are specifically representative of the desired game model (style of play).

The fulfilment of the Principle of Specificity will only be truly achieved if players understand the aims and objectives of each practice, maintain high levels of concentration and the coach's interventions are absorbed (Oliveira, 2008). The Principle of Specificity should also lead to the interactive intervention between the practice, the players and the coach (see diagram below).

The Interactive Intervention Between the Practice, the Players and the Coach

PRINCIPLE OF SPECIFICITY & THE GAME MODEL



Frade (2006) considers Specificity as the supra-principle (most important principle) of football training.

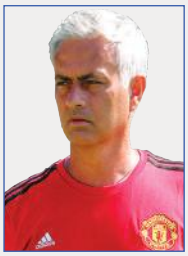
Specificity is the key to Tactical Periodization and the coach's principles of play are instilled into all parts - the **Game Model**, all **Training Sessions** and **Competitive Matches**.

According to Guilherme Oliveira (1991), the principle of specificity should create tactical situations that the team's game model requires, allowing all dimensions of the game model to be applied and adopted:

- **TACTICAL DIMENSION**
- **TECHNICAL DIMENSION**
- **PHYSICAL DIMENSION**
- **PSYCHOLOGICAL DIMENSION**

For Frade (2002), what determines the specificity, is the game model of the team. This concept of specificity refers to the idea that the planned training sessions should be based on the structure of the team's game model.

PRINCIPLE OF SPECIFICITY: ALL TRAINING IS REPRESENTATIVE OF OUR PRINCIPLES OF PLAY



"For me, training means training in specificity, creating practices that allow me to enhance my principles of play."

(**José Mourinho**, in Oliveira et al., 2006)

What is Specificity?

From the Tactical Periodization perspective, the principle of specificity should direct the training process. This is arguably the most important principle of Tactical Periodization. Specificity arises when there is a permanent relationship between all the dimensions of the game (tactical, technical, physical and psychological) and all training practices are representative of our game model (style of play).

Therefore, ***the concept of specificity directs and leads the entire training process***. In this regard, Vitor Frade (in Silva, 1998) affirms that regardless of the features of a training practice (e.g. More or fewer players, larger or smaller spaces, and so on), it should always be designed in a way that allows our principles of play to be learned and transferred to competitive matches.

Implementing Specificity into Training Sessions

However, any practice can be just "potentially specific." The principle of specificity will only be truly achieved if during training, players understand the aims and objectives of the practice and maintain high levels of concentration, with the coach's intervention always being appropriate. Specificity is then related to the capacity of making the principles of play, and their respective sub-principles, operational. Therefore, according to Tactical Periodization, the principle of specificity should also lead the interactions between the practice, the players and the coach.

Specificity requires technical staff to design practices as carefully as possible to meet this demand, so we can create the things we want to happen during competitive matches within our training. ***The way to make our style of play (our game model) operational is through specific practices***. These will be the most effective medium to promote a strong relationship between information and behaviour, so the players can absorb the tactical knowledge essential to our style of play.

Therefore, the training process should enhance solutions to problems related to time and space management, the "here and now" (Frade, 2006; Garganta, 2006). In addition, Carvalhal (2000) states that practices in football must simulate competitive "moments" without misunderstanding the competitive reality. Each practice must possess the "components" of the game in its entire meaning.

According to Oliveira (2004), training or training situations are only truly specific when there is a permanent and constant relationship between all the individual and collective components (tactical, technical, physical, coordination and cognitive) and a permanent relationship with the style of play and its tactical principles.

As Carvalhal admits (Tavares, 2003), a coach should understand that having a well-conceived idea about the way you want to play is easier than making it operational. One of the main reasons given by Rocha (2000) for this is methodological differences between elements in the technical staff, coupled with a poor relationship.

"For us, it's a matter of design, but more than that, it is a matter of making it operational. It is not useful to have good ideas, saying that we support this or that methodology, if the training process does not use these same ideas."

José Mourinho (2005)

In this sense, the primary concern is to invent principles that determine our future style of play (Frade, 2004).

Training practices need to have objectives and create new challenges for both individual and team development. This approach involves the development of certain behavioural instincts. To achieve this, Faria (2003) believes that repetition and automation make things become subconscious. He adds that it is vital for players to understand the purpose of the practices they are doing. They should first think about what they are doing, and once they are used to it, they will adopt a certain, natural playing habit.

Specific practices, combined with a clear purpose defined by the coach, are an essential tool for building new desirable actions and mental images. However, given the complexity of the game, the main difficulty the coach faces is making his intention operational.

"We create practices that are able to cover all the aspects of the game, without ever forgetting our first concern: a given principle of play."

(**José Mourinho** in Gaiteiro, 2006)

These principles of play should bring out a specific set of actions, making the practices a method to create individual and collective adaptability. Guilherme Oliveira (1991) reinforces the need to create a series of specific situations that allow players to show such behaviour and realise how such actions are beneficial for them and the team (self-awareness).

Therefore, to enhance certain actions and make them show regularly and effectively in competitive matches, it becomes necessary to create a proper set of training situations from a collective, group and individual point of view, enabling the practice to produce exactly what we intend (Tavares, 2003).

Permanent Relationship Between All Dimensions of the Game

Following the above, Carvalhal (2001) argues that to reach a certain way of playing, we need to design proper specific practices because, as advocated by Manno (1990), adaptation is a phenomenon that leads to performance improvement, but it is linked to the specificity of the teachings.

Specificity arises when there is a permanent relationship between all the dimensions of the game. Training according to the sum of the different dimensions would allow the players to acquire behaviours differently to what the game demands (Ferreira and Queiroz, 1982, Faria, 1999).

Therefore, ***to achieve specificity, the goals and content of practices, regardless of their complexity, should specifically represent our style of play***.

Thus, an interdependent relationship must exist between training and competitive matches. To succeed, players need to train in an appropriate manner, so they can respond effectively to the open situations they will face in matches (Faria, 1999).

In this way, Mourinho and his assistant affirm that "training means improving understanding about the game, having a clearly defined model (style) and principles that guide what happens on a daily basis. Our concern is the interaction between all the factors (dimensions). Then specificity is related to the capacity of making these principles, and their respective sub-principles, operational."

2. PRINCIPLE OF PROPENSITIES

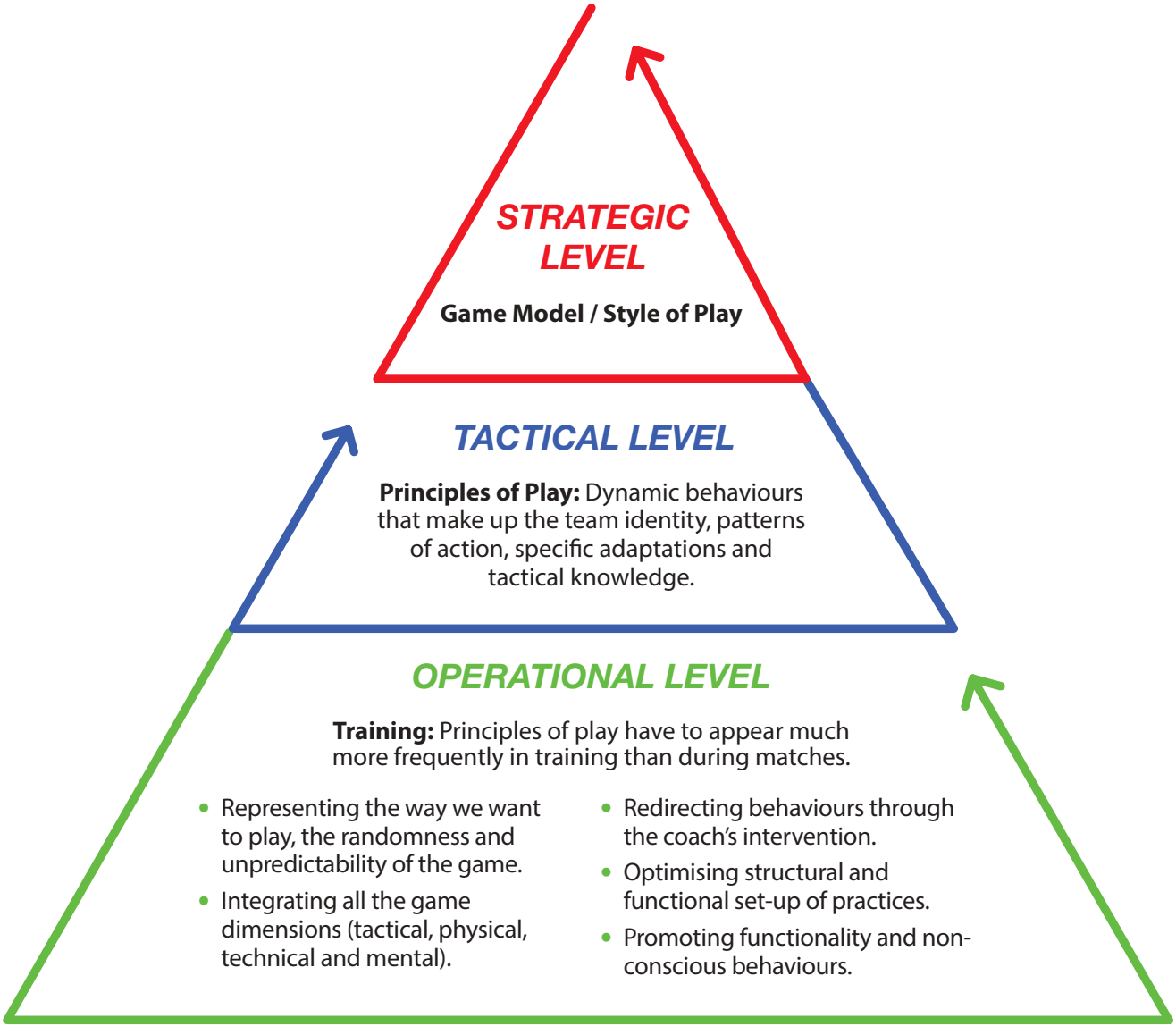
WHAT IS THE PRINCIPLE OF PROPENSITIES?

We want to make the principles of play operational using conditioned practices which relate directly to the game model. The **Principle of Propensity** emphasises the need to create practices in which the coach's desired behaviours/ actions appear frequently.

The **Desired Behaviours** related to a given principle of play have to appear much more frequently in training than during competitive matches, to create multiple mental images for the players about the desired target.

The set-up of the practice (i.e., size of playing area, number of players, rules, objectives etc) must promote the appearance of the required behaviour: **Conditioned Practices**.

The Principle of Propensities: Operational, Tactical & Strategic Levels



PRINCIPLE OF PROPENSITIES: MAKING THE PRINCIPLES OF PLAY OPERATIONAL

"One of the most difficult questions is how to make our style of play operational by creating practices where we are able to embrace all aspects (dimensions), but never forgetting our first concern: To enhance a given principle of play of our game model."

(**José Mourinho** in Gaiteiro, 2006)

Conditioned Practices

As explained before, when we aim to teach or improve a particular principle or sub-principle, the best way is to create appropriate practices to train them. Following Goleman et al. (2002), it is necessary to create a space where old habits can be avoided (if that is our goal) and new actions can be tested. Then, if we are interested in certain actions related to a certain principle, we should make them appear more often than others.

The configuration of practices must be developed in a way that allows the frequent appearance of certain actions - this is what Carvalhal (2001) calls **"Conditioned Practices."** For example, setting up a practice where a team has a numerical disadvantage in its defensive zone and constantly defending, makes actions related to defensive organisation emerge in a progressive way. There will then be many opportunities to "shape" actions.

Creating Training to Replicate the Style of Play and Match Conditions

When we observe a team, we find it tends to be attracted to a dynamic action that constitutes its identity, describing a pattern of actions. To transform these patterns into practice, every training practice must be closely related to our style of play (the game model) and the concept of specificity. This similarity should be present in the daily work to promote specific adaptations and tactical behaviours. If a practice is designed without considering the style of play, the resulting adaptations can have negative effects and interfere with the players' learning the desired (specific) knowledge.

It is crucial for practices to represent the way we want to play and include the randomness and unpredictability of the game. The latter condition means that every proposed practice must have an element that players cannot control. The game is complicated, so the training should also be complicated and exclude direct cause-effect relationships. The coach's intervention plays a key role in successfully conducting a practice, because it can accelerate the specificity in a positive or a negative way.

In addition, the structural and functional configuration of practices must comply with the specificity and fractality of the game. This means that some practices promote functionality (e.g., Acquiring subconscious actions) because of their structure. In contrast, some practices aim to do exactly the same with an identical number of players and playing space, but the distribution (i.e. Structure) of the players across the pitch differs from the game's requirements (e.g., Centre backs training in a different playing position and/or role). This can consequently, cause the wrong subconscious behaviours and tactical knowledge to emerge.

Probability

To prevent simple cause and effect, we must focus instead on describing behavioural patterns (Stacey, 1995) by using the notion of probability. The greater the probability of an event is, the more certain we are that the event will occur. Thus, probability is therefore a measure of the likelihood that a random event will occur. Open-ended situations like football matches are unpredictable. However, prior knowledge of the opposition allows for training based on the opposing team's tendency for particular actions.

For example, after analysis, we discover that when regaining the ball, the opposition will most likely implement their transition from defence to attack by playing straight long passes (direct play) to their advanced players. To counter this, we should prepare our midfielders to compete for the second balls, training them to get into good positions and press (as per our style of play) for a chance to win the second ball (in response to our opponent's style of play).

STRUCTURAL AND FUNCTIONAL CONFIGURATIONS FOR A TRAINING PRACTICE

The structural and functional configuration of a practice is crucial to comply with the specificity and the fractality of the game. This means that some practices promote appropriate subconscious behaviours and knowledge because their structures promote functionality.

Similarly, practices with exactly the same aim and number of players but with a different structure/distribution or playing space will also promote subconscious behaviours and knowledge. However, the results will be different.

For example, take a team that plays in a 4-4-2 formation with the midfield players positioned in a diamond. The coach designs a ball possession practice between two teams of four players with two neutral players supporting from outside. Below we show the correct and incorrect configurations.

4 v 4 (+2) "Diamond" Midfield (Correct Configuration)

There is space and the aim is for the players to circulate the ball among themselves, and pass to an outside yellow player, who is supporting from outside.

If the players are positioned in a diamond shape (as they are in the game) in the specific area of the pitch where they need to perform these actions, the adaptations and actions will be the desirable ones.

4 v 4 (+2) "Box" Midfield (Incorrect Configuration)

If the players make a box shape, some desirable actions may be learned, but there may be other actions and adaptations that we do not want. This example is meant to clarify that it is essential for the practice structure and functionality to be well designed, because these will promote certain actions, adaptations and interactions between players. Practices should therefore be designed very carefully, to prevent them being counterproductive.

PRINCIPLES OF PLAY: PRACTICE EXAMPLE

Imagine the coach of a team wants to work on building up play from the back, because the centre backs are not getting the ball to the midfield through the central channel as much as he would like them to. He proposes a 5 v 5 game with two small goals at each end.

However, if he does not define the shape and specific functions/positions for the players, he will not condition the necessary actions that he wants performed in a competitive match.

If the team uses a 4-3-3 system with one defensive midfielder in matches, he can set out a smaller structure that represents part of what he wants in a competitive match. In this case, it would be a 2-1-2 arrangement (two centre backs, one defensive midfielder and the two other central midfielders). By defining the structure and the respective roles of the players, he is promoting adaptations and specific knowledge appropriate to the style of play he wants to implement.

5 v 5 Build Up Play with 2-1-2 Structure (from 4-3-3)

In this simple 5 v 5 practice, the coach starts by passing to a blue centre back. The aim is to build up play through the 2-1-2 structure (from 4-3-3), using the defensive midfielder to work the ball to an attacking midfielder, then score in one of the two mini goals.

If the reds win the ball, they then try to quickly score in either of the two mini goals at the other end.

There are positional references and defined roles for the desired behaviours related to the given principle of play (building up play into the midfielders) much more frequently than during a competitive match.

The configuration of the practice (i.e., size of playing area, number of players, rules, objectives etc) are designed to promote the appearance of the required behaviours/actions. This makes this a well-conditioned practice.

If the players have no clear roles, some desired behaviours/actions may appear but not often enough.

Also, some undesired patterns could emerge, creating incompatibility with the style of play and our game model.

TACTICAL PERIODIZATION: "UNIQUENESS OF THE PROCESS"

A concept that summarises the considerations on the previous pages is what Tactical Periodization refers to as the **"Uniqueness of the Process"**. This is the idea that every practice must be done in close relationship with the **Concept of Specificity** and **Style of Play** (game model).

Decision Making

Every game model is unique, because the factors that determine it are specific to each team. This relationship should be present in our daily work to promote specific adaptations and tactical knowledge. As mentioned before, a practice can be suitable for a team because it systematically orders actions that are vital for the intended game model, so it encourages major adaptations among the players and the team.

We can therefore state that the intervention of the coach in training has to be focused on preparing the players to make good decisions during the match. During a match, the coach has very little influence on the players and the team. Consequently, the players and the team have to solve these problems by themselves (through self-organisation).

Thus, according to Oliveira, "Competition is a great time to learn and also the best moment to assess the whole learning process. Consequently, the competition is extremely important. So often, people think competition is the culmination ... something apart from training. For me it is not! The competition is a very important moment of the process and must be treated as such." (Guilherme Oliveira, 2006)

Principle of Propensity

The principle of propensity emphasises the need to create practices in which the actions you want to appear occur frequently. This way, a given action is demanded much more often than in a competitive match, enabling players to create mental images about the desired target.

In conclusion, the principle of propensity refers to the need to put training contents into their proper context, in a way that increases the appearances of the things you want to happen. It can be applied to a given principle of play or a number of principles, always guided by a style of play that is initially "a mental configuration, because the process itself is managed by an intervention that will determine its achievement" (Campos, 2007). Oliveira says about this, "To achieve the concept of specificity during training, it is not enough just to do practices that are potentially specific; the interactive intervention of the coach is required to make it happen" (Guilherme Oliveira, 2004).

Specific Practices to Match Style of Play

Even when a practice is properly structured according to the coach's desired style and its specific principles, only appropriate intervention by the coach can make the practice truly specific. Therefore, the coach should direct players' attention to what he really wants to improve. Faria (2002) also highlights the importance of such intervention during practices by stating that a coach can only establish lines of common thought by designing situations (specific practices) where certain rules and principles of action are emphasised. By doing this, mental connections are established that allow players to truly learn these ideas, and through repetition, they can transfer them to a competitive match situation.

Therefore, according to José Mourinho's long-term assistant **Rui Faria**, "We cannot just wait for things to happen simply by performing a practice; we need to guide the players to do what we want to happen in the practice and later in the game." As stated by Guilherme Oliveira (2006), there is a need to create training situations where the players acquire the actions we want them to learn and develop a hierarchical organisation (order by importance) of the game principles and sub-principles, but there is also a need to direct players' attentions to the actions we want to enhance.

Oliveira also presents the following example that explains how to develop sub-principles for the transition from defence to attack: "I create situations where many transitions appear. I try to direct and condition players' choices to let them play the way we want. If they identify it through training practices, they will also do the same in a match situation. Players can choose to make a transition safely (ensuring ball possession) or to make a transition in depth (direct attack), but I will lead them to choose safety transitions more often than transitions in depth, as we prefer to keep possession after regaining the ball."

This means we can direct our players' choices toward the style we want to play. Reinforcing this logic, Faria (2002) states that the basic objective of training is to develop the game principles related to each game phase (attack, defence and transitions) through specific practices. In this way, a team develops a certain identity in terms of a certain playing style that is demonstrated regularly.

SPECIFIC (TACTICAL) PRACTICE EXAMPLE:
Playing Out from the Back in a 6 (+GK) v 5 Practice

For **José Mourinho** (2004), adaptation is specific, because each practice is designed to achieve the action that the coach wants to see. He adds, "This doesn't mean that all the ball possession practices are useful for us. We design only those environments that are really important to allow our players a proper adaptation to the different variables of our style of play."

The specificity of practices can only be achieved with ***Optimal Coach Intervention*** before, during and after their execution (Guilherme Oliveira, 2004). In this sense, Oliveira says, "Sometimes, the practices are quite appropriate for the style of play expected. However, due to an inadequate intervention from the coach, they can become dysfunctional." Frade (2004) stresses that it is one thing to be a coach who gives all the solutions, but it is a completely different thing to create situations where the players need to find the solutions through the dynamics of the practice. There, the role of the coach during a practice should be a catalyst that directs players' attention to the action they want to enhance.

Therefore, even when practices are perfectly suited to the game model, an ***Inadequate Intervention*** from the coach can cause the practice to become dysfunctional. For instance, consider that a sub-principle of our game model is **"Playing Out from the Back"**, where the goalkeeper or a defender has the ball in their defensive third. The proposed practice would be as follows: A team (blues in diagram) consisting of a goalkeeper + four defenders, supported by two central midfielders, playing against three forwards and two central midfielders (reds).

Once the goalkeeper or coach passes the ball to one of the defenders, the team coordinates its actions with the objective of passing the ball forward to one of the midfielders (diagonal pass) or to a full back making a forward run. The defending team (reds) press and try to prevent the ball being passed to the blue midfielders.

This practice promotes relationships between different players to create the coach's desired actions. However, the practice is only potentially appropriate, with the coach's intervention determining if it is specific or not. Imagine the goalkeeper passes the ball to the right back, who is then pressed, so he chooses to clear the ball rather than play to a supporting teammate who is free to receive the ball. If the coach does not intervene to correct this action, the practice will not promote the desired specificity. Instead, it will allow the adoption of attitudes that contradict the game model, and if repeated consistently, these will become harmful habits.

THE 3 COACH INTERVENTION MOMENTS

1. Before the Practice

The coach should explain the practice in a way that the players can understand the objectives, the desired actions the coach is looking for, and why these actions are important in the development of an individual and collective understanding of the style of play. How the coach conveys this information determines whether the intervention will be successful (Hotz, 1999). In fact, this has a considerable influence in how the players interpret the practice and how they will perform it. The phrasing should be simple and clear, speaking slowly and with as few words as possible, paying attention to the players' reactions through their facial expressions (Mesquita, 1998).

Oliveira says about this, "When I present a practice, I say to the players what its main purpose is and which principles of our style of play I want to train by doing it. I try to focus their attention, directing them to perform certain actions." (Guilherme Oliveira, 2007)

We can use a demonstration to complement this explanation, but we should always take some considerations into account. A common belief is that demonstrations are crucial in educating players in how best to perform a certain action. Although demonstrations are likely to be effective in most cases, they are occasionally no more effective than verbal instruction. In some cases, it may be harmful to learning new motor patterns.

As stated by Williams (2003), a demonstration is most effective when it clearly highlights the strategy required for successful performance to a player with the necessary movement, skill and motivation to replicate the strategy in an effective manner. Demonstrations are no more effective than verbal instruction or practice alone when the information conveyed is limited and/or when the task requires the learner to develop a feel for the movement or to "scale" an existing movement pattern.

A potential disadvantage when demonstrating an action early in learning is the risk of imposing a less-than-ideal movement pattern on a player. It may be appropriate to give players the opportunity to try out the skill prior to watching a demonstration. A clear explanation about the goal of the task may be enough to allow learners to engage in guided discovery learning, and this may produce more flexible and adaptable skills in the long term. Demonstrations can then be selectively introduced as additional sources of guidance (Williams, 2003).

2. During the Practice

The coach should act as a catalyst for positive actions, associating them with positive emotions or physical markers. On the other hand, the coach should not inhibit any desired actions, because this will associate them with negative emotions or physical markers. Thus, the feedback given to players after performing a particular movement is a tool for enriching the learning process.

The coach's interventions over the practice, through outward feedback, are crucial for achieving the desired outcome. Williams (quoted by Fonte, 2006) reinforces this by stating that without feedback, learning is nearly non-existent. Undoubtedly, to change motor actions, players need to understand the directions they have to follow. According to the same author, feedback serves three purposes:

a. **To correct mistakes**

b. **To motivate**

c. **To act as reinforcement or punishment**

Consequently, when referring to the fundamental role of specific feedback, the coach's interventions during the practice are essential to focus players' attentions exactly where the coach wants them to be. Basically, it is all about guiding players to solve the game problems according to the collective project (the style of play) and individual development. This is why the coach's intervention is particularly crucial in improving the players' game understanding and reinforcing certain aspects, while inhibiting others. This intervention is a dialogue between coach and players, with the training practice being the common context. Therefore, if the coach does not intervene appropriately, many actions will not be adopted as desired (Guilherme Oliveira, 2004).

José Mourinho's long term assistant, Rui Faria (2007) gives some clarifying testimony: "During the practice execution, the intervention has to be based on the relationship between practice-player-coach. This means that we will sometimes need to modify some aspects to get what we want. This type of intervention is only possible if we know very well where we are and where we want to go. That is, it requires a very structured knowledge about our style of play (our game model) that allows us to adjust the intervention always towards our specific goal."

This means the coach has to know exactly what kind of actions he wants to enhance and correct these actions during the practice, specifically when they happen or should happen.

Hotz (1999) clarifies this by stating that the quality in the transmission of information depends on its timing, so the coach has to be patient and have enough assessment and diagnostic capability to identify players' actions in order to optimise his interventions. The "optimal intervention" also has to take into account the frequency of the feedback. As stated by Williams (2003), the tendency is for coaches to provide detailed feedback on a frequent basis.

Although feedback is essential for acquiring skill, particularly early in the learning process, research suggests that learners should be encouraged to rely on their own intrinsic feedback processes rather than a large amount of feedback from the coach. Coaches should therefore resist the temptation to provide too much feedback and progressively encourage learners to develop their own error detection and correction processes through trial and error. When coaches reduce the frequency and precision of their feedback, performance during practice sessions will likely become less efficient initially. Over time, however, this should facilitate learning and long-term performance.

3. After the Practice

Feedback after the practice emphasises the positive and negative aspects of what took place. It promotes discussion, understanding, and "guided discovery" (Mourinho, in Oliveira et al., 2006), all of which consequently lead to the desired specific knowledge being developed. Note that this moment serves as a final reflection about what has been learned and has considerable influence on the construction of the idealised style of play and the integration of its principles.

A key tool is the ability to ask meaningful questions. Questioning raises the awareness of players and encourages internal feedback. It creates independent players by providing them with the opportunity to take responsibility for their own interpretations and understanding, and make decisions.

When the coach asks questions and gives players a chance to solve them, the players will generally try hard to solve them. The solution they generate is theirs, so they will take ownership of it and remember it. They will understand it better and be better able to apply the solution more effectively than if they had simply been told the answer.

A key to effective questioning is a coach's ability to listen to the players' responses and redirect, prompt or probe for better or more complete answers. The better a coach understands his game model, the easier it will be to explore it in more depth.

On the following page, we have a figure which shows a structured '**Quality Questioning Framework**' of important considerations in the questioning process.

QUALITY QUESTIONING FRAMEWORK

(Adapted from Walsh, J. Saties, B. 2005)

We emphasise that training should be a process that involves communication and interaction between players and coaches in order to build a specific way of playing football together. Coaching provides the optimal environment for motor solutions to emerge through self-discovery. The model suggests that development is determined by the constraints of the practice itself, the player characteristics and coach intervention. Coaches can manipulate these factors to ensure the desired action emerges from a process of guided discovery, rather than prescriptive coaching (Williams, 2003). This process challenges coaches to be creative in designing practices, planning feedback and questioning. This enables certain behaviours to emerge in players.

STAGE 1
PREPARE THE QUESTION

1. Identify the purpose
2. Determine the content focus (according to players' needs)
3. Understand cognitive, physical, social & emotional level of players
4. Formulate the question for the level of the player(s)

STAGE 2
PRESENT THE QUESTION

1. Indicate how players can respond (i.e., not all shout out at once) - it is also very important that the players listen to both the coach and their teammates
2. Ask the question, 'step back' and let the player formulate an answer
3. Select a player or players to answer

STAGE 3
ENCOURAGE PLAYER RESPONSES

1. Take time and wait to determine whether you should encourage responses - you can do this by selecting players or by opening up the question to the group
2. Assist player(s) to respond (if necessary)
3. Use player cues to encourage responses

STAGE 4
PROCESS PLAYER RESPONSES

1. Listen very carefully and pause following the players' responses
2. Provide appropriate feedback (according to player responses) with positivity
3. Expand responses
4. Encourage player reactions and questions

STAGE 5
REFLECT ON THE QUESTIONING PROCESS

1. Analyse questions asked
2. Reflect on who and how players responded
3. Evaluate player response patterns
4. Examine coach and player reactions

3. PRINCIPLE OF SYSTEMATIC REPETITION

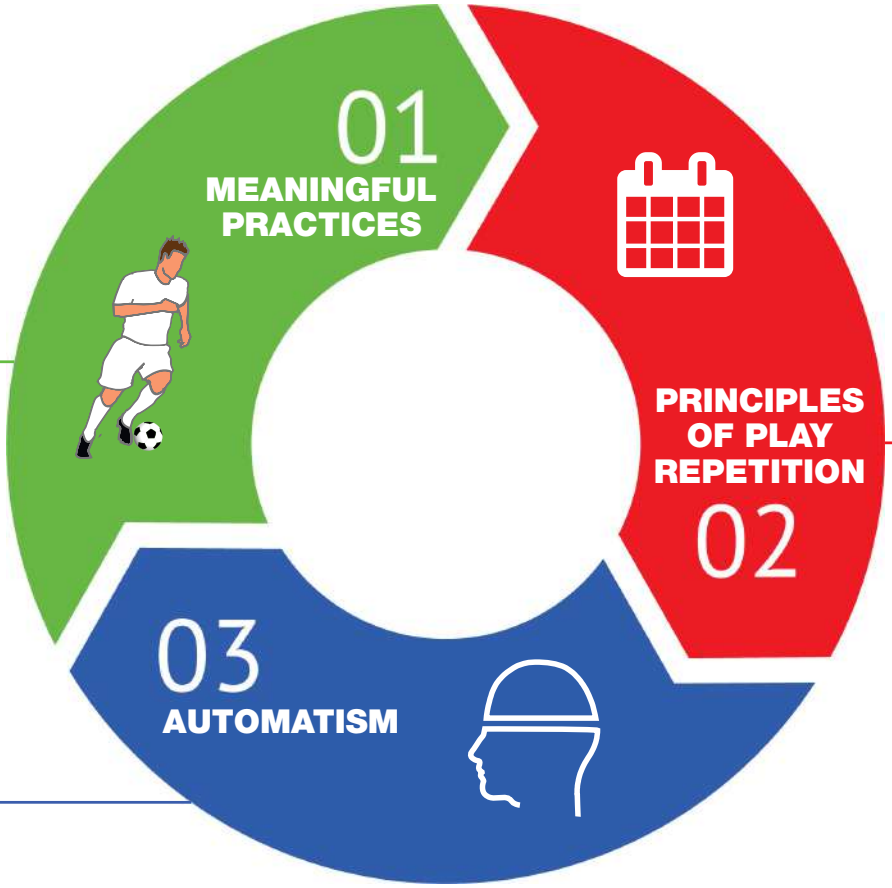
WHAT IS THE PRINCIPLE OF SYSTEMATIC REPETITION?

VISUAL MEMORIES

- Recovery of learned memories: dependent on state, time and context.
- Practices must take place within a "meaningful" environment with visual references (an area of the pitch, corridors, familiar positioning of teammates and opponents, pitch lines, etc).

REPETITION OF PRINCIPLES OF PLAY & PATTERNS

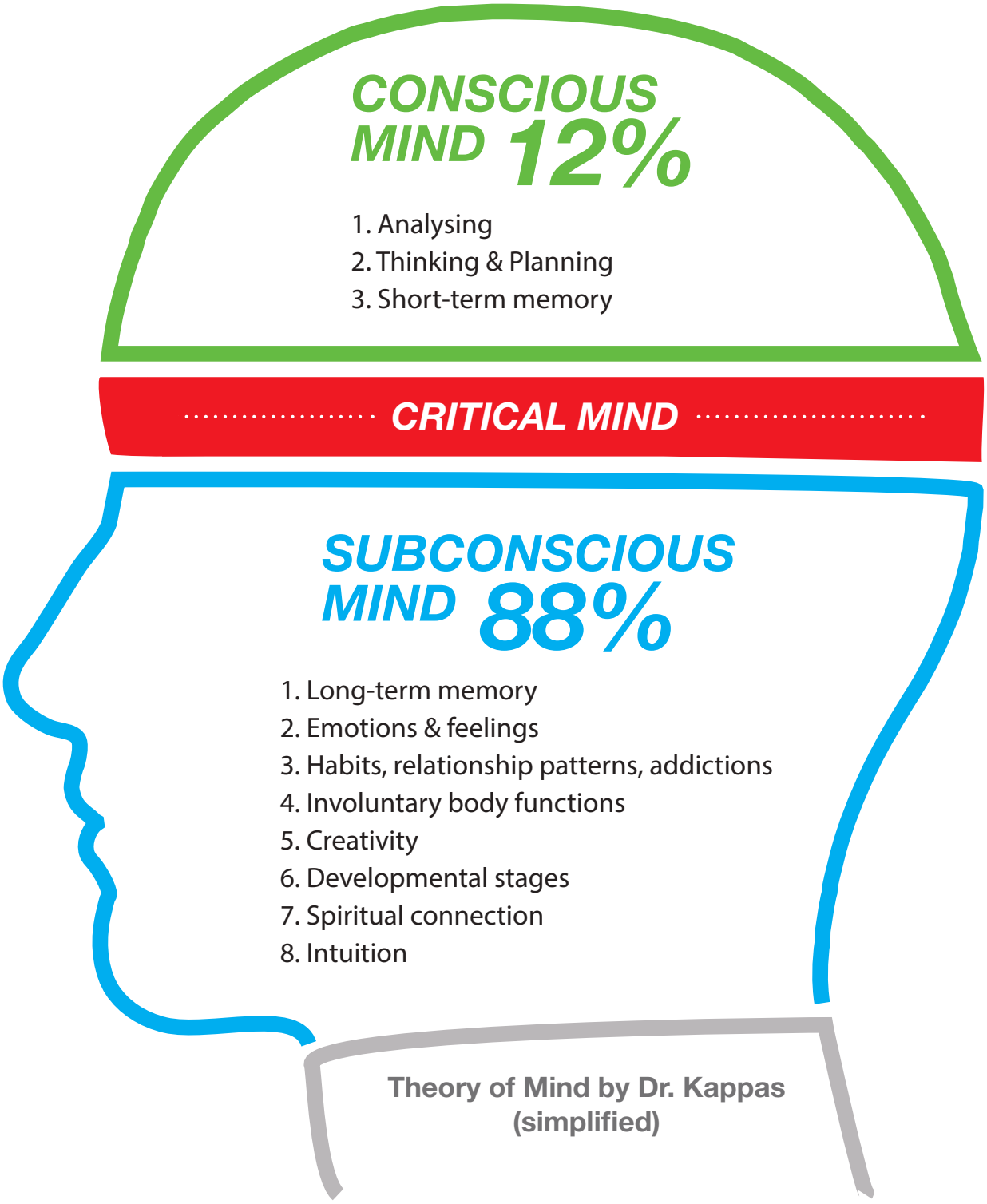
- Systematic repetition is to understand certain principles of play and create certain behavioural patterns.
- By letting the team and its players' frequently experience various principles of play during training, we enable the emergence of certain behaviours and patterns of play, to enable automation.



SUBCONSCIOUS PROCESSES

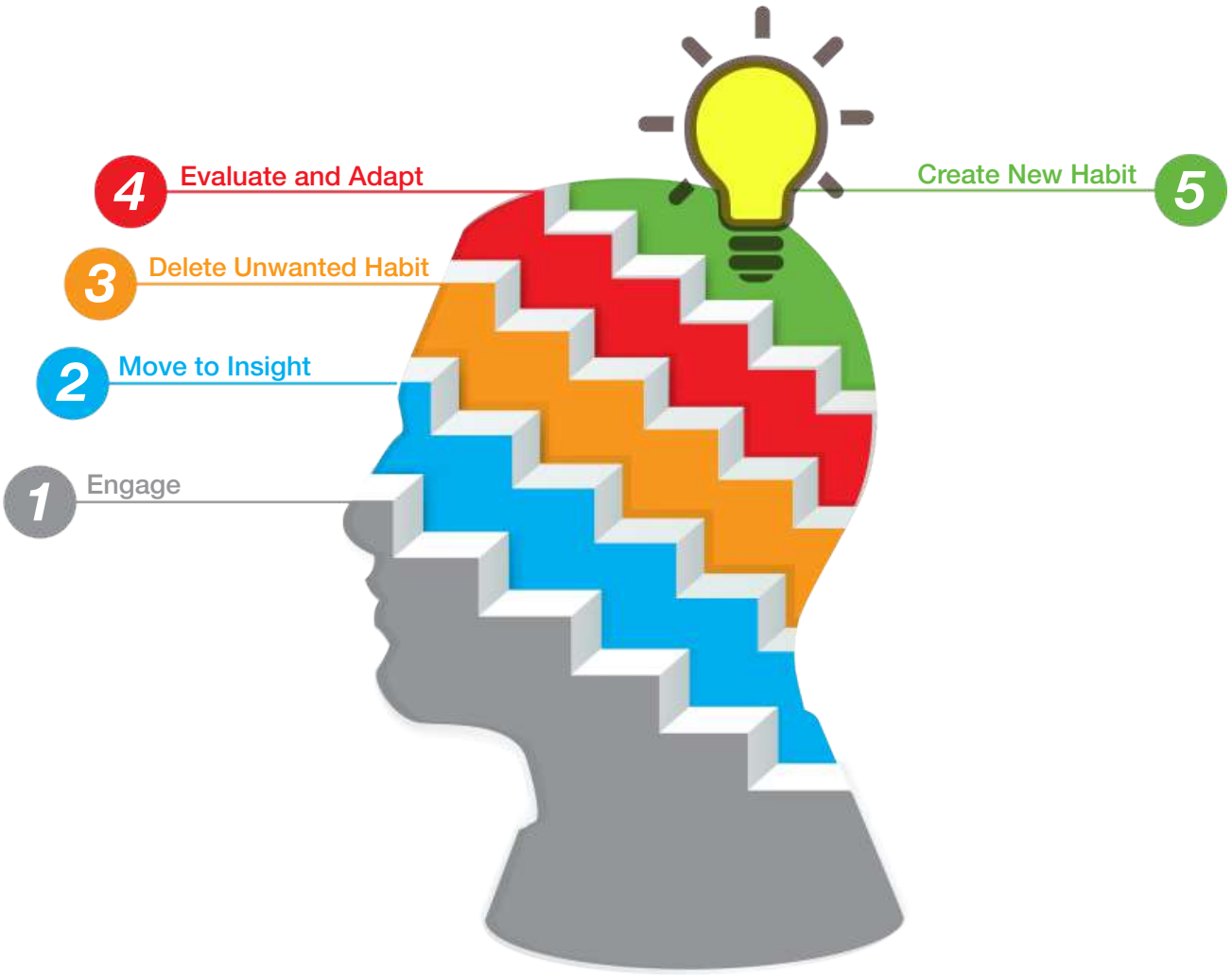
- It involves the subconscious mind to play an active and integral role.
- Sensory-motor skills can be acquired and exercised without using conscious processes, enabling tasks to be performed efficiently.

THE CONSCIOUS AND SUBCONSCIOUS MIND



*** Critical Mind:** *Critical thinking is about making reasoned and logical judgments which are well considered. You must question information and evidence and not just accept certain arguments.*

EMBED MODEL™ FOR CREATING NEW HABITS:
Facilitating Change with New Hard-Wiring of Mind



1. **Engage**: The "Engage" state sets the stage for reflection on what's getting in the way, making new connections, and accessing solutions to problems.
2. **Move to Insight**: Helping people hear those quiet signals referred to as "a-ha" moments are at the heart of personal learning and innovation. This state of mind creates a space where roadblocks are clearly brought to light (awareness) and solutions from the unconscious are able to be accessed (insight). Insights create permanent neural changes in the brain, are more memorable than linear problem solving, and are needed for addressing complex barriers to change.
3. **Delete Unwanted Habit**: Insights aren't very useful unless action is taken. What is most important is that action follows insight. This leads to the creation of new neural pathways in the brain and the consolidation necessary for changes in emotional responses, thinking, and behaviour.
4. **Evaluate and Adapt**: Ongoing follow-ups to identify and acknowledge the learning that comes from taking action is essential for tracking progress and ensuring development. A new action that follows insight provides opportunity for learning, which leads to more reflection and additional insights. This cycle of learning leads to deeper levels of engagement and precise actions focused on the new thinking and behaviour that supports the achievement of goals.
5. **Create New Habit**: New habits of behaviour need reinforcement for sustainable change to occur. When a coach reinforces new habits, attention is maintained and new pathways in the brain are developed and expanded.

PRINCIPLE OF SYSTEMATIC REPETITION: TRAINING THE BRAIN TO MAKE QUICK DECISIONS

"I give the players the day off after the game, and we do a recovery session on the first day of work (Tuesday if the game was on Sunday). From Wednesday, we begin working on general aspects, which are unchanged in my style of play. We end the week by working on more tactical and positional details, taking into account the strategic side. The general aspects refer to my main principles of play and the main sub-principles that make them up. These never change, so we train them every week (systematic repetition), because we attempt to model actions that promote the particular habits of our game model."

(**José Mourinho** in Gaiteiro, 2006)

The Importance of Emotions in Learning a Way of Playing

"Making decisions based on emotions is not an exception; it is the rule." (Jensen, 2002)

Damasio (2003) explains, "Despite the biological and cultural past that influences us when we decide, and that almost inevitably leads us to certain decisions, we have some leeway, some degree of free will."

Suppose we wanted a centre back to learn our principles related to building up play from the back using ball possession and circulation. However, he has played many years for a team where he was encouraged to play forward quickly with long balls and never risk giving the ball away in this area:

- He would probably have difficulties taking the risk to retain the ball and circulate it, because he will experience a constraining emotional feeling i.e. The fear of losing the ball in his half.
- Although he tends to refuse to take that risk (which is a kind of cultural survival mechanism learned at his former team), with specific work on changing the habit (i.e., by activating the prefrontal cortex to create new mental connection standards) and systematic repetition, he can gradually adapt his brain to the new way of playing.
- Training is necessary to reverse the state of body he feels, so he can feel comfortable on the ball.

Therefore, when the emotional dispositions are already modelled by the new values (the principles of play) of the team, the decision-making process in both training and competition becomes faster and more efficient.

Using Positive Emotions to Create Good Habits

We therefore see that experiencing certain actions, as defined by the principles and sub-principles of how to play, creates a set of emotions and feelings in players. When these players subsequently face a similar situation in a competitive match, their emotions and feelings will assist them in decoding the information and making decisions, reducing the reasoning process and allowing them to anticipate.

The training process should enhance the creation of positive emotions, so players can make decisions easier during matches, as they are stimulated by situations linked to those same emotions. When players experience these specific situations during practice, they will find it useful to anticipate their responses later in a competitive match - they will be inclined towards actions that were previously successful in solving similar problems.

Notice that in the above text, it is very clear that systematically training the principles of play for a particular game model leads players to become familiar with the operational logic, and in turn, they form memories (linked to pleasant or unpleasant stimuli) that will direct their choices during the game, albeit subconsciously. However, this unconscious nature does not exclude the need for conscious engagement and concentration from the player, because as Oliveira (2006) says, "there is a need for players to be fully engaged and emotionally involved in this project of building a game model."

As mentioned earlier, all the principles of play that are learned by a given player make up his specific knowledge of the collective project. To comprehend the

extremely complex process that leads to this potential understanding, some key concepts need to be defined: knowledge, memory and learning.

According to Eysennk and Keane (1994), knowledge can be considered as information that is mentally represented in a specific format and structured or organised in a certain way. To Damasio (2000), a given representation of reality consists of a "standard consistently related to something" with some specific purpose, such as a principle of the game. This representation exists in the brain as "a set of neural activities that forms potential activity, which is then activated before a given situation, consciously or subconsciously, and which may or may not involve mental images."

The concept of a mental image means describing something that is constructed by the brain, a pattern of connections created through our sensory modes to be represented in the mind. It is now accepted to be the most appropriate format to report knowledge (Damasio, 2000). The mind, according to the same author, is essentially a process, a continuous flow of mental images that can be ordered and manipulated during a thought.

In summary, each mental image created by a given subject (the player) has something of themselves in it, and therefore the coach's proposed game model is subject to the interpretations of the players (Guilherme Oliveira, 2004), which in turn depend on their previous experiences, cognitive abilities, perspectives, feelings and emotions (Damasio, 1994).

This gives us an idea about the highly complex nature of the training process, where more than 20 players should have very similar interpretations of the intended way to play, respecting the principles of play that support it, regardless of the character, ideas and past experiences of each player.

New Habits, New Intentions and a New Way to Play

The learning process often involves a dual task: to delete unwanted habits and replace them with others of greater value. This happens because, as mentioned before, each player brings his own history. (Goleman et al., 2002)

From this perspective, the learning process is based on acquiring new habits, but this complex process that involves the body and mind "machinery" of the players is not always as simple as it sounds.

According to Goleman et al. (2002), the prefrontal cortex (part of brain that regulates cognitive, emotional and behavioural functioning) becomes particularly active when a person needs to prepare to avoid a usual response. When stimulated, the prefrontal cortex reinforces the "focus" of the brain (concentration) on what is happening (Goleman et al., 2002). In this very short period (0.2 seconds), a player may dismiss an action if it is not in accordance with prior intentions (Coricelli et al., 2005). Goleman et al. (2002) points out that the higher this "pre-activation" (i.e., The formation of an explicit memory [prior intention] about the intended action), the better the task will be performed. This view is supported by Santos (2003), who states, "For a player to have proper concentration during training, he needs to be aware that by performing this exercise, he is going to improve a certain aspect of his game." In other words, a player needs to know what the objective is and how it relates to the game model. In addition, feedback from the coach and/or teammates is another essential factor. In the view of Goleman et al. (2002), "It takes dedication and constant reminders to stay focused on reversing these habits."

So, to either acquire new habits or change existing ones, it is crucial to find the right way. For Goleman et al. (2002), "When people try to change their habitual thoughts or actions, they need to reverse the decades of learning that reside in heavily used neural circuits." He also notes, "The learning of new habits strengthens certain pathways between neurons and may even stimulate neurogenesis (a process by which neurons are generated from the neural stem and progenitor cells - *see diagram on the next page*).

A new way of thinking, feeling or acting seems unnatural at first, because we are forcing the brain to follow a lesser travelled path (Goleman et al., 2002). However, Goleman also states that "it is possible to improve by taking three steps: Be aware of bad habits, deliberately practice the most appropriate alternatives, and repeat the new action at every opportunity to master it completely."

Mourinho (2004) talks about his training process, "It is all about actions. We create habits in order to maintain the performance of our team, which often translates into good levels of play." In other words, he argues that by linking with quality training practice and style of play, it will be easier for players to identify such patterns and act accordingly in competitive matches. Damasio (2000) also supports this position by stating that the more we experience situations related to a certain object (e.g., A principle of play), the more easily we can act because our brain has easier access to that object's image. In short, the process of reversing/acquiring habits has to do with a certain style of play, so it needs coaches and players to be very systematic in building a way of playing and then keeping it. Consequently, once new actions have been learned, they should continue to be exercised to avoid returning to old habits (Goleman et al., 2002). Maintaining the set of habits that shape our game model results in the maintenance of performance that Mourinho (2005) talks about.

BRAIN FUNCTION CONTROL

Frontal Lobe

- The ability to concentrate and attend, elaboration of thought, learning and behaviour. Including intellect, abstract reasoning, problem solving, judgement, sequencing, planning and concentration.
- Controls emotional response, expressive language, word associations, and memory, for habits and motor activities.

Parietal Lobe

- Location for visual attention, touch perception, goal directed voluntary movement and manipulation of objects.
- Integration of different senses that allows for understanding a single concept.

Occipital Lobe

- Primary visual reception area.

Temporal Lobe

- Hearing ability, memory acquisition, some visual perceptions and visual memory.
- Categorisation of objects, intellect.
- Sense of identity, behaviour and emotions, including fear.
- Long term memory.

Cerebellum

- Regulation and coordination of movement, posture and balance.
- Some memory for reflex and motor actions.

Brain Stem

- Breathing, heart rate, swallowing, reflexes for seeing and hearing, reactions. Controls sweating, blood pressure, digestion and temperature.
- Affects level of alertness, ability to sleep and sense of balance.

THE NEED FOR SYSTEMATIC REPETITION OF SPECIFIC PRACTICES

Mind and Habit

It is essential that the training process causes a defined relationship between mind and habit. Football is a kind of know-how; it is a habit that is acquired during action (Carvalhal, 2001).

The role of the coach is to promote adaptations in players according to the specific way he wants them to play. Working out these actions during training helps the players to apply them in competitive matches. It is therefore necessary to create habits that make such actions become automatic responses (Gomes, 2006).

Automation also has great value for performing technically complex motor responses successfully. For example, part of a musical virtuoso's technique may remain unconscious, allowing him or her to focus on the higher aspects of a particular piece and be better able to express his or her creativity. The same concept can be applied to an athlete (Damasio, 2000).

Therefore, practices have to be planned, conducted, and evaluated subject to the game model, using methods that involve an intensive and systematic specificity that allows players and the team to find a pattern of organisation and regulation. This will make certain actions appear automatically in the game, with most coming from the subconscious (Resende, 2002).

We realise that if the repetition is active and specific to our way of playing, it will result in learning and new know-how. On the other hand, if this repetition is not put into context, the existing actions may remain, but it will not promote any further development.

From the perspective of how to make a principle of play operational, an adaptation in the players and the team comes from systematic and specific repetition, where we constrain the practices and make certain actions occur more often. The habit you want to create must always be intentional and be in context with a firm connection to the game model.

Frade (cited by Resende, 2002) stresses the need to increase the importance of the tactical dimension, because the tactical aspect should guide the whole process by providing the intentions of each practice and working towards the desired actions.

While training should be based on learning new principles, maintaining those already learned is also crucial, so they will not be forgotten. Therefore, specific practices must be selected, created and applied at suitable intervals to stabilise the capacity that has been acquired and developed over time. Only the systematic repetition of these practices will allow the team to consolidate the principles of the game model (Oliveira et al., 2006).

Specific Training and Systematic Repetition

The specificity of a training practice is complete when it relates to a specific game situation in the game model, because it is not enough for a practice to be linked to just any game action (Guilherme Oliveira, 1991). Oliveira also adds that specific practices are not simply situational; they are absolutely connected with the game model and its principles of play. It is important for players to be aware of what they are doing and understand the dynamics of the practice and its relation to what the coach wants for the team.

Regarding the recovery of learned memories, Jensen (2002) states that a successful recovery is highly dependent on its state, time and context. Every kind of learning is associated with sensory data, such as sight, smell, locations, and so on. Therefore, practice must take place within a "meaningful environment" (a specific area of the pitch, channels, familiar positioning of teammates and opponents, pitch lines, and so on). It should not just be any space, because players need meaningful references (visual in this case).

According to Frade (2004), when considering the perspective presented here, the systematic repetition of desired actions is a key element to meeting the objectives. As stated by Guilherme Oliveira (1991), the changes produced in the players are the result of what the coach does rather than what he or she wishes or dreams for. It is therefore important for players to become used to repeating actions during practice if they are going to happen in competitive matches.

To Frade (in Tavares, 2003), movement is educational only if it has an intention behind it. It is therefore necessary to foster certain intentions in the actions of the players. Consequently, ***learning requires more than simple repetition. It requires an intentional, consistent and structured training process that results in stronger and more durable visible learning effects***. Guilherme Oliveira (1991) states that when the body is subjected to a given task, it is requested to perform a specific

action in response to a particular stimulus. It is prepared to make a particular response and consequently to get "consciousness of action." However, if this action is required or encouraged often, the body tends to adapt and create a new awareness of the action that takes full advantage of it.

Systematic Repetition is therefore understood not as the mere automation of a particular action, but rather an attempt to understand certain principles of play and create certain behavioural patterns (Batista, 2006).

To Frade (in Carvalhal, 2001), systematic repetition is the best way to make a principle of play operational and enhance it, because it gives it the opportunity to emerge and appear more often, enabling it to be learned. In other words, by letting the team and its players frequently experience various principles of play during training, we enable the emergence of certain actions and patterns of play. This creates a collective dynamic, a certain kind of mechanism, but it is not purely mechanical, because this dynamic cannot separate itself from the inherent random nature of an open situation (Oliveira et al., 2006).

Systematic repetition enables the automation of actions and invokes the subconscious to play an active and integral role. Regarding subconscious activity, Damasio (2000), McCrone (2002) and Jacob and Lafargue (2005) all report that the brain can trigger answers without conscious interference.

Damasio (2000) states that sensory-motor skills can be acquired and exercised without using conscious processes, enabling tasks to be performed efficiently. According to the same author, automation also has great value for complex motor skills. If a part of the technical skill remains subconscious, it allows the subject to focus on more complex aspects and create solutions to new problems. This quality enables our body to automate itself in the sense of a "non-mechanical mechanism," with the conscious brain then being freed up to solve strategic decision-making problems.

The main objective of this brain function is to save time, but it only works when the brain has experienced an identical or similar situation and recorded it as an automatic habit (McCrone, 2002).

The systematic repetition of the principles of play directs the adaptation processes of the players towards the way we want to play (Frade, 2004). The training process therefore influences the players' habits and shapes their actions.

When Mourinho talks about stabilising performance, he also refers to systematic repetition being important for the resumption of habits and the need to experience a collective sense.

"What we train are daily connections between the principles and sub-principles regarding the attacking and defensive organisation, as well as transitions after losing and winning the ball, always in correspondence with our game model."

(**José Mourinho** in Gaiteiro, 2006)

Therefore, the strategic side (game preparation) is not subject to systematic repetition. In terms of the game model, the tactical aspect is geared towards the learning of invariable principles and sub-principles. Changeable sub-principles promote the coordination and configuration of the strategic side (Frade, 2006).

4. PRINCIPLE OF COMPLEX PROGRESSION

WHAT IS THE PRINCIPLE OF COMPLEX PROGRESSION?

For Tactical Periodization, the **Principle of Complex Progression** is built around learning a certain way of playing. It is based on the need to prioritise the principles that are most important to the game model. We need to develop a strategy to break down and build up these principles, using their sub-principles in a way that avoids any interference between them.

This progression appears at three different levels of complexity: During the **SEASON** (the intended game model), throughout the **WEEK** (taking into account the previous and next matches), and finally during each **TRAINING SESSION** (in the practices). It therefore becomes a complex progression where each level is related to the others.

PRINCIPLE OF COMPLEX PROGRESSION: ORDERING THE PRINCIPLES OF PLAY BY IMPORTANCE

"I wrote a document that is never going to be published. It is my 'training dossier,' where I keep all my training guidelines. That is, all my training goals and the way to achieve them through my methodological principles, 'to improve these given principles, these practices'. If I should have to name this document, its title would be 'The evolution of my training concepts'." (**José Mourinho** in Lourenço, L. and Ilharco, 2007)

Vítor Frade states that it is imperative to understand the way we want our team to play and our players to develop. From this, we can link the principles to each other and organise them by importance hierarchically (in Gomes, 2006). As stated by **José Mourinho**, "Since the very beginning, the principles and sub-principles of our game model are privileged through a set of practices. But the best way to convey our ideas is by lowering the complexity through conditioned games." (in Fernandes, 2003)

For example, take a team that have players with a low technical level but have fast strikers. Perhaps the most interesting organisation would be to defend very deep and apply quick transitions from defence to attack, trying to get in behind the opposition. Therefore, this principle is very important for this team, but it may be less important for another team with different characteristics. This is why a proper hierarchy of the principles of play is needed (ordering the principles of play by importance).

We consider principles of play to be very complex concepts, because they involve several variables that are in constant and direct relationships. Therefore, from the Tactical Periodization point of view, it is necessary to break them down and reduce their complexity. By making them more understandable, the players adapt quicker and perform them better. This reduction process has to be done very carefully, always respecting the style of play (game model).

Each specific principle of our game model is directly related to one of the four phases of the game ***(see figure 'Example of How to Break Down a Principle of Play' on the next page)***. No equal value is ever given to all the principles of play, so there is a hierarchical organisation. The importance of each principle during the training process is directly related to the intended game model. Some principles are more important and more valued than others in terms of what is intended. The coach's ability to articulate all the principles that comprise his game model will determine the team's DNA, which is the coach's conception of the game (Tamarit, 2007).

For example, a particular coach may want his players to apply intensive pressing during the defensive phase, so this would be his main principle for this phase. Now, imagine the same coach taking over a new team. On his first day, he explains the way he wants them to play, but many of the players do not have a good understanding of this type of action. Before the first game, the coach asks them to play like this. Clearly, such action will not happen effectively, because it is vital to first build and understand the paths that lead to this end. These are the partial objectives of this principle, which are covered by its sub-principles and its sub-sub principles. Thus, breaking down the main principles of play in order to reduce their complexity helps the players to learn them and therefore achieve their objectives. However, note that this breaking down of the principles must not deplete the whole (the game model). The objective is to separate the main principles into their sub-principles and then integrate them again.

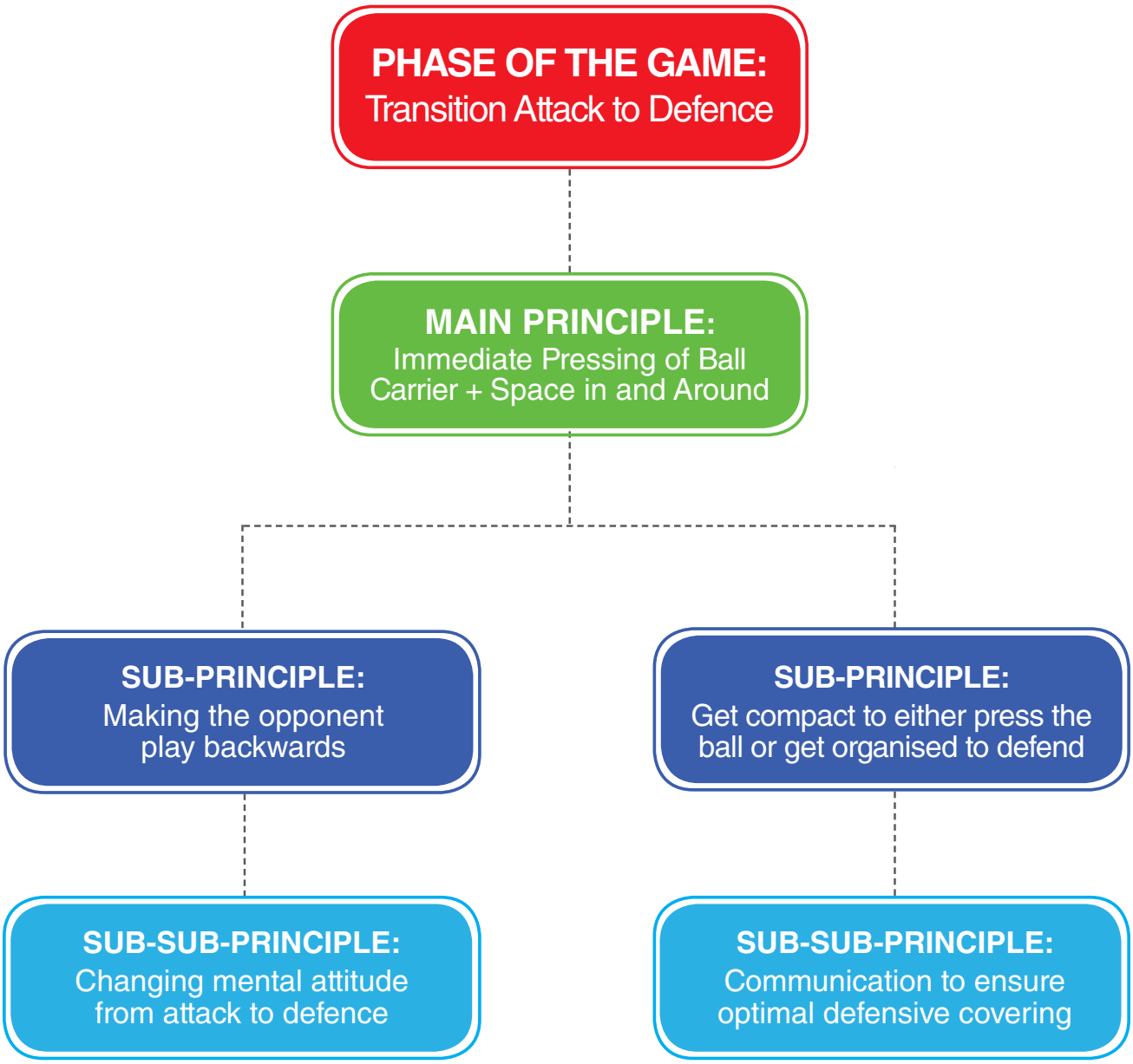
About this, Tamarit (2007) states, "Tactical Periodization allows the fragmentation of the principles and sub-principles and the articulation between them without needing to isolate the different components and moments that make up the game. In other words, this allows reduction without limitations. It is achieved by creating practices in smaller spaces and with fewer numbers of players, simplifying the complexity of the game without being separated from the whole."

The principle of complex progression is therefore related to the hierarchical organisation (ordering by importance) of the principles and sub-principles of play. It has nothing to do with a general-to-specific progression, from volume to intensity, whatsoever. For Tactical Periodization, the concept of progression is built around learning a certain way of playing. It is based on the need to prioritise the principles that are most important for the intended game model. We need to develop a strategy to build up these principles based on their sub-principles, in a way that avoids any interference between them.

This progression appears at three different levels of complexity: During the **SEASON** (the intended game model), throughout the **WEEK** (taking into account the previous and next games), and finally during each **TRAINING SESSION** (in the practices). It therefore becomes a complex progression where each level is related to the others, as we can see in the diagram on the next page.

EXAMPLE OF HOW TO BREAK DOWN A PRINCIPLE OF PLAY

(Adapted from Gomes, M. 2006)



PRINCIPLE OF COMPLEX PROGRESSION: THE SEASON, THE WEEK AND THE TRAINING SESSION

Season Planning

According to Frade (2004), during the early stages of the training season, we should introduce the general principles of play, which are related to the four phases of the game:

1. **Defensive Phase**
2. **Attacking Phase**
3. **Transition from Defence to Attack**
4. **Transition from Attack to Defence**

If players know and can explain when to apply the principles of play relative to each phase, it will be easier for them to learn the specific principles of the coach's game model. In the second phase, we work on the specific principles of our game model.

At this stage, we can distinguish between the phases. We focus on the defensive phase first, because a good defensive balance enables the team to gain confidence and consistency. This allows the team to progress into other game situations i.e. Defending well to attack even better. In addition, it is "easier" to defend than to attack and we need to expend less time to get the players to understand the defensive principles of our game model. Next, we move on to more complex actions, such as the attacking phase. However, none of this is set in stone, because it is up to the coach to analyse the needs of the team and decide the training priorities.

The transition phases are a key aspect in modern football, and the defensive transition is closely linked to the attacking phase. Therefore, during the practices for the attacking phase, we will also train our defensive transition. It is important to note that although we have followed a methodological order, these four phases are all linked, and a proper interaction between these stages will allow us to design the style of play we want. Within these stages, we work through all the principles involved, but we may emphasise some more than others, depending on the objective of the practice.

We refer to a "building up" and "disassembly" (breaking down) of the principles/sub-principles and their hierarchy (order of importance) inside the weekly plan and over several weeks, according to the evolution of the players and the team. This methodological principle has two levels of planning that interact with each other:

- **Short Term** (game to game)
- **Medium/Long Term** (style of play or game model)

Weekly Planning

This complex progression is achieved by prioritising the principles of play and changing the effort levels (training loads) throughout the week. Therefore, alongside the desired way of playing, there is a weekly concern about the alternation of different patterns of effort and recovery.

Frade (2007) states that what is trained each day is different because of a greater or lesser complexity with certain consequences for the intended way of playing. Thus, we can say there is an "assembly" and "disassembly" of the principles of the game and their hierarchy (order of importance) inside each weekly plan and over the weeks, in accordance with the development of our players and team (Frade, 2007).

As mentioned previously, the hierarchical structure of the principles of play allows the development of the physiological dimension to be specific (according to the desired game model).

Therefore, Mourinho makes use of the physical dimension to calculate the training load, but he states that his daily concerns are directed towards making his game model operational.

Therefore, to better develop his style of play, he uses his principles of play in a complex progression. This is the "assembly" and "disassembly" of different levels of organisation and the teaching of principles and sub-principles during the ***Standard Weekly Micro-cycle*** (the "Morfo-cycle Pattern"), always taking into account the evolution of the team. In other words, there is an increase in complexity for each principle/action as it is learned. This structure of the weekly pattern is therefore maintained to meet the ***Principle of Stabilisation***, and combined with the ***Principle of Complex Progression*** in order to conveniently manage mental and physical fatigue for recovery.

Training Session Planning

When there is a reduced complexity in a training practice, we risk losing specificity. To avoid this, we try to connect the principles covered in one practice to the principles covered in a different one, promoting the integration of these actions into our collective idea. However, the structure of the training session and what to do each day depends not only on the tactical objectives but also on the physical capacity available (Mourinho, in Oliveira et al., 2006).

From the beginning of the season, our principles and sub-principles are expressed through a set of game specific practices. A certain principle of play can be initially presented through an 11 v 0 situation. This shows the positional relationships and its dynamics, and provides an overview of what is intended. The best way to first convey ideas is to reduce the complexity by using reduced forms such as this.

However, the concerns get more complicated as we progress. For example, after the major principles, other sub-principles and concerns arise that have not yet been trained. It is worth mentioning here how we can mentally challenge our players by manipulating the degree of difficulty and constraints for a practice.

For instance, Mourinho (in Freitas, 2004) explains how to use the variable of "difficulty" in training to combat a lack of challenge during a week spent preparing to play against a theoretically weaker opponent: "We create very difficult training situations to let our players experience failure and put some pressure on them. For example, a practice that they are used to is playing in a 20 x 20 yard square. During these weeks, we play in an area of 14 x 14 yards to reduce their effectiveness. It makes the practices more challenging, and more difficult, and it demands greater efforts from them to perform effectively. Consequently, they will face the game with a better mental preparation."

The interactions between the factors we have explained are essential to designing effective practices. However, to get the most from these practices, it is necessary to fulfil some methodological principles.

Faria (2007) and Oliveira (2007) validate the idea that the "Complex Progression" principle is not just a progression from the easiest to the most difficult; it is a regulator of the training process. If a practice becomes "easy," we need to restructure it, so the players are in constant development.

After the disintegration of the principles and sub-principles of our style of play (game model), it becomes necessary to reintegrate them in a dynamic and hierarchical manner (Oliveira et al., 2006). However, to understand the entire logical structure of the weekly standard pattern, we should link the principle of complex progression to the principle of performance stabilisation (horizontal alternation in specificity - see pages 96-98). We are therefore talking about a progression with respect to ordering our principles by importance with changing levels of physical and mental effort over the week (Oliveira et al., 2006).

5. PRINCIPLE OF TACTICAL FATIGUE & CONCENTRATION

WHAT IS THE PRINCIPLE OF TACTICAL FATIGUE & CONCENTRATION?

Principle of Tactical Fatigue and Concentration: Tactical fatigue relates to players' capacity to focus on actions that characterise their team's style of play. The game is made up of complex situations which require high degrees of concentration. The game is characterised by high-intensity actions - it therefore makes no sense to train at low intensities, so maximum-intensity training is required, but must be relative to players' levels of fatigue on a given day.

Load & Recovery

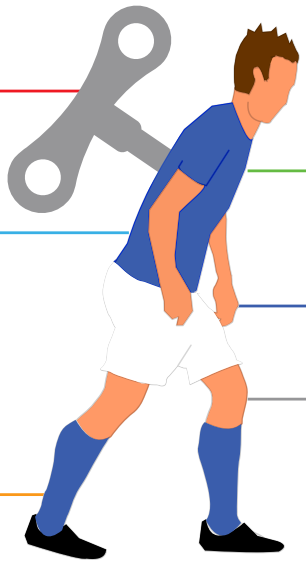
- Optimal relationship between load and recovery (mental + physical) = Higher quality actions

Training Variations

- The more variations and different information for the players to analyse during practice, the more demanding and intense the training becomes

High Levels of Concentration

- High levels of concentration from the first to last minute of a training session or competitive match provides a high degree of learning



Relative Maximal Intensity

- The intensity is always maximal in terms of concentration, but the training load and complexity must be adjusted for different days
- Training must always be relative to the players' recovery time and readiness to train

Tactical Thinking

- Football players' peak performance requires constant concentration and tactical thinking (think and decide fast)

Principles of Play

- "Intensity" is directly related to the principles and sub-principles of play, trained through well-designed practices and training sessions

PRINCIPLE OF TACTICAL FATIGUE AND TACTICAL CONCENTRATION (RELATIVE MAXIMAL INTENSITIES)

"Concentration needs to be trained. This can be done by training according to a specific philosophy. I cannot dissociate training intensity from the concept of concentration. When I say that football is made up of high-intensity actions, I also refer to the need for permanent concentration; it is integral to the game."

(**José Mourinho**, in Oliveira et al., 2006)

The Concept of Concentration

As a starting point, we need to understand more about the concept of concentration. Silverio and Srebro (2002) argue that the definition of concentration has two dimensions:

1. Ability to give attention to relevant information while ignoring irrelevant information and disturbances.
2. Ability to maintain this attention over a long period.

For football players, the relevant information is linked to their functions on the pitch, such as the position of the ball and the positions/movements of their teammates and opponents. Irrelevant information would be disturbing noise from fans, photographers, journalists, and their own negative thoughts or insecurities.

Concentration therefore relates to mechanisms for selective attention, which can be internal or external. The efficiency of actions is highly dependent on the ability to concentrate and deal with the considerable stimuli that players face during a training practice or game situation. Along these lines, Mourinho (2002) adds that something that makes his training sessions more intense is the concentration they require, and is associated to the emotional demands (Fernandes, 2003).

Tactical Fatigue and Tactical Concentration

When recognising the importance of tiredness that results from concentrated playing, there is a need for a different understanding about the traditional concept of recovery. This led to the emergence of the "tactical fatigue" concept (Frade, 2004), which relates to players' capacity to focus on the actions that characterise their team's style of play. Mourinho says about this, "I assume that one thing that makes the training more intense is the concentration required. For example, running demands energy, but the complexity of this situation is zero. And as such, the emotional wear tends to be void as well. Conversely, the game is made up of complex situations where players are exposed to technical, tactical and psychological strains. It demands from them higher degrees of concentration." (**José Mourinho**, in Oliveira et al., 2006)

The game is characterised by high-intensity actions where a player must be prepared to handle any kind of situation that the game requires. It therefore makes no sense to train at low intensities, so maximum-intensity training is required, at least relatively. How do we define the term "intensity"? José Mourinho's long term assistant **Rui Faria** comments "When we talk about intensity, we refer to intensity of concentration; regarding volume, we speak about volume of intensities of concentration. So our notion of these concepts escapes the traditional notion. We talk about intensity of concentration because being in the game is primarily being able to think and make decisions, which requires concentration in terms of what is fundamental in our style of play."

José Guilherme Oliveira (2004) highlights the importance of being patient during the attacking phase, retaining possession of the ball in order to find space to exploit in the opponent's defensive organisation. He states that when even a well-organised defensive team goes a long time without the ball, it will reach a crisis point in its concentration, and this is usually when spaces appear. Great patience is therefore important when moving the ball. This so-called concentration crisis is actually nothing more than "tactical fatigue." It is not measurable in tests and cannot be quantified, so it is much more difficult to manage than peripheral fatigue (muscle fatigue). Nevertheless, it is important and needs to be trained constantly.

José Mourinho (in Oliveira et al., 2006) argues that it is most important to manage **"Central Fatigue"** (mental fatigue), because he believes that central fatigue leads to players being unable to concentrate, so their decision-making quality is diminished (Gomes, 2006).

TRAINING WEEK: BALANCING CONCENTRATION, COMPLEXITY, INTENSITY AND RECOVERY

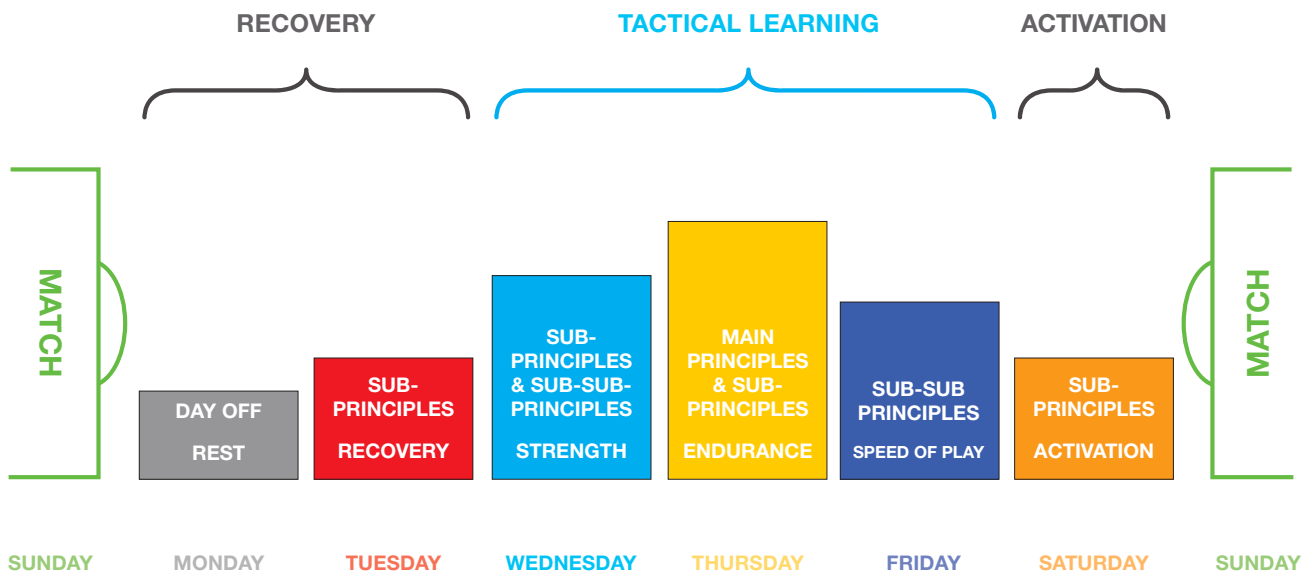
Reaching peak performance for football players requires constant tactical thinking, both in games and in training. Players always need to act with concentration. The development of tactical attitudes leads to the ability to make decisions quickly, but it depends on the capacity to design solutions. The mastery of specific techniques and the ability to make tactical decisions depends on the player's suitability to the game situation.

High levels of concentration, from the first to the last minute of a match, are essential. Intensity is therefore not an intangible concept, because it is directly related to the principles and sub-principles of play, which when trained through well-designed practices, leads the players' future actions and thoughts. The more variables that players must analyse during the execution of training practices, the more demanding and intense the situation will be (Frade, 2003).

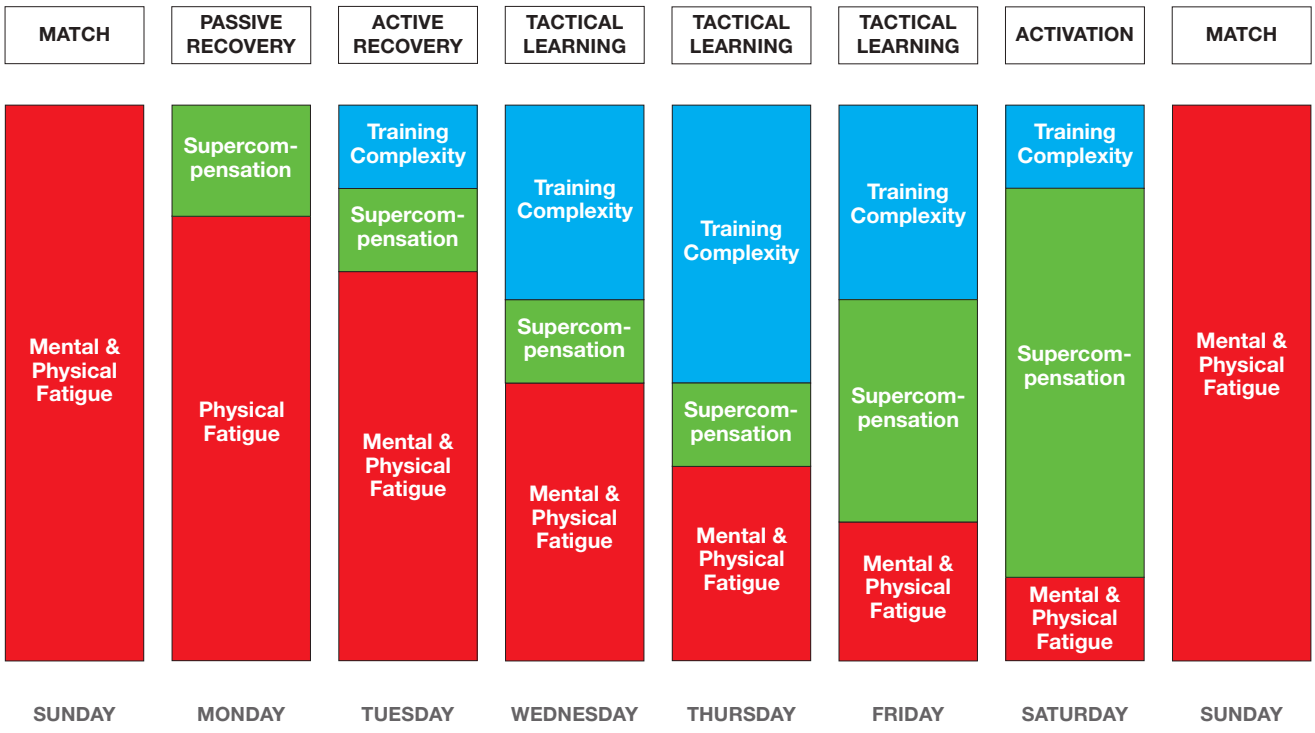
Therefore, the intensity will always be maximal yet relative, because it depends on the actions performed during a given training session and the relationship between recovery and complexity factors. It will differ from day to day, because the complexity of training sessions also varies as they incorporate the other dimensions of the game ***(see figure 'Standard Weekly Pattern' below)***.

STANDARD WEEKLY TRAINING PATTERN

(Adapted from Oliveira, G. 2007)



TACTICAL FATIGUE & CONCENTRATION LEVELS ACROSS A TRAINING WEEK



This diagram shows how we increase the training complexity and thus the **Tactical Fatigue** as the players' mental and physical fatigue reduces after a competitive match (peaking on Thursday by training the main principles of play), and then reduce it again in preparation for the next match.

*** Supercompensation:** In sports science theory, supercompensation is the post-training period in which the trained players' function/parameter have a higher performance capacity than they did prior to the training period. As shown in the diagram above, we are aiming for this peak just before Sunday's match.

RELATIVE MAXIMAL INTENSITY OF CONCENTRATION

We can explain the concept of relative maximal intensity best using the following example:

- If a player plays on Sunday, he will not fully recover from the game (physically or mentally) by Monday or Tuesday.
- To overcome the challenges that Tuesday's training session may require, the player should work at his maximum intensity of concentration.
- However, the same maximum intensity will not be enough to overcome the increased complexity (and intensity) that training will demand on Wednesday and Thursday, because the player has recovered more. The level of complexity can therefore be increased as the player recovers through the week.
- **Therefore, in Tactical Periodization, intensity is always maximal in terms of concentration while being relative to a player's state of recovery and readiness to train.**
- Higher levels of concentration during a training practice mean fewer opportunities to make mistakes.
- High concentration also supports a higher degree of learning. Consequently, coaches should always look for maximum concentration during training.

"Concentration needs to be trained. It can be done by training according to a specific philosophy. When I arrived at Benfica, the team was awful in terms of transitions: we gave the ball away and did not try to regain it immediately; we regained possession and did not change the speed of play. What did I do? I defined a set of principles for these moments and I designed many practices to train them up. Concentration trains itself. What I mean by intensity has a completely different meaning than is usually attributed to it. I cannot dissociate intensity from the concept of concentration. When I say football is made of high intensity actions, I also refer to the need for permanent concentration; it is integral." (**José Mourinho,** 2001)

Therefore, intensity is not an abstract concept. It is directly related to the principles and sub-principles of play, which, when trained through well-designed practices, will lead the players' future actions and thoughts. The accumulation of specific stimuli and the consequent adaptation enables players to have a choice of possible actions, and this will become more intense depending on the effort they need to make to maintain high levels of concentration.

Faria (in Fernandes, 2003) reports a similar idea: "There is a need to constantly evolve as per training variability to avoid a routine that will cause demotivation. A fundamental aspect is the variation in the practice complexity and the presentation of new ones. These strategies make the player feel renewed day by day, thanks to having something new to think about."

FACTORS TO MANAGE THE COMPLEXITY OF TRAINING PRACTICES / SESSIONS

The process of planning and designing training sessions is a singular and unique process for each coach. The ability to set up the whole process and to apply it on a daily basis is the primary role of the coach, because anyone can get to their style of play through different ways. The intervention of a coach towards their players is an unrepeatable event, so the coach must design practices that are actually compatible with his ideas. These practices are the way to achieve the main goal: to create a certain tactical culture. Therefore, **there should be precise and direct relationships between practices and their objectives, so the structure and content of a practice determines a precise effect** (Queiroz, 1986).

Resende (2002) also points out that the operational action of the players will depend on the level of concentration that the specific practices demand. This happens when the coach gives a certain direction to a given practice in terms of certain rules (constraints), creating a more effective fulfilment of certain game principles. These rules allow the functionality and objectives of practices to be changed, subject to a particular style of play (Resende, 2002).

During training, **the coach must therefore be able to present practices with varying degrees of complexity**. According to Queiroz (1986), practices can be designed so their specific requirements are higher or lower than the demands of the game, by manipulating their constraints such as space, time, number of players, rules, and so on. The same author points out that the complexity of a practice can be manipulated by adjusting the variables, as well as the relationships between these variables (the rules), to make the practice more or less complex:

Space

Can be modified according to its size, organisation and geometric shape, as well as with equipment used e.g. Cones, goals.

Time

Total time, number of repetitions played (attack or defence), frequency of actions, speed execution, pace, duration of actions and rates of successful performance.

Number of Players

Number of players involved in the activity, the tasks (i.e., Attacking and defending) or functional positions (e.g., Goalkeepers, defenders, midfielders, forwards and neutral players).

Rules

Set of laws that regulate the complexity of the practice. It results from the established connection between the structure and content of the practice.

For example, take a game situation with two goals and no opposition, active opposition, semi-active opposition or passive opposition, together with all sorts of regulatory constraints, such as with/without offside, with two touches, or finishing only by heading.

Combining these criteria, the practice can be conceived and structured by keeping in mind the specific actions desired. In fact, the most important aim is to make the situation we desire happen as many times as possible (***Principle of Propensities*** - ***see pages 63-64***), while always considering the various factors:

Practices therefore act as a guide to certain specific objectives, and this will promote the natural appearance and development of certain actions in the players. The coach must also ensure that the players know why they are doing what they are doing in a practice and understand its relationship with the team's style of play.

When designing practices according to a team's style of play, the coach should break down the principles and form them into complex actions, focusing on the relationships and habits he or she wants to create (Carvalhal, 2000). Thus, the coach should consider the complexity of the game, modelling it without promoting any reductions or changes to the game's properties (Carvalhal, 2000).

PHYSICAL CAPACITY, INTERMITTENCY, COMPLEXITY & EMOTIONAL LOAD/RECOVERY

Physical Capacity

Refers to the type of "muscle contraction" (i.e., strength, duration or speed) and associated bioenergetics (transformation of energy) route to be prioritised.

Levels of Intermittency

The relationship (ratio) between working and recovery time for a given exercise.

Complexity & Ratio of Emotional Load/Recovery

Football players' peak performance requires constant tactical thinking, both in competitive matches and in training. Players need to always be concentrating.

The development of a tactical attitude demands an attitude to think and decide quickly. High levels of concentration from the first to the last minute of the game are an essential requirement.

Therefore, "intensity" is not an intangible concept, it is directly related to the principles and sub-principles of play, which trained through well-designed practices, will lead player's future actions and thoughts.

The more variables to be analysed for the players during the execution of training practices, the more demanding and intense the situation will be (Frade, 2003).

The intensity should always be maximum, but relative, as it relates to the actions performed in a given training session. It will be different from day to day, as the complexity of training sessions also vary from day to day, always dragging the other dimensions of the game with it.

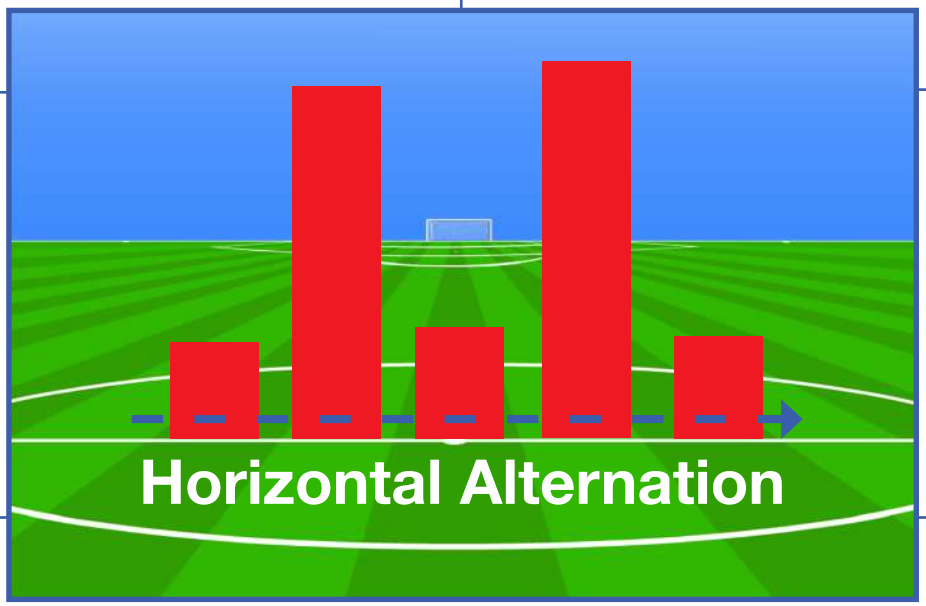
6. PRINCIPLE OF PERFORMANCE STABILISATION

WHAT IS THE PRINCIPLE OF PERFORMANCE STABILISATION?

Always combining tactical principles and physical components in training

Regular and fixed weekly training pattern with alternating loads and complexity to cope with recovery demands

Managing the physical components and tactical complexity to ensure the correct recovery from previous sessions



Relationship and interaction of main principles, sub-principles and sub-sub-principles of play

Practices designed to enhance a specific conditioning component (strength, endurance, speed)

HORIZONTAL ALTERNATION IN SPECIFICITY: THE IMPORTANCE OF THE PHYSICAL DIMENSION

Horizontal (Along the Week...)

- Alternation occurs over the week (i.e., one day of high complexity training is not followed by another one), with the recovery process organised according to the previous and next game.
- The intention is to avoid extended periods of high physiological demands, giving the body time to recover and making sure to avoid overtraining.

Alternation

- This involves alternating the dominant pattern of muscle contraction.
- This is according to strength, duration and speed + level of complexity between training sessions.

Specificity

- Everything is carried out according to the style of play (the game model) adopted by the team.

The principle of **Horizontal Alternation in Specificity** aims to highlight the importance and relevance that the physical dimension plays in the Tactical Periodization approach, and avoid the misconception that the physical dimension is forgotten and untrained.

As we know, the physical dimension has traditionally been the top priority in football, with everything being planned based on physical performance. Such assumptions are based on the delayed effect of training loads, with the aim being to achieve (physical) peaks in performances for a certain period of the season and gain a significant advantage over the opposition. This planning begins before the season starts and already considers semi-finals and finals, yet it forgets that the team needs to win several matches to get there.

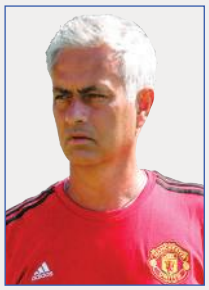
Thus, Mourinho's periodization describes a pattern of operation along time. On one hand, this pattern shows the major constant concerns about the style of play structured in an increasingly complex logic. This is then enhanced by alternating muscle dominant contractions—such as varying the variables of strength, duration and speed—being developed in training sessions more or less discontinuously. Regarding specificity (principles of play), this is present from the first to the last day of practice.

This alternation is very relevant to the whole training process, because it involves switching the dominant pattern of muscular contraction and the level of complexity for the principles of play between sessions. This therefore occurs along the week and not between the practices of each training session, ensuring that the team trains in specificity, while avoiding overtraining.

This principle advocates the need for horizontal alternation (over the days of the week) for the dominant types of muscle contraction according to differences in strength, duration and speed, but never forgetting the team's specific style of play.

As a result, no two days in the week have the same demands, giving time for the structures already trained to regenerate (Tamarit, 2007).

PRINCIPLE OF PERFORMANCE STABILISATION (HORIZONTAL ALTERNATION IN SPECIFICITY)



"I do not want my team to have peak performances. I do not want my team to swing performance. Rather than that, I prefer to keep high levels of performance always. This is because to me, there aren't periods or games more important than others. We need to win every game. In Benfica, Leiria, Porto and Chelsea. How to do it? After the second week (micro-cycle) of the season, all micro-cycles are basically the same until the end of the season, both in terms of principles and objectives and in tactical-technical and physical terms."

José Mourinho (Resende et al., 2006)

The concept of performance from a conventional viewpoint is normally based on a set of quantitative criteria that take the physiological dimension as a guide. Planning and periodization in football has to place vital importance on the concept of ***"Performance Stabilisation"*** to meet the needs of the long competitive period. From this perspective, being fit means playing well, and playing well means carrying out the on-field duties in accordance with the intended game model. Underpinning this concept of collective and individual performance is the organisation of the team, which is the fundamental objective. Thus, what really matters is for a team to regularly demonstrate quality play, aside from minor fluctuations, to guarantee consistent results.

Stabilising at the level of optimum performance is achieved by implementing and maintaining the standard weekly plan ***(see Figure 'Interaction Between Horizontal Alternation & Performance Stabilisation Principles' on the next page)***.

Three Levels of Horizontal Alternation

1. Relationship between main principles, sub-principles and sub-sub-principles of play

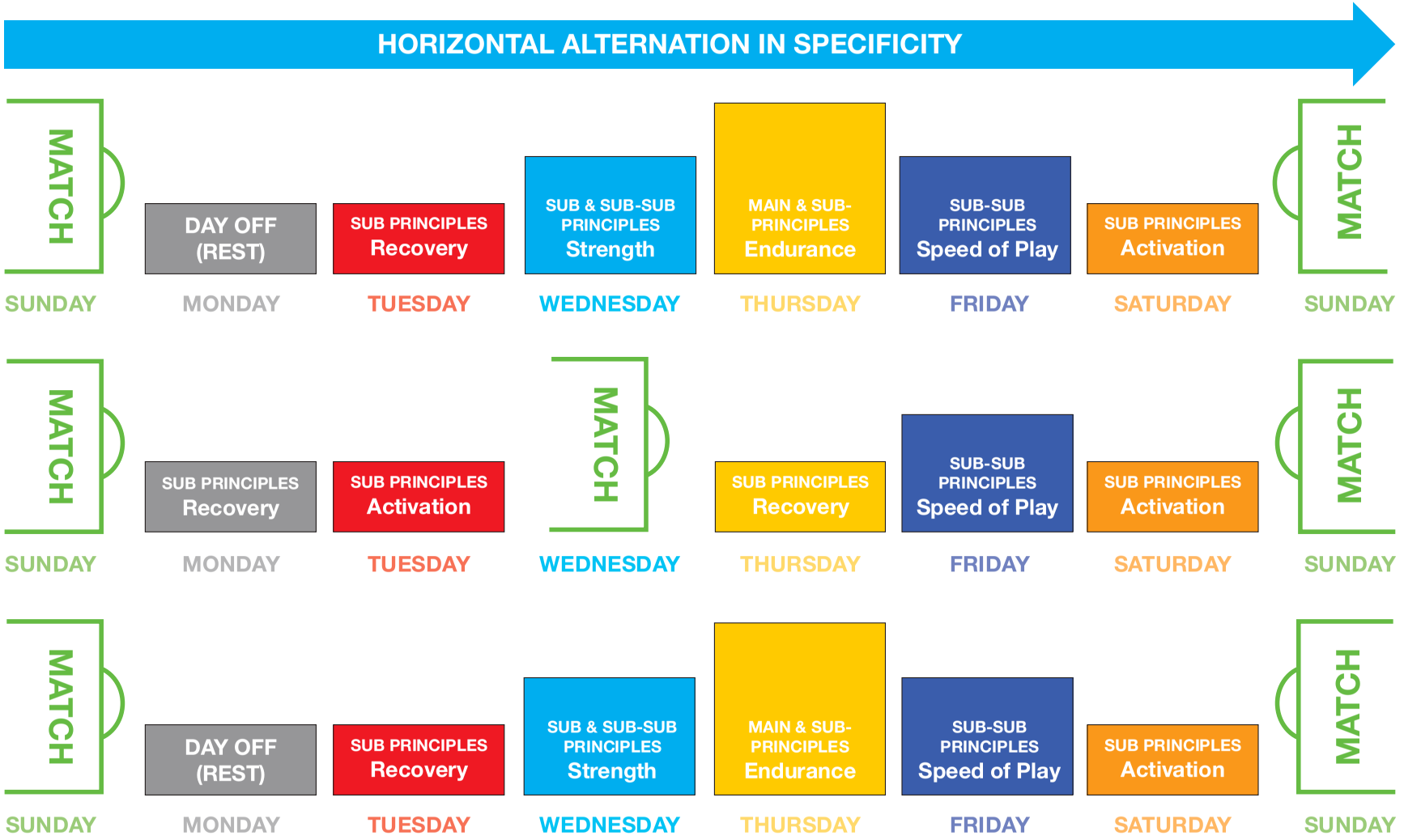
2. Alternation of conditional component (strength, endurance, speed of play)

3. Load-recovery dynamic pattern

MAINTAINING LOAD DYNAMICS ALONG THE WEEKS

INTERACTION BETWEEN HORIZONTAL ALTERNATION & PERFORMANCE STABILISATION PRINCIPLES

(adapted from Oliveira, G. 2007)



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PERFORMANCE STABILISATION: CONSISTENT WEEKLY TRAINING

With such a plan, the weekly dynamic in terms of training content, recovery schemes and the number and length of training units remain almost invariable through the season. Football performance and training cannot be separated from the competition and the game. It must be translated in terms of play using a quality over quantity approach, always working on attacking and defensive actions and the dynamics that allow the connection between these two phases. By working this way, the methodological *Principle of Stabilisation* is respected.

"The structure of our weekly plan and what we do each day is not only related to the tactical objectives but also to the physical capacity we want to prioritise, as I have to take into account aspects such as recovery, particularly with regard to the proximity of the next game and the load from the previous one. So on a given day (normally Tuesday) tactical and technical work focuses more on the recovery from the last game. The following one (Wednesday) is what I call "technical strength" and so on."

(**José Mourinho,** quoted by Oliveira et al., 2006)

The above methodological principle is fundamental in the Tactical Periodization approach. It works as a guide to a hierarchical build up our style of play and its principles of play. This is a necessary concern when maintaining a regular weekly pattern that respects the alternating demands of training and recovery (Oliveira et al., 2006).

This brings us to the area of load dynamics, where Bondarchuk (1988) argues for a very high percentage of specific, high-intensity and constant-volume practices over the entire season. According to this view, Court (1992) stresses that specific practices only produce positive results if applied at high intensity throughout the entire season. Additionally, Oliveira et al. (2006) reports that recovery takes place by switching the dominant pattern of muscle contraction, making training sessions more or less discontinuous throughout the week (horizontal alternation), but always according to the principle of specificity.

These authors conclude that to optimise content distribution among different training units, we need to apply the *Principle of Complex Progression* and *Horizontal Alternation in Specificity* while always considering the "physical" and "mental-emotional" recovery. **The term "horizontal" is used because the alternation takes place throughout the week, rather than during the training unit**. Throughout the week, making our style of play operational is always the main objective, but how we approach it will differ.

José Mourinho uses the physical dimension in his weekly pattern to calibrate the relationship between load and recovery. However, he states, "Daily concerns are directed to making our game model operational. However, the structure of the training session and what to do each day is related not only to tactical objectives but also to the physical regime to be used." (**José Mourinho**, 2006; cit. by Oliveira et al. 2006: 108)

Along with prioritising the different principles of our style of play, the optimal relationship with alternating the different patterns of performance-recovery must be maintained. The structure of the weekly standard pattern is designed to comply with the Principle of Performance Stabilisation (Horizontal Alternation in Specificity) and the Principle of Complex Progression, with the overall aim of conveniently managing mental, emotional, physical performance and recovery.

FULL SEASON PERFORMANCE, NOT JUST PEAK PERFORMANCES

The concept of performance in team sports is linked to the way of playing and its principles, a particular and specific structure of play. So performance is derived from the continuous expression of regular actions, which the team uses to express and show its quality and identity (Faria, 1999).

According to Silva (in Faria, 1999), planning and periodization in team sports is vitally important to the concept of performance stabilisation because of long competitive periods. As we saw earlier, Mourinho dismisses the concept of isolated performance conditioning. For him, fitness is being able to play well according to the intended game model. The basis of collective and individual performance is the team's organisation, and this is the fundamental objective to maintain. Stabilising on a level of optimum performance is achieved by implementing and maintaining a standard weekly plan. Thus, over time, the weekly dynamic of training content remains stable in terms of managing recovery and the number and length of training units. By working this way, the methodological *Principle of Stabilisation* is respected.

As mentioned, from a conventional point of view, the concept of sports performance is normally based on a set of quantitative criteria based on physical dimensions. In these approaches, the performance process is characterised by three main stages (Matvéiev, 1986):

1. **Learning**
2. **Retention**
3. **Temporary Decay**

Full Season Performance (No 'Peak Performances')

Tactical Periodization is built around competition, and it completely rethinks this concept, because in football, competition takes place over nine months.

If success depends on good results, every game is important to a high performance team, so it is difficult to prioritise some games over others. The competition calendar demands consistent performance for a team to always win, so talking about "peak performances" is a methodological mistake. As explained before, Mourinho (2007) believes the key notion is "performance stabilisation," and this is directly related to a regular organisation of the team.

"We believe in training at high intensity from the first to the last day and not in peak performances."

Therefore, what really matters is for the team to regularly demonstrate a quality of play, minor fluctuations aside, and guarantee consistent results.

José Mourinho adds about this, "Only at the tactical-technical level are we going to change the contents to be enhanced, always depending on the difficulties experienced in the previous game and what we expect to face in the next one. But, when talking about the physical dimension, which is the one more associated with conventional periodization, the objectives are the same from the second to the last micro cycle.

The first micro-cycle is what we call adaptive; we aim just to readjust to the specific demands of the game. From the second week, we plan cycles that reoccur weekly. Therefore, micro-cycles are built only in a weekly base. In terms of the physical dimension, the demands are the same across the months. We just change these weekly patterns depending on the number of games we have during the week (one or two matches).

The "Weekly Standard Pattern" is always similar. They are not copies but rather reflections from one to another, showing subtle differences in terms of tactical objectives. So the "morfo-cycles" [a term specific to tactical periodization] are virtually identical in terms of structure and objectives, but modified in terms of tactical contents. This makes the concept of stability emerge. Therefore, the standardisation of the planning process is what allows performance stabilisation."

When Mourinho talks about the concept of stabilisation, he also refers to the ***Principle of Systematic Repetition*** and the importance of learning new habits in order to create a collective understanding. As we have seen, football performance must be translatable in terms of play, a quality instead of quantity approach, always working on attacking and defensive actions, and the dynamics that allow these two phases to connect.

CREATING A GAME CULTURE

CREATING A GAME CULTURE THROUGH A SPECIFIC TRAINING MODEL

Culture is not physical; it is not formed only by things, people, actions or emotions. It is rather a way of organising all these factors. It is the shape of things that people have in their minds, models of how they perceive, how they relate, and how they interpret. (Goodenough, W. 1957)

When the players of a team have consistently mastered a given set of habits that support a particular way of playing, we can say they have a culture of play, an identity.

Creating a Culture for a Specific Way of Playing

Together with the content from the previous chapters, we can now summarise some topics. Here we show the crucial and suitable habits for players to learn, and consequently, create a culture related to their specific way of playing:

- There must be a "space" where the desired action can appear (i.e., conditioned and specific practices).
- The subjects involved in the learning process (the players) must be aware of the actions involved in learning situations (the practices) in order to direct the "focus" of their brains and regulate their emotions.
- Until these actions are learned (i.e., they become habits), they must be repeated systematically for a certain amount of time.
- The higher the quality of this systematisation, according to the hierarchical organisation (ordering by importance) of the principles of play, the more efficient the process will be.
- The “unconscious mechanisms" (including emotions) allow players to make faster and more effective decisions when modelled by systematic repetition.
- Emotions play a crucial role in a player’s concentration while learning, due to physical markers, as well as promoting the formation of unconscious intentions that are strongly related to decision-making processes.
- After a principle of play is learned, it must be maintained to prevent it from regressing.

Tactical Culture

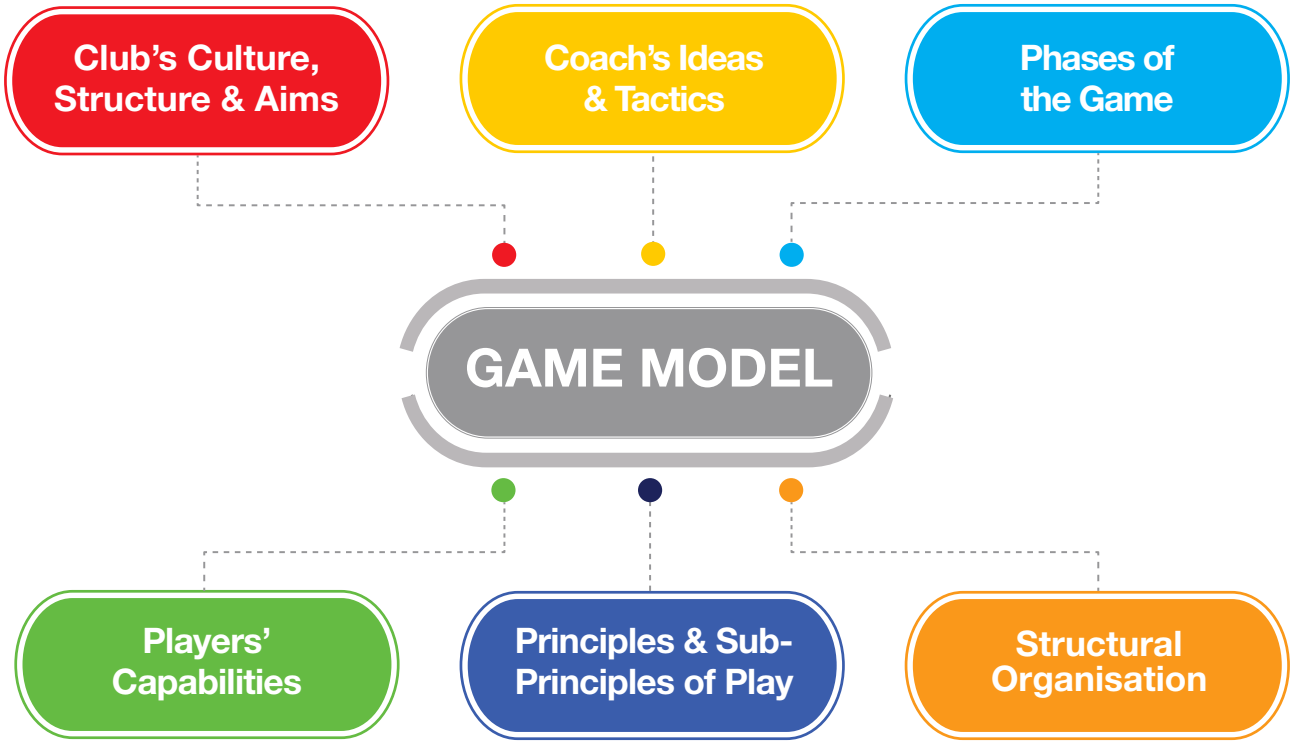
Following Faria (cit. By Resende, 2002), to successfully create a tactical culture, you need to have a common language with rules and principles, a culture of play or a game model. It is essential to understand that this can be done only through the game.

This requires training situations that allow the players to identify with the way we want them to perform in competitive matches. This can only be achieved through specific training, according to our game model.

CHAPTER 4
THE GAME MODEL

THE GAME MODEL: INTRODUCTION

Factors to Take into Account for Designing a Game Model (Adapted from Oliveira, G. 2007)



"To me, the most important aspect in my teams is to have a defined game model, a set of principles that provides organisation. Therefore, from the first day, our attention is directed to achieving that." (**José Mourinho**, J. in Gaiteiro, 2006)

Models are created based on their creators' interpretations of reality (Le Moigne, 1990). They result from the need to make sense of the complex interactions between the different elements of a system.

In the game of football, there are specific features, such as the decision making of players. Their decisions cannot be coincidental, but rather based on certain principles that will make the team act according to an internal logic. Expressing this idea, Frade (2003) states that the game takes place in a "know-how field". However, this know-how is better supported when there is a conscious understanding of the interactions within the team. Thus, tactical awareness (knowing what to do) allows the synchronisation of thoughts between the elements of a team. A football team is a micro-society that has its own culture, language, rules and identity, so it must be understood and addressed from a complex perspective. When constructing a game model for a team, coaches should consider several factors that operate within given specific contexts, with each factor being equally important ***(see Figure above)***.

A key aspect when building a game model is the style of play the coach wants in the different phases of the game. It is imperative for players to know exactly what they have to do during every moment of a match. The coach wants certain tactical actions and patterns to show during the game, within the collective (whole team), intersectorial (e.g., Defenders and midfielders), sectorial (e.g., Defenders) and individual actions.

The game model consists of principles, sub-principles, and sub-sub-principles of play that are connected and represent the different phases of the game (Oliveira, 2003). The different principles and phases of the game must be compatible (some actions may be incompatible). These actions and patterns will then express a collective dynamic action and reveal a specific playing identity, which could be called a functional organisation.

THE FOUR PHASES OF THE GAME

The coach's ideas need to be represented in every phase of the game, as well as in the relationships between them. These four phases are the defensive phase, the attacking phase, the transition from attack to defence and the transition from defence to attack. These four phases need to be understood as a whole, because they occur in a mutually dependent relationship. Perceiving the game as four connected and complementary phases reduces the complexity and helps us to organise the desirable actions we want the players to display.

Attacking Phase

- Characterised by the attitudes of the team when they have possession of the ball.
- How the team build up play with combination play and movement.
- How the team prepare and create opportunities for scoring a goal.

Transition from Attack to Defence

- The moment a team loses the ball to their opponents, we enter the transition from attack to defence.
- Characterised by the team's actions just after losing possession - changing from an attacking attitude to a defensive attitude.

Defensive Phase

- Characterised by the team's attitudes when they don't have possession.
- The team needs to be well organised with good positioning and team shape, to prevent the opposition from creating scoring opportunities.

Transition from Defence to Attack

- The moment a team wins the ball from their opponents, we enter the transition from defence to attack (positive transition).
- Characterised by the attacking actions that should be adopted just after gaining possession.

COMBINING THE FOUR PHASES AND DOMINATING GAMES WITH "TOTAL FOOTBALL"

The interpretation of the game's dynamics as four integrated phases has been greatly influenced by **Rinus Michels** and his "Total Football" approach, as well as by his followers, such as **Johan Cruyff** and **Van Gaal** (Sousa, 2009). This way of playing resulted from how they wanted to move the ball to the opponent's goal. According to Michels (2001), the "Total Football" approach tries to open up the opponent's defensive structure by using constant mobility, frequently changing positions, and always being willing to gain possession of the ball.

Getting to the opponent's goal is a natural consequence of the game's objective, so we can infer that **the four phases approach came from a philosophy built around the attacking phase**. In other words, the way this phase is addressed influences the dynamics of all the other phases. Based on this idea and this attacking style, high pressing in the opposition's half (the areas where the team will probably lose the ball more often) resulted from the immediate desire of the team to regain possession after losing it (the transition from attack to defence).

When it was not possible to win the ball back immediately, the team would organise defensively (defensive phase). As soon as the ball was recovered, the first objective would be to take advantage of the opponent's disorganisation by playing deep (transition from defence to attack). It was therefore urgent to interpret the transitions and the dynamic game, enhancing the "spatial dimension" and relating it to the relative organisation/disorganisation of the teams.

When proposing such an "attacking philosophy", it is important to understand key concepts. For example, ball circulation will clearly differ as the team approaches their opponent's goal, because the attackers will tend to encounter greater resistance and more aggressive defence. Ball circulation is therefore influenced and constrained by the spaces in which a team plays. By understanding this, a team can control the spaces where it wants to move the ball, hindering its opponent's use of this space in the process. Controlling the game therefore appears to be associated with a team's ability to play, both with and without the ball, in the desired spaces.

How a team combines domination and control of a game can take different forms. A team can control a game without dominating it, and it can dominate a game without controlling it. Sometimes, it may neither control nor dominate the game, but other times it may control the game whilst also dominating it. Our philosophy prefers the final option, because we want to control the game through possession. If we have the ball, the opponent does not, so we are closer to scoring. However, just because we want to control the game through possession doesn't mean there is no control in the other phases. We think it is actually easier to control a game through attacking organisation, rather than through defensive organisation, but we must also be able to control the game in the other phases. For example, we need to keep our defensive balance when we have possession, as well as use the correct actions after losing the ball, both collectively and individually. Therefore, controlling the game involves mastering the game in all its aspects, in all its actions, and in all areas of the pitch.

The complexity of the game can be very high and prevent us from keeping our block as high as we would like to. We then need to play in a middle block or, in some games, with the team defending deeper (i.e., a low block), so the different distributions of the team and the different blocks require that we train different types of collective actions.

Due to the enhanced defensive organisation of teams in modern football, the transition phases have become vital. For example, in the transition from defence to attack, there is an action pattern where after winning the ball, the first intention is to quickly probe for defensive vulnerabilities in the opponent. Since not all teams become disorganised after losing the ball, and since not all are slow to reorganise, we cannot establish any cause-effect relationships, because this would compromise the whole dynamic of the game. In this sense, we need to identify the principles that govern the game, even off the ball, such as identifying areas where the team intends to win the ball back and establishing principles like balance. This is how the attacking phases merge with the defensive ones and vice versa.

As mentioned before, one key aspect of managing space in phases with the ball is related to the positioning of the block. An "attacking philosophy" of play requires high levels of ball possession in the opponent's half, but you also need to win the ball as often and as quickly as possible.

A key issue linking the attacking and defensive phases is the principle of balance. On winning the ball, we need to "prepare" the next action in case we give it away. This is vital to limiting the opponent's counter attack options, by maintaining numerical superiority in our defensive line and marking the opposing forwards.

STRUCTURAL ORGANISATION (SYSTEM OF PLAY)

Structural Organisation: Concept that matches with the so-called "system of play formation," so it refers to the initial positioning of the players on the pitch. The structural organisation is just a theoretical and fixed formation (e.g. 4-3-3, 4-4-2, 3-4-3, 3-5-2).

Although the structure is just a fixed spatial shape, it can play an important role in encouraging or constraining desired actions. For instance, if good levels of ball possession and circulation are necessary for players to constantly create diagonal angles, triangles and "diamonds" among themselves, some structural organisations can enhance these actions more than others (e.g., Structures with a greater number of lines, both across and lengthwise). Therefore, when choosing a formation, it is important to realise that these structures can have a positive or negative impact on our functional organisation.

Choosing a Formation

When deciding the formation to adopt, **it is important to consider various factors, such as the principles of play, the functional organisation and the capabilities and characteristics of the players** (Guilherme Oliveira, 2003). We therefore need to establish which formation will enhance the team's characteristics. The same author concludes that a team can train and use a variety of formations, because these structures do not affect the interactions that should exist between our functional organisation and our players' capabilities. In this sense, Garganta (1997) adds that the concept of organisation largely transcends the structural dimension (a static concept), because it refers mainly to the functional dimension (a dynamic concept). This is because during the game, the players are constantly moving in response to the interactions between teammates and opponents.

As mentioned already, there is a close relationship between the structure and principles of play. **José Mourinho** (2003) exemplifies this, "AC Milan plays with three lines in a flat 4-4-2 formation, and they try to pressure the opponent in width. Our team plays in a 2-2-1-2-1-2 formation, and we prefer to pressure our opponents in depth."

Therefore, the way we want to defend or to attack, according to the principles of play, should be connected with the structure used. Although this structure is a static organisation, as said before, it can be important in enhancing or constraining the desired actions.

The Interaction Between the Structure and the Principles of Play

Regarding the interaction between the structure and the principles of play - if we wanted, for example, our team to have high percentages of ball possession, a fundamental consideration would be the positions of the players on the pitch. Assuming that being well positioned with the ball means having as many passing options as possible, some structures will enhance these actions more than others.

Structures with a greater number of lines allow players to occupy the entire width of the field and make many diagonal lines between each other in case they choose to defend high up the pitch. These structures with a greater number of lines are more desirable than other ones, because they allow players to always have cover without creating gaps between sectors, which could then easily be exploited by the opposition.

Regarding the relationship between structures and the characteristics and positioning of the players, problems arise at another level. Suppose that a coach has a team whose best players are the centre forward and two wingers (when playing in their specific positions), but the coach wants to play in a diamond 4-4-2 formation. This structure does not have wingers, so those players will need to adapt to a new position and functions, and this could limit their effectiveness. In this particular case, the coach can get maximum performance from these players by using a structure that enhances the position of his wingers and centre forward, as well as the interactions between them, like the 4-3-3 formation.

ATTACKING PASSING LINES WITH DIFFERENT SYSTEMS OF PLAY (adapted from Oliveira, G., 2007)

Creating Passing Angles and Maximising Space for Our Attacking Philosophy

A key attacking concept in an attacking philosophy is the constant formation of several triangle and diamond shapes, regardless of the chosen formation. These triangles and diamonds enable an optimal coverage of the space and a greater number of passing lines, both in depth and width.

Our aim is to ensure a pattern with constant movement of the ball. This dynamic is created in the system, because the structure is merely static, so the dynamic and the principles within the structure are more important than the structure itself.

These 3 formations shown in the diagrams (4-3-3, 4-4-2 with diamond and 3-4-3) promote structures (diamonds and triangles) and dynamics that, help the appearance of the main principles of play from our game model in all four phases of the game. This is done by creating several transversal (horizontal) and longitudinal (vertical) lines:

Attacking

Enhancing ball possession and high pace ball circulation through positional play and the creation of multiple passing lanes.

Transition from Attack to Defence

Enhancing pressing movements of the ball carrier and the space in and around the ball.

Defending

Enhancing the possibility to win the ball by directing and pressing opponents, forcing them to make mistakes through effective zonal defending, covering, closing passing lanes and pressing the ball carrier.

Transition from Defence to Attack

Taking advantage of the opponent's defensive disorganisation by quickly moving the ball "outside the pressure zone" and attack quickly to score.

Attacking Representation: Shape & Passing Lines "4-3-3", "4-4-2 with Diamond" & "3-4-3"

LEVELS OF STRUCTURAL ORGANISATION

(adapted from Oliveira, G., 2007)

When understanding the game as a complex system and following the ideas of Guilherme Oliveira (2003), we can differentiate between four levels of complexity:

1. **Individual** (illustrated in the 'Structural Organisation: Individual Level' diagram below)
2. **Sectorial & Group** (actions involving players from the same line or small groups of 2 or 3 players from different lines)
3. **Intersectorial** (relationships between the sectors)
4. **Collective** (relative to the entire team). When we take the number of interactions as an indicator of complexity, it increases from the individual to the collective levels of organisation.

These levels of organisation are related to the relationships and interactions that are enhanced or limited by the chosen structure (formation). Different structures provide different levels of organisation, with implications for individual actions and consequently for the quality of the collective play. As we saw earlier, the positional play structure goes beyond the positioning of the players on the pitch, because it depends on its function within the collective dynamic.

On the other hand, we have stressed that the structure is something that appears "on paper," because it is the primary reference for positioning the players according to their functions, and our way of playing depends on the dynamics imposed. Therefore, the principles of play are enhanced by the structure and its dynamics.

This presented systematisation helps to organise and structure the different interactions among the players. After properly defining the phases of the game, it is imperative that players learn exactly what they need to do during every phase and the transition from one phase to another. In this sense, other key aspects in the construction of a game model are its principles and sub-principles.

Structural Organisation Level I: Individual

- Sub-sub-principles of play.
- Roles and responsibilities for each position in each phase of the game.
- **Attack Example**: Body shape key to create "positional advantage."
- **Defensive Transition Example**: Change from attacking to defensive attitude.
- **Defence Example**: Pressing at speed with the correct angles.
- **Attacking Transition Example**: Ensuring successful first pass - "play easy."

Structural Organisation Level 2: Sectorial & Group

- Sub-sub-principles of play and sub-principles of play.
- Roles and responsibilities for each line in each phase of the game.
- **Attack Example**: Overlapping runs (outside/inside).
- **Defensive Transition Example**: Communicating to press as unit & cover.
- **Defence Example**: Cover.
- **Attacking Transition Example**: Opening passing lines in width & depth (spread out).

- This second diagram shows a different way for how the team could be divided into sectors or groups.
- Roles and responsibilities for each small group of 2-3 players.

Structural Organisation Level 3: Intersectorial

- Sub and main principles of play.
- Roles and responsibilities involving 2 or more lines in each phase of the game.
- **Attack Example**: Playing forward (to the next sector line).
- **Defensive Transition Example**: Stop the opposition playing out of "pressure zone."
- **Defence Example**: Compactness.
- **Attacking Transition Example**: Playing forward (without risk) if possible.

- This second diagram shows a different way for how the team could have relationships between the sectors.

Structural Organisation Level 4: Collective

- Main principles of play.
- Roles and responsibilities for the whole team in each phase of the game.
- **Attack Example**: Ball possession and high speed ball circulation.
- **Defensive Transition Example**: Stop opposition playing "inside our team" (in between the lines).
- **Defence Example**: Make play predictable - force play to outside or inside channels.
- **Attacking Transition Example**: Circulate ball across 3 vertical channels (switching play).

FUNCTIONAL ORGANISATION

Although we consider the choice of the structural organisation of a team (formation) to be important, the most crucial aspect is its dynamic, which you can create through the training process.

According to the fluidity by which the game phases happen, it is essential to ensure a balance in the spatial distribution of the pitch at all times and apply a reference structure that will shape the dynamics of the game. This structure sets the initial positions for the players and defines how they will take on its basic functions, whether attacking or defending (Michels 2001, Van Gaal, 2006 cited by Sousa, 2009).

The actions and patterns we want our team to express during the game will, when applied, display a collective dynamic action that represents a certain identity, and this is called a **Functional Organisation**.

Following this idea, Guilherme Oliveira (2003) states that from Tactical Periodization's point of view, "Player and team actions, and patterns are the consequences of an order and an organisation. This order should never induce individual limitations regarding creativity."

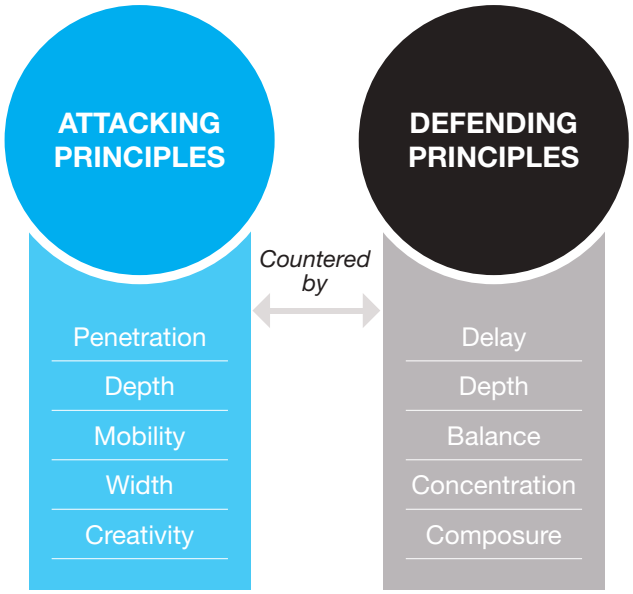
It is essential for players to create new solutions within the proposed framework of the coach. In other words, the coach sets the scenes for what he knows can potentially happen, but he doesn't know what the exact details will be.

PRINCIPLES OF PLAY AND THE GAME MODEL

We practice our game model, and we practice our principles and sub-principles of play. The players have to adapt their ideas through a common goal in order to establish the same actions throughout the team. We work exclusively on game situations related to our way of playing. We do our weekly planning to create habits in order to maintain high levels of performance, which often translates into "playing well" (Mourinho, 2005).

According to **Carlos Queiroz** (1983), the fundamental principles of play "are the rules which help the players to run and coordinate their activities (individually and collectively) during the different phases of the game." Therefore, they are rules of action that support the basic objectives of football. According to Queiroz, these fundamental principles comprise two kinds of principles. Firstly, we have the **General Principles**, which are the general action requirements, and secondly the **Specific Principles**, which are related to the attacking and defensive phases. Both general and specific principles are inherent to the game, regardless of the style of play.

Specific Principles of Play



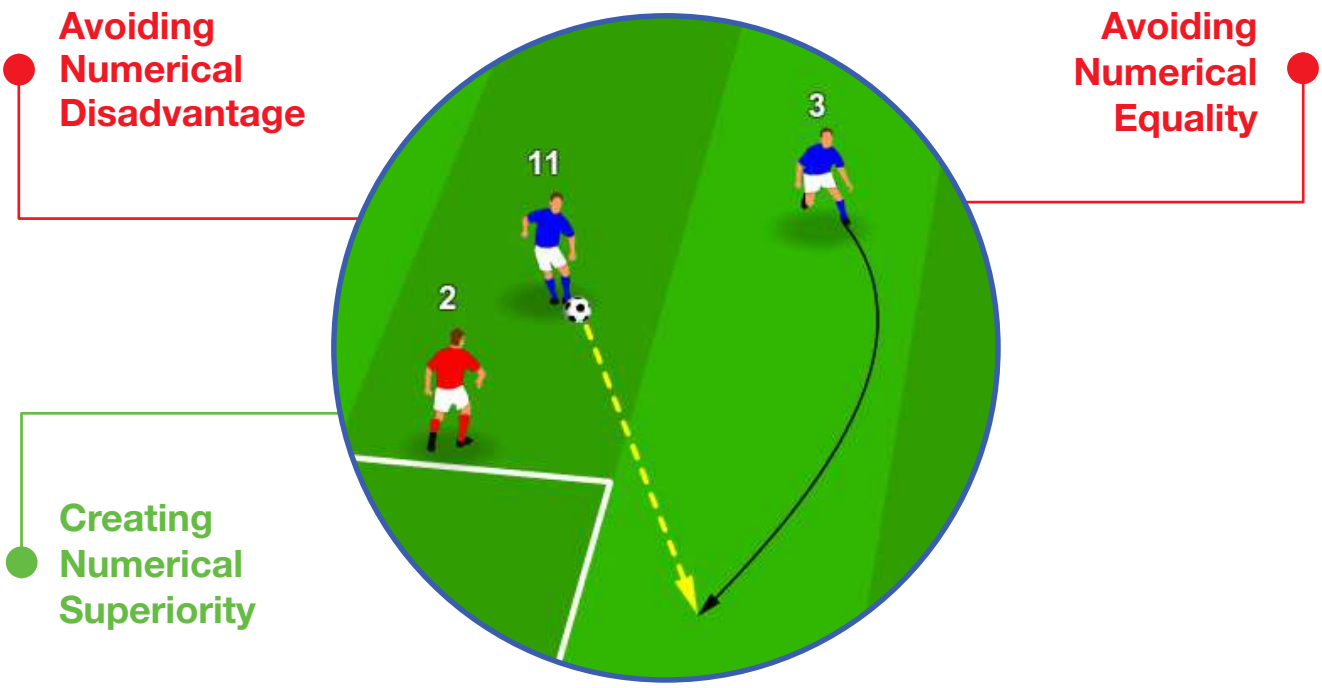
The **Attacking Principles** can be briefly defined as:

- **Penetration:** Advancing the ball past opposing players by shooting, dribbling, running, passing or exploiting 2 v 1 situations.
- **Depth:** Supporting teammates by reading the game, providing strong communication, creating safe options and opportunities for advancement, and seeking to gain numerical advantages in certain areas of the pitch.
- **Mobility:** Creating attacking opportunities through changes in position, movements off the ball, and creating numerical advantages in certain areas of the pitch.
- **Width:** Attacking on a broad front to stretch the opposition's defence and create space, isolating defenders into 1 v 1 situations, and creating opportunities for through balls.
- **Creativity:** Individual flair in the form of take-ons, overlaps, diagonal runs and blind side runs.

The **Defensive Principles** can be briefly defined as:

- **Delay:** Slowing down the attack by closing the gaps and denying space, allowing the defence to organise itself.
- **Depth:** Assist the defence by providing strong communication, reading the attack and creating a numerical superiority.
- **Balance:** Reading the attack and providing an equal or greater number of defenders than attackers at the point of attack, while simultaneously covering the vital area near the goal.
- **Concentration:** Compressing or restricting the attack into a confined area, making it more predictable and easier to defend against.
- **Composure:** Showing the patience to delay and wait for support and having the discipline to play ball-side or goal-side to deny shooting opportunities.

GENERAL AND SPECIFIC PRINCIPLES OF PLAY



The General Principles include avoiding numerically equal or inferior situations and creating numerical superiorities. However, there are many different ways to perform a given general or specific principle, so Guillerme Oliveira (2003) states that we can add a third type of principle of play:

The Specific Principles of the Game Model

These principles allow our team to perform certain motor actions and patterns on an individual, sectorial, intersectorial and collective scale. They are specifically designed according to our style of play and identity as a team. Obviously, these principles should always be consistent with the fundamental principles of play.

The specific principles of the game model have different levels of complexity. In Tactical Periodization terminology, we use the following terms:

- **Main Principles of Play** relate to collective actions.
- **Sub-Principles of Play** relate to intersectorial and sectorial actions.
- **Sub-Sub-Principles of Play** relate to individual actions.

Thus, the game model consists of main principles, sub-principles and sub-sub-principles, which together represent the different phases of the game. These connect with each other to express a functional organisation of their own, revealing the identity of a team (Guilherme Oliveira, 2003).

In this sense, it is essential for the coach to know what he wants to happen in each phase of the game. To do so, he first must define a set of actions and the coordination between them, because this will allow the team to show its uniqueness.

When defined, these principles, sub-principles and sub-sub-principles should be clearly presented to the players, so everyone clearly understands the way they need to play. To get them to understand the same thing and act toward the same purpose (at the same time) is no simple task and takes time. Therefore, it is essential that the players have the will to learn, and the coach must convince the players to work toward a common project and establish a common language.

At this point, it is worth mentioning that the principles are "open rules," so they merely guide players to act in a coordinated manner, while always respecting a player's creativity and freedom to make decisions.

COMPATIBILITY BETWEEN THE PRINCIPLES OF PLAY AND THE PHASES OF THE GAME

The Importance of Compatibility

The compatibility of the principles during the different phases of the game is an extremely important factor to consider when designing the game model.

Actions in different phases can sometimes be potentially incompatible. For instance, during the attacking phase, we want to have long-lasting ball possession in order to disrupt the opposition's defensive structure.

Now, a key to achieving this is to have good positional play (a main principle). In other words, for the team to move the ball with quality and pace, the players must always be well positioned. However, if the coach asks the players to apply a man-to-man defence during the defensive phase, the players will often leave their areas of competence, and once they win the ball back, they will be poorly positioned and unable to move the ball properly. These mismatched actions will clearly hinder the quality of the team's game.

As mentioned in previous chapters, breaking down and prioritising principles also plays an important role in developing a game model. When we want a team to master a certain pattern of play (the main principle), it needs to be dismantled into smaller pieces or actions (sub-principles and sub-sub-principles).

These sub-principles and sub-sub-principles will interact hierarchically (ordering by importance) with the original main pattern.

Compatibility Example

For instance, during the transition from defence to attack, our first objective is to avoid the opposition regaining possession.

Therefore, we may consider it a sub-principle to first get the ball out of the pressure zone. Once we achieve this, we will have two options:

1. The first option is to play one or two safety passes (i.e., side or back passes) to buy the time needed to spread our team out (in depth and width), while entering into our attacking phase.
2. The other option is to play deep (direct and into the space behind the opposition) in order to take advantage of the opposition's momentary disorganisation and try to counter attack them quickly.

Therefore, we have the following:

- **A Main Principle** (moving the ball out of the pressure zone)
- **Two Possible Sub-Principles** (ensuring we keep possession of the ball or counter attacking)

Depending on the option (sub-principle) we prioritise, the dynamics of our transitions will be completely different, and as a result, our game model will have a particular configuration.

Therefore, we can see how the breaking down of our principles of play and the hierarchical organisation of our principles of play are crucial in creating the desired game model.

THE ROLE OF THE PLAYERS IN THE GAME MODEL

A vital aspect when building up a game model is the players' knowledge about the game. In other words, the coach must quickly learn the different levels of understanding that his players have about the game, as well as their capabilities and specific characteristics. Players are the main actors in the game, because they are responsible for interpreting the actions that lead the team to play in a certain way.

The coach must be aware of the context and level of players. For example, training senior players is not the same thing as training youth players, much like how training international players is not the same thing as training amateur players. In the same way, training players whose game culture and experiences match the coach's ideas is not the same as coaching players with a different understanding of the game. The coach should therefore take different approaches and strategies to implement his ideas, in order to manage the design and implementation of his game model in the best way possible.

The game model must highlight and enhance the players' best features and capabilities. Therefore, the coach must use strategies that let players recognise the importance of certain actions, because their convictions are also vital when developing a game model. Consequently, **the construction of the game model arises through a process that involves the coach, players and the team itself**. The coach's constant awareness about what they want to happen, both in collective and individual terms, and what is actually happening in the game should drive the training process.

Regarding player characteristics again, they must interact properly with the principles of play and the structure used. An example of this from **José Mourinho** (2003) comes from his time at FC Porto: "The individual characteristics of the players are a very important factor. We have some players who find it easier to press high up the pitch than others, because it matches with their nature. For example, in my team, if we had Maniche and Derlei, we could not pressurise the opponent in the way we want to press." In relation to the principles of play, Mourinho (in Faria, 1999) states, "I explain to players what I would like them to do. I give them choices and make them feel more involved, also letting them create new solutions to the problems that arise from the game."

One criticism that can arise when people analyse the Tactical Periodization approach and its methodological principles, is the misconception about individual development. **It is important to understand that the definition and creation of a clear game model should not be taken to mean that players must act like robots, following a predefined plan. On the contrary, the main purpose of having a clear game model is to reduce players' uncertainty, because this will give them more time to express their creativity.**

According to Frade (Campos, 2007), "There is no training with more individual effects, more individualised, than what tactical periodization proposes, because the primary concern is to select principles of play that consider the characteristics of the players. Moreover, these principles are adopted and modified by the players themselves when acting in certain positions and with certain functions. So, if positions and functions are different and complementary, what we are really doing is individualising training stimulus." Corroborating the above statement, Frade (2003) points out that the game "has to be born first in the players' minds."

It is crucial for the coach to use strategies that let the players recognise the importance of a certain action, because this is the only way their potential quality can be achieved (Guillherme Oliveira, 2006). Players act as drivers for the whole process, and they develop the game model through their convictions and actions.

José Mourinho (in Oliveira et al., 2006) argues that all players should know that in a given game situation, their teammates are trying to make a certain geometrical configuration in a certain position. This knowledge allows them to anticipate the action and think faster and more effectively, both individually and collectively. With this common understanding, players can focus their concerns on their opponents, instead of expending cognitive (mental) resources to establish what their teammates are thinking and doing.

For this to happen, we need to master our positional play based on a set of principles and a certain formation, so each player has a mental map of what the rest of the team is doing in each phase of the game.

CLUB STRUCTURE AND OBJECTIVES

The structure and expectations of the club or federation are important in creating a game model. Coaching a team that can only train two or three times a week is obviously different to coaching a team that can train five days a week. The scope for improvement, both collectively and individually, is also different. In the same way, having a full training pitch or only half a pitch has direct implications on our potential development as a team. The amount of players in a team is also an aspect with important implications. Having twenty-two or thirty players presents completely different situations.

The size of the technical staff can also determine the development and evolution of the game model. If we have twenty-two players and one coach, there is less attention available to the players than when there are two or three coaches. In the second situation, the potential attention that can be given to each player and practice is considerably greater. Consequently, the practice will be carried out with greater quality, both collectively and individually. A greater number of coaches also provides the possibility of dividing the group and potentially making the desired actions appear more often.

Another consideration is the objectives of the club. Different objectives require different ways of looking at competition, and this directly influences both the training process and the way we play.

A team that aims to be champions knows that it needs to always play to win, regardless of the opponent. On the other hand, a team that plays just to avoid relegation does not see all its games alike. These different positions are motivated not just by the different objectives of the teams but ultimately by the quality and quantity of their players. This means the game model of a team is heavily influenced by its objectives.

COUNTRY / CLUB FOOTBALL CULTURE

The cultures of both the country and the club can be regarded as fundamental to creating a successful game model. For instance, a country like Brazil sees the game of football very differently to how the English see it. Different cultures influence how the game is played and consequently how to build a game model. For example, if you coached in Brazil, you would blaze a path of failure if you tried to play direct football, because it goes against everything the Brazilian game stands for. Likewise, instructing an English team to play with a slow tempo, without any aggressiveness or competitiveness, goes against the emotional charge that is expected in the English game.

These cultural characteristics must be considered when setting up a game model. This does not mean that some elements cannot be mixed in. The best examples of such teams are big English clubs like Manchester United, Arsenal, Chelsea and Liverpool, but they always maintain the essence of English football (competitiveness, aggressiveness and honesty).

Club cultures have formed over decades and generations, and they are key to their identities, so when a coach comes to a club, he or she must learn the culture that surrounds the club. For example, if we were training in Italy or Spain, things would be completely different. The cultures of these countries have direct implications on several levels:

- Player's Game Understanding
- Involvement of Supporters
- Impact of the Media

The game model must incorporate all these cultural elements and more.

THE GAME MODEL SHOULD ALWAYS BE EVOLVING

The game model is never finished. When implementing the model, it will provide feedback and indicators that the coach has to decode in order to develop a more evolved model (Frade, 2003).

According to Frade, the specific way of playing that we create and make operational is always a work in progress. However, the main ideas and principles should remain constant, so any new actions should fit with these initial ideas. In this sense, Guilherme Oliveira (2006) states:

Coaches will transmit certain ideas to players about how they want them to play. Then players will receive and interpret these ideas, and finally, these ideas can be rebuilt in the players' solutions. In order to clarify the matter, we can look at an example - imagine that a coach wants his team to have high levels of ball possession. He wants to circulate the ball across the full width of the pitch by using short passing and support play, in order to create spaces to disrupt the opponent's defensive organisation. However, the coach conveys this idea (ball possession via short passes) and then realises that there is a player with an outstanding ability for long passing. The coach can take advantage of this feature, because through that long pass accuracy, the game will become faster. So, he decides to add this principle to his attacking play by alternating short passes and long passes, so the ball may move much faster.

In this example, we see that the coach can change an aspect of the game model without sacrificing its identity. He is just changing a detail to stimulate greater quality and effectiveness. This means modifying the game model is not necessarily restricted to the initially conceived way of playing. This should be a fundamental concept when building up a game model. Frade (1985) adds that the game model is a reference, something you want to achieve, but it should always be reviewed because it is a process that will never be completed.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The construction of a game model arises from a process of interaction between the coach, the players and the team as a whole.

Players are given a set of actions that they should show during competitive matches. The difference in what the coach believes should happen, both individually and collectively, and what actually happens in the game should be the driver of the whole training process. In other words, merging the desired and actual actions should be pursued in both training and competitive matches. This acts as the guiding light for the construction of a game model.

However, it should never have an end, because it must allow creativity and excitement, both individually and collectively, to raise the model to whole new levels. Thus, the game model plays a key role, both in the construction of a style of play (including developing players' individual skills) and as a benchmark to evaluate player and team performance.

As mentioned before, the design of a game model is heavily influenced by the ideas of the coach (Guilherme Oliveira 2004). However, just as important is the capacity of the coach to implement these ideas. It is crucial to maintain compatibility between all the given factors that influence the design of a game model.

CHAPTER 5

TACTICAL ORGANISATION IN THE 4 PHASES OF THE GAME

ATTACKING PHASE

ATTACKING PHASE

Our Philosophy: Dominate the Game

The game model proposed here is built around the idea of having high levels of ball possession in order to dominate the opponent through attack. Our philosophy is to dominate the opponent by keeping the ball, so the attacking phase is the cornerstone of our game model.

The **main objective is to produce attacking patterns that disrupt and unbalance the opposition**. This is needed when the opposition are organised defensively, and to achieve it, we need to create an attacking dynamic with the following characteristics:

- Opening spaces and positional play.
- Preventing the opposition from creating "pressing zones."
- Constantly varying the corridors of play (passing lanes).
- Changing circulation both in width and depth.
- Having positional mobility (exchanging positions).
- Imposing varied rhythms of ball circulation, such as variations in the intensity, type and quality of passes.

These conditions are linked to the general pattern of good positional play, where the team must:

- Open spaces, both in width and depth.
- Have a set of positions, occupying spaces both near and far away from the ball.
- Create a formation with several passing lines (width and depth) and diagonal angles (triangles).

When we have the ball, our aim is to open spaces in width and depth to create favourable conditions that unbalance our opponents. We first need to create the spaces by **"Making the Playing Space Big."** Associated with this idea is the need to have players in all our lines with good passing and receiving technique. Our centre backs and goalkeeper need to be comfortable on the ball, as they are responsible for initiating and leading this principle of ball circulation.

Positional Play

We agree with **José Mourinho** (2003), that **one of the most important factors to ensure movement of the ball is to have "good positional play."** However, it is also important to understand that positional play goes beyond the simple arrangement of players on the pitch (the team shape) - it also refers primarily to their specific functions and capacity to have good body positioning and orientation (**"body shape, playing side on"**).

Diagonal Passing Lines (Triangles)

Thus, a diagonal orientation among players encourages a greater number of lines. This diagonal orientation is also conditioned by the structural organisation (the system of play) and by the players' movements (dynamic diagonals). The constant formation of positional diagonal lines enhances the creation of channels for ball circulation, so it depends on the formation of lines in width and depth. It also depends on the dynamics that players will be able to create.

The dynamic interaction through these triangles enhances certain characteristics of the playing style. This is present not just when we look at the collective level but also at the sectorial and intersectorial levels. By constantly making triangles, we can provide the ball carrier with three passing lines, so his decision-making will be easier and better than if he had only one or two options.

Thus, the concept of creativity appears, because these dynamic triangles allow the player on the ball to always have different options available and the time to create new solutions.

The Sub-Principles of Ball Circulation

Our game model emphasises the importance of the sub-principles related to ball possession, such as varying the channels to create spaces regularly.

The aim/objective is to find gaps and vulnerabilities in the opponent's defensive structure and take advantage in different situations (1 v 1, 2 v 1 and 3 v 1), preventing the opposition from creating pressing zones.

More important than varying the space through which the ball circulates (frequency) is understanding how we do it. We want to do it with great speed, passing the ball with both intensity and good decision-making. Only by circulating the ball with this intensity will we be able to unbalance the opponent and create the spaces we need (finishing spaces) to ultimately score.

However, this intensity in possession does not constantly appear, because the use of varied rhythms in ball circulation is also important e.g. Variations in intensity, type and quality of passes. These variations are related to the technical quality of the players and the collective tactical organisation, so the use of varied rhythms in ball circulation requires players to be able to make good decisions (tactical intelligence).

The Speed of Play

The temporal dimension (speed of play) influences the spatial dimension. The slower we play, the sooner the opponent reaches areas near to the ball, meaning there is less space to play in. Therefore, we need to play quickly to create imbalances in the opposition's defensive organisation, putting both physical and emotional pressure on our opponents.

The opposition will obviously have a greater number of players in the last third, so the spaces there will be smaller and the passing lines will need to be sharper with a higher technical accuracy. When talking about technical capacity, we refer to two types:

1. **On-the-ball:** Passing, receiving, 1 v 1 duels etc.
2. **Off-the-ball:** Runs, support play etc.

Support Play

Proper support play in the midfield is essential to create passing lines/lanes, and the more passing options we create, the easier the decisions will be. As mentioned before, individual creativity arises as part of our collective organisation.

To create these spaces "inside" our opponent's structure, we need to be well positioned in both width and depth and have players supporting the interior lines. This shapes our core geometric configuration, which we describe as dynamic triangles.

Attacking in the Final Third

A crucial moment is when the ball enters the final third as we approach the opponent's goal. In this moment, we need to take some risks in order to create scoring chances. This is not just in individual terms, but also though making runs to create imbalances and open spaces in our opponent's defensive structure. In this situation, the wide channels involve less risk in case we give the ball away - we prepare for the next possible action by protecting and balancing the central channel.

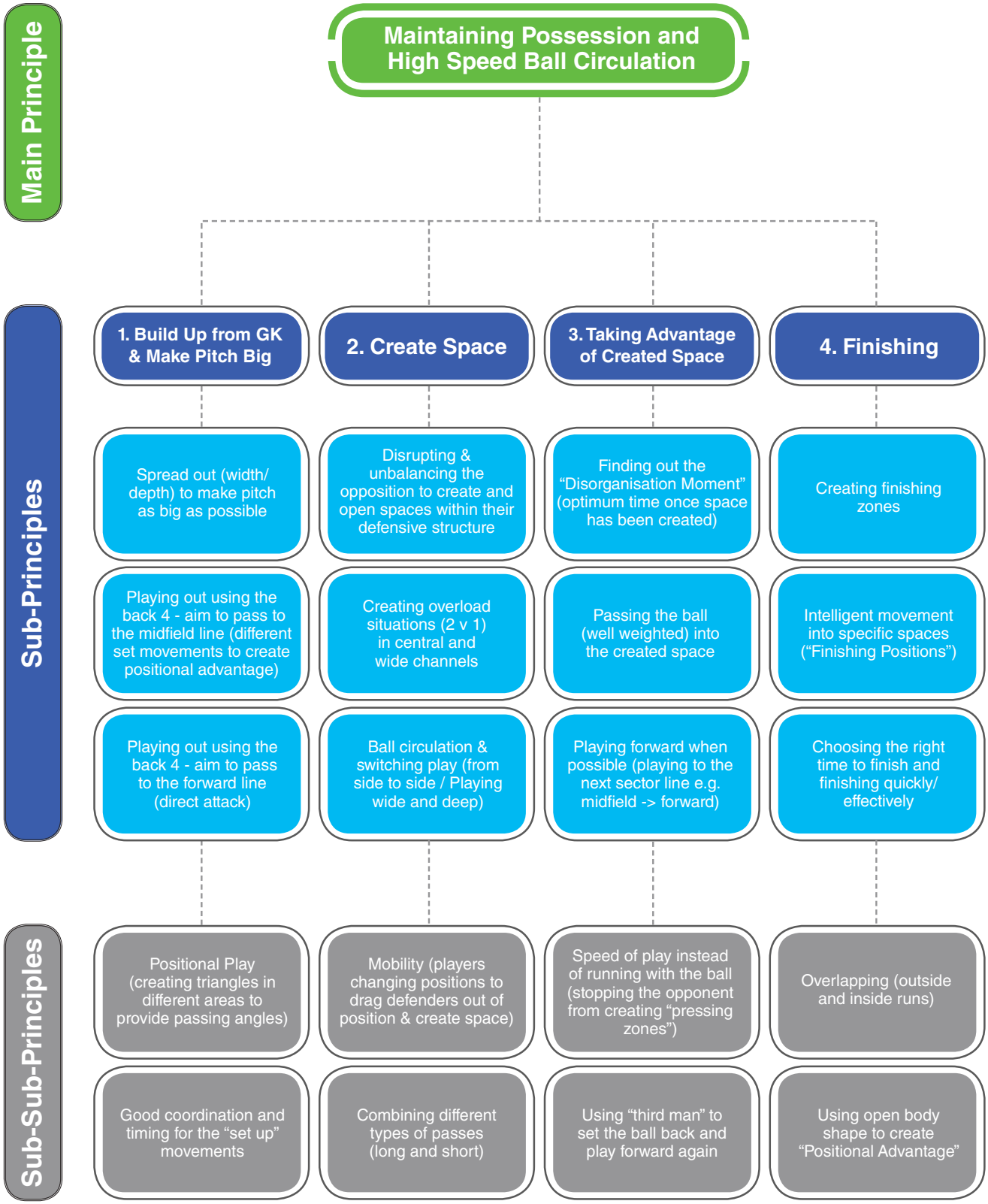
A key consideration when trying to penetrate areas that may provide an attempt on goal is to arrive in force but preserve our defensive balance. Ball possession should always be balanced when we are away from our goal, because this will enable us to control, dominate and win the game.

As "sub-principles" related to the specific areas to finish in, we want to fill three zones inside the box, plus one player outside in case of a second ball, or even a back pass. Our three players inside the box will occupy three different positions:

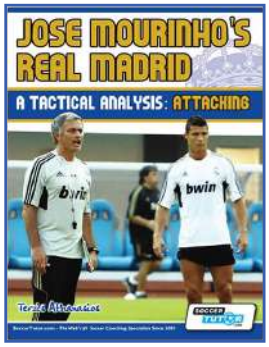
1. **Front Post**
2. **Penalty Spot**
3. **Far Post**

The far post position will be taken by the player who has more time to read the trajectory of the ball and consequently more time to attack it.

PRINCIPLES FOR THE ATTACKING PHASE



JOSÉ MOURINHO ATTACKING PHASE EXAMPLE: SWITCHING PLAY TO THE WEAK SIDE



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The analysis presented is an example of the team's tactics being used effectively.

EXAMPLE 1: The No.10 Switches Play

The opposing team shifts towards the left side after the pass to the left back Marcelo (12), retaining a very compact formation and defensive block.

This restricts the available space for Real Madrid near the ball zone.

No.10 Özil drops deep to receive and the forward Benzema (9) drops towards the left side.

When the ball is passed to the left winger Ronaldo (7), the opposition move to triple mark him.

Özil spots this, provides support and a passing angle for Ronaldo to play back to him.

When he receives, Özil has the 4 passing options shown. The pass to the forward Benzema (9) can lead to the final stage of attack, but it is the riskiest option.

Options 2 and 3 are the best for switching the play to the weak side.

EXAMPLE 2: The Defensive Midfielder Switches Play

The opposition retains their compactness with a collective shift across towards the ball position.

The Real defensive midfielder Xabi Alonso reacts quickly by shifting across to provide support and receive a pass in the centre.

After receiving the ball, Xabi Alonso has 4 passing options.

The pass to the forward Benzema (9) can lead to the final stage of attack, but it is the riskiest option.

To make sure his team retain the ball and switch the play to the weak side, Alonso can use options 2 or 3.

TRANSITION FROM ATTACK TO DEFENCE

TRANSITION FROM ATTACK TO DEFENCE

In any football match, teams will find themselves with and without possession, and the most dangerous phase in open play is the transition from attack to defence. When a team is building up play, the players are usually spread out from back to front and from side to side. The team will have committed defensive and midfield players forward for attacking support. This makes them vulnerable if they lose the ball.

The opposite is true of the defending team, as their shape and organisation is likely to be compact with their players moving towards the ball from the sides, front and back. A good defensive team will try to move as a tight block in order to help create layers of help around the ball.

Stopping the Counter Attack

Knowing that counter attacking is an effective tactic, good teams will look to develop transition skills that slow or stop an opponent's immediate forward progress. This is achieved by immediately pressing the ball to force sideways or backwards passes and by keeping the midfield and defensive lines well balanced, both positionally and numerically.

Importantly, this continual defensive organisation takes place during the build-up or attack. Teams that only defend after the transition are much more likely to be punished for their ball watching by good counter attacking teams.

At the moment of transition, players in attacking positions are often on the wrong side of their immediate opponents and not in a position to cover their own teammates. This is why immediate pressure on the ball can be so critical. However, where the turnover occurs on the pitch, and whether the risk of a counter attack is high or low, will in part dictate how a team should react to losing possession.

Altering Tactics for the Game Situation

In addition to factors such as weather, fitness, pitch conditions, technical range, the importance of a match situation (time remaining and score) impacts where teams start to defend.

Counter attacking situations aside, say a team is losing or needs an additional goal, the responsibility is on that team to increase their defensive tempo and chase the ball to try and win it. This results in pressing the ball closer to the opponent's goal.

Pressing

When a defending team chooses the right tactical cues, pressing can be a very effective tactic, but it does bring risks. Pressing can be dangerous because the defensive block must move forward and towards the ball. If this movement does not happen at the right moment, with the players reacting together, there will be attacking spaces left open within the block, behind the block, or on the flanks.

With defensive players committed forward without being organised, a quick build-up may produce dangerous attacking opportunities for the opponent.

Offside Tactics

The defensive application of offside tactics also becomes important, as pressing teams cannot effectively protect the space behind their back line. This is one reason why goalkeepers must play out of their goal (advanced position to act as a sweeper) in pressing situations.

Main Principles for Transition from Attack to Defence

Therefore, in this transition from attack to defence, we will have three main principles that guide our actions:

1. Our first principle will be to press the ball (according to the situation) with the aim of regaining it to then attack or counter attack ourselves.
2. If the opponent does not allow us to regain possession, our objective will be to delay their attack and gain time to organise defensively.
3. On having enough time to organise our team, we will start our defensive phase.

In order to develop these principles in a good and consistent way, we need to set out the positions we want to start defending from in advance - these are what we call our **Defensive Block Positions** - fully described on the following pages.

REORGANISING INTO DEFENSIVE BLOCK POSITIONS

When losing possession, our team needs to have previously set position on the pitch where it is most comfortable defending. If we do not get a chance to regain the ball in the first few seconds after losing possession, our objective must be to get defensively organised into starting positions (the main position).

We can be forced to change our main positions by our opponent, so in these cases, we will adopt what we call a secondary position.

In our defensive organisation, we name these positions as follows:

1. **High Defensive Block** (Main Position)
2. **Middle Defensive Block** (Main Position)
3. **Deep Defensive Block** (Secondary Position)

I. Reorganising into a High Defensive Block

When using a high defensive block, the team organises defensively in the opposition's half. We try to regain possession at the start of the opposition's attacking phase. It requires active, aggressive and coordinated actions from all the players collectively. It is based on applying pressure on the ball carrier (and the potential receivers) as soon as the opponent gets the ball.

In this situation, the back four is positioned along the halfway line (or sometimes even higher) and the remaining lines need to keep short, vertical distances between them as shown.

We need to press the ball carrier, while at the same time limiting the passing lanes available, reducing the time he has to make a decision.

Advantages of a High Defensive Block

- The aim is to dominate the game all the time.
- It forces the opponent to play in their own half.
- It keeps the opposition far away from our goal.
- It is difficult for the opponent to build up their attacks.
- It forces the opponent to rush play, so they may be inaccurate in their actions (forces mistakes).

Disadvantages of a High Defensive Block

- The biggest drawback to a high line is the free space left in behind the defensive line.
- Inefficiencies in the recovery of the ball can lead to a greater physical load being expended.
- We could be surprised by any clearance or long pass.
- We need to recover the ball in the shortest time possible.
- Need to have an intelligent back four who understand keeping a good line, and that know when to play for offside and when to drop off.

2. Reorganising into a Middle Defensive Block

Using a middle defensive block, our players defend from within their half (only the striker/forward is in the other half). The back four line is about 10-15 yards in front of the penalty area, setting the rest of the lines according to the pre-set distances, which are usually about 10-15 yards (depending on the circumstances of the game).

Because we leave considerable free space behind our back four, our goalkeeper must play high to protect his defenders and dominate the free space that exists.

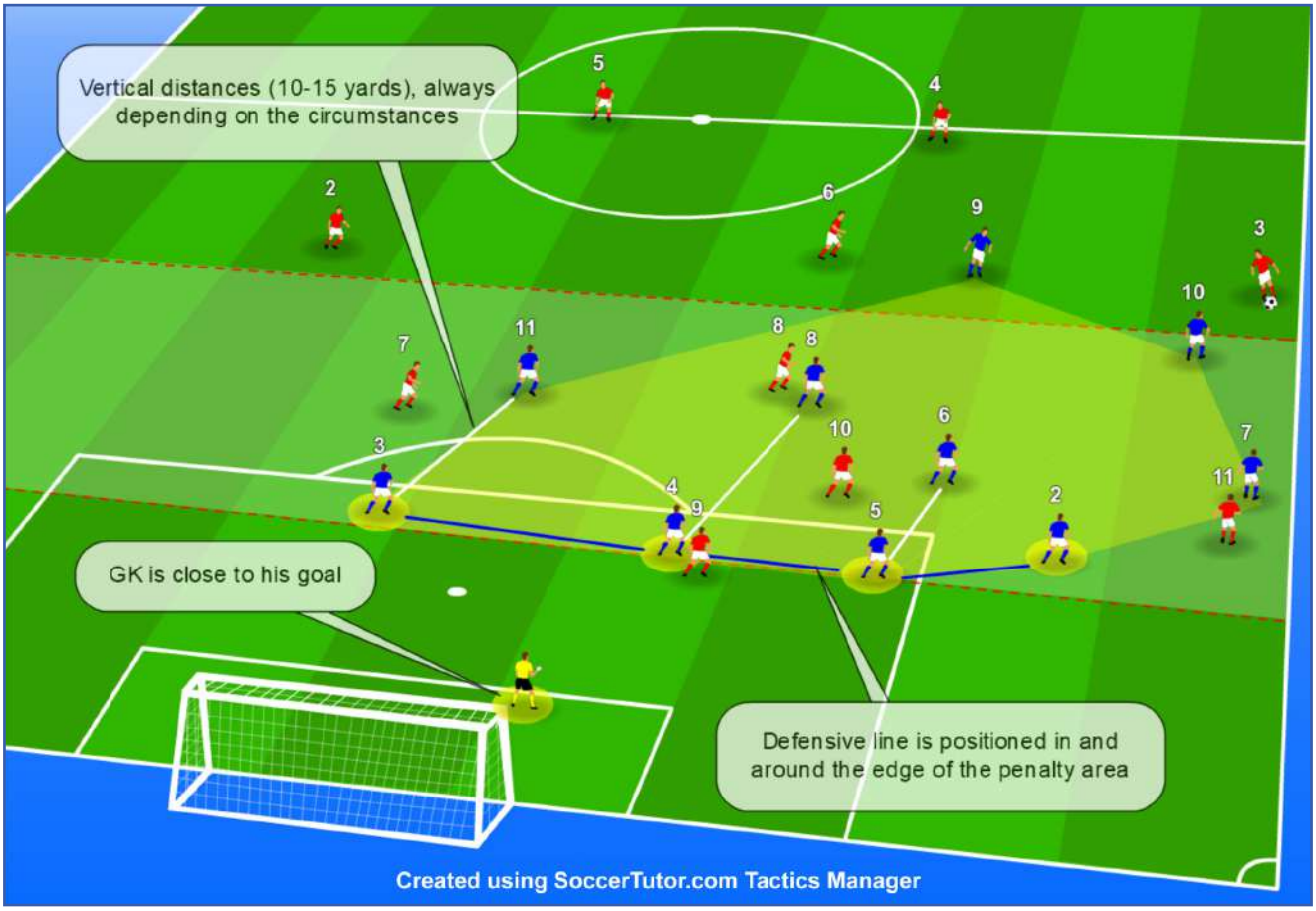
Advantages of a Middle Defensive Block

- Compact defensive block between the ball and our goal.
- Counter attacks can be developed effectively.
- The defensive phase is developed in a relatively small and manageable space.
- The small distance between all the players allows us to maintain an adequate defensive intensity.
- It forces the opposition to keep their beginning stages of attack away from our goal.
- Favourable positions and spaces for an opponent to shoot are limited.
- There is a good possibility to apply an offside trap.

Disadvantages of a Middle Defensive Block

- It gives the initiative to the opponent when they are building up play from the back (low pressure).
- The advanced positioning of the goalkeeper may be dangerous against long range shots.
- There is a possibility for the opposition to exploit the space behind our defensive line.

3. Reorganising into a Deep Defensive Block



A deep defensive block provides more protection for our goal. Our defensive line is positioned in and around the edge of the penalty area, while other lines will be located based on previously established vertical distances (10-15 yards), always depending on the circumstances. In this scenario, the goalkeeper is close to his goal.

We consider a deep defensive block to be a secondary position, because it is not where we want our team to develop the defensive phase. It is only used when the opposition progress their attack and force us back.

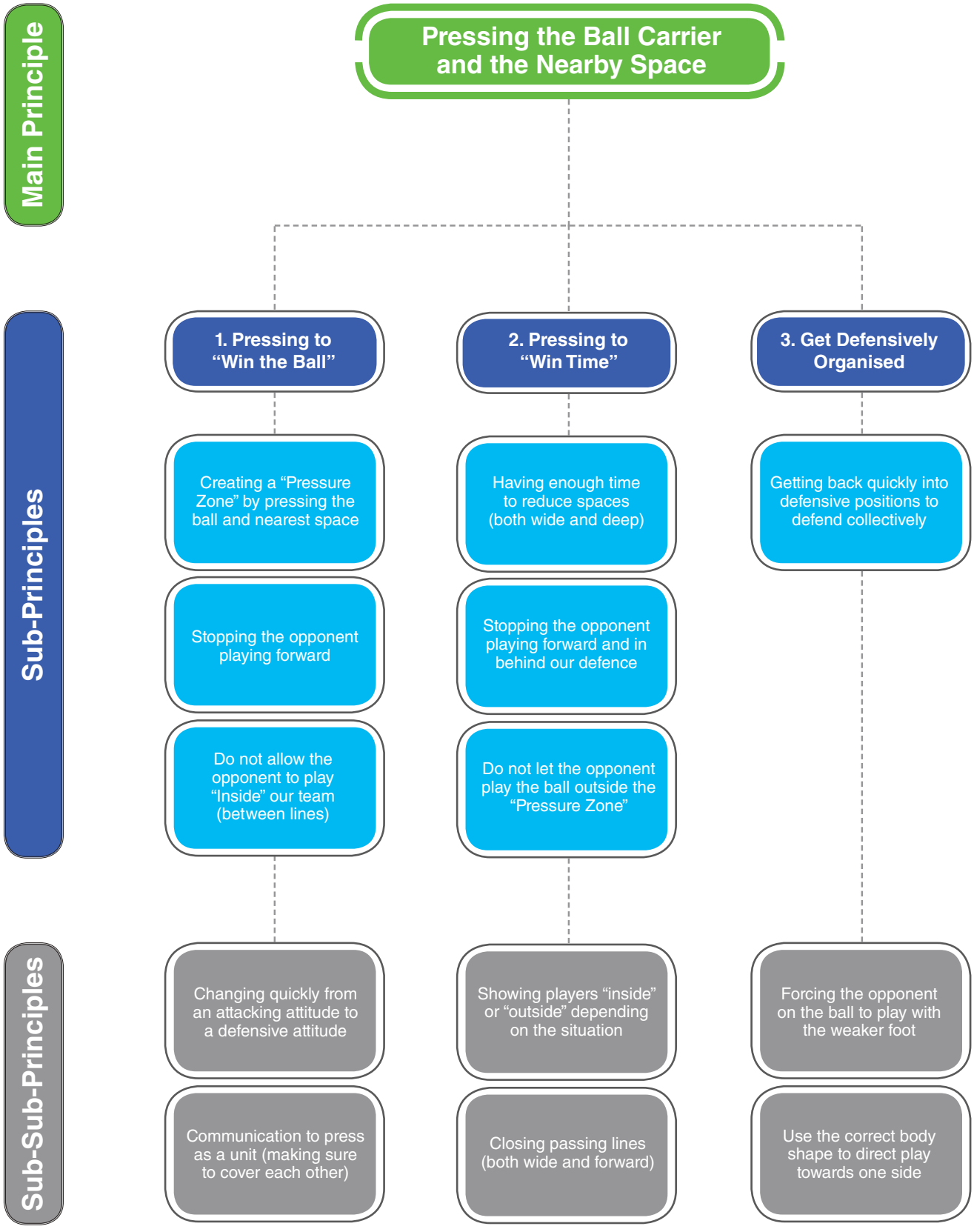
Advantages of a Deep Defensive Block

- There is always a compact block between the ball and our goal.
- Provides strong protection of our goal.
- Defending takes place in a relatively small space (high defensive density and intensity).
- Defensive help is always present.
- Favourable positions to shoot are closed, and even if a shot is produced, the opponent will always be under high pressure.
- Can force the opponent to modify its attacking patterns (i.e., they may tend to rush, playing a more direct game).

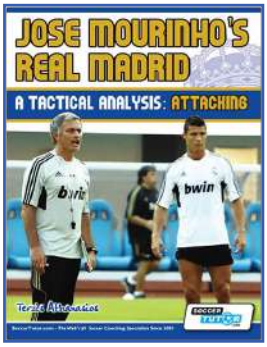
Disadvantages of a Deep Defensive Block

- The initiative is left entirely to the opponent.
- We defend very close to our goal.
- Given the large number of players close to our goal, any second ball can be very dangerous.
- If we win the ball, potential counter attacks are much more likely to be ineffective, given the distance between the recovery zone and the opposition's goal.

PRINCIPLES FOR THE TRANSITION FROM ATTACK TO DEFENCE



JOSÉ MOURINHO NEGATIVE TRANSITION EXAMPLE: PRESSING IMMEDIATELY AFTER LOSING POSSESSION



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The analysis presented is an example of the team's tactics being used effectively.

Condensing Space when Possession is Lost in the Centre

In Real Madrid's negative transition, the full backs played a key role. When the ball was lost, they would take up effective defensive positions against the opposing wingers immediately.

If the team won the ball back, they then moved into advanced positions to receive a possible forward pass free of marking.

This example starts with central midfielder Khedira (6) giving the ball away in the centre of the pitch.

The 2 full backs (Marcelo and Arbeloa) move towards the centre to take up goal side positions against the opposing wingers (7 and 11).

The defensive midfielder Xabi Alonso (14) and central midfielder Khedira (6) are the safety players who move to block No.6's passing options and try to win the ball.

Real Madrid are able to limit the time and space available, leading to them regaining possession.

DEFENSIVE PHASE

DEFENSIVE PHASE: ZONE DEFENCE

The defensive phase is ultimately a matter of defending in a smart way. We aim to reduce the space available to constrain the opposition (Frade, 2002).

Once our team has lost possession (i.e., the end of our attacking phase), it is necessary to organise defensively. This involves a fast and effective transition from attack to defence, so we can reach a desirable defensive positioning. At this point, we will be able to develop our defensive phase. Therefore, as mentioned before, the defensive phase must be linked to the other phases of the game.

A well-organised zone defence allows us to form a compact and permanent block between the ball and our goal, neutralising the opposition's attacking actions and preventing their attack from progressing into creating scoring chances. Within this compact unit placed in the chosen position, there will be a rational allocation of sectors and areas of playing space.

Each player in a game is assigned to a zone or area, which he is defensively responsible for when an attacking player enters it, whether on or off the ball, in order to neutralise this opponent's attacking actions for as long as he stays in this area. The player can leave his opponent whenever this opponent leaves the area or when our team recovers possession. So, the position of the players in their zones shall always be subject to the position of the ball.

By defending in zones:

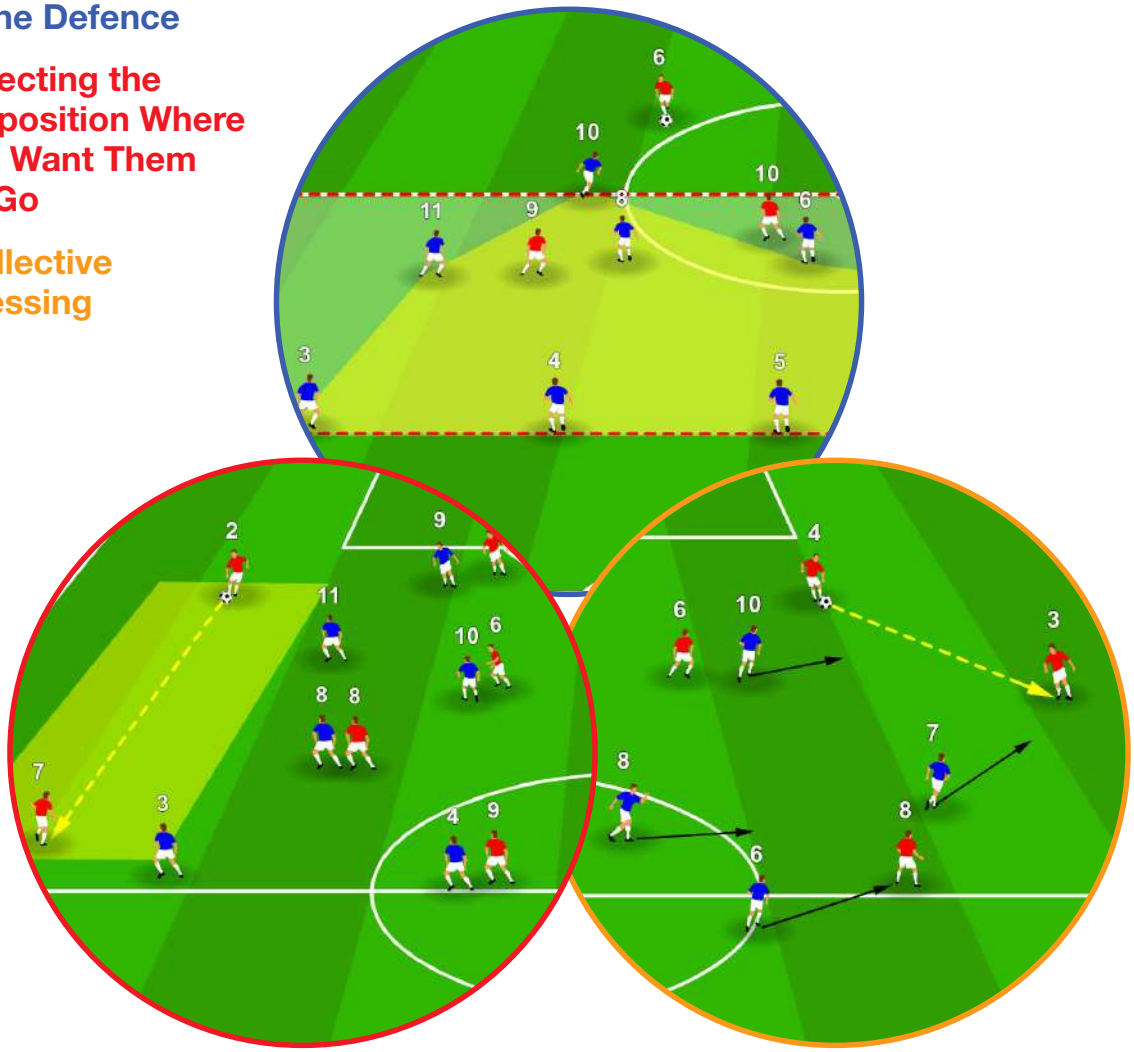
- We are able to achieve a numerical superiority in and around the ball area.
- We can maintain a high defensive intensity by acting as a collective and compact block.
- Our displacements and efforts become more efficient. To increase this efficiency, defensive areas should be reduced to smaller spaces, both horizontally and vertically. The distances between teammates (sectorial and intersectorial) must be reduced, but not excessively - the players need to find the optimal defensive distance.
- The player will always be acting in a very meaningful area for him, so he will know his initial positions and consequently, he will increase his performance.

12 Advantages of Using a Zone Defence

1. The solidarity of the group is the core value; The team is defensively accountable.
2. The movements of the players (physical effort/ output) are more efficient.
3. Helps the application of constant defensive help/ cover.
4. Players don't have to move out of position to close and mark their direct opponents.
5. It is the best way to defend with a numerical disadvantage.
6. Helps the creation of a numerical superiority near the ball (defensive compactness).
7. It limits the space for the opposition's attack.
8. It forces the opposition to play sideways (horizontal passes in midfield).
9. Reduces the chances for the opposition to shoot from favourable positions.
10. Players are supported by teammates and their actions are more effective to anticipate and recover the ball.
11. Individual mistakes can be immediately repaired by another player from the same or different defensive line.
12. The players always know their defensive position and where/how to attack if the team regain the ball.

MAIN TACTICAL DEFENSIVE PRINCIPLES

- Zone Defence
- Directing the Opposition Where We Want Them to Go
- Collective Pressing



Collective Defensive Patterns

When approaching the defensive phase of the game, we need to consider that our main goal is to create some collective defensive patterns.

Using the ball as the main reference, we seek to create a numerical superiority in the space in and around that area (special dimension).

We need to consider that even if we are faced with a situation where we have a numerical disadvantage, we can still take advantage by using good positional play that allows us to anticipate the opponent's actions.

The main tactical principles that we build our defensive phase around are twofold:

- **Directing the opposition where we want them to go** (inside or outside)
- **Collective pressing** (ball carrier and potential receivers)

DIRECTING THE OPPOSITION WHERE WE WANT THEM TO GO (INSIDE OR OUTSIDE)

We apply zonal defending but in a way that pressurises and directs the opposition to play where we want them to play. In other words, we are looking to regain possession as soon as possible by forcing the opponent to make mistakes. The main idea is to "attack the opponent" even when we are without the ball. Pressing the opposition in an around the ball zone and covering each other constantly are the sub-sub-principles of play that allow us to develop our defensive philosophy.

As mentioned above, directing the opposition is a very important principle in our defensive organisation, because it relates to where we want to win the ball and how this will affect the next attacking transition, such as directing play into the central or outside channels.

Directing the opposition towards the central channel does not necessarily mean the opponent will play "inside" our team, which is one of the principles that defines our defensive model when we do not have the ball. It is therefore important to differentiate both concepts.

On the one hand, a team without the ball can direct the opponent to play into the centre without allowing them to play "inside" their team. Once the opposition are in the centre, they can be directed towards the outside, thus preventing the ball from circulating between our midfield and defensive lines.

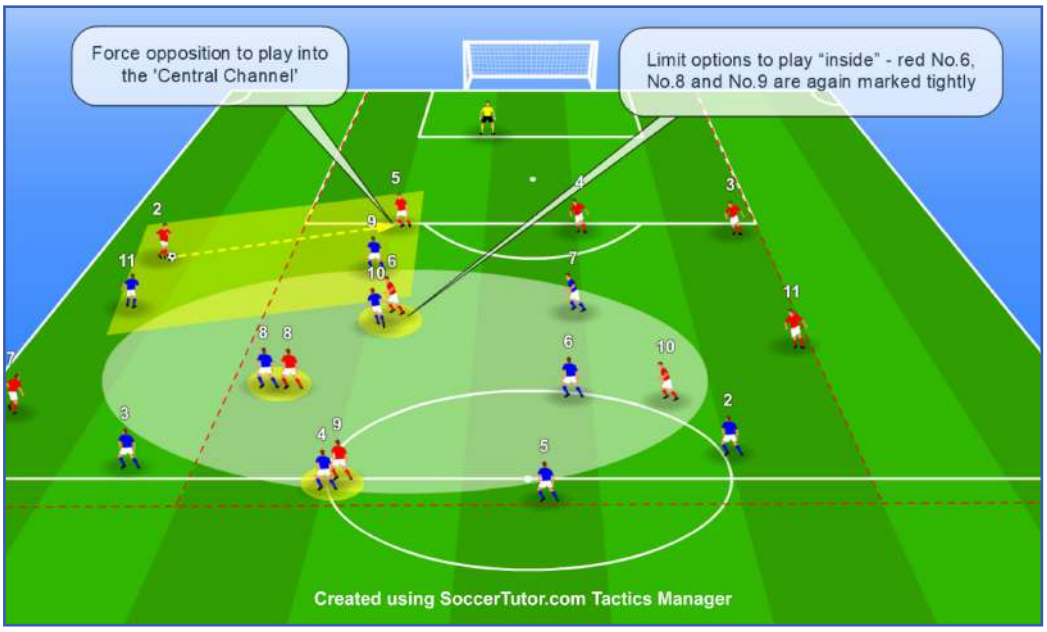
Another option, although it is unusual in strategic situations, is to purposely let the opponent play between the lines in order to regain the ball within this congested space. The following three diagrams (two on next page) show how the principle of directing the opposition is related to the spaces for regaining the ball.

Forcing the Opposition to Play Outside of Our Defensive Block and into the Wide Channel

In this example, the defensive block closes down the opponent's options to play "inside" our team. We direct the ball carrier (red No.2) to play outside of our defensive block and within the wide channel.

The team succeed as they are compact in the centre, marking the potential receivers (red No.5, No.6, No.8 and No.9).

Forcing the Opposition to Play into the Central Channel but Outside of Our Defensive Block



In this example, we force the opposition to play into the central channel.

However, the defensive block closes down the options to play "inside" our team. As shown, red No.6, No.8 and No.9 are again marked tightly.

The red ball carrier (2) passes back to the centre back (5) who is positioned within the central channel but outside of our defensive block.

Forcing the Opposition to Play into the Central Channel and Inside Our Defensive Block

In this example, we force the opposition to play into the central channel and "inside" our team.

This may seem out of the ordinary, but our defensive block allows the opponent to play "inside" our team strategically.

This is so that many players can press the new ball carrier all at once in an attempt to win the ball. In the diagram, we have 4 blue players move to close down the red defensive midfielder No.6.

COLLECTIVE PRESSING

As we seek to apply a zonal defence that always presses the opposition, identifying tactical cues for pressing (to win the ball) become crucial for us. In this sense, it is important to ensure that all team players are tuned toward specific indicators to press the opponent.

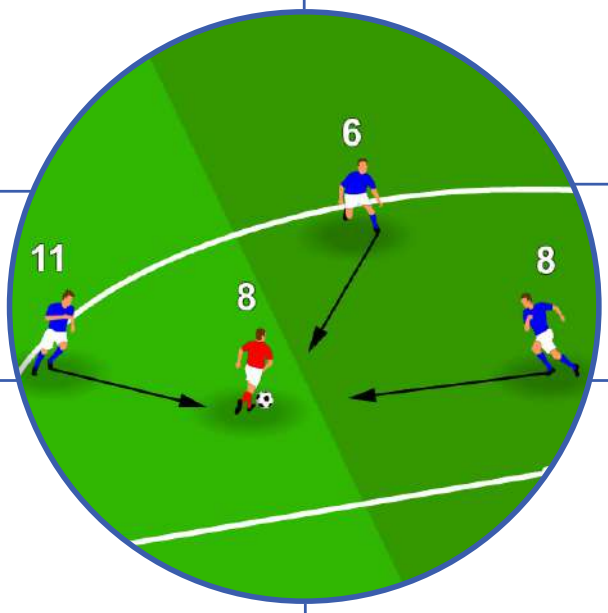
Pressing is a collective action where all the team interacts, although there are players who, because of their position, can play a guiding role and lead the timing to apply pressure. For example, a player is near an opponent who will receive the ball - our player sees that his opponent will get it in the wrong shape (i.e., no supporting players on the way), so he will be responsible for guiding and setting the pressing timing, while the remaining players should follow the principles inherent to this collective action, such as covering close and away from the ball.

This tactical defensive principle is going to determine how effective our defence will be in regaining the ball. Therefore, pressing must be applied by all the players.

Starting the collective pressing on the ball carrier

Reducing space in both vertical and horizontal directions

Good defensive organisation - always protecting the central corridor/ channel



Marking the attacking players near to the ball strongly (limit passing options for ball carrier)

Pressing in compact block (but always staggered)

Reorganising: Dropping off and getting organised (into position) to restart the collective pressing

SUB-PRINCIPLES FOR COLLECTIVE PRESSING

To direct and press the opponent in an efficient manner, we need to apply the following sub-principles:

1. **Compactness**
2. **Collective Shifting to the Ball Position**
3. **Active and Non-Active Defensive Areas**
4. **Defensive Cover**

I. Compactness

Once the team has made a smooth transition from attack to defence and reached the defensive positioning, it must organise and form a compact unit close to the ball. By compact unit, we mean the group of players who are positioned between the ball and our goal. To do so, we need to establish two types of distances:

- **Lateral-Sectorial Distances** are the distances established between players within the same line (sector - defence, midfield and forward). These distances will usually be approximately 8-10 yards and may be modified depending on the situation and circumstances of the game.
- **Vertical-Intersectorial Distances** are distances that exist between players in different lines (defence, midfield and forward lines). These distances are typically 14–16 yards but they will be increased or reduced, depending on the circumstances of the game.

To maintain our compact block as a functional unit, it is necessary for the team to move in relation to the movements of the ball and with adequate defensive speed.

The diagram on the next page shows how, starting from the action against the ball carrier, the rest of the team is organised to form a compact unit, keeping lateral and vertical distances. This compact block must be maintained no matter what the position of the ball, but to do so, the team must have adequate collective mobility.

2. Collective Shifting to the Ball Position

Shifting across, forwards or backwards collectively is the only way to keep our defensive block compact and close to the ball. All the players must coordinate their movements with adequate defensive speed, thus preventing the opposition's attack from progressing.

The diagram shows how a compact block moves defensively, depending on the position of the ball and restores the defensive compact block relative to the new position of the ball.

Collective shifting can be classified in two ways:

- **Horizontal:** Movements made by players in a lateral (sideways) direction, always dependent on the movement and positioning of the ball.

  As shown in the diagram example, the red centre back (4) passes out wide to the left back (3) near the side-line. All of the blue players shift across collectively (retaining the same distances between each other) towards that side. The team remain organised and compact in their defensive block.

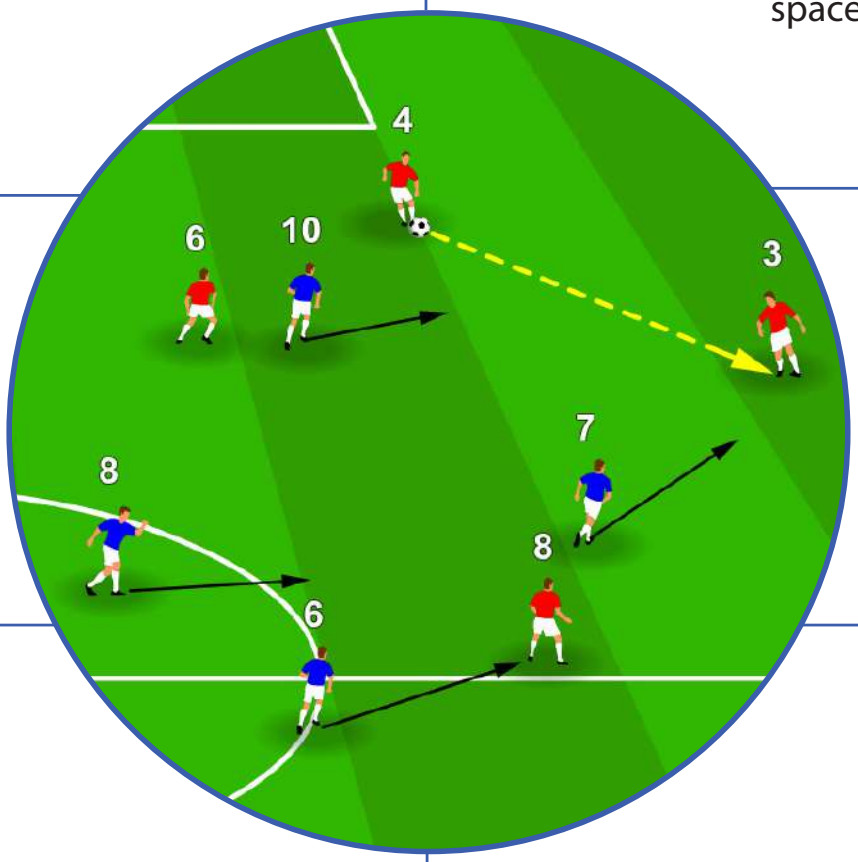
- **Vertical:** Movements made by players in forward or backwards directions, depending on the position of the ball. For example, if an opposing player had plenty of time/space on the ball and could potentially play a pass in behind the defensive line, the defensive line would drop back. At the same time, all of the other players would also move back collectively to retain the defensive block.

Key Points for Collective Shifting to the Ball Position and Pressing as a Team

No matter the ball position, deny horizontal and vertical space for the opposition

Encouraging the subsequent collective pressing

Prevent the progression of opposition's attack (reducing their space and time)



Prevent the opposition from playing into advanced areas

Force the opposition to play backwards or square passes, while focussing on intercepting the ball

Create a numerical advantage in defensive situations

3. Active and Non-Active Defensive Areas

As a result of collective shifting, we can reduce horizontal and vertical spaces. This is going to make two different types of zones appear:

- **Active Defensive Areas:** The areas closest to the ball.
- **Non-Active Defensive Areas:** The areas left unprotected to encourage clustering the defensive block around the ball. The players closest to these passive areas keep an eye on the opponents in there (red 2 and 7 in diagram).

The diagram below shows how the defensive block reduces the space to play in and acts against their opponents, forming active defensive areas (white) and non-active defensive areas (yellow).

4. Defensive Cover

This kind of defensive organisation and the chosen structural organisation (e.g., with many lines in both width and depth) can help to establish permanent defensive support (cover) near to the ball.

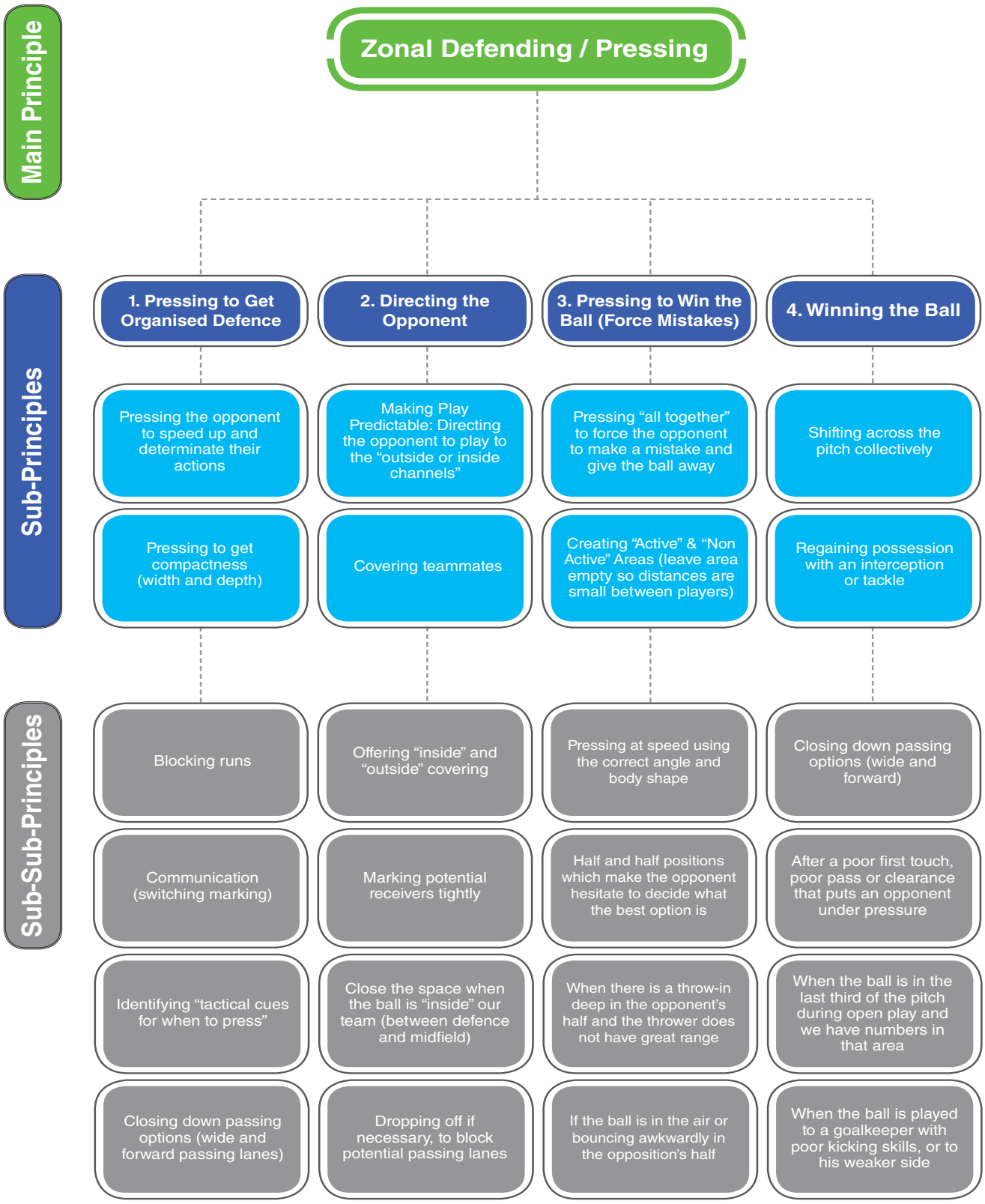
These covers are set around the player that moves to press the ball carrier (blue No.10 in diagram below).

As the diagram shows, the player that applies pressure to the ball carrier (No.10) is then covered by three players (No.6, No.7 and No.8) who are alert to the situation.

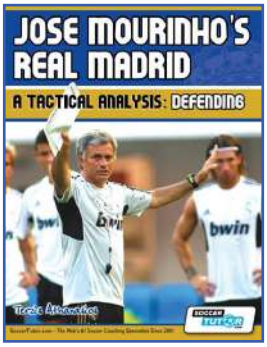
This limits the ball carrier's (red No.6) time and space, and thus the possibilities to progress the red team's attack.

To summarise, we can say that the main difference between the traditional concept of zonal defending and the pressing philosophy exists in the level of aggressiveness to press both the ball and the space around the ball, in order to constrain the opponents' actions.

PRINCIPLES FOR THE DEFENSIVE PHASE



JOSÉ MOURINHO DEFENSIVE PHASE EXAMPLE: COLLECTIVE PRESSING & DIRECTING OPPONENT



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The analysis presented is an example of the team's tactics being used effectively.

Pressing High Up the Pitch and Forcing Play "Outside"

No.10 Özil is away from the ball zone. The left winger Ronaldo has a goal side position against the full back. The defensive midfielder Xabi Alonso is able to mark the opposition's midfielder No.6 if necessary.

As the opposition's centre back (4) receives from the goalkeeper, No.6 is in space to receive due to Özil's positioning - the next diagram shows the Real Madrid team's reactions.

Ronaldo retains his goal-side position.

The defensive midfielder Xabi Alonso analyses the tactical situation and moves forward to reduce the space between him and No.6.

No.10 Özil moves towards the strong side and Khedira shifts towards the centre to provide balance.

The centre back Ramos and left back Marcelo tighten the marking of their direct opponents.

The centre back (4) passes out wide to the right back (2) and Ronaldo puts pressure on the new ball carrier.

The defensive midfielder Xabi Alonso is able to leave his direct opponent as Ronaldo's body position means the ball is unlikely to reach No.6. Also, Alonso would be too far from No.7 if the ball is played down the line.

Khedira makes an extensive shift towards the left side to provide balance, as Alonso is high up the pitch.

The left back Marcelo (12) follows his direct opponent and marks him closely. The centre back Ramos (4) does the same and follows No.10. However, after Khedira completes his movement across, Ramos (4) is ready to pass on No.10's marking so he can help cover the left back Marcelo (12).

When the pass is made from No.2 to the left winger No.7, the Real left back Marcelo (12) puts the ball carrier under pressure and Ronaldo tracks back to help double mark him.

Khedira takes over No.10's marking and Ramos (4) moves back to provide cover.

No.10 Özil provides balance in midfield by dropping into a deeper position.

TRANSITION FROM DEFENCE TO ATTACK

TRANSITION FROM DEFENCE TO ATTACK

The moment of transition from defence to attack is a branching point where the team finds itself facing two possibilities:

1. **Consolidate Possession of the Ball**
2. **Counter Attack**

This choice depends mainly on the space available, with regards to where the ball is regained, the positioning of the defensive block, and the relative balance/organisation of the opposition. If the opposition allow us space and time to play because they are unbalanced, we can use this space to look for depth.

If, for instance, we want to have an attacking transition where the aim is to play deep (trying to get in behind), we have two options:

1. We can defend deeper (middle block) in order to have free space behind the opposition while we are in the defensive process.
2. Alternatively, we can press very high to regain the ball close to the opposition's goal and try to penetrate quickly through their defensive line.

The choice to consolidate ball possession in the attacking transition arises from the team recognising situations in which the opponent is organised (i.e., they remained organised when losing the ball, or they reorganised quickly). Retaining the ball is also associated with our philosophy of play that involves controlling the game through possession.

However, note that this possession is always related to the objective of creating imbalances in the opposition's organisation. Therefore, clearing the ball from the pressure zone turns out to be a logical approach, because the quicker the ball leaves the opposing pressure zones, the more difficult it is for the opposition to stay organised. The choice to ensure possession is retained also relates to situations where the team recovers the ball high up the pitch with the opposition defending deeper.

If we play in a high block, we will normally lose the ball in the opposition's half, and we will attempt to regain it as soon as possible. This turns out to be a natural response, because we are near to the opposition's goal and away from our own goal. At the same time, it is a way to protect ourselves and prevent the opposition from taking advantage of the spaces that we have left in behind our defensive line.

Whatever approach we decide to apply in our attacking transition, we need to understand that **the great principle of this phase is to take the ball away from the pressure zone, and the actions related to this principle always depend on the organisation/ disorganisation of the opposition**.

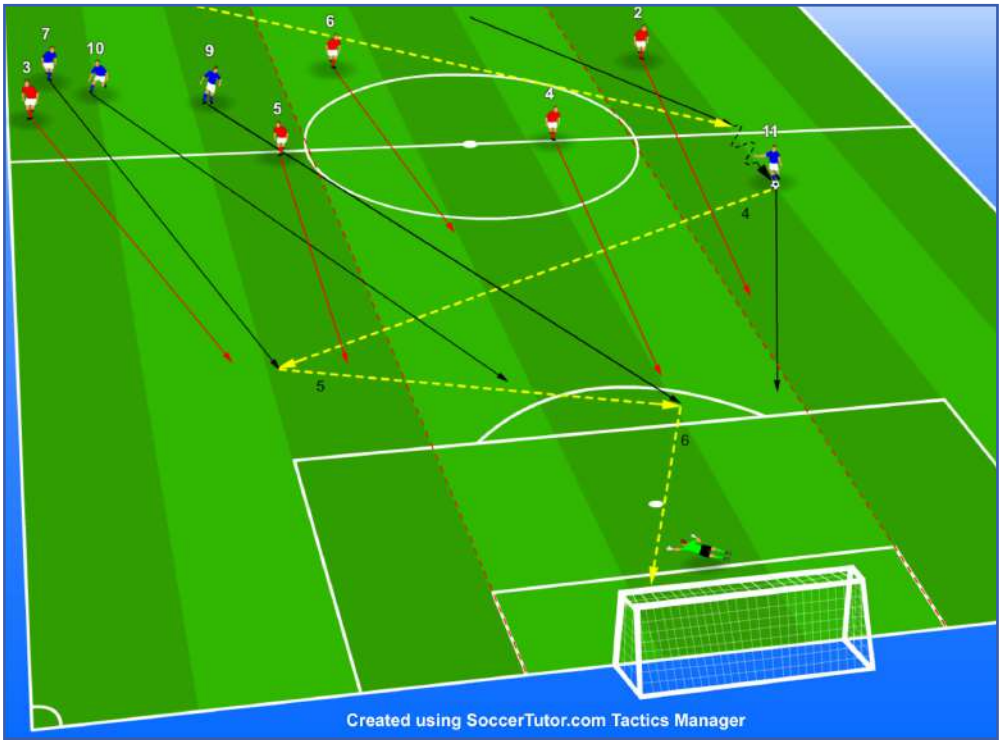
As mentioned before, there must be a connection between all the principles and sub-principles within the four phases of the game. Following this idea, it is important for the team to have the ability to ensure the correct positioning of certain players, who will serve as a reference for the transition from defence to attack.

For example, in a situation where the ball is in a side channel, a player, let's say a winger, will have the objective to stop the opposition from switching play (participating in the defensive process) but will also be able to counter attack if the ball is regained.

Therefore, our attacking transition is directly related to the defensive position of our block. Each position will enhance a different way to act when regaining the ball.

TRANSITION FROM DEFENCE TO ATTACK FROM THE LOW ZONE (DEEP DEFENSIVE BLOCK)

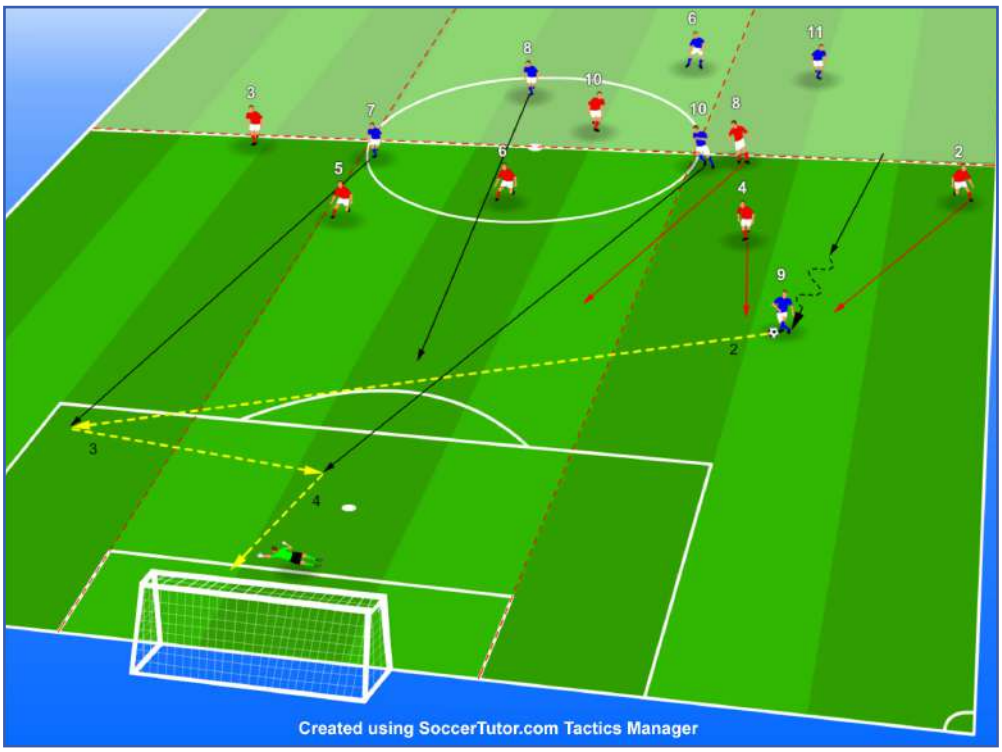
- The team is defending with a deep defensive block.
- This would not be suited to our game model where we prefer a high or middle defensive block.
- In this example, the red opposing left back (3) tries to complete a pass to the left winger (11) and it is intercepted by our blue right winger (7).
- From this point, the team launches a counter attack - No.7 passes forward to No.9, who lays the ball back for No.6 to switch the play to No.11.



- There is a slower turnover from deep, as the team make sure to keep possession of the ball first.
- Play wide and switch play (move ball outside pressure zone).
- 3-5 players are involved in the counter attack.
- Need to stretch the opponents' defensive block (use all 3 channels at least once).
- 3-4 passes: Passing outside of pressure zone (possible set back pass) + outlet pass (getting in behind) + 2nd early pass + finish.

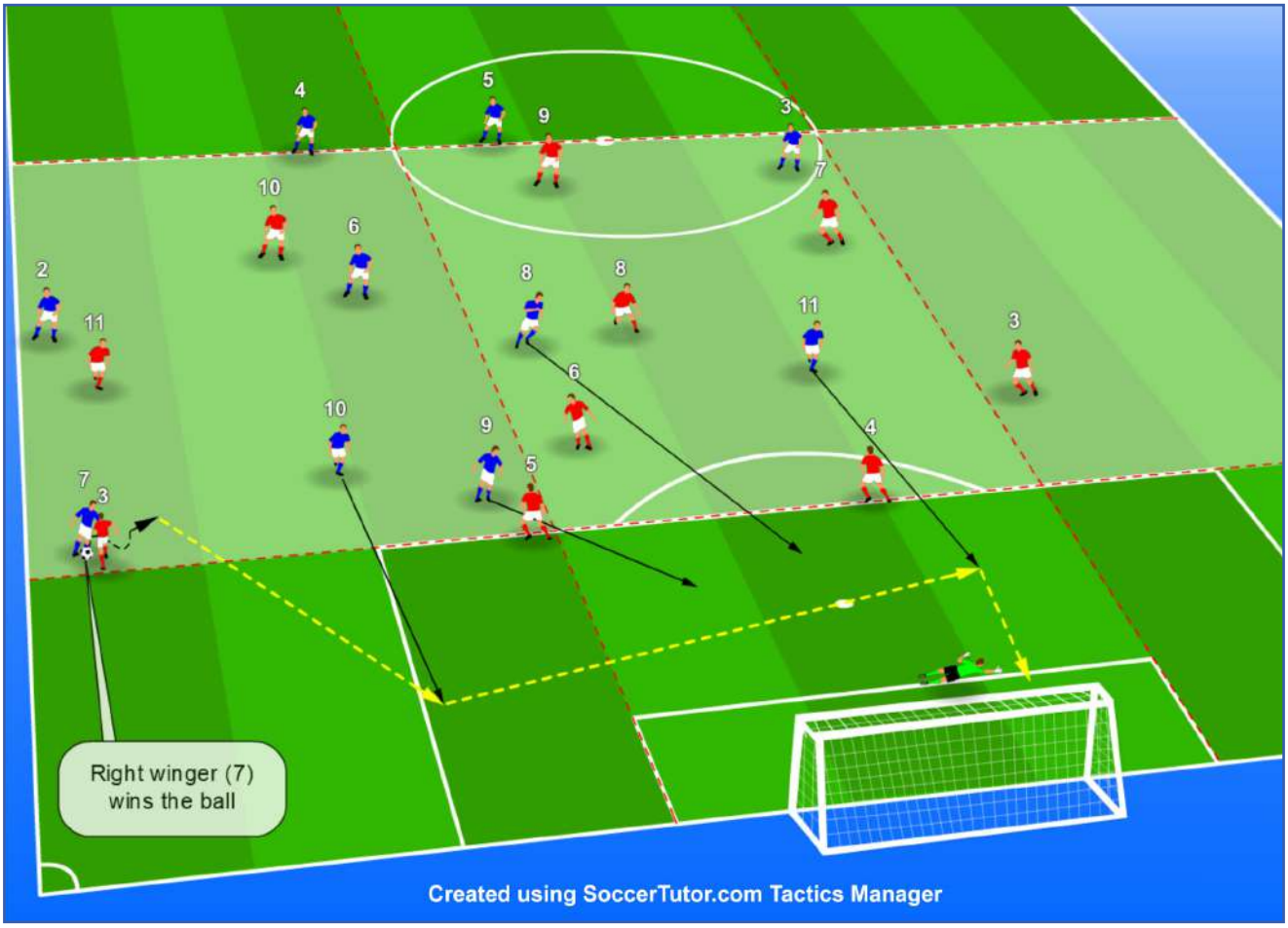
TRANSITION FROM DEFENCE TO ATTACK FROM THE MIDDLE ZONE (MIDDLE DEFENSIVE BLOCK)

- The team is defending with a middle defensive block.
- We like to defend using a high or middle defensive block.
- In this example, the defensive midfielder (6) wins the ball from the red forward (9).
- From this point the team launches a counter attack - No.6 passes forward to No.9 - he switches play to the right winger (7), who makes a bursting forward run. No.7 is able to cut the ball back for No.10 to score.



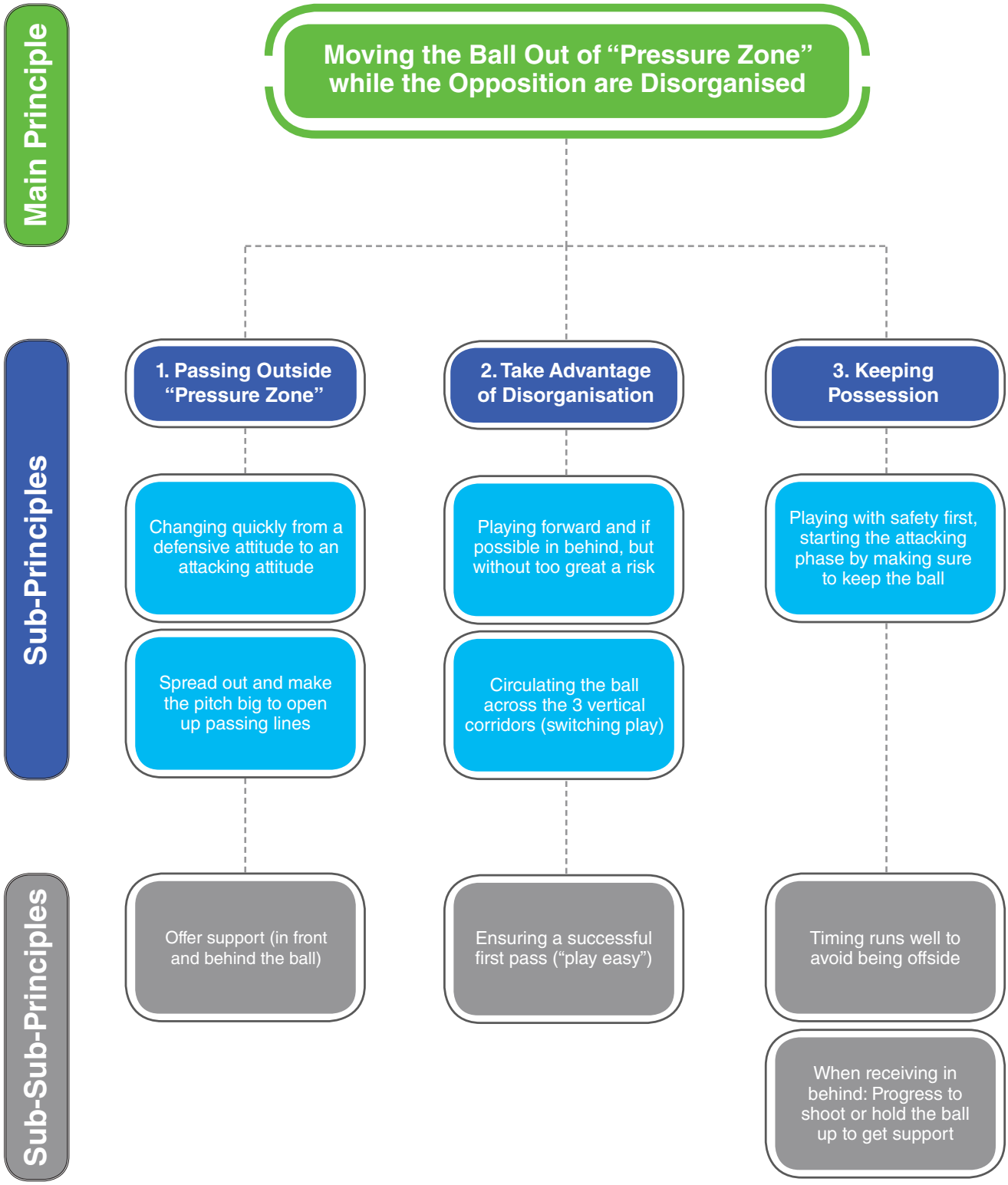
- There is a quick turnover, playing forward quickly and in behind.
- 3-4 players are involved in the counter attack.
- Need to stretch the opponents' defensive block (use all 3 channels at least once).
- 3 passes: Outlet pass (in behind) + 2nd early pass + 3rd early pass + finish.
- Trying to get in behind the opposition's back four (playing over or around).

TRANSITION FROM DEFENCE TO ATTACK FROM THE HIGH ZONE (HIGH DEFENSIVE BLOCK)

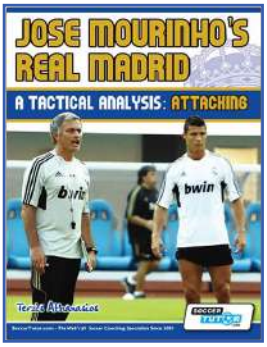


- The team is defending with a high defensive block.
- We like to defend using a high or middle defensive block.
- In this example, the blue right winger (7) wins the ball from the red left back (3) high up the pitch.
- From this point, the team immediately play the ball in behind and try to finish the attack as quickly as possible.
- No.7 passes in behind for No.10 to run onto and receive inside the penalty area - he then has 3 options with the central midfielder (8), forward (9) and left winger (11) all making forward runs to finish.
- There is a quick turnover, playing forward quickly and in behind.
- 2-3 players are involved in the counter attack.
- No need to stretch the opponents' defensive block (use 1 or 2 channels).
- 1 or 2 passes: Outlet pass (in behind) + 2nd early pass + finish.
- Trying to get quick finishing options (playing through or around).

PRINCIPLES FOR THE TRANSITION FROM DEFENCE TO ATTACK



JOSÉ MOURINHO POSITIVE TRANSITION PHASE EXAMPLE: FAST BREAK ATTACK



Analysis taken from 'José Mourinho's Real Madrid: A Tactical Analysis - Attacking in the 4-2-3-1' (Athanasios Terzis 2012)

Available to buy from SoccerTutor.com (paperback + eBook)

The analysis is based on recurring patterns of play. Once the same phase of play occurred a number of times (at least 10) the tactics would be decoded, with the positioning of each player on the pitch studied in great detail, including their body shape. Each individual movement with or without the ball was also recorded in detail.

The analysis presented is an example of the team's tactics being used effectively.

Creating a 4 v 3 Overload with a Fast Break Attack

In this example, Real Madrid's No.10 Özil wins the ball in midfield.

Özil moves forward with the ball and the left winger Ronaldo (7) moves into a wide position to receive the pass from Özil on the run.

Ronaldo draws one of the centre out of position, so Benzema makes a run in behind him and receives the pass from Ronaldo.

The other centre back (No.5) is drawn to Benzema and the opposition's defenders have large distances between them.

Özil makes a direct run into the centre forward position. Benzema crosses to him and Özil scores into the far corner.

CHAPTER 6

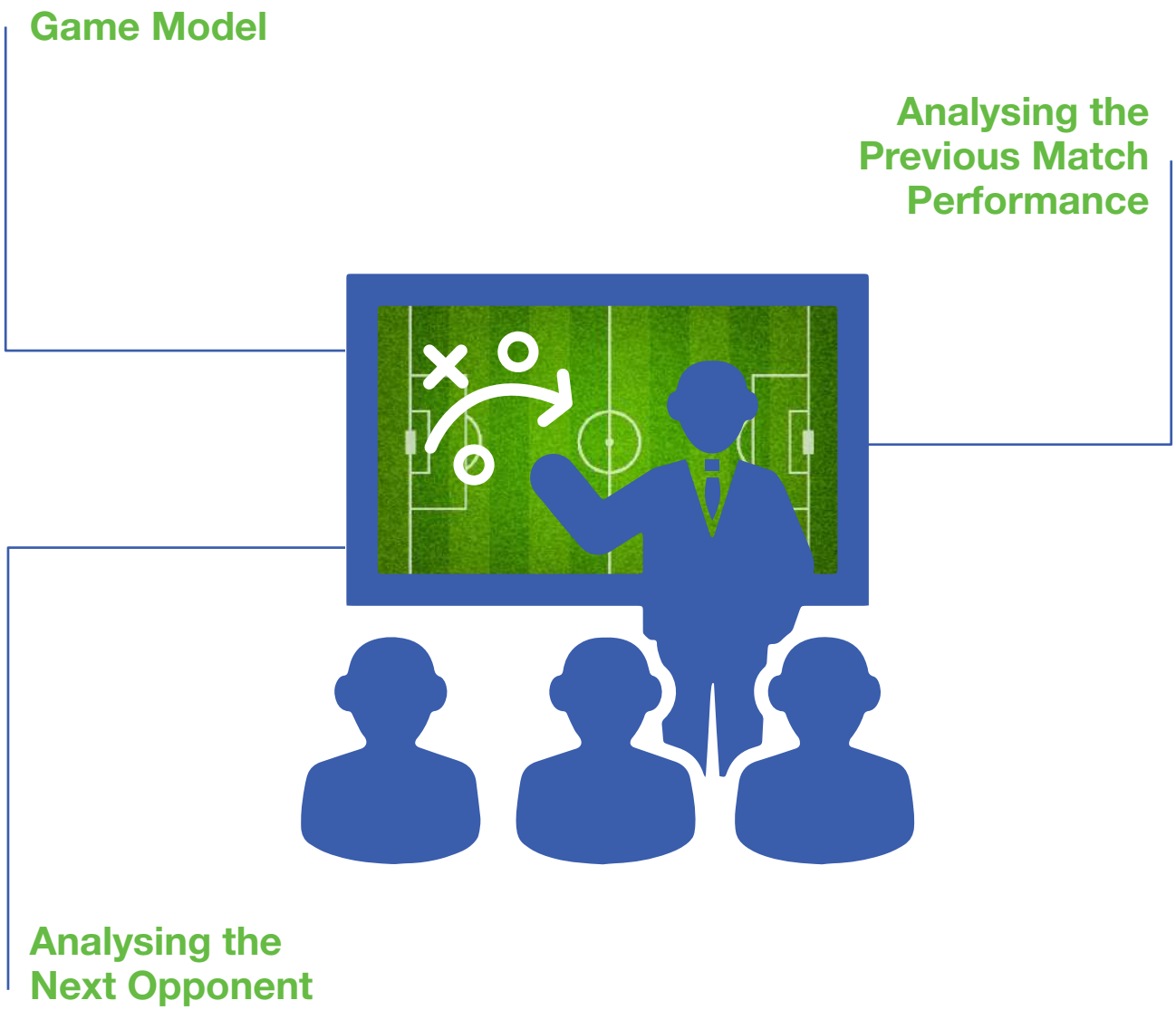
ANALYSING THE PREVIOUS MATCH PERFORMANCE AND THE NEXT OPPONENT

ANALYSING THE PREVIOUS MATCH PERFORMANCE AND THE NEXT OPPONENT

As has been previously mentioned, preparing the weekly training pattern is based on continuous interactions between the game model, the performance of the team in the previous match (whether good or bad), and the characteristics of the next opponent.

The objectives therefore consider the problems the team showed in the previous match and those they will likely experience in the upcoming match.

Factors to Take into Account When Setting Weekly Objectives
(adapted from Gomes, M. 2006)



ANALYSING THE PREVIOUS MATCH PERFORMANCE

ANALYSING THE PREVIOUS MATCH PERFORMANCE: ATTACKING PHASE EXAMPLE

The diagram shows the correct positioning that we require for this phase. The centre backs (4 & 5) are in good positions to receive from the goalkeeper and the full backs (2 & 3) and wingers (7 & 11) are in wide positions to make the pitch as big as possible.

However, for our example analysis of the attacking phase in a previous match this was not done correctly. When our team had possession, we discovered the following positioning errors:

- The defensive sector was not well positioned to play out from the back.
- Our wingers' starting positions were, most of the time, too far inside (reducing the width).

ANALYSING THE PREVIOUS MATCH PERFORMANCE: TRANSITION FROM ATTACK TO DEFENCE EXAMPLE

This is an example from our analysis of the transition from attack to defence in a previous match. When our team lost the ball, we discovered the following positioning errors:

- When the team gave the ball away, the defensive sector did not push up from back to front properly.
- Therefore, the space between the defensive line and the midfield line allowed the opposition to play into this space (between the lines).

The diagram shows the opposition centre back (5) easily being able to play a forward pass into the space between the lines and there is a potential 4 v 4 situation for the opposition's attack.

If the defensive line had pushed up as they were instructed to do, this space wouldn't have been available.

ANALYSING THE PREVIOUS MATCH PERFORMANCE: DEFENSIVE PHASE EXAMPLE

This is an example from our analysis of the defensive phase in a previous match. When our team were out of possession, we discovered the following positioning errors:

- Following on from our comments about the transition from attack to defence, during the defensive phase, our team did not close down the spaces well.
- Despite closing the spaces well across the width of the pitch when we didn't have the ball, the defensive sector (defensive line) was generally too far away from the midfield line and thus created space between the midfield and defensive lines.
- The space between the midfield and defensive lines was exploited with opposition players able to receive in the space between the lines and turn. This lead to situations with a numerical superiority or equality for the opposition when they would attack.

The diagram shows how the team should have positioned themselves in the last game. The team are more compact as a whole and the defensive line is much higher.

The collective pressure with the correct distances between the players and lines (sectors) forces the opposition's left back to pass backwards to the centre back. From this point, every player in our team moves forward and across to apply collective pressure and reduce the space available for the opposition to play.

ANALYSING THE PREVIOUS MATCH PERFORMANCE: TRANSITION FROM DEFENCE TO ATTACK EXAMPLE

This is an example from our analysis of the transition from defence to attack in a previous match. When our team won the ball, we discovered the following errors:

- When the team won the ball, they rarely made passes in behind the opposition's defensive line.
- The team chose mostly to play in a safe way, so we missed many opportunities to counter attack.

The diagram shows an example of the situation described. Our left winger (blue 11) wins the ball from his direct opponent and is free to play a pass. He decides to choose a safety by passing back to the central midfielder (8). The team do retrain possession but have failed to exploit a potentially advantageous position. This is shown with the blue passing arrows.

We would prefer our players to behave differently in this situation. The opposition are temporarily disorganised and there is space to exploit behind the defensive line before they are able to regroup.

The yellow passing arrows show how No.11 could easily pass the ball in behind as soon as he wins the ball.

No.11 has 2 options which could lead directly to a goal scoring opportunity:

1. Pass in between the 2 red centre backs (4 and 5) for the run of the blue forward (9). He can receive with a 1 v 1 situation against the goalkeeper and score.
2. Pass up the line for No.10 to run onto. When No.10 receives he may be able to dribble into the box, or alternatively cross/pass into the box for No.9 to finish.

ANALYSING THE NEXT OPPONENT

ANALYSING THE NEXT OPPONENT: ATTACKING PHASE EXAMPLE

ANALYSIS: We take into account the previous match performance when outlining the objectives of our weekly plan, but these objectives must also consider the characteristics of our next opponent. If we study and understand our next opposition's patterns in each phase of the game, we can define some strategic objectives to nullify their strengths and exploit their weaknesses.

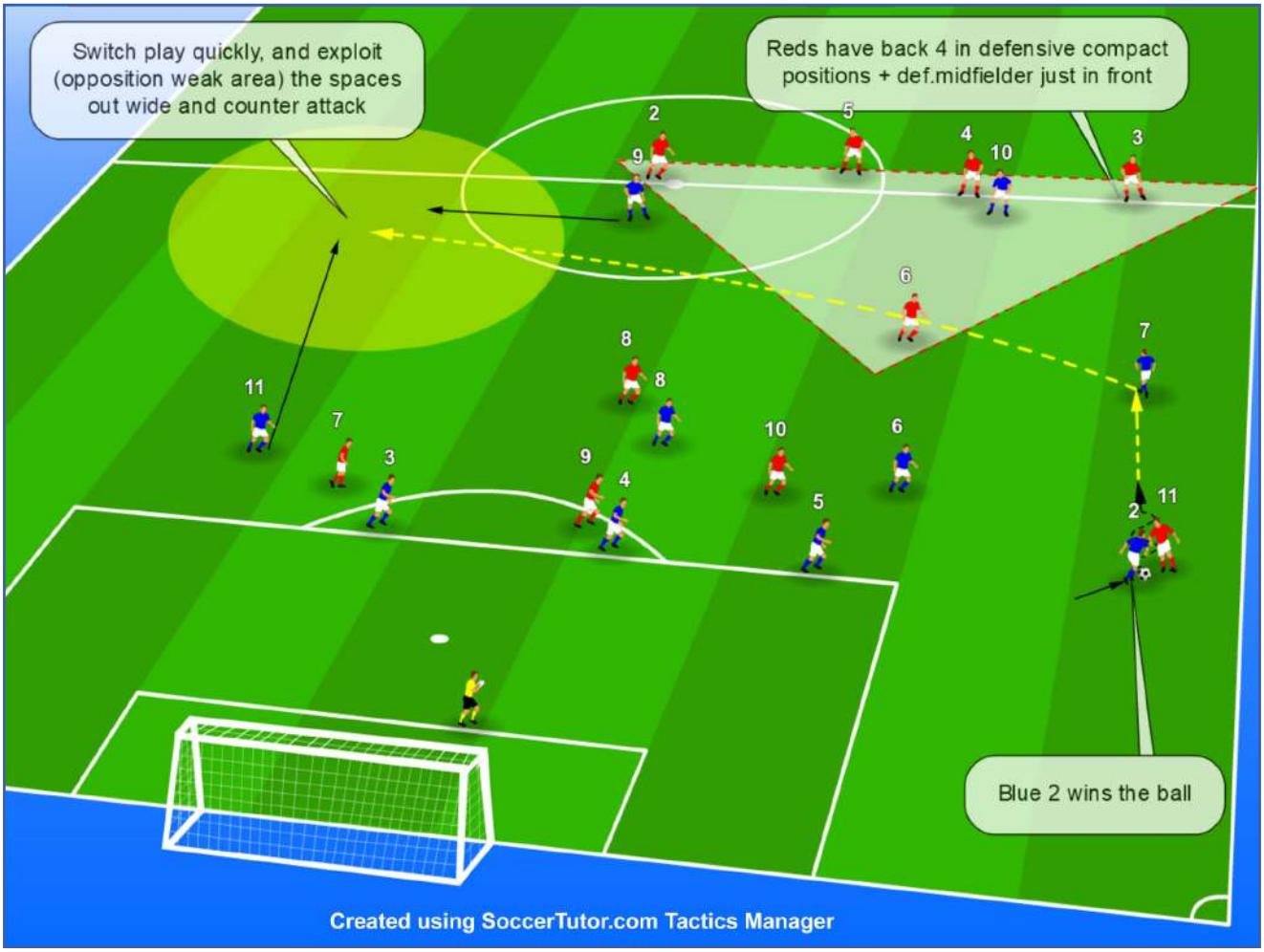
For example, our next opponent plays in a classic flat 4-4-2 midfield structure, with 3 lines of depth and the following characteristics in the attacking phase:

- When building up play, they don't use short passes into midfield and consistently show a pattern of direct play.
- Their forwards remain in high positions up against the centre backs and the team use long diagonal passes to exploit the space in behind the defensive line.
- When they have possession, they will systematically try long diagonal passes for the 2 forwards to run onto. These passes are often played by the defenders.

OUR TACTICS: When we are in the defensive phase, our defenders need to be constantly aware of these long passes, making sure to drop off when necessary and track the runs of the 2 forwards.

Our midfield and forward players also need to be aware, making sure to press the ball carrier and deny them time and space to get their head up and play an accurate long pass.

ANALYSING THE NEXT OPPONENT: TRANSITION FROM ATTACK TO DEFENCE EXAMPLE



ANALYSIS: In this example, we analyse our next opposition and study their tactics in the transition from attack to defence.

As shown in the diagram, their left winger (11) loses the ball to the blue full back (2).

When losing the ball in these situations, they have the following tactics:

- When they lose the ball, they do not react with aggressiveness and commit many players to the ball zone to try and win the ball back quickly.
- Instead, they focus on keeping many players behind the line of the ball (balance with back four and a defensive midfielder - No.6). This is shown by the highlighted area in the diagram - they have a compact and organised defence with a numerical advantage at the back.

OUR TACTICS: When we are in the transition from defence to attack, it will be difficult to exploit this opposition in a central area after winning the ball, as they will have a numerical advantage and a compact defence, which is able to press and cover.

Instead we must focus on their weaker areas. The wingers and one central midfielder are often in advanced positions when this team lose the ball, so usually leave gaps that are not properly compensated for.

If our team can switch play quickly, and exploit the spaces out wide, we can launch successful counter attacks.

ANALYSING THE NEXT OPPONENT: DEFENSIVE PHASE EXAMPLE

ANALYSIS: In this example, our next opponent defends in a compact 4-4 formation and leave their 2 forwards in advanced positions. After analysis, these are the key aspects we discovered from their defensive phase:

- When they do not have the ball, they start defending in a deep defensive block with 2 lines of 4. The players keep close distances between each other.
- They experience some problems when the opposition circulate the ball quickly and switch the play.
- We also noticed a weakness with their left back's reactions and positioning. When the team shifts across to one side and are close to each other in a compact formation, the left back (3) would often stay in their position to mark his direct opponent (blue winger No.7 in diagram).
- If a team is able to switch the play quickly, as the blues do in the diagram, a large gap is left between the red centre back (4) and the left back (3). This means that there is space to exploit in the centre - the forwards can time their runs to receive inside the box with a great goal scoring opportunity.

OUR TACTICS: When we are in the attacking phase, we will be faced by a compact block. We should concentrate on playing high tempo football, switching the play quickly from one side to the other.

If transferring the ball from left to right, we can also then take advantage of the left back's poor positioning to play through the centre and into the penalty area.

ANALYSING THE NEXT OPPONENT: TRANSITION FROM DEFENCE TO ATTACK EXAMPLE

ANALYSIS: In this example, we analyse our next opposition's tactics when they win the ball (transition from defence to attack):

- Firstly, the red team leave their 2 forwards up in the defensive phase, ready for potential counter attacks.
- When they win the ball, they try to play deep diagonal passes over their opponent's defence to try and get in behind quickly with the fast movements of their forwards.
- So, this team does not worry about playing short/ medium passes (or dribbling) out of the "pressure zone" to then launch a counter attack with supporting runners. Instead, they look to play a riskier game with long passes and direct counter attacks.

OUR TACTICS: When we are in the transition from attack to defence against this team, our centre backs must be aware to drop off as soon as possession is lost and track the forwards who will make runs in behind.

Our defensive midfielder (6) and full backs (2 and 3) must also track back quickly to create a numerical advantage in defence.

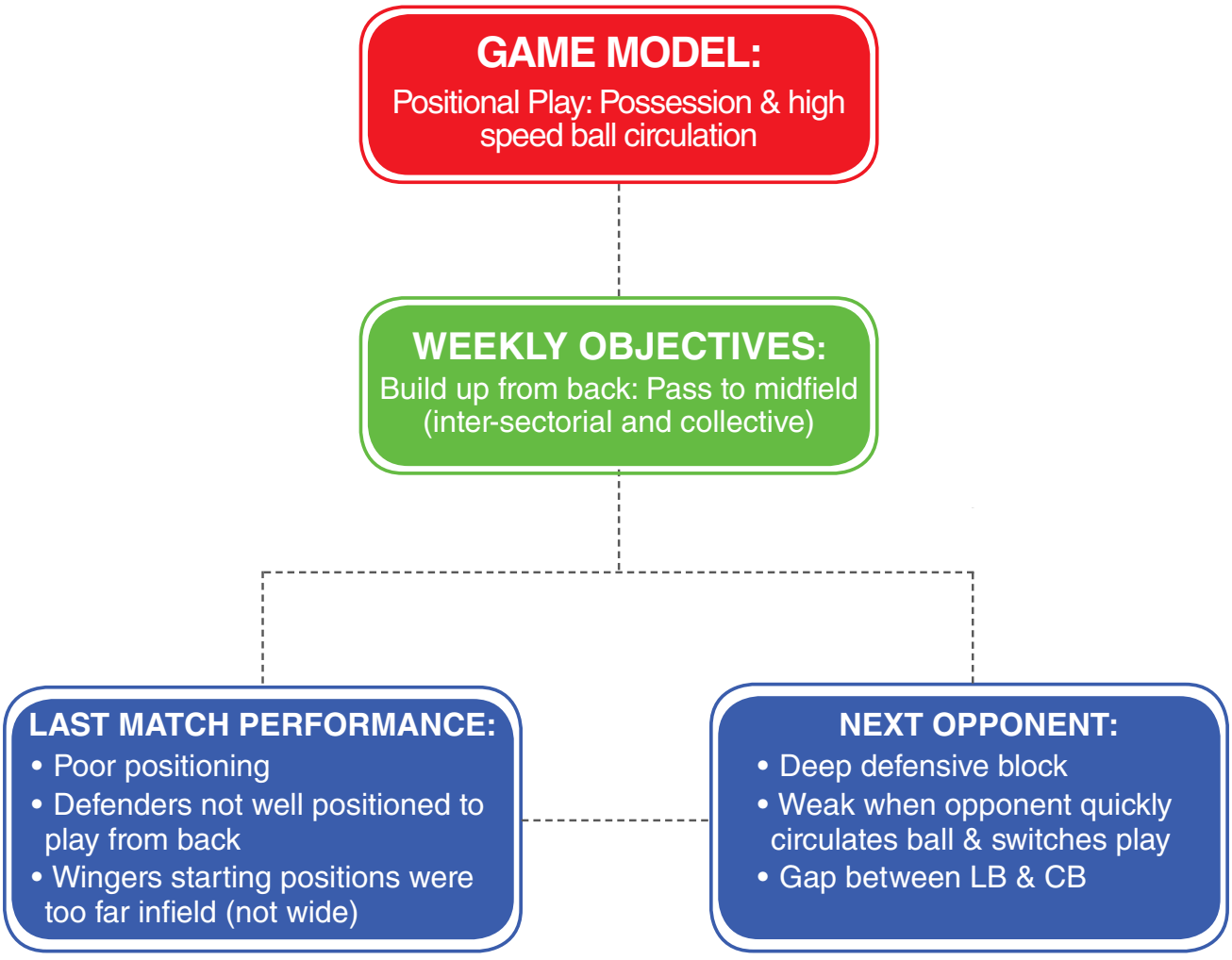
In addition, our goalkeeper needs to be in an advanced position so he is able to act as a sweeper if necessary.

CHAPTER 7

WEEKLY TRAINING OBJECTIVES

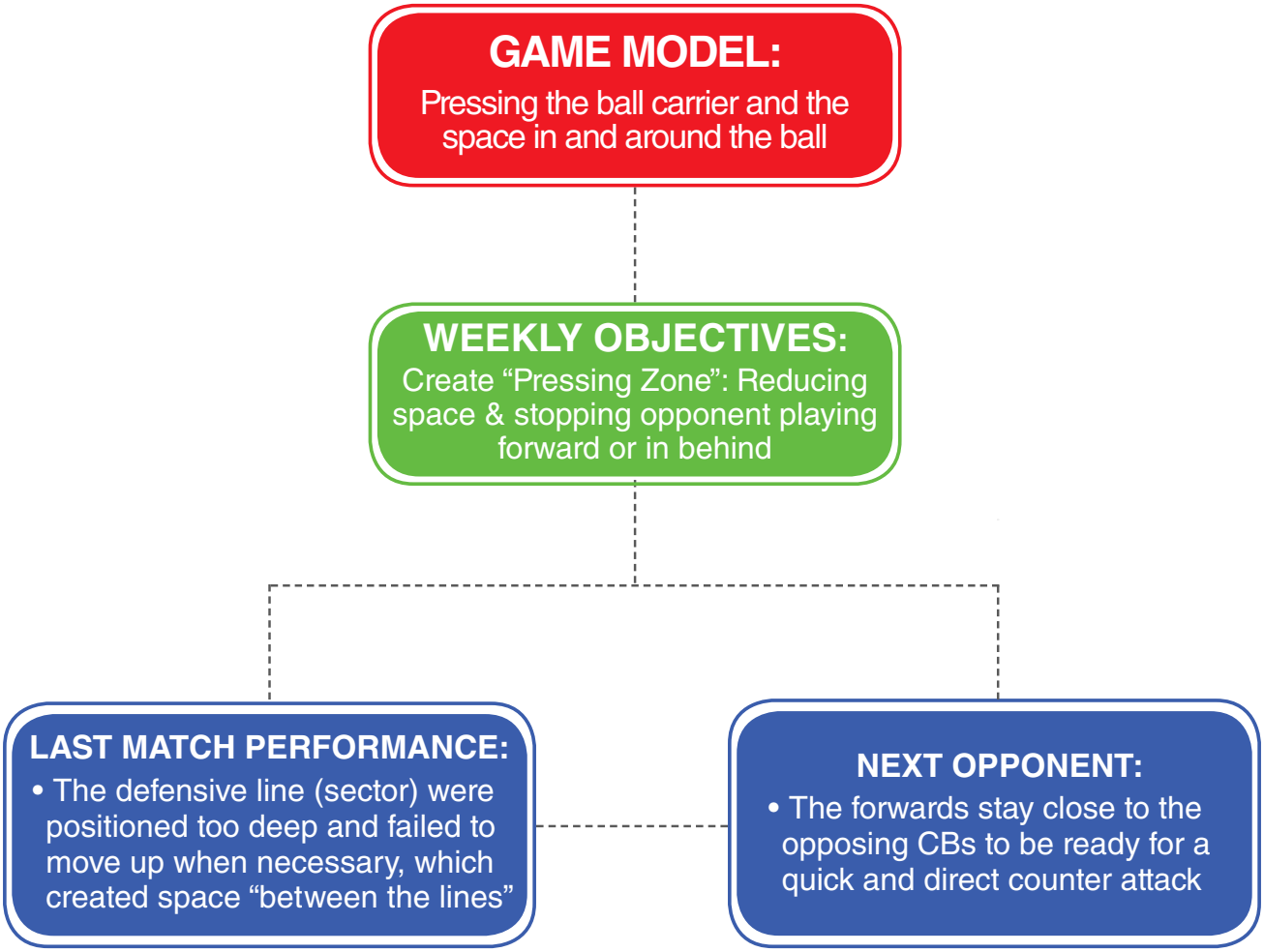
WEEKLY TRAINING OBJECTIVES: ATTACKING PHASE EXAMPLE

After taking into account our analysis of the previous match performance and our next opposition's tactics (see the previous chapter), the diagram below outlines our weekly training objectives for the attacking phase:



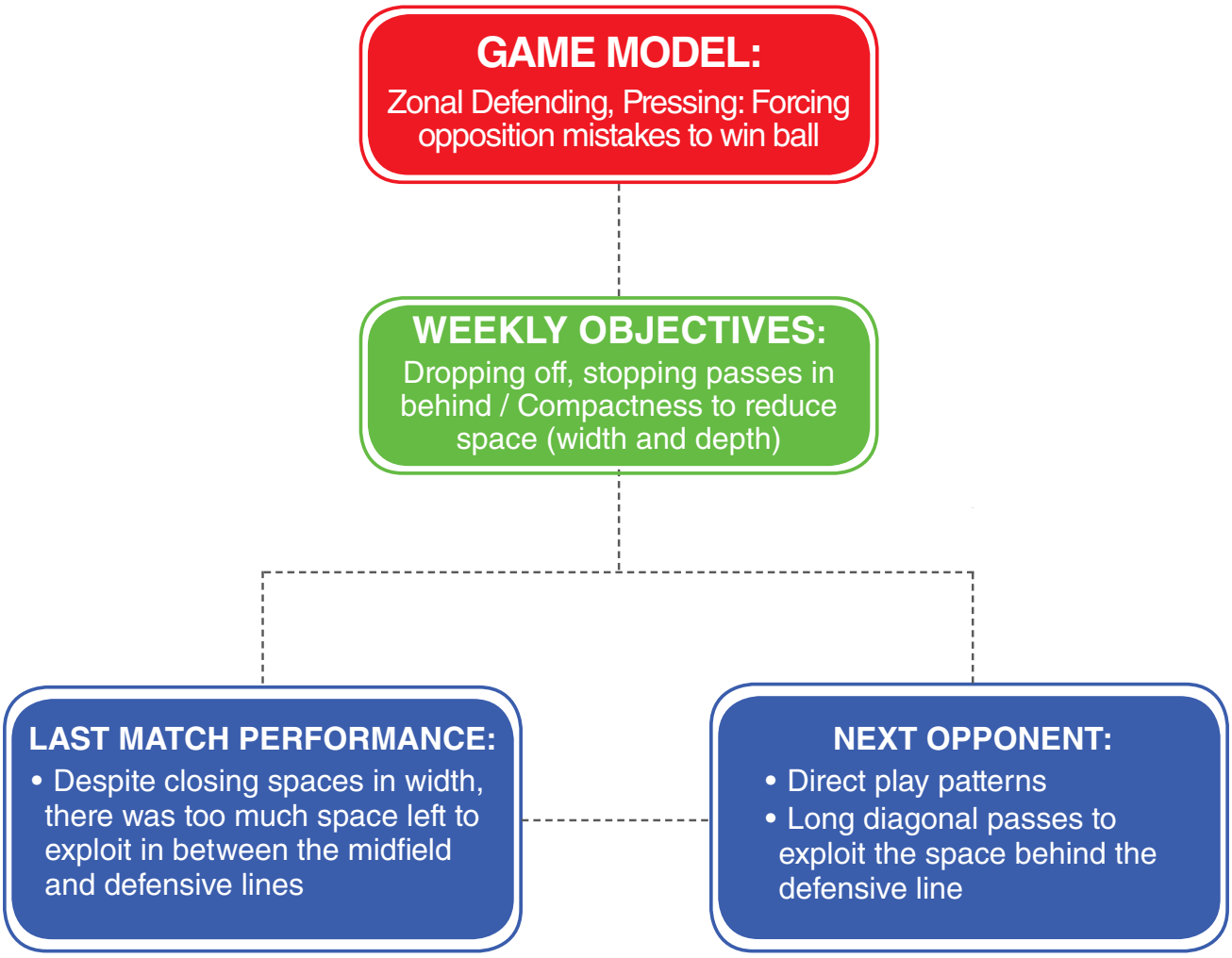
WEEKLY TRAINING OBJECTIVES: TRANSITION FROM ATTACK TO DEFENCE EXAMPLE

After taking into account our analysis of the previous match performance and our next opposition's tactics (see the previous chapter), the diagram below outlines our weekly training objectives for the transition from attack to defence:



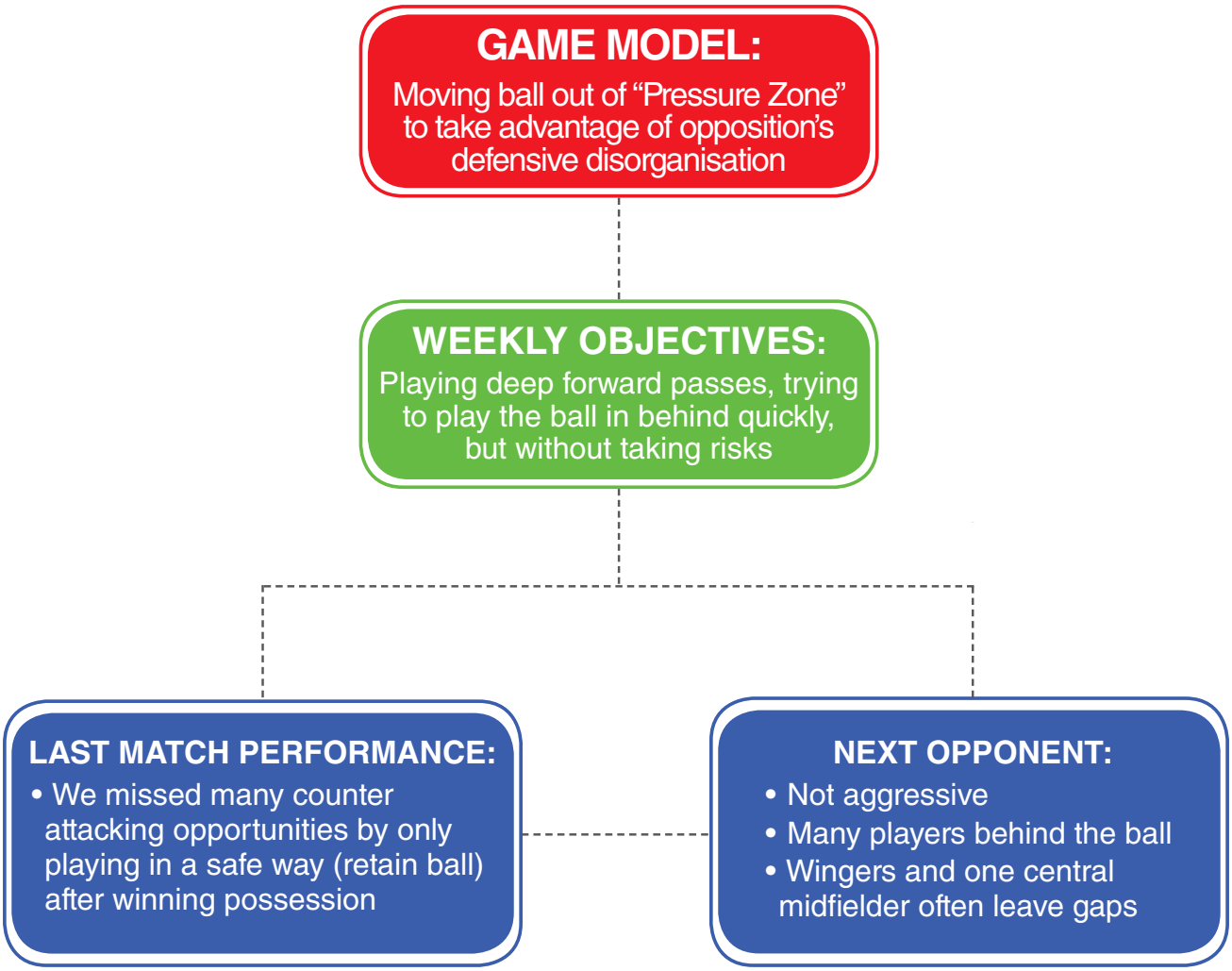
WEEKLY TRAINING OBJECTIVES: DEFENSIVE PHASE EXAMPLE

After taking into account our analysis of the previous match performance and our next opposition's tactics (see the previous chapter), the diagram below outlines our weekly training objectives for the defensive phase:



WEEKLY TRAINING OBJECTIVES: TRANSITION FROM DEFENCE TO ATTACK EXAMPLE

After taking into account our analysis of the previous match performance and our next opposition's tactics (see the previous chapter), the diagram below outlines our weekly training objectives for the transition from defence to attack:



RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE GAME MODEL AND THE WEEKLY TRAINING OBJECTIVES

Attacking Phase

- Building up play from the back with the aim of passing to the midfield line (intersectorial and collective).
- Switching play (from side to side) to the free man outside in a wide position.

Transition from Attack to Defence

- Create "Pressure Zone" by pressing the ball carrier and the space in and around the ball.
- Mark the potential receivers and stop the opponent from playing forward and in behind our defensive line.
- Quickly reduce the space available in width and depth.

Defensive Phase

- Dropping off, preventing the opposition from playing in behind our defensive line.
- Compactness (reduce space in width and depth).

Transition from Defence to Attack

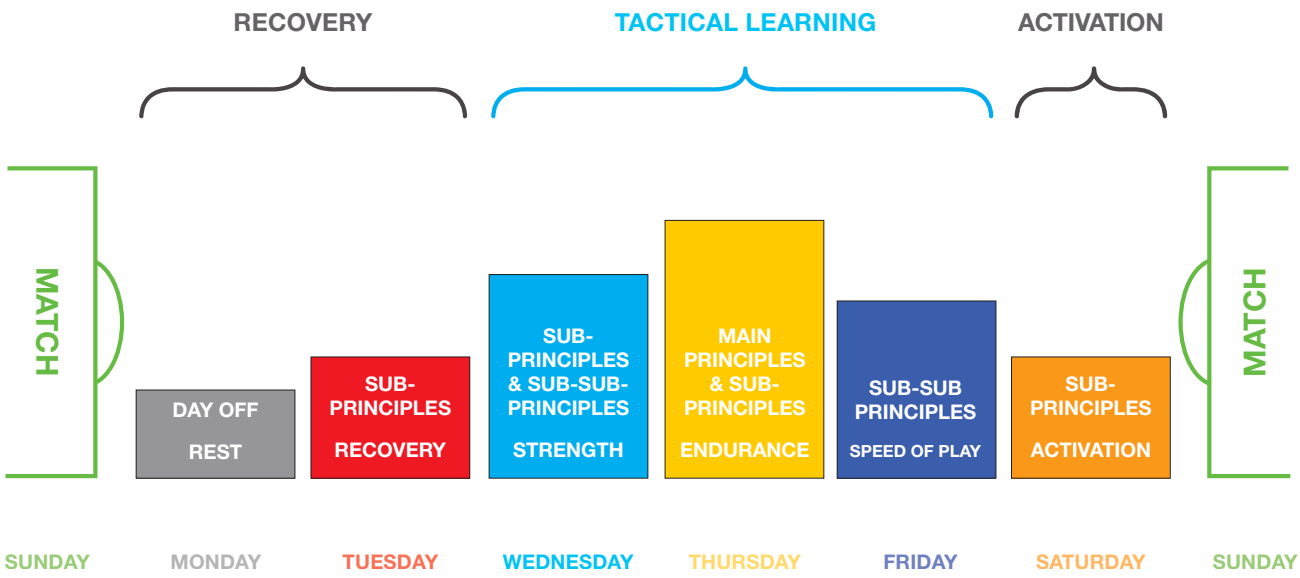
- Playing forward quickly and in behind the defensive line to take advantage of the opposition's temporary disorganised defence.
- Although we don't want the players to just play safe, they should not take unnecessary risks.

CHAPTER 8

STANDARD WEEKLY TRAINING PATTERN

STANDARD WEEKLY TRAINING PATTERN (1 MATCH)

(Adapted from Oliveira, G. 2007)



For Tactical Periodization, the weekly pattern is the planning unit and framework that guides the organisation of all the training content.

The main factors influencing these decisions are our **Game Model** and its **Principles of Play**, our last competitive performance and our predictions for the next game.

The most relevant methodological principles that influence the design of the weekly pattern are the:

- **Principle of Horizontal Alternation in Specificity** (see page XX)
- **Principle of Conditioned Practices** (see page XX)
- **Principle of Complex Progression** (see page XX)

In the same way, it is also very important to consider the **Principle of Tactical Fatigue** (see page XX), as well as the relationship between the complexity of the tactical principles and the subsequent fitness demands, because these will affect the structure of the training day.

Complexity (see page XX) progresses through the week, taking into account the proximity of the previous and upcoming games, so the team can always train at the maximal relative intensity of concentration. The further from a competitive match the team is, the more complex the training session will be, tactically speaking.

This is the training schedule for a week with one competitive game (fully explained on following pages):

- **SUNDAY:** Match Day
- **MONDAY:** Passive Recovery / Day off
- **TUESDAY:** Active Recovery (Strategic Training)
- **WEDNESDAY:** Medium Learning of Game Model (Strength)
- **THURSDAY:** Higher / Main Learning of Game Model (Endurance)
- **FRIDAY:** Lower Learning of Game Model (Speed of Play)
- **SATURDAY:** Pre-game Activation (Strategic Training)

* *To understand **Fractality, please see page XX).***

SUNDAY: MATCH DAY

With such a tight competition calendar, recovery starts in the match. In our team, we play more than sixty games per season, which I consequently take into account and factor into my game model. I want my team to be able to rest on the ball, but to do so, we need to have very good positional play, with a rational space occupation and the ability to keep possession, even without progress.

Therefore, the aim is to possess the ball in order to rest, but to achieve that level of control over the match requires training — **José Mourinho** (Amieiro et al., 2006).

Competition is a fundamental phase in the training process. In the Tactical Periodization approach, training is not separated from competition, because it allows us to analyse what has been accomplished regarding the intended game model. Therefore, training and competition are part of the same objective — the development of a specific style of play.

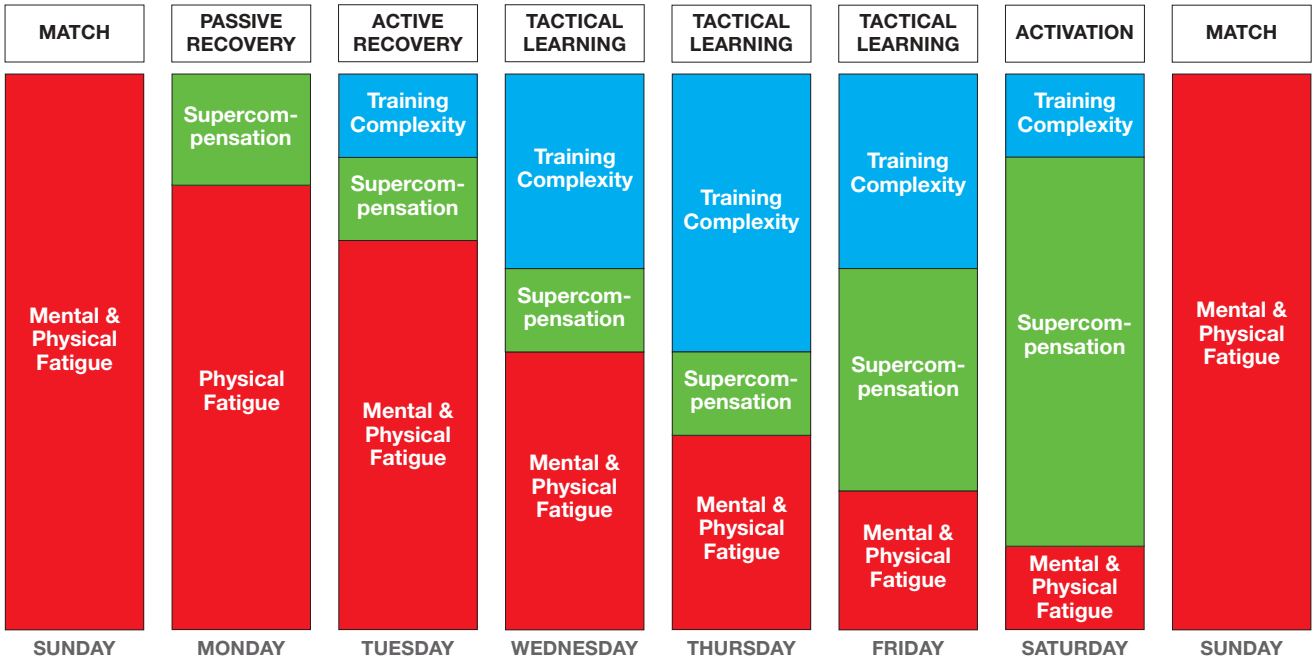
Competition can make great demands due to having to manage the problems that the opposition provide and achieving our objectives. However, we do not believe it is the most demanding time. Some matches can be relatively comfortable, because we can play in our preferred way. Therefore, the requirements suit our patterns of play, which our players and team are already adapted to (specific adaptations).

Imagine a team that is characterised by taking the initiative with the ball, high levels of ball possession, fast play with short passing and support actions, and considerable mobility (interchanging positions). In a given match, they can impose their style of play and spend most of the match playing within these patterns.

However, in the next match, they face an opponent that takes the initiative on the ball and prevents our team from using its style of play. Consequently, our team spends most of its time defending. In this situation, our team has to play differently to what it is used to, and as a result, the physical requirements and load are completely different. Other factors such as weather conditions, pitch dimensions and surface, score line, and the kind of competition (e.g. League or cup) can also affect the style of play and create different demands of the team and its players during the match.

In such examples, we see that a match's requirements can be either maximal or sub-maximal, so in the Tactical Periodization approach, competitive matches should always be related to the concept of specificity.

MONDAY: PASSIVE RECOVERY / DAY OFF



The diagram above shows the following during a typical football week:

- **Mental and Physical Fatigue** per day.
- Level of mental concentration required on each training day (**Training Complexity**). This is low during recovery and activation, and high in the middle of the training week.
- **Supercompensation** (the post-training period in which the players' function/parameter have a higher performance capacity than they did prior to the training period).

We allow our players to have complete rest on the Monday after Sunday's game. Therefore, there is no training complexity and no added mental fatigue.

Central Fatigue (mental) is the most relevant in football. It appears as a result of being constantly concentrated, both individually and collectively, such as having to react and to coordinate our movements when we give the ball away (**José Mourinho** in Amieiro et al., 2006).

Recovery is crucial both during the week and in each training session, because it is needed to fully take in our principles of play. Before starting each practice/repetition, players need to be ready to maximise their learning. This is why Tactical Periodization breaks down each practice into a more or less discontinuous series i.e. 4 x 6 minutes, instead of 1 x 24 minutes.

According to **José Mourinho** (in Amieiro et al., 2006), if his team has only one game in a week, Monday is his team's day off. From a physiological point of view, it would probably be better to do a recovery session. From a psychological perspective, however, it is better to let the players relax, spend time with their family and friends, and generally "switch off" for a day.

Tuesday will be our first training session if the last game was on Sunday.

From Wednesday until the next game, we start working on the tactical-technical aspects, going from more general principles to more specific ones related to the next opponent.

Therefore, we start by working on the fundamental aspects of our game model, the ones we train every week. We finish the week by working on the tactical and positional details.

On Saturday, we start taking into account the strategic side, but this is more theoretical with a low level of opposed pressure or unopposed practices.

If we have two games in the week, we train the "main principles" in the session before the match, but only very briefly and through theoretical lectures and video presentations.

TUESDAY: ACTIVE RECOVERY (STRATEGIC TRAINING)

The aim is to train the SUB-PRINCIPLES OF PLAY of our game model (sectorial and intersectorial).

This **"Active Recovery"** practice example is working on building up play from the back and positional play. For the full description, please see page 191.

The fact that the aim of the session is to recover does not mean that I do not work on the tactical aspects of my game model. Instead of doing low-intensity runs, I apply the same principle but from a tactical-technical perspective. I do positional games where only the players defending (normally the substitutes from previous match) are making a significant effort. Players on the ball do only short supporting movements, just to recover in a specific way (**José Mourinho** in Amieiro et al., 2006).

On Tuesday, two days after the match, the concern shifts toward active recovery. Consequently, the fitness demands are very low compared to those of a match.

In addition, the emotional load is also considerably reduced (maximally relative). In line with this idea, **José Mourinho** (in Amieiro et al,, 2006) states that in his opinion, "It is more important to properly manage central (mental) fatigue rather than physical fatigue", because he believes that "When there is central fatigue, players cannot concentrate enough, so the quality of their decisions are diminished."

We approach the training session with the aim of either reflecting on what happened in the previous match or predicting what we'll face in the next one.

To clarify this idea, Guilherme Oliveira (2006) gives a concrete example: "I know that in the next game, our opponent's forwards prefer to let defenders build up through the full backs (closing down the central channel). So, I'm going to prepare my team to have different solutions to solve the problems that could potentially happen in the next game by training how to build up though the wide channels."

Therefore, in the Tactical Periodization approach, we start to prepare for the next game from the first training day (strategic vision). However, "the strategic side must be linked to the way we play without creating interference to our principles of play." (Oliveira G., 2006)

In this approach, the coach tries to analyse what was lacking in the last game and anticipate certain regularities and patterns in the next opponent, so they can prepare the team and players to deal with them. Above all, though, the coach still gives priority to the style of play.

The training practices on this day will be very discontinuous with frequent breaks to allow the players to recover in a specific way. Guilherme Oliveira (2006) explains, "We promote specific actions as per our style of play but with a very large reduction in the speed, strength and endurance demands. We also develop our sub-principles of play, but in a recovery regime."

As mentioned already, recovery is not restricted to fitness factors; it also relates to reductions in concentration. We therefore propose the following:

- Collective situations, where the line up from the last game (i.e., players that played for more than 45 minutes) will train together.
- The area of play will be large (e.g. 2/3 or 3/4 of the pitch), and we can design either unopposed or very overloaded practices with a low degree of difficulty.
- We involve a large number of players (e.g. 6 v 0, 11 v 0, 7 v 3, 11 v 4) but keep specific active recovery as the main fitness concern.
- The duration of each repetition will be short (from 30 seconds to 3 minutes) with constant breaks between intermittent-discontinuous (stop-start) situations.

In line with this, Carvalhal (2001) concludes that the best way to recover is to "stimulate the same structures that support our game model but reduce the space of play, length of time and required concentration."

Therefore, each training session, even when our aim is to recover, needs to be related to our style of play.

WEDNESDAY: MEDIUM LEARNING OF GAME MODEL ("TECHNICAL STRENGTH")

In Wednesday's session, the main concern is that the recovery of the players and team is not yet complete. Tactically speaking, we mainly train our SUB-PRINCIPLES & SUB-SUB-PRINCIPLES OF PLAY and focus on the players' action in terms of sectorial and intersectorial relationships.

This **"Technical Strength"** example works on reducing time/space available for our opponents in the negative transition. For the full description, please see page 197.

From experience, I acknowledge that the three days after the game, players are still not fully recovered, especially emotionally. If we played on Sunday, in Wednesday's session we train what I call "Technical Strength" (**José Mourinho** in Amieiro et al., 2006).

Therefore, we break up the collective complexity into scaled-down situations with small numbers of players and highly opposed situations (1 v 1, 2 v 2, 3 v 3, 4 v 4, & 5 v 5). We will use a small area to play in and a short duration (30 seconds to 3 minutes).

Our training will be situations where the dominant fitness capacity is specific strength, promoting the following:

- **Speed of Execution**
- **Acceleration**
- **Deceleration**
- **Changes of Direction**
- **Tackling**
- **Shooting**

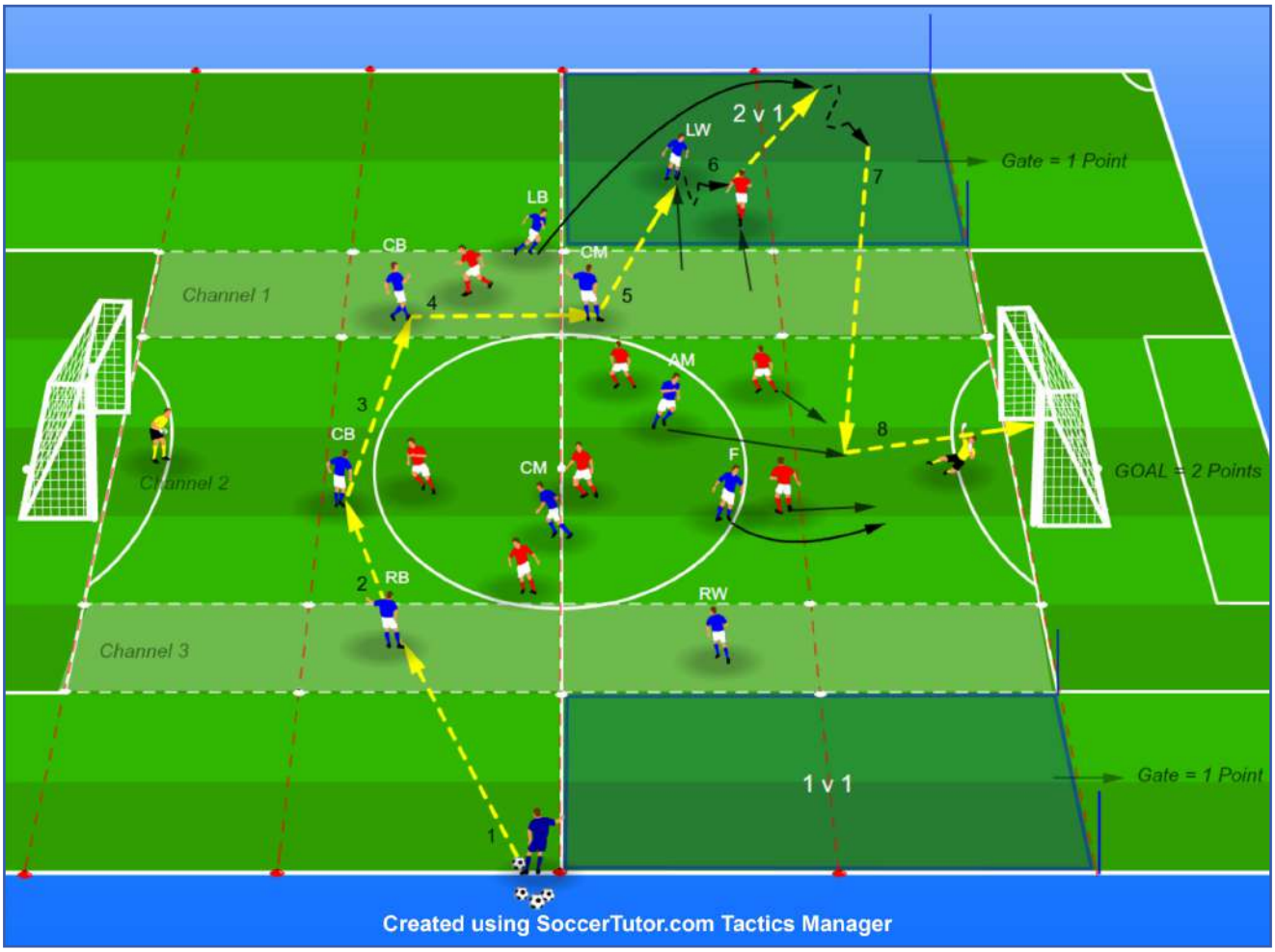
In addition, there will be frequent breaks to allow high quality execution and decision-making: very intermittent-discontinuous (stop-start) situations.

We also need to consider that on the following day (Thursday), we will focus on the key principles of our game model, and the complete mental recovery of our players will be essential for them to improve their performance on this main learning day.

Consequently, we need to avoid our players getting too mentally fatigued on Wednesday. To achieve this, we split up our style of play into smaller situations where the mental requirements are less than competitive matches.

THURSDAY: HIGHER / MAIN LEARNING OF GAME MODEL (ENDURANCE)

Thursday is the furthest removed day from a match, in terms of the previous and upcoming match, so we focus on more complex situations - MAIN PRINCIPLES OF PLAY and some related SUB-PRINCIPLES. Requirements are similar to a competitive match, so we work on improving our collective organisation.



This **"Fully Competitive"** practice example is working on building up play from the back and creating overloads. For the full description, please see page 203.

On this day of our weekly standard pattern, we focus on training in large spaces. However, we do not use the whole pitch, as we want to create situations with increased amounts of desired player actions and tactical behaviours (**José Mourinho** in Amieiro et al., 2006).

It is essential to create situations where we involve coordination, synchronisation and harmony in all the sectors of the team (defenders, midfielders and forwards). Therefore, the practices on Thursday will promote efforts more representative of a competitive match (specific endurance) than the other training days, with a high density of collective movements e.g. Pressing, switching play, dropping off etc. We will create highly opposed situations with the following conditions:

- Large number of players
  (7 v 7, 8 v 8, 9 v 9, 11 v 7, 11 v 11 etc)
- The playing area will be large e.g. Half to 3/4 pitch
- Longest repetitions of 3–6 minutes because this is the day of the week where training is the least stop-start, with less recovery moments needed.

As a result of all these factors (tactical and physical), it will be the training session with the greatest physical load and emotional distress. The players will need high levels of concentration and intensity throughout.

FRIDAY: LOWER LEARNING OF GAME MODEL (SPEED OF PLAY)

On Friday, we train SUB-SUB-PRINCIPLES OF PLAY. We break our 'style of play' down into smaller pieces, working on sectorial and intersectorial actions. We work to improve the coordination of each sector of the team separately, with the main tactical-technical concern being the speed of play (decision-making).

For the full description of this practice, see page 207.

"I consider speed as the ability to analyse game situations, to properly process this information, and to execute. It is a context-specific speed, the one that our way of play requests." (**José Mourinho** in Amieiro et al., 2006)

According to Valdano (2002), there are two kinds of speed in football: 'Speed of play' and 'Running Speed'. According to the same author, speed of play relates to intelligence and the ability to anticipate upcoming actions. He states, "In football, sometimes to be first in a given situation, you need to slow down or even stop." In this sense, he refers to the mental speed that allows players to interpret clues in the game and anticipate an opponent's intentions.

In the same way, Valdano clarifies that in football, 'running speed' needs to be appropriately optimal, which means it is always related to decision-making mechanisms.

The practices involve a medium number of players and overloaded practices with attacking numerical superiority (2 v 1, 4 v 2, 5 v 2, 7 v 3, 8 v 4 and 10 v 6) and unopposed practices (4 v 0, 5 v 0, etc) in a large or medium space.

However, sometimes we can create 8 v 8 or 10 v 10 practices in a small area to force players to decide and move extremely quickly. For time, we perform either very short repetitions (5–30 seconds) or short repetitions (2–3 minutes) when training speed of play. The sessions will be intermittent-discontinuous (with frequent stops), so the endurance demands will be very low. As a result, we will promote different areas and demand less than the previous training session, so the players can recover for the upcoming game (in two days' time). The dominant fitness capacity will be specific speed, promoting faster execution and decision-making (thinking), as well as some specific strength.

SATURDAY: PRE-GAME ACTIVATION (STRATEGIC TRAINING)

The aim on Saturday is essentially to activate the players for the game the next day and recover from previous training sessions by working on some very SIMPLE SUB-PRINCIPLES (Guillerme Oliveira, 2006).

This **"Pre-game Activation"** practice example is working on high speed ball circulation and mobility. For the full description, please see page 210.

On Saturday, the day before competition, we recall the main tactical objectives developed over the week and some sub-principles of play to prepare for the next game. In this sense, we practice some team patterns (collective-strategic actions) that do not require much concentration.

Tactical learning is not a focus on this day - we just want to prepare the team and players well for the next day. This means it will be the most intermittent-discontinuous (with frequent stops) training session of the week, in order to avoid both mental and physical fatigue.

Given this understanding, Guilherme Oliveira (2006) states, "We achieve this recovery through situations that demand specific strength and speed, but both with a much lower density and with extremely short durations compared to the other training sessions of the week."

To do so, we have the following conditions:

- Unopposed, highly overloaded and very-low-demand practices (both physically and mentally).
- Large number of players ((8 v 4, 8 v 6, 11 v 7, 11 v 8 etc)
- Medium and large areas (half pitch and larger).
- Short and medium duration repetitions (30" to 3').

JOSÉ MOURINHO'S STANDARD TRAINING WEEK

(Adapted from Amieiro, N. et al. 2007)

Main Principle of Specificity: Training should be as specific as possible in order to enhance team and player performance during competitive matches.

- **Principle of Disassembly and Hierarchical Organisation of the Principles of Play:**

It is necessary to disassemble (break down) the main principles of play and reduce their complexity. By making them more understandable, the players adapt quicker and perform them better. This reduction process has to be done very carefully, always respecting the style of play (game model). The objective is to separate the main principles into their sub-principles and then integrate them again. From this, we can link the principles to each other and organise them by importance (hierarchically).

A proper hierarchy of the principles of play is needed. Different teams will have different principles e.g. One team may not have technical defenders or midfielders but do have fast forwards, so their organisation of the principles of play may be focused on long passes over the top, which would be very different to a team with technical players that look to always build up play from the back with short passes.

- **Principle of Tactical Fatigue and Tactical Concentration:**

Tactical fatigue relates to players' capacity to focus on the actions that characterise their team's style of play. The game is made up of complex situations which require high degrees of concentration. The game is characterised by high-intensity actions - it therefore makes no sense to train at low intensities, so maximum-intensity training is required, at least relative to the players' level of fatigue on a given day.

- **Principle of Horizontal Alternation in Specificity:**

This principle advocates the need for horizontal alternation (over the days of the week) for the dominant types of muscle contraction, according to differences in strength, duration and speed, but never forgetting the team's specific style of play.

- **Principle of Complex Progression:**

For Tactical Periodization, the concept of progression is built around learning a certain way of playing. It is based on the need to prioritise the principles that are most important to the game model. We need to develop a strategy to build up these principles based on their sub-principles in a way that avoids any interference between them.

This progression appears at three different levels of complexity: During the **SEASON** (the intended game model), throughout the **WEEK** (taking into account the previous and next matches), and finally during each **TRAINING SESSION** (in the practices). It therefore becomes a complex progression where each level is related to the others.

- **Principle of Conditioned Practices:**

The configuration of practices (in terms of space, players, rules, and so on) must be developed in a way that allows the frequent appearance of certain actions - this is what Carvalhal (2001) calls "Conditioned Practices." For example, setting up a practice where a team is under-loaded in its defensive sector and constantly defending, makes actions related to defensive organisation emerge in a progressive way. There will then be many opportunities to "shape" these actions.

- **Principle of Performance Stabilisation:**

Performance stabilisation is achieved by distributing selected content over the week in the same way (in a weekly pattern). We should link this to the principle of complex progression - we are therefore talking about a progression with respect to the aforementioned hierarchy of principles with changing levels of effort over the week (Oliveira et al., 2006).

Planning and periodization in football has to place vital importance on the concept of "Performance Stabilisation" to meet the needs of the long competitive period.

Stabilising at the level of optimum performance is achieved by implementing and maintaining the standard weekly plan.

* Please see **"José Mourinho's Standard Weekly Pattern"** diagram on the next page (Adapted from Amieiro, N. et al. 2007).

Standard Weekly Training Pattern

	SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
	MATCH	DAY OFF (REST)	RECOVERY	TACTICAL LEARNING TRAINING			RECOVERY	MATCH
Principles of play			Sub-principles of play	Sub-principles & sub-sub principles of play	Main & sub-principles of play	Sub-sub principles of play	Simple sub-principles of play	
Training			Very stop-start (discontinuous training)	Very stop-start (discontinuous training)	Less stop-start (more continuous training)	Medium level of discontinuous training	Very stop-start (discontinuous training)	
Physical			Recovery	"Technical Strength"	Endurance	Speed of Play	Activation	
Area of play			Large area of play	Small area of play	Large area of play	Medium area of play	Medium area of play	
Situations			Sectorial & intersectorial situations	Sectorial & intersectorial situations	Collective situations	Sectorial & intersectorial situations	Collective situations	
Number of players			Large number of players	Small number of players	Large number of players	Medium number of players	Large number of players	
Duration			Short duration training (30" - 3')	Short duration training (30" - 3')	Short duration training (3 - 6')	V. short duration training (5 - 30")	V. short duration training (5 - 30")	
Intensity			Relative maximal intensity of concentration	Relative maximal intensity of concentration (see pg. 92)	Relative maximal intensity of concentration (see pg. 92)	Relative maximal intensity of concentration (see pg. 92)	Relative maximal intensity of concentration (see pg. 92)	

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CHAPTER 9

TRAINING SESSIONS (1 MATCH WEEK)

TACTICAL OBJECTIVES EXAMPLE (1 MATCH WEEK)

We always begin each training session with a short video (7-10 min) showing the principles of play we will work on, as well as the animation of the practices. The main goal is to explain the coaching points, the link between the practices and the principles of play we want to improve, in relation to our game model and our next opponent's style of play.

MONDAY
REST (DAY OFF)

TUESDAY
GAME MODEL (IMPROVEMENTS FROM LAST GAME)

- **Building up play from the back**
- Positional play (inter-sectorial and collective)
- Compactness (reducing space in width and depth)

WEDNESDAY
GAME MODEL (TRANSITION PHASES)

- We work on the systematic repetition of our sub-principles and sub-sub-principles of play from our game model
- Lose ball = create a "Pressure Zone" by pressing ball carrier and stopping him from playing forward
- Reduce the space and time the opposition have around the ball zone in the transition to defence
- In transition to attack, play the ball forward quickly to the wingers in space but without great risk

THURSDAY
ATTACKING & DEFENSIVE PHASE

- **Fast ball circulation and switching play to create overloads**
- Zonal defending/pressing - winning the ball by directing and pressing opponents, forcing mistakes

FRIDAY
GAME MODEL (TRANSITION PHASES)

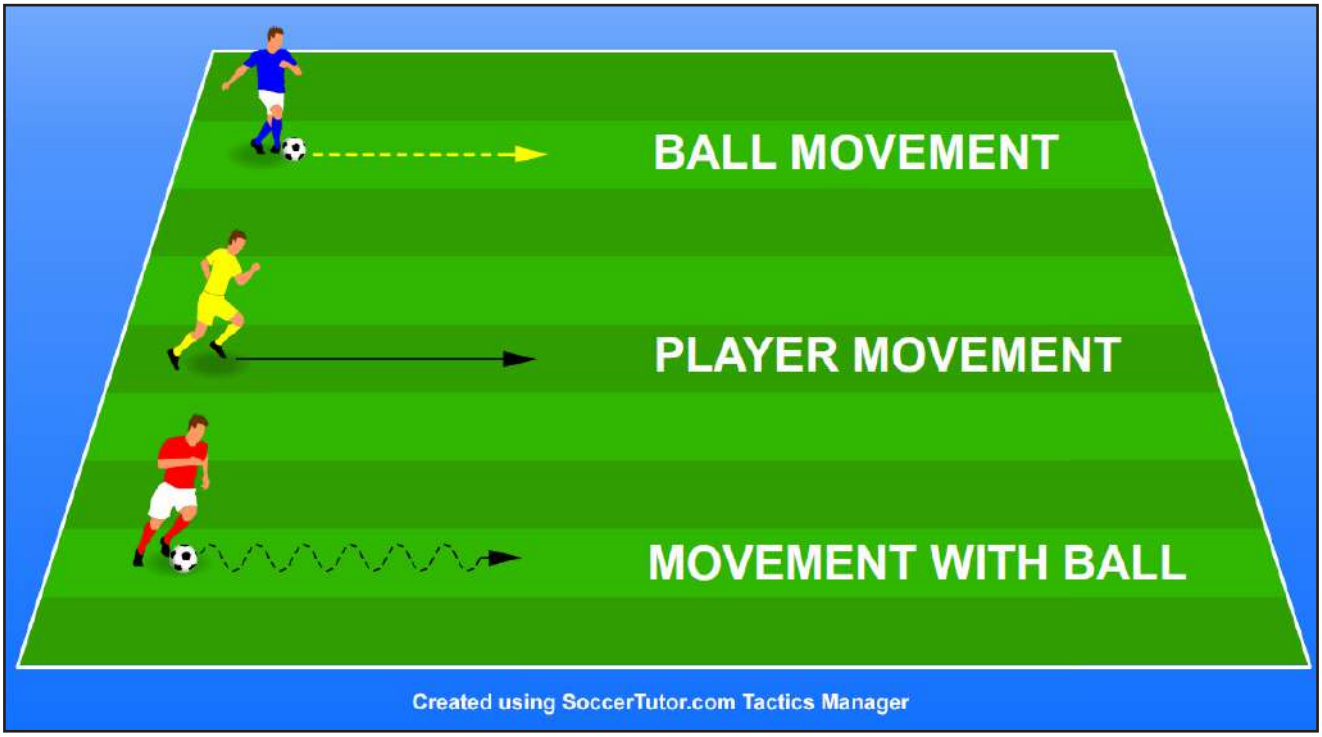
- **Dropping off and tracking runs to stop the opposition receiving in behind our defensive line**
- Play the ball forward quickly to the wingers in space but without great risk

SATURDAY
STRATEGIC DIMENSION (WEEKLY REVIEW)

- We work on the review of sub-principles and sub-sub-principles of play trained during the week
- Fast ball circulation and switching play to create overloads
- Set plays (attacking and defending)

SUNDAY
MATCH DAY

DIAGRAM KEY



PRACTICE FORMAT

Each practice includes clear diagrams with supporting training notes such as:

- Name / Objective of Practice
- Principles of Play / Coaching Points
- Practice Organisation
- Practice Description

TUESDAY: ACTIVE RECOVERY (STRATEGIC TRAINING)

SESSION OBJECTIVES (ATTACKING PHASE):

- Building up play from the back and positional play (intersectorial and collective).
- The defending team focus on compactness (reducing spaces in width and depth).

Practice I (Sectorial): II v 4 Build Up Play from the Back with Passing and Movement Patterns

Sub-Principles of Play

- Playing out from the back.
- Ball circulation & switching play (creating overloads).
- Timing runs to receive in behind the defensive line.
- Compactness (reducing spaces - width and depth).

Sub-Sub-Principles of Play

- Combining different types of passes (short and long).
- Using the correct body shape to support and receive.
- Positional play (triangles to create passing angles).

Practice Organisation

- Time: 5 x 3 minute sets (changing patterns every set, with free option for the final set).
- Numbers: 14 outfield players + 1 GK.
- Coaching breaks: Very often.

Practice Description

- The practice always starts with the goalkeeper, who decides who to play the first pass to.
- The blues use a 4-2-3-1 or 4-3-3 formation and specific passing and movement patterns to build up play, which are determined by the coach and the game model.
- The ball must be passed into all 5 channels before the blues can enter the "Final zone", with a maximum of 2 passes allowed in each channel.
- Once they enter the final zone, they can score in any of the 3 mini goals (1 point), with the aim to time runs to receive in behind the red back 4. All players are free to move into this zone.
- The red back 4 defend by keeping compact (moving together and keeping close distances to each other) with the aim of reducing the space and time available for the blues.
- The red players are free to move out of the "Final Zone" at any time during the practice.
- If the reds win the ball, they play a long pass to the goalkeeper (1 point) and the practice restarts from the goalkeeper.

Practice 2 (Intersectorial): II v 8 Build Up Play from the Back with Passing and Movement Patterns

Sub-Principles of Play

- Playing out from the back.
- Ball circulation & switching play (creating overloads).
- Timing runs to receive behind the defensive line.
- Compactness (reducing spaces - width and depth).

Sub-Sub-Principles of Play

- Combining different types of passes (short and long).
- Using the correct body shape to support and receive.
- Positional play (triangles to create passing angles).

Practice Organisation

- Area: 60 x 65 metres / 65 x 70 yards.
- Time: 5 x 3 minute sets (changing patterns every set, with free option for the final set).
- Numbers: 18 outfield players + 1 GK.
- Coaching breaks: Very often.

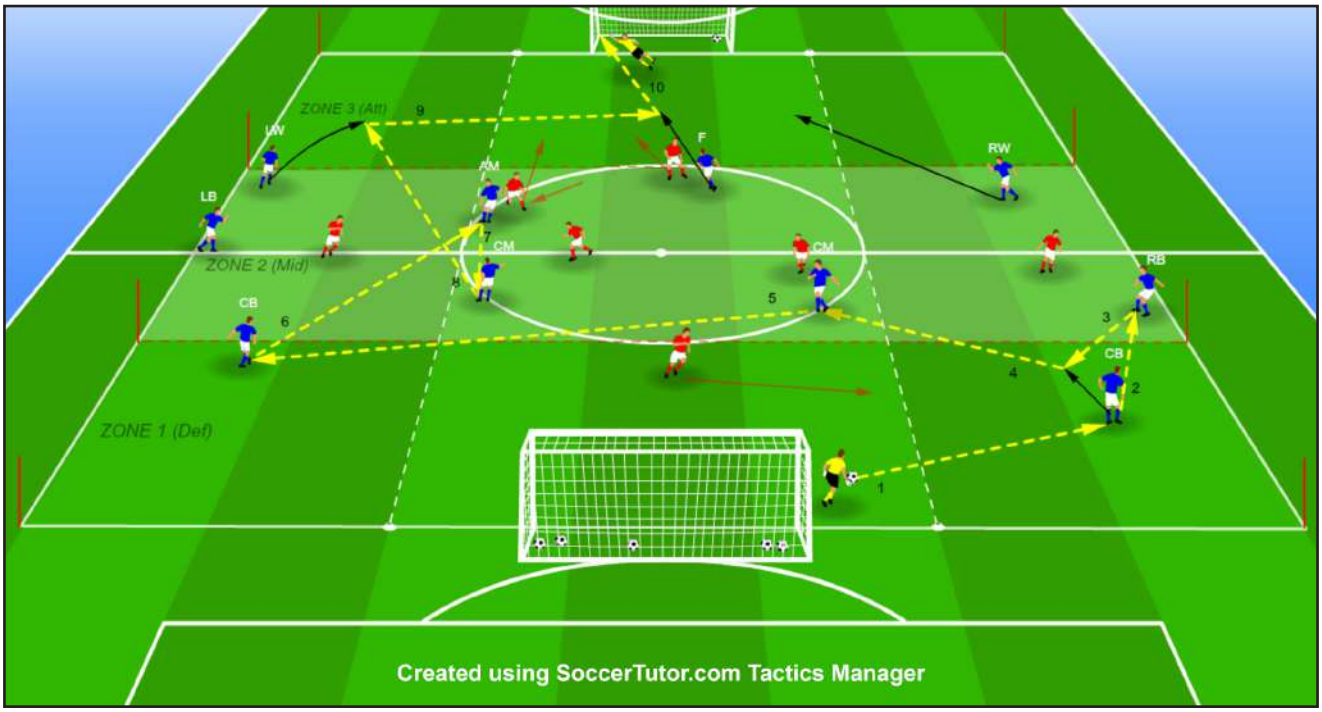
Practice Description

- **Objective**: "Playing in behind the defensive line".
- In this progression of the previous practice, the blues play against the reds' 2-4-2 formation with a high press.
- To combat this, 1 blue central midfielder drops back to create a back 3, as shown in the diagram.
- The blues again use specific passing and movement patters to build up play and score.

The aims and rules are similar to the previous practice with the following changes:

- The "Final Zone" has been removed and the offside rule is applied.
- The blues pass the ball into all 5 channels before they can score (instead of before entering "Final Zone").
- The pass "in behind the defensive line" must be played from one channel into another and all "final passes" must be played from one channel into another.

Practice 3 (Intersectorial): Build Up Play, Positional Play and Defensive Compactness in a 3 Zone Game



Sub-Principles of Play

- Ball circulation and switching play (creating overloads).
- Compactness to reduce space collectively (width and depth).
- Shifting across and providing cover.
- Active and non-active areas (see page 145).

Sub-Sub-Principles of Play

- Combining different types of passes (short and long).
- Positional play (triangles to create passing angles).
- Identifying "Tactical Cues for Pressing."
- Offering inside and outside cover.
- Pressing at the correct speed and angle.
- Closing down passing options (horizontal and vertical).

Practice Organisation

- Area: 50 x 65 metres / 55 x 70 yards.
- Time: 4 x 3 minute sets.
- Numbers: 17 outfield players + 2 GKs.
- Coaching breaks: Very often.

Practice Description

- For this practice, the area is split into 3 equal horizontal zones (red lines). The white vertical lines are there as a positional guide for the players.
- Blues in a 4-2-3-1 (or 4-3-3) and reds in a 2-4-1.
- The practice starts with the blue team's goalkeeper.
- Blues build up play from the back and try to score, using specific passing and movement patterns determined by the coach and the game model.
- The aim for the blues is to pass the ball in behind the red team's defensive line and score.
- The red team stay compact, defend their goal, try to win the ball, and then score themselves.
- At all times, all players from both teams must be within 2 zones to keep the practice compacted. At the start, both teams are in zones 1 and 2. As soon as the ball leaves zone 1, all players must then only be in zones 2 and 3.
- If the ball goes out of play, restart from the blue team's goalkeeper.

Rules

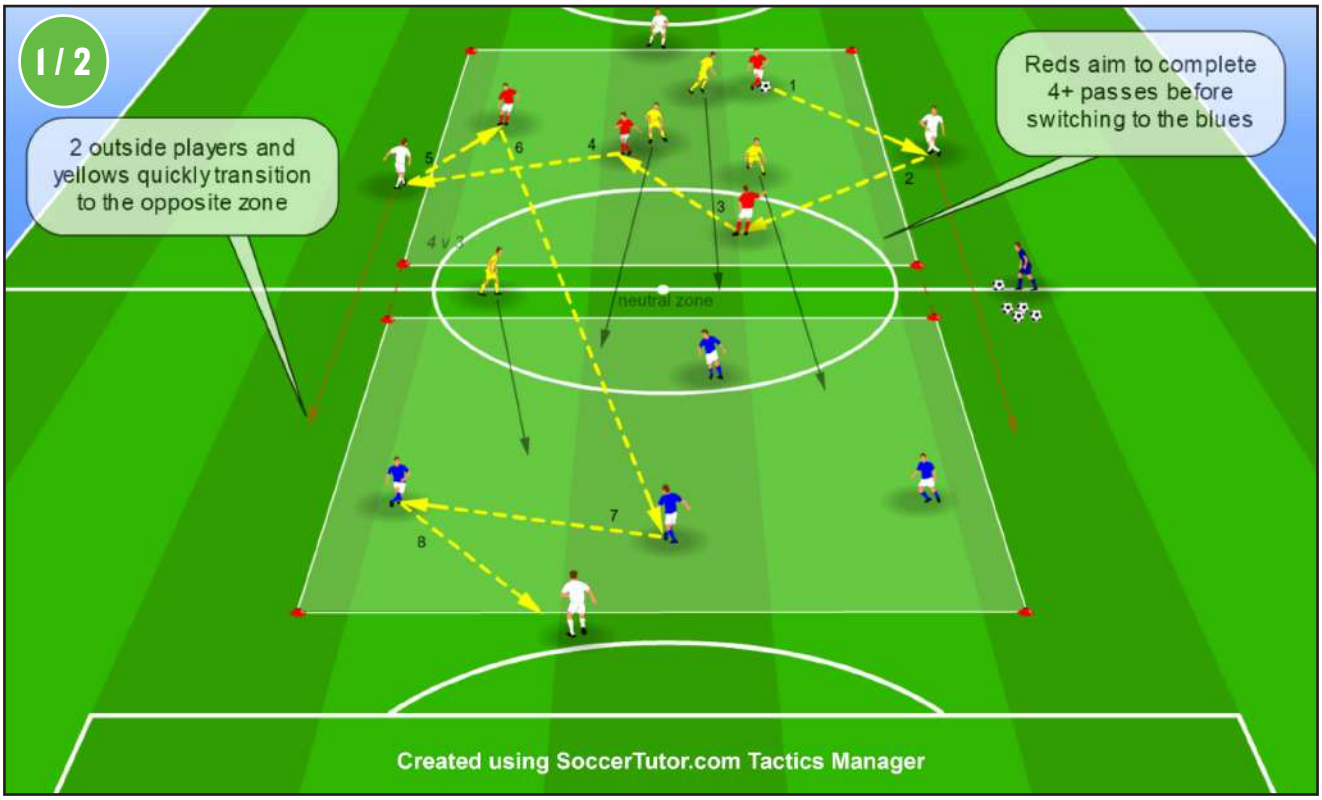
- The blues are limited to 2 touches in zone 1 (defence) and zone 2 (midfield).
- The blues have unlimited touches in zone 3 (attack).
- Offside rule is only applied in zone 3.
- All red players have unlimited touches throughout.

WEDNESDAY: MEDIUM LEARNING OF GAME MODEL ("TECHNICAL STRENGTH")

SESSION OBJECTIVES (TRANSITION PHASES):

- Reduce time and space available for opponents (collective pressing - width/ depth).
- Positive transition: Play forward, trying to get the ball wide to the wingers (but without great risk).

Practice 1 (Sectorial): Creating "Pressing Zone" and Stopping Forward Passes in a Two Area Transition Game



Sub-Principles of Play

- Creating "Pressing Zone" by pressing the ball and the area around the ball zone.
- Stopping the opponent playing forward and in behind our defensive line.

Sub-Sub-Principles of Play

- Communication to press as a unit (covering).
- Showing opponents "inside" or "outside", depending on the situation.
- Forcing the ball carrier to play with their weaker foot.
- Changing from defensive to attacking attitude and vice versa.

Practice Organisation

- Area: 2 squares 25 x 25 metres + 7 metre neutral zone.
- Time: 5 x 2.5 minute sets.
- Numbers: 10-16 players.
- Coaching breaks: Only between repetitions (recovery).

Practice Description

- We have 4 teams of 4 players. The blues and reds start positioned inside the 2 different squares.
- We have 3 white players at the sides of square 1 and 1 white player outside square 2.
- There are 3 yellow players inside square 1 and 1 yellow player in the neutral zone (in between the 2 squares).
- The reds maintain possession with help from the whites in a 4 (+3) v 3 situation.
- The red team's aim is to complete 4 passes and then switch play to the blues in the other square.
- At this point, 2 white outside players move across, as do 3 yellow players. The practice continues with the blue team in possession and the yellows still defending.
- If the yellows had won the ball from the reds, they switch play to the blues and the reds become the defending team ***(see diagram 2/2 on the next page)***.
- The practice is continuous. Change the roles of the outside team/players often.

Practice Description Continued...

- This second diagram shows what happens if the defending team (yellows) are able to win the ball before the reds complete 4 passes and a switch of play.
- If the yellows win the ball, they try to switch play to the blues as quickly as possible. The reds become the defending team - 3 of their players move to defend in square 2 and the 1 other player moves to the neutral zone.
- 2 white outside players also move to square 2. The practice continues with the blue team in possession and the reds defending.
- The blues aim to complete 4 passes with help from the white outside players and then switch play back to the yellow team in square 1.

Practice 2 (Sectorial): Pressing as a Collective Unit + Fast Break Attack in a 3 Team Transition Game

Sub-Principles of Play

- Creating "Pressing Zone" by pressing the ball and the area around the ball zone.
- Stopping the opponent playing forward and in behind our defensive line.

Sub-Sub-Principles of Play

- Communication to press as a unit (covering each other).
- Showing opponents "inside" or "outside", depending on the situation.
- Forcing the ball carrier to play with their weaker foot.
- Closing passing lines (horizontal and vertical).
- Changing from defensive to attacking attitude.

Practice Organisation

- Area: 30 x 50 metres / 34 x 55 yards (including neutral zone).
- Time: 6 x 2 minute sets.
- Numbers: 12-15 outfield players + 2 GKs.
- Coaching breaks: Only between repetitions (recovery).

Practice Description

- The practice starts with the coach who passes into zone 1 (4 +GK v 3).
- The blue team's goalkeeper and 4 players try to keep possession against 3 yellow players inside zone 1.
- The aim for the blues is to complete 5 passes and then switch the play to the red team in zone 2.
- There is also an extra yellow player (AM) in the neutral zone who tries to intercept the pass across.
- If the blues successfully pass across to the red team, the yellow team then move to defend in zone 2. The reds then aim to complete 5 passes and switch play back to the blues.
- If the yellows win the ball before a switch of play to the reds (as shown in the diagram example), they then try to score in the red team's goal as quickly as possible.
- When the yellows win the ball, all of their players are free to move anywhere but the reds/blues must stay within their zones.
- Change the team roles every 2 minutes.

Practice 3 (Intersectorial): Winning the Ball and Playing Wide to the Wingers for a 4 v 2 Fast Break Attack

Sub-Principles of Play

- Winning possession, playing quickly out wide to the wingers and create overloads (4 v 2).
- Creating "Pressing Zone" by pressing the ball and the area around the ball zone.
- Stopping the opponent playing forward and in behind the defensive line.

Sub-Sub-Principle of Play

- Changing from defensive to attacking attitude and vice versa.

Practice Organisation

- Time: 6 x 2.5 minute sets.
- Numbers: 14-18 outfield players + 2 GKs.
- Coaching breaks: Only between repetitions.

Practice Description

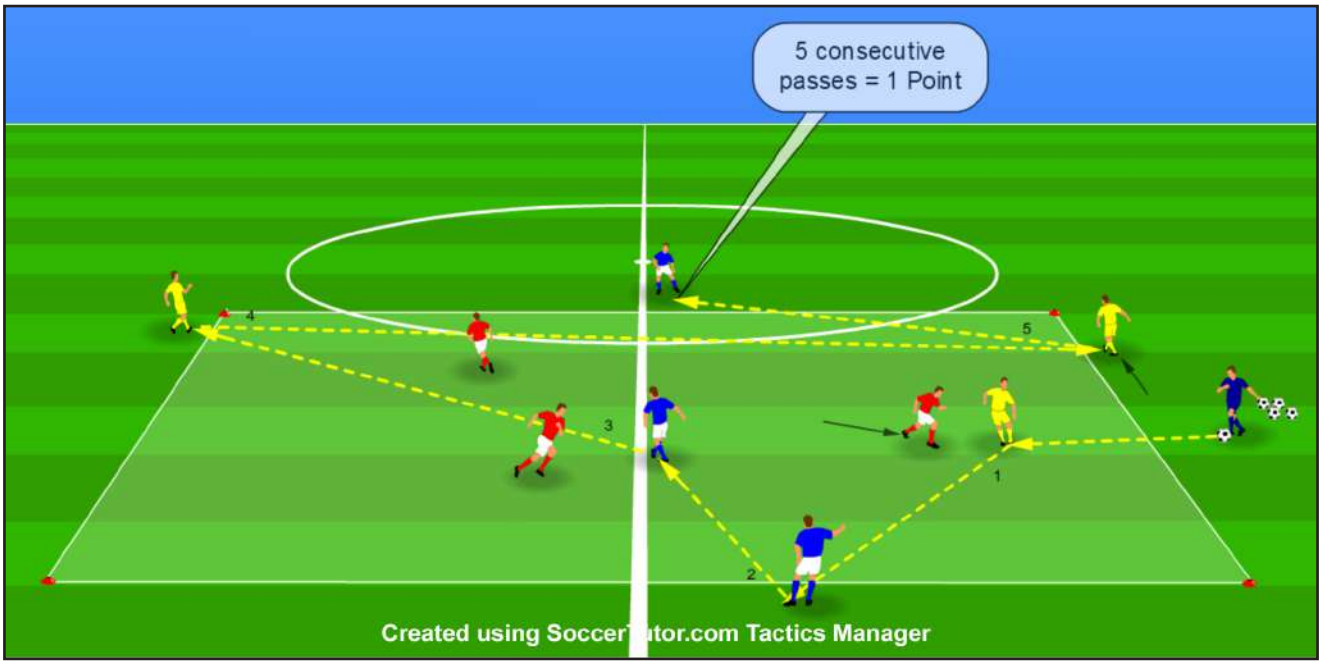
- The players are initially restricted to their zones: 2 v 1 in end zones and 3 v 3 (+2) in the middle.
- The practice starts with a goalkeeper and that team (reds) have a 2 v 1 advantage in their low zone - their aim is to play into the middle zone.
- One of the centre backs can then move forward into the middle zone to create an overload. Once in the middle zone, they have a 6 v 3 (4 v 3 + 2) advantage with 2 yellow wingers who play with the team in possession.
- The aim is to then have a 4 v 2 attack in the high zone (both yellow wingers and 1 red midfielder move forward into the final zone).
- If the defending team (blues) win the ball at any time, they launch a fast 4 v 2 break attack. Both wingers and 1 red midfielder move forward into the final zone.
- The aim after winning the ball is to play wide to the winger quickly. In the diagram example, the blue CM wins the ball, passes to the winger in the final zone and the AM makes a forward run to finish.
- If an attack finishes or the ball goes out of play, always restart from one of the goalkeepers.

THURSDAY: HIGHER / MAIN LEARNING OF GAME MODEL (ENDURANCE)

SESSION OBJECTIVES (ATTACKING & DEFENSIVE PHASE):

- Ball circulation & switching play (creating overloads).
- Zonal defending / pressing.
- Regaining the ball by directing and pressing our opponents, forcing mistakes.

Practice I: Ball Circulation and Switching Play in a 3 v 3 (+ 3) Possession Game



Main Principles of Play

- Maintaining possession and high speed ball circulation.
- Positional play and movement: Dropping deep, pushing up, moving inside or outside.
- Creating passing angles (triangles).
- Playing in behind our opponents.

Sub-Principles of Play

- Creating Space: Ball circulation & switching play (playing from side to side / width and depth).
- Taking advantage of spaces: Playing deep when possible (playing to the next sector-line).

Sub-Sub-Principles of Play

- Using a “third man” to set the ball back.
- Use the correct body shape and look far/forward.
- Attack the ball.

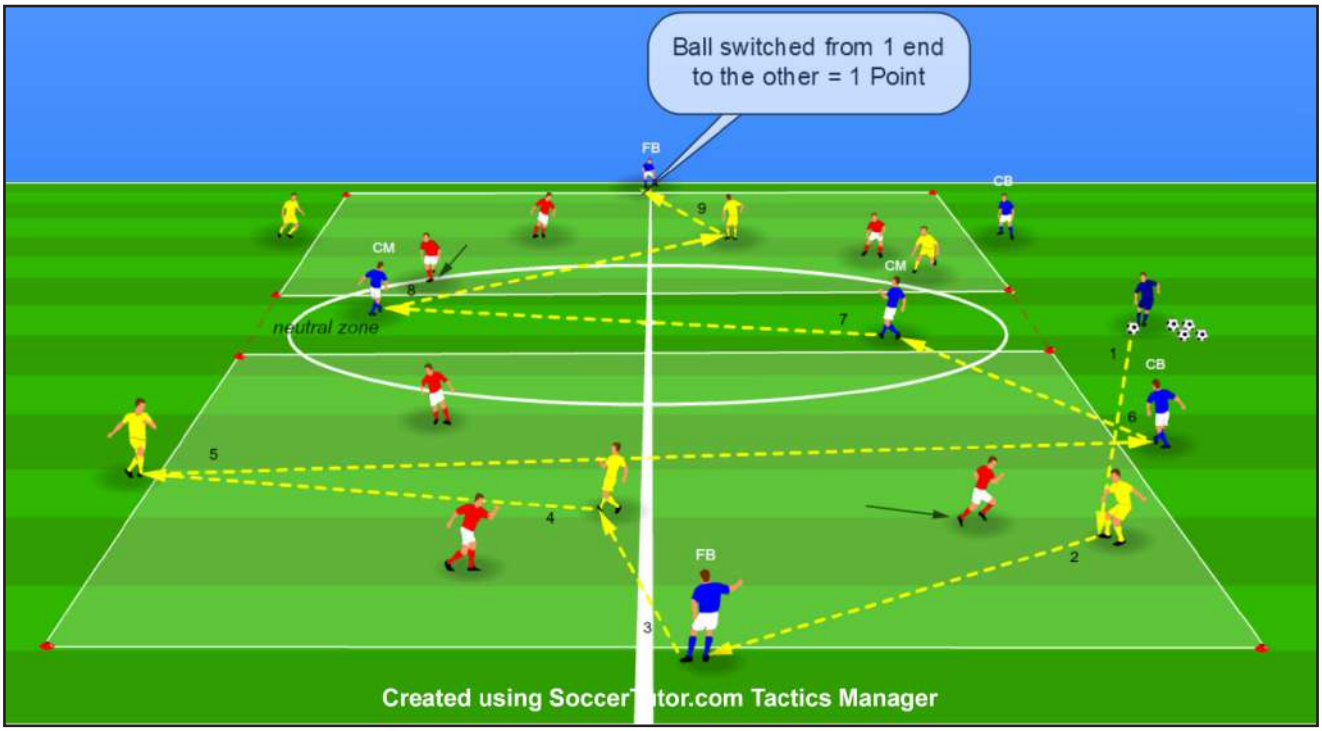
Practice Organisation

- Area: 20 x 25 metres / 22 x 27 yards.
- Time: 3 x 4 minute sets.
- Numbers: 9-12 players.
- Coaching breaks: Only between repetitions (recovery time).

Practice Description

- We have 3 teams of 3 players. We can also play with teams of 4.
- One team (reds) start inside the area defending. The other two teams (blues and yellows) work together - they each have 2 players on the outside and 1 player inside.
- The coach starts the practice and the blues/yellows try to keep possession.
- 5 consecutive passes = 1 point.
- The players are not allowed to pass straight back to the player they received from, instead always playing to a "third man."
- All 4 sides of the area must be occupied at all times, but the outside players can and should exchange positions.
- If the yellows win the ball, the team that lost the ball become the defenders.
- The practice is continuous for each 4 minute set.
- The players on the outside are limited to 1 touch and the inside players have 2 touches.

Practice 2 (Collective): Ball Circulation and Switching Play in a Possession Game with 2 Parallel Groups



Main Principles of Play

- Maintaining possession and high speed ball circulation.
- Positional play.

Sub-Principles of Play

- Creating Space: Ball circulation & switching play (playing from side to side / width and depth).
- Taking advantage of spaces: Playing deep when possible (playing to the next sector-line).

Sub-Sub-Principles of Play

- Using a "third man" to set the ball back.
- Positional play to create passing angles (triangles).
- Mobility (switching positions).
- Switching play (from side to side / width and depth).
- Correct body shape (receive on half-turn and directional first touch into space, ideally forwards).

Practice Organisation

- Area: 20 x 50 metres / 22 x 55 yards (including neutral zone).
- Time: 3 x 5 minute sets.
- Numbers: 15-18 players.
- Coaching breaks: Only between repetitions (recovery).

Practice Description

- We have 3 teams of 6 players. We have one team (reds) with 3 players starting in each zone defending.
- The yellows have 2 players inside and 1 player outside each zone, as shown.
- The blues have all their players outside the zones in specific positional roles: 2 centre backs on one side, 2 full backs at opposite ends and 2 central midfielders in the neutral zone.
- The practice starts with the coach and the aim for the blues and yellows is to switch the play from one full back to the other (1 point), using the central midfielders in the neutral zone.
- The players are not allowed to pass straight back to the player they received from, instead always playing to a "third man."
- If the reds win the ball, the teams switch roles and the team that lost the ball become the defenders.
- The practice is continuous for each 5 minute set.
- The players on the outside are limited to 1 touch and the inside players have 2 touches.

Practice 3 (Collective): Building Up Play from the Back and Creating Overloads Against a Compact 4-4 Formation

Main Principles of Play

- Ball circulation and switching play (creating overloads).
- Zonal defending/pressing.
- Regaining the ball by directing and pressing the opponent, forcing them to make mistakes.

Sub-Principles of Play

- Compactness and shifting across collectively.
- Active and non-active areas (see page 145).
- Providing cover for teammates.

Sub-Sub-Principle of Play

- Closing down passing options (horizontal and vertical).

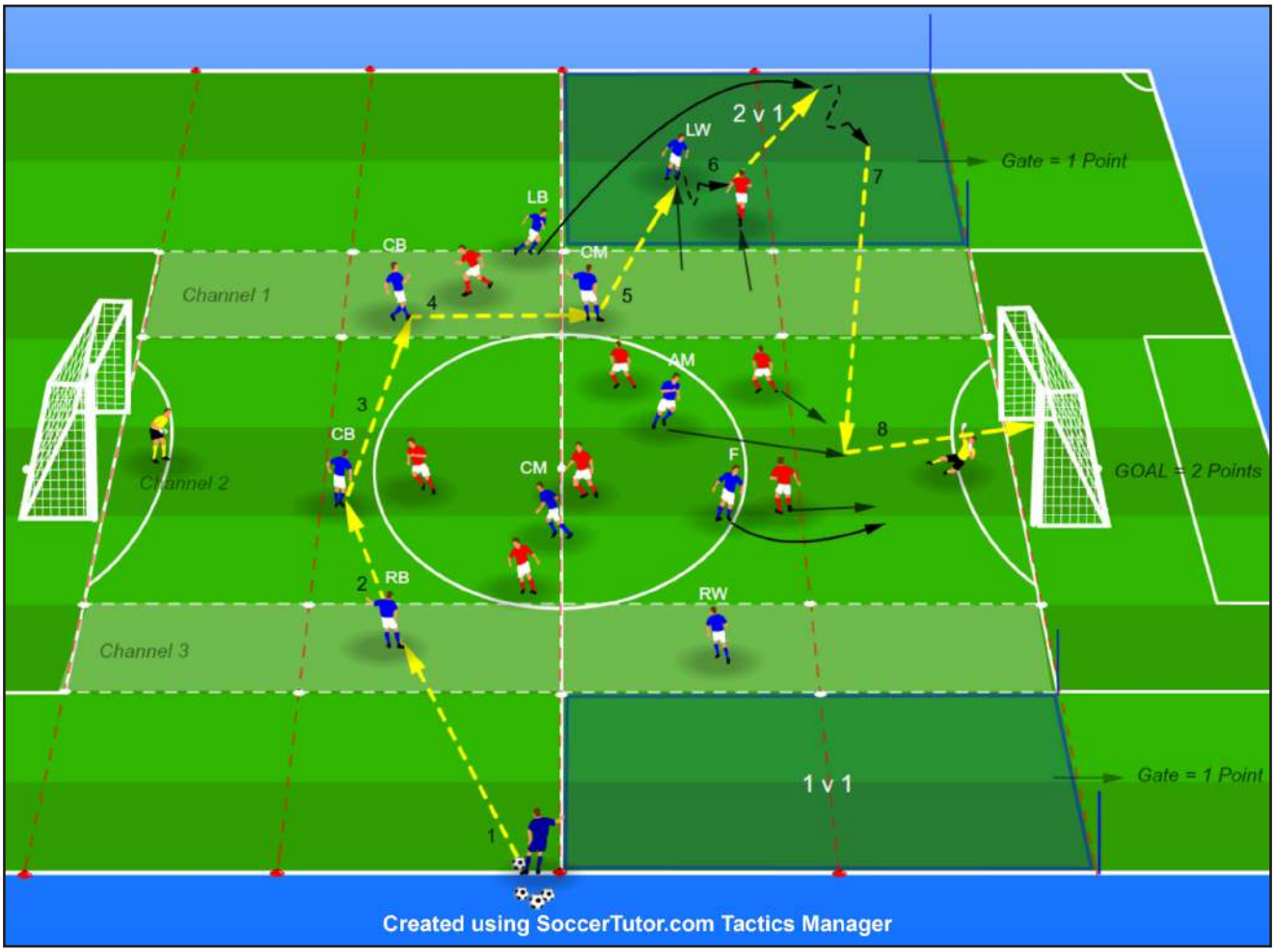
Practice Organisation

- Time: 5 x 3 minute sets (changing patterns every set, with free option for the final set).
- Coaching breaks: Very often.

Practice Description

- **Objective**: Attack full backs, creating 2 v 1 situations against the right back and 1 v 1 against the left back.
- The practice always starts with the goalkeeper. The blues use a 4-2-3-1 or 4-3-3 formation and specific passing and movement patterns to build up play.
- We are playing against the red team who are in a 4-4 formation using a middle defensive block.
- The ball must be passed into all 5 channels before the blues can pass into one of the 2 v 1 or 1 v 1 side zones.
- Only the red full back on that side is allowed to defend in the 1 v 1 or 2 v 1 zones.
- Only 1 blue player is allowed to enter the 1 v 1 zone and 2 players can enter the 2 v 1 zone.
- The main aim is to move the ball into the 2 v 1 zone against the red left back and score (1 point).
- If the reds win the ball, they try to pass to the goalkeeper (1 point) and the practice restarts.
- The blues keep compact and reduce the space available after losing possession, trying to force mistakes to win the ball back quickly.
- If the ball goes out of play, the practice restarts from the goalkeeper.

Practice 4 (Collective): Building Up Play from the Back and Creating Overloads Against a 3-4-1 Formation



Main Principle of Play

- Maintaining possession and high speed ball circulation.

Sub-Principles of Play

- Playing out from the back (collective).
- Ball circulation and switching play (creating overloads).
- Timing of runs in behind the defensive line.
- Compactness (reducing spaces - width and depth).

Sub-Sub-Principles of Play

- Combining different types of passes (short and long).
- Using the correct body shape to receive and for awareness of teammates/opponents' positioning.
- Positional play to create passing angles (triangles).

Practice Organisation

- Time: 5 x 6 minute sets.
- Coaching breaks: Only between repetitions (recovery).

Practice Description

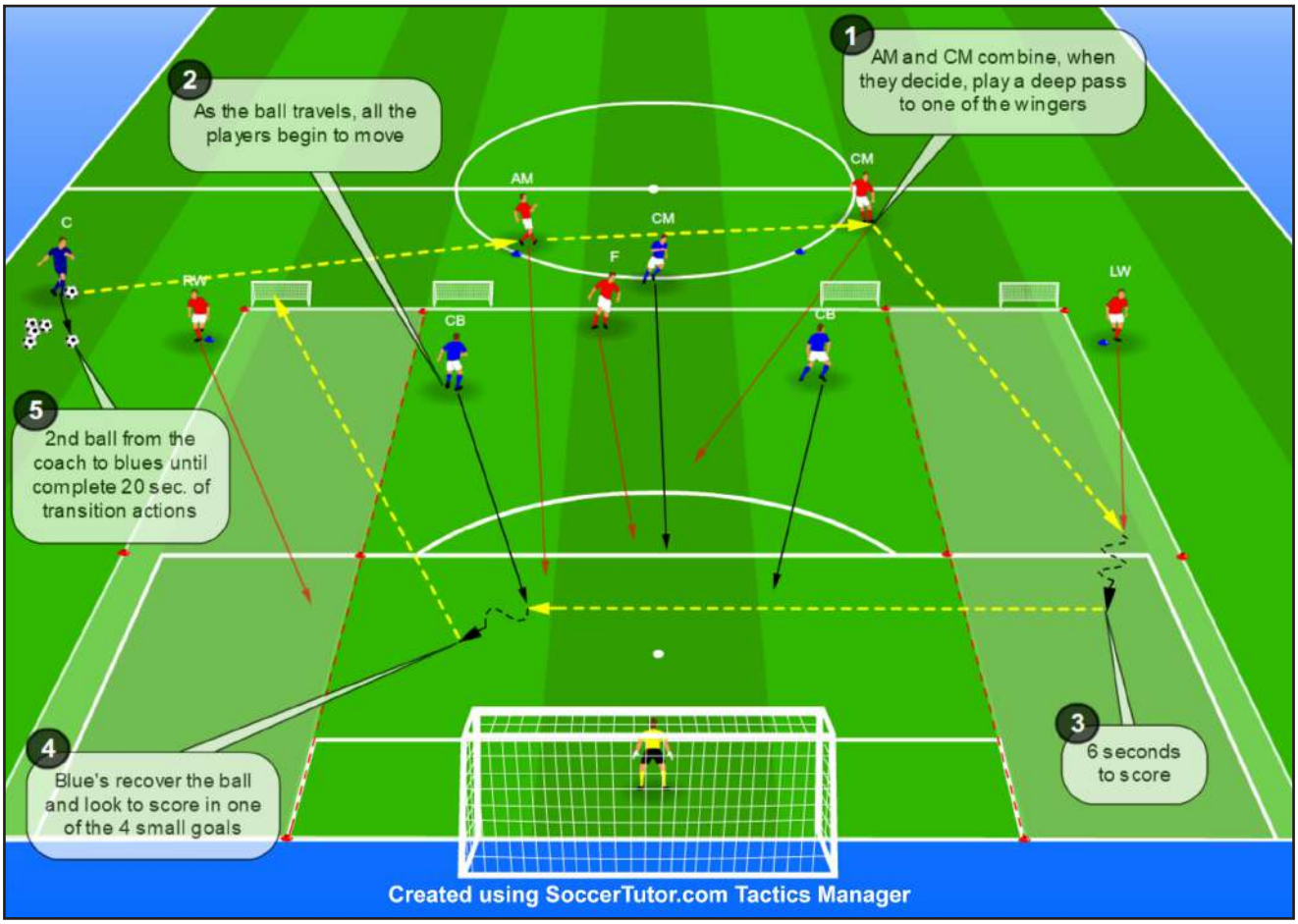
- **Objective 1**: Attack the right back, creating 2 v 1. **Objective 2**: Attack the left back - exploit space between opponent's left centre back and wing back.
- There are 4 zones marked out by the red horizontal lines. All outfield players from both teams must be within 2 horizontal zones at all times (compact).
- We also mark out 3 channels in the centre. The practice starts with the coach and the blues must pass the ball into all 3 channels before they can attempt to score.
- Scoring: Large goal = 2 points, passing/dribbling through pole gates in 2 v 1 / 1 v 1 side zones = 1 point.
- The offside rule is applied for the final zone. As well as having to all remain within 2 horizontal zones, the red defending team must also remain in only 2 channels at a time (2 channels = active zone).
- If the reds win the ball, they counter attack. Blues make a fast defensive transition. If they regain possession in their attacking half, they then use a direct attack.

FRIDAY: LOWER LEARNING OF GAME MODEL (SPEED OF PLAY)

SESSION OBJECTIVES (TRANSITION ATTACK TO DEFENCE):

- Dropping off and stopping the opposition from playing in behind.
- Positive transition: Play forward, trying to get the ball wide to the wingers (but without great risk).

Practice 1 (Sectorial): Dropping Back and Stopping the Opposition Playing in Behind in a 3 (+GK) v 5 Practice



Sub-Sub-Principles of Play

- Dropping off, stopping the opposition getting in behind.
- Correct defensive body shape: Marking while making sure to always have awareness of the spaces, the position of the ball and the goal.
- Blocking and tracking runs.
- Exchanging positions (central channel is priority).
- Transition to attack: Finishing positions (different lines), timing runs in behind, making runs on the blind side of the defender and second ball awareness.

Practice Organisation

- Area: 45 x 35 metres / 50 x 40 yards.
- Time: 12 x 20 second sets.
- Coaching breaks: Only between repetitions (recovery).

Practice Description

We mark out the area with 3 channels. The players all start in the positions shown.

There are 5 steps for the practice:

1. The coach starts the practice - the CM and AM combine until they decide to play a deep pass to either of the wingers.
2. As the ball travels, all the players move to attack or defend - the blue players are not allowed to defend in the side channels.
3. The red team have 6 seconds to score in the large goal, with the offside rule applied.
4. The blue team try to win the ball and then score in one of the mini goals.
5. When the attack is finished or the ball goes out of play (phase finished), the coach passes a second ball to the blues and the teams compete for 20 seconds of transition actions.

Practice 2 (Sectorial): Dropping Back and Stopping the Opposition Playing in Behind in a 5 (+GK) v 5 Practice

Sub-Sub-Principles of Play

- Dropping off, stopping the opposition getting in behind.
- Correct defensive body shape: Marking while making sure to always have awareness of the spaces, the position of the ball and the goal.
- Blocking and tracking runs.
- Exchanging positions (central channel is priority).
- Transition to attack: Finishing positions (different lines), timing runs in behind.
- Making runs on the blind side of the defender and second ball awareness.

Practice Organisation

- Area: Half pitch.
- Time: 12 x 20 second sets.
- Numbers: 8-10 outfield players + 1 GK.
- Coaching breaks: Only between repetitions (recovery).

Practice Description

- This is a progression of the previous practice.
- The total area is now larger for the potential blue counter attack.
- We also add 2 blue full backs so the outfield player numbers are now equal (5 v 5).

Otherwise, the practice is the same:

1. The CM and AM combine until they decide to play a deep pass to a winger.
2. As the ball travels, all the players move to attack or defend - the blue full backs can defend in all channels (the red team have 6 seconds to score).
3. When the phase is finished, the coach passes a second ball to the blues and the teams compete for 20 seconds of transition actions.

Practice 3 (Intersectorial): Dropping Off, Compactness and Counter Attack with Switch of Play in a Positional Game

Sub-Sub-Principles of Play

- Dropping off, stopping the opposition getting in behind.
- Correct defensive body shape: Marking while making sure to always have awareness of the spaces, the position of the ball and the goal.
- Blocking and tracking runs.
- Exchanging positions (central channel is priority).
- Transition to attack: Finishing positions (different lines), timing runs in behind, making runs on the blind side of the defender and second ball awareness.

Practice Organisation

- Area: 55 metres / 60 yards x half pitch length.
- Time: 14 x 30 second sets.
- Numbers: 16-20 outfield players + 2 GKs.
- Coaching breaks: Very often.

Practice Description

- We have 3 equal horizontal zones - all the players from both teams must be within 2 zones at all times.
- Reds in a 4-2 formation and blues in a 4-2-3-1 or 4-3-3.
- The coach starts the practice by passing to a red defender.
- The red players are limited to 2 touches as they try to score.
- The blue back 4 drop off, the team remain compact with the midfielders dropping back to defend and they try to win the ball.
- As soon as the blues do win the ball, they switch play with a deep diagonal pass to the winger on the opposite side (from left side to RW in diagram).
- From the moment they win the ball, the blues have 5 seconds to finish their counter attack and score.
- The offside rule is applied for the final zone.
- The practice always restarts with the coach passing a new ball to the red team.
- Change the blue back 4 after 7 sets (halfway through the practice).

SATURDAY: PRE-GAME ACTIVATION (STRATEGIC TRAINING)

SESSION OBJECTIVES (ALL PHASES):

- Ball possession and high speed ball circulation.
- Switching play (creating overloads).
- Set Plays (attacking and defending).

Practice I (Collective): 8 v 6 Possession Game + Fast 3 v 2 Break Away in a Dynamic Transition Practice

Main Principle of Play

- Ball possession and high speed ball circulation.

Sub-Sub-Principles of Play

- Using "third man" to set the ball back.
- Positional play (making triangles).
- Mobility (changing positions).
- Switching play (from side to side / width and depth).

Practice Organisation

- Time: 4 x 2 minute sets.
- Numbers: 14-18 players.
- Coaching breaks: Only between repetitions (recovery time).

Practice Description

- For this practice, we mark out an area split into 2 equal halves and also have a 3 v 2 final zone, as shown.
- The blue team have a centre back, full back and central midfielder in each half of the area + 2 wingers outside.
- The red team have a central midfielder and forward (or AM) in each half of the area + 2 centre backs and 2 full backs on the outsides, as shown.
- The red team's goalkeeper starts the practice by passing to one of the centre backs.
- The reds try to maintain possession and switch play from one full back to the other (= 1 point).
- The reds are not allowed to pass back to player that passed to them, so it must always be played to a "third man."
- The outside players are not allowed to pass to each other.
- The inside players are limited to 2 touches and the outside players have just 1 touch.
- The blues aim to press collectively, win the ball and then play the ball quickly to one of their wingers.
- From this point, they launch a 3 v 2 fast break attack against the red centre backs, with 1 blue player allowed to leave the area to join the attack (CM in diagram example).
- The blues have 5 seconds to finish their attack.
- The practice restarts with the goalkeeper.

Practice 2 (Collective): Creating 2 v 1 Overloads Out Wide in a Positional 8 v 8 (+ 3) Zonal Game

Main Principle of Play

- Ball possession and high speed ball circulation.

Sub-Sub-Principles of Play

- Positional play to create passing angles (triangles).
- Mobility (switching positions).
- Switching play (from side to side / width and depth).

Practice Organisation

- Area: 40 x 60 metres / 44 x 65 yards.
- Time: 5 x 2 minute sets.
- Numbers: 18-20 outfield players + 2 GKs.
- Coaching breaks: Only between repetitions (recovery time).

Practice Description

- **Objective**: Attack the opposition right back, creating a 2 v 1 situation with the winger and full back.
- We play an 8 v 8 game - both teams have the back 4, a central midfielder, attacking midfielder and a forward.
- In addition, there are 3 yellow neutral players who take the role of an extra central midfielder and 2 wingers.
- Within the area, we mark out 4 side zones for the wingers to attack the full backs. Only the full backs and wingers are allowed in these zones.
- If a team is attacking the opposing right back, their left back can move forward to create a 2 v 1 overload.
- The practice starts with the coach's pass. The team in possession (blues in diagram) build up play and try to pass to a yellow winger, ideally the left winger.
- If a winger receives in a left 2 v 1 zone, that team can exploit their numerical advantage to beat the opposing full back and then play the ball into the centre to try and score.
- If the defending team (reds) win the ball, they launch a counter attack with the same rules in place.
- There is no offside rule for this practice.
- Always restart from the coach.

Practice 3 (Collective): Defending Set Plays and Counter Attacking in a Dynamic 2 Zone Practice

Sub-Principle of Play

- After winning the ball, play forward and deep if possible but without taking great risks.

Sub-Sub-Principles of Play

- Offering support (in front and behind the ball).
- Ensuring a successful first pass ("play easy").
- Timing runs in behind well to avoid being offside.

Practice Organisation

- Area: Half pitch + 10 yards.
- Time: 12 sets.
- Numbers: 14-18 outfield players + 2 GKs.
- Coaching breaks: Very often.

Practice Description

The pitch is split into 2 halves. In their half, the blues are defending a corner kick with 10 players. The blue forward is positioned in the attacking half.

The red team have 6 players in that half for their corner kick. They have 2 defenders in the other half.

The practice starts with the red team's corner.

If the reds score, then they take another corner. If not, the following happens:

1. If the blues win the ball, they start a counter attack.
2. The blue team's back 4 push up to keep compactness.
3. The blues must try to quickly enter the attacking half and try to score their counter attack within 5 seconds.
4. 3 blue players can move forward into the attacking half to create a 4 v 2 situation. In the diagram example this is the right winger who dribbles into the attacking half, the attacking midfielder who makes an overlapping run to receive and the left winger.
5. If the reds win the ball, the coach passes a second ball in for the blues to attack again with the same 4 v 2 situation.

Once the blues have had their attack (or 2 attacks), allow the players to get back into position and restart the practice with another red corner kick.

CHAPTER 10

TRAINING SESSIONS (2 MATCH WEEK)

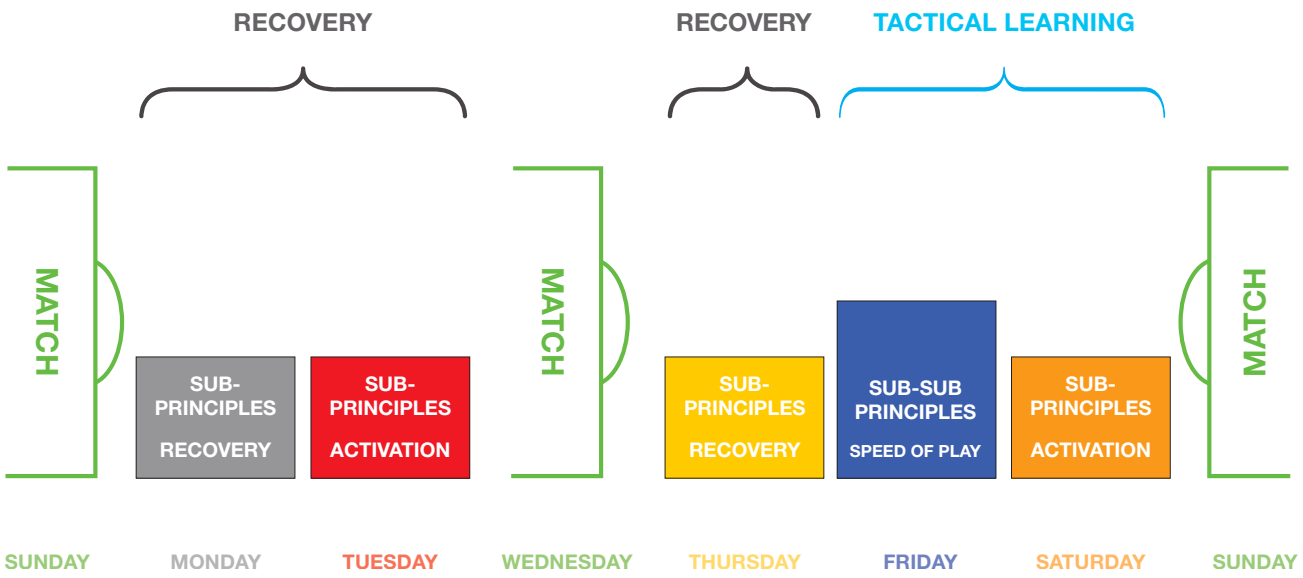
EXAMPLE ANALYSIS OF THE NEXT 2 OPPONENTS AND HOW TO IMPROVE FROM OUR LAST MATCH

	OPPONENT 1 (3-5-2)	OPPONENT 2 (4-4-2)
ATTACKING PHASE	▶ When building up, they consistently show a **direct pattern of play**. They use long diagonal passes to exploit the space behind the defensive line. ▶ When the ball is in the final third, they **pass to the wing-backs to force their opponent's full backs out wide and create space for their forwards in the centre and in behind** - we have to pay special attention to this with our centre backs tracking runs or playing offside. ▶ In the final third, they constantly look to **attack from wide with crosses** as both their forwards are very powerful in the air.	▶ When building up play from the back, this team prefer to do so using their right centre back. ▶ When possible, the **right centre back attacks the space in front of him and tries to connect with the front four** (wingers and forwards). ▶ The left centre back is right footed and has problems technically in the first phase of building up play. ▶ Their front four (wingers and forwards) have **a lot of mobility and exchange positions constantly**.
TRANSITION FROM ATTACK TO DEFENCE	▶ When they give the ball away, they **do not react with aggressiveness but rather always keep many players behind the line of the ball** (3 centre backs and 2 central midfielders). ▶ They are balanced in this phase, but the **wing-backs usually leave gaps that are not properly compensated for**.	▶ When they give the ball away, **they press with aggressiveness**. ▶ Wingers work hard to help full backs **create defensive overloads in wide areas**. ▶ We therefore need to switch play or play a forward pass very quickly if we want to take advantage.
DEFENSIVE PHASE	▶ When they don't have the ball, they start defending with a **Middle Defensive Block**. ▶ We can take advantage of the spaces they leave behind the midfield line (lack of compactness). ▶ Sometimes there is a **lack of coordination between the left centre back and left wing-back when pressing** the ball carrier in the inter-spaces. The left centre back overcommits when going to press the ball carrier, so we can dominate the spaces between these two players (LCB & LWB).	▶ In the defensive phase, they start defending with a **High Defensive Block**. They press with the two forwards, two wingers and one central midfielder. ▶ The back four sometimes do not push forward enough and **leave space between the defensive and midfield lines that we can take advantage of**. ▶ In the middle third, they are compact with short distances between the lines. But **when the ball carrier is not pressed their back four is stationary**, so we can take advantage with our midfielders making runs forward and in behind.

TRANSITION FROM DEFENCE TO ATTACK	▶ When they win the ball, **they try to quickly switch play to the wing-back on the weak side.** ▶ **One forward stays with the opponent's centre backs and then drops back to support and receive between the lines** (our centre backs and central midfielders need to be aware of this movement).	▶ When they win the ball, they try to **play quickly and directly towards both forwards and win the second ball.** ▶ We need to be aware of this tactic, making sure to have a numerical advantage against the 2 forwards and have players tracking back to compete for the second balls.
AREAS OF IMPROVEMENT FROM OUR LAST MATCH	▶ Directing the opponent into specific channels and **pressing "all together."** ▶ Force the ball carrier into making mistakes which lead to him giving the ball away. ▶ Coordinated movements of the back four during the defensive phase.	▶ **Ball circulation and switching play to the weak side.** ▶ More varied and higher tempo building up play patterns.

STANDARD WEEKLY TRAINING PATTERN (2 MATCHES)

(Adapted from Gomes, M. 2006)



This is the training schedule for a week with two competitive matches:

- **SUNDAY:** Match Day
- **MONDAY:** Active Recovery (Strategic Training)
- **TUESDAY:** Pre-game Activation (Strategic Training)
- **WEDNESDAY:** Match Day
- **THURSDAY:** Active Recovery (Strategic Training)
- **FRIDAY:** Lower Learning of Game Model (Speed of Play)
- **SATURDAY:** Pre-game Activation (Strategic Training)

We have a different weekly pattern when we play an extra match during the week. In this case, the primary concern will be for the players to be completely recovered, both mentally and physically, as they go into the two matches.

The most relevant methodological principles and factors that influence the design of the training contents are the same as they are in the standard 1 match week model.

The recovery and player readiness to compete is the main concern during a two game week, so the **Principle of Tactical Fatigue** is particularly important here (see section *"PRINCIPLE OF TACTICAL FATIGUE & CONCENTRATION"* from page 87).

TACTICAL OBJECTIVES EXAMPLE (2 MATCH WEEK)

MONDAY
GAME MODEL ("RECOVERY")

- We work on areas of improvement from the last game.
- Defensive line works on coordinated movements during the defensive phase. They maintain short distances between each other and shift across, forward and back in relation to the ball position.
- We work on directing the opponent towards where we want them to go and pressing "all together."

TUESDAY
ATTACKING & DEFENSIVE PHASE

- "Activation" for the match the next day.
- We create our session after analysing our opposition's tactics.
- E.g. Building up play patterns against the opposition's 3-5-2 formation with a middle defensive line.
- Defending from crosses.

WEDNESDAY
MATCH DAY

THURSDAY
GAME MODEL ("RECOVERY")

- We work on areas of improvement from the last game.
- Fast ball circulation and switching play to the weak side.
- E.g. Building up play patterns against the opposition's 4-4-2 formation with a high defensive line.

FRIDAY
ATTACKING & DEFENSIVE PHASE

- "Speed of play" (we work on fast decision-making).
- We create our session after analysing our next opposition's tactics.
- Defending and preventing direct play to both forwards and winning the second ball.
- Switch play or play a forward pass very quickly to avoid opposition from creating a "pressing zone."

SATURDAY
STRATEGIC DIMENSION (WEEKLY REVIEW)

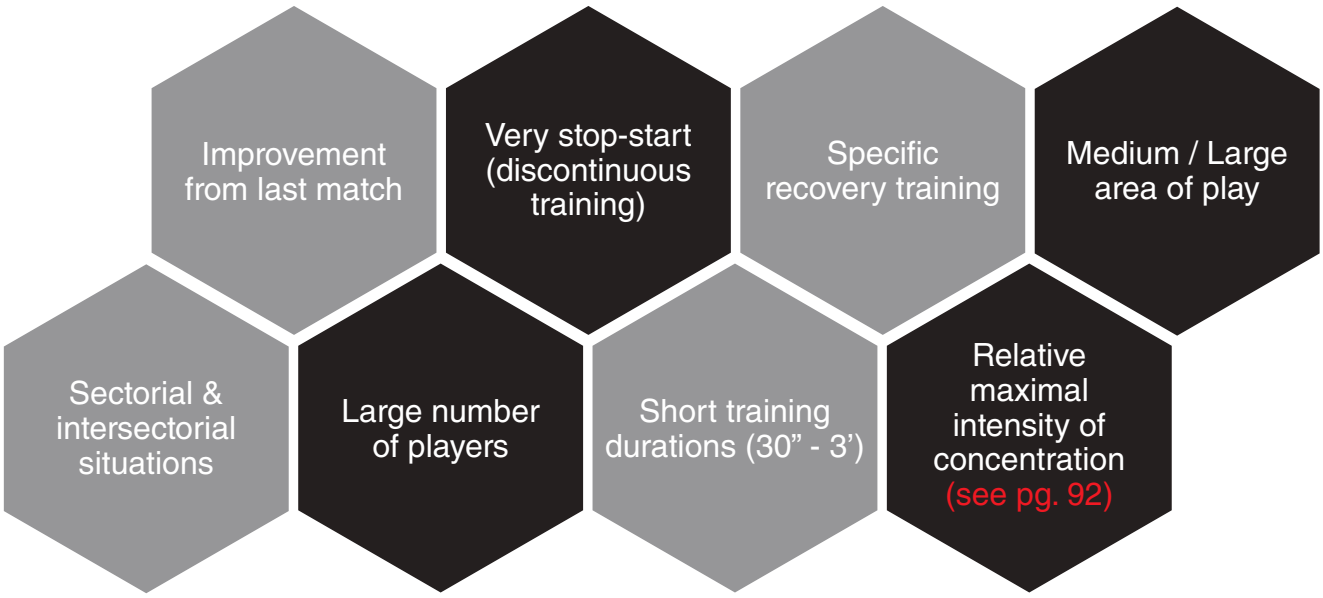
- "Activation" for the match the next day.
- Midfielders running from deep to support attacks.
- E.g. Pressing: Making the play predictable by directing the opponent to play out with their left centre back as he is right footed and has problems technically.

SUNDAY
MATCH DAY

MONDAY: ACTIVE RECOVERY (STRATEGIC TRAINING)

SESSION OBJECTIVES (DEFENSIVE & ATTACKING PHASE):

- Coordinated movements of the back four during the defensive phase.
- Directing the opponent into channels where we want them to go and pressing "all together."



Practice I (Sectorial): Defensive Organisation Against the 3-5-2 in a Dynamic 4 Zone Game

Sub-Principles of Play

- Back four coordination during the defensive phase: Compactness, covering, shifting across collectively.
- Active and non-active areas (see page 145).
- Ball circulation and switching play (creating overloads).

Sub-Sub-Principles of Play

- Communicate and switch markers when necessary.
- Take up half and half positions to cover space.

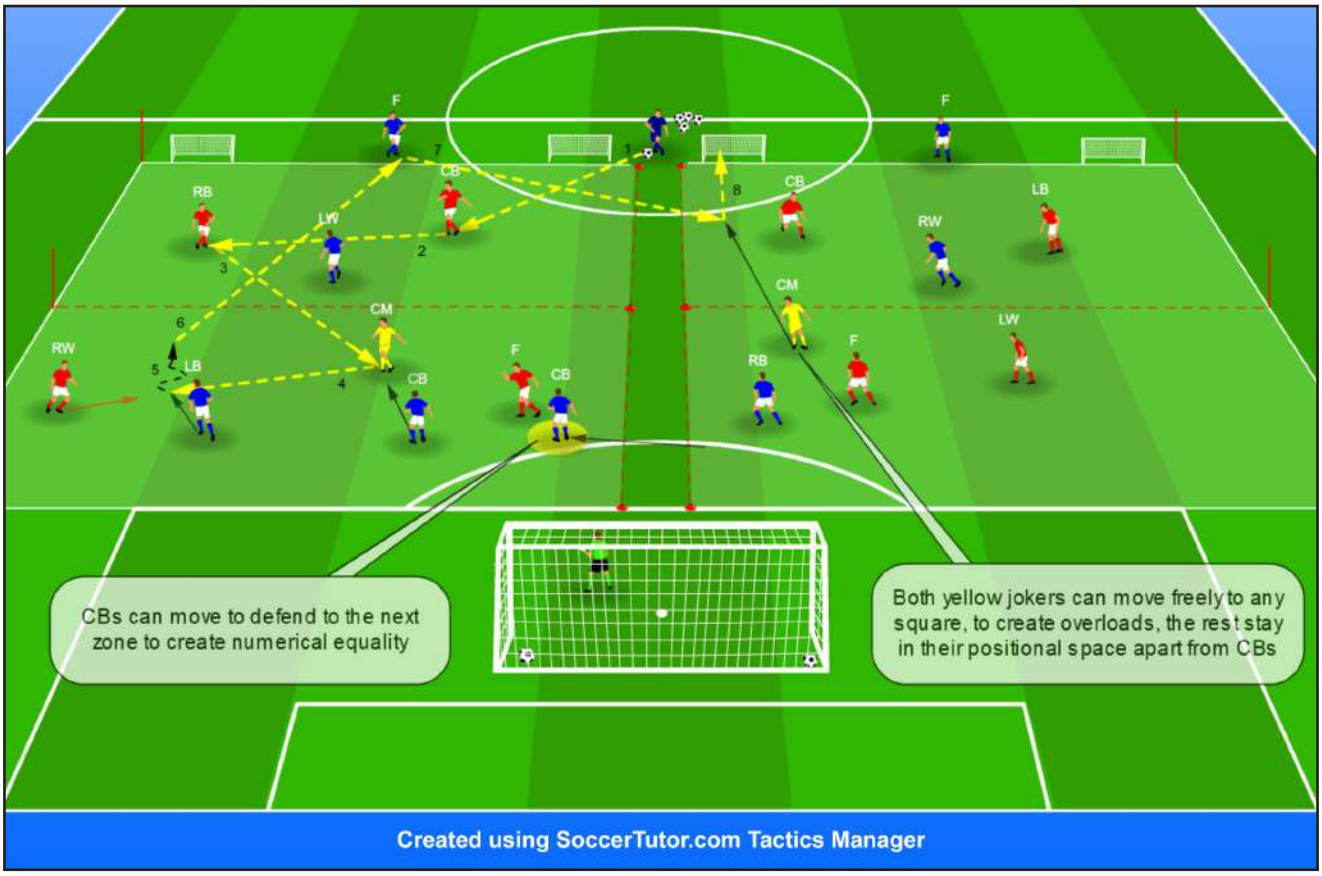
Practice Organisation

- Area: 50 x 45 metres / 55 x 50 yards.
- Time: 5 x 2 minute sets.
- Numbers: 16-20 outfield players + 1 GK.
- Coaching breaks: Only between repetitions (recovery time).

Practice Description

- The 2 neutral 'jokers' act as central midfielders for the team in possession. Both jokers (yellow) move freely across all 4 zones to create overloads.
- The red team are in a 3-5-2 formation. The middle centre back and the attacking midfielder can move freely across the 2 zones in their half, but all other players must remain within their quarter.
- The blue team have a back 4 and 2 forwards - all blue players must remain within their zones.
- The practice starts with the red team's goalkeeper.
- The reds use their numerical advantage to build up play and try to score in any of the 4 mini goals.
- The blue team defend the 4 mini goals using the sub-principles and sub-sub-principles of play listed, trying to win the ball.
- If the blues win the ball, they are then free to move across any zones to counter attack quickly with help from the yellow jokers and score, as shown in the diagram.
- The practice always restarts from the red team's goalkeeper.

Practice 2 (Sectorial): Centre Backs Shifting Across to Provide Cover in a Dynamic 4 Zone Game



Sub-Principles of Play

- Back four coordination during the defensive phase: Compactness, covering, shifting across collectively.
- Active and non-active areas (see page 145).
- Ball circulation and switching play (creating overloads).

Sub-Sub-Principles of Play

- Communicate and switch markers when necessary.
- Take up half and half positions to cover space.

Practice Organisation

- Area: 55 x 45 metres / 60 x 50 yards.
- Time: 5 x 2 minute sets.
- Numbers: 18-20 outfield players + 1 GK.
- Coaching breaks: Only between repetitions (recovery time).

Practice Description

- The 2 neutral 'jokers' act as central midfielders for the team in possession. Both jokers (yellow) move freely across all 4 zones to create overloads.
- The red team are in a 4-4-2 formation and all of their players must stay within their zones.
- Blues have a back 4 and 2 wingers positioned inside the zones. They also have 2 forwards outside, as shown.
- All blue players must remain within their zones, except the centre backs who can move to defend in the next zone to create a 3 v 3 numerical equality.
- The practice starts with the coach's pass to a red defender. The reds build up play and try to score in the large goal - they must shoot from within the zones.
- The blue team defend the goal using the sub-principles and sub-sub-principle of play listed, trying to win the ball. This is helped when a centre back shifts across to create a 3 v 3 situation in one of the zones.
- If the blues win the ball, they are then free to move across any zones to counter attack quickly with help from the yellow jokers and the blue forwards outside, who can lay the ball back using 1 touch (as shown in the diagram).
- The practice always restarts from the coach.

Practice 3 (Intersectorial): Directing the Opponent's Play to Force Mistakes in a Positional Game

Sub-Principles of Play

- Directing the opponent into channels where we want them to go and making their play predictable.
- Pressing "all together" to force the opponent into mistakes and ultimately give the ball away.
- Regaining possession.

Sub-Sub-Principles of Play

- Communication (starting positions) and switch markers when necessary.
- Take up half and half positions to cover space.
- Identifying “Tactical Cues for Pressing.”

Practice Organisation

- Area: 55 x 60 metres / 60 x 65 yards.
- Time: 5 x 2 minute sets.
- Numbers: 22 players.
- Coaching breaks: Only between repetitions (recovery).

Practice Description

- **Objective:** The blues work on trying to direct the play towards the left centre back as he is a weakness for our next opponents - he is solely right footed and prone to mistakes when playing out from the back.
- The reds are in a 3-5-2 formation and the blues are in a 4-2-3-1 or 4-3-3 formation.
- The pitch is divided into 3 equal thirds.
- **1st Third:** We have the blue attacking midfielder and forward vs 3 red centre backs (2 v 3).
- **2nd Third:** We have the blue midfield vs 2 red wing backs and 3 central midfielders 4 (4 v 5).
- **3rd Third:** We have the blue back 4 vs 2 red forwards (4 v 2).
- We also mark out channels (white lines) as a guide for the players' positional roles.
- The practice always starts with the red team's goalkeeper - the reds try to build up play through the thirds and score.
- The blue team defend the goal using the sub-principles and sub-sub-principle of play listed, trying to win the ball.
- The main aim is to force the play towards the red left centre back who is prone to making mistakes, as shown in the diagram example when he misplaces his pass straight to the blue right winger.
- If the blues win the ball, they are then free to move across all thirds to counter attack quickly and score.
- The offside rule is applied in the final thirds only.
- The practice always restarts from the red team's goalkeeper.

TUESDAY: PRE-GAME ACTIVATION (STRATEGIC TRAINING)

SESSION OBJECTIVES (ATT. PHASE & DEF. TRANSITION):

- Building up play patterns against the 3-5-2 formation with a middle defensive block.
- Defending crosses.

Practice 1 (Collective): Build Up Play and Fast Transition to Defend in a Dynamic Positional Practice

Sub-Principles of Play

- Playing out from the back to the midfield line.
- Creating positional advantages.
- Creating overloads in the central and wide channels.
- Pressing to win the ball.

Sub-Sub-Principles of Play

- Positional play (creating triangles for passing angles).
- Mobility (switching positions).
- High speed of play.
- When possession is lost, create a "Pressure Zone" and stop opponent playing forward.

Practice Organisation

- Area: Half pitch + 10 yards.
- Time: 10 x 30 second sets.
- Numbers: 14-17 outfield players + 1 GK.
- Coaching breaks: Only between repetitions (recovery).

Practice Description

- The blue team use a 4-3 (from 4-3-3) formation and the reds use a 5-2 (from 3-5-2) formation.
- We mark out a "Goal Zone" for the blue team and 5 channels (white lines) as a guide for the players' positional roles.
- The practice always starts with the blue team's goalkeeper.
- The blues build up play using the sub-principles and sub-sub-principles listed, trying to score by receiving within the "Goal Zone".
- The reds press high up the pitch and try to win the ball. If they do, they launch a counter attack to try and score themselves.
- If the blues successfully score by receiving within the "Goal Zone," the coach passes a new ball in for the reds to launch a quick counter attack.
- At this point, the blues must make a very quick transition from attack to defence.
- The blues create a "Pressure Zone" around the ball area, preventing the reds from playing forward and ultimately regaining possession.

Practice 2 (Collective): Build Up Play / "Creating Overloads" vs 3-5-2 and Fast Transition to Defend in a Dynamic Practice

Sub-Principles of Play

- Playing out from the back to the midfield line.
- Creating positional advantages.
- Creating overloads in the central and wide channels.
- Pressing to win the ball.

Sub-Sub-Principles of Play

- Positional play (creating triangles for passing angles).
- Mobility (switching positions).
- High speed of play and quick reactions to transition.
- Create "Pressure Zone" and stop opponent playing forward.

Practice Organisation

- Area: 2/3 of full pitch.
- Time: 10 x 30 second sets.
- Numbers: 22 players.
- Coaching breaks: Only between repetitions (recovery).

Practice Description

- The blue team are in a 4-2-3-1 or 4-3-3 formation and the reds are in a 3-5-2 formation.
- The practice starts with the blue team's goalkeeper.
- The blues have a numerical advantage in the first phase (4 v 2) with the central midfielders able to drop into the low zone. They can also create 2 v 1 overloads by moving the ball to one of the side zones.
- The blues' aim is to cross the ball from out wide into the penalty area and score. The reds defend their goal, try to win the ball and then launch a counter attack.
- If the blues successfully score in the first phase, the coach passes a new ball in for the reds to launch a quick counter attack.
- At this point, the blues must react quickly for a transition to defence, creating a "Pressure Zone" around the ball area, preventing the reds from playing forward and ultimately regaining possession.

Practice 3 (Collective): Defending Crosses and Winning Second Balls in a 7 v 7 (+4) Transition Game

Sub-Principles of Play

- Compactness.
- Providing cover.
- Shifting across collectively in relation to ball position.

Sub-Sub-Principles of Play

- Using the correct defensive body shape and being aware in relation to your direct opponent, the ball, the goal and available spaces.
- Blocking and tracking runs.
- Pressing at the correct speed and angles.
- Closing down passing options (horizontal and vertical lines).
- Changing attitude (from defence -> attack -> defence).
- Switching positions (central channel is a priority).
- Playing forward and in behind if possible.
- Taking up finishing positions.

Practice Organisation

- Area: 2/3 of full pitch.
- Time: 10 x 30 second sets.
- Numbers: 16-18 outfield players + 2 GKs.
- Coaching breaks: Only between repetitions (recovery).

Practice Description

- There are 4 yellow neutral wingers in the side zones, as shown. The other players can only move into the side zones once the ball has been played in there.
- We also show 5 channels (white lines) as a guide for the players' positional roles.
- The practice starts with one of the goalkeepers (red in diagram).
- The aim is to play the ball into a side zone for a winger to cross into the penalty area.
- A goal is only valid after a cross from a winger (first or second ball). The teams can also play the ball to the deeper winger for an early deeper diagonal cross.
- The main aim is for the defending team (blues in diagram) to use some of the sub-principles and sub-sub-principles listed to defend crosses and win any second balls.
- If the blue team do win the ball or it goes out of play, the coach can play a new ball in to the red team for a quick counter attack - the blues have to react quickly and defend their goal.
- Restart the practice with the blue or red goalkeeper.

THURSDAY: ACTIVE RECOVERY (STRATEGIC TRAINING)

SESSION OBJECTIVES (ALL PHASES):

- Ball circulation and switching play to the weak side.
- Building up play patterns against the 4-4-2 formation with a high defensive block.

Practice 1 (Sectorial): Switching Play to the Weak Side in a Dynamic Zonal Game

Sub-Principle of Play

- Ball circulation and switching play to the weak side.

Sub-Sub-Principles of Play

- Speed of play
- Overlapping runs on the outside.
- Communication.
- Playing forward and in behind if possible.
- Taking up finishing positions.
- Changing attitude from attack to defence.
- Organised and tight marking.

Practice Organisation

- Area: Half pitch.
- Time: 10 x 30 second sets.
- Numbers: 14-16 outfield players + 1 GK.
- Coaching breaks: Only between repetitions (recovery).

Practice Description

- The practice starts in one of the side zones (left side zone in the diagram example) with a 3 v 3 situation.
- The coach starts the practice and the red full back and 2 yellow neutral players try to keep possession.
- The blue left back, central midfielder and left winger try to win the ball.
- As soon as they win the ball, they pass to the central midfielder in the middle zone.
- From this point, the aim is to switch the play quickly and create an overload on the weak side. This is best achieved by passing forward to the winger.
- In the diagram example there is a 2 v 1 overload - the red left back moves across to defend, but the blue right back makes an overlapping run to receive high up the pitch and then cross into the penalty area.
- The 2 blue forwards make runs into the penalty area and try to score.
- The red centre backs defend - if they are able to win the ball, they can try to score in any of the 3 mini goals.
- Restart the practice with a 3 v 3 situation in the right side zone and switch play to the left.

Practice 2 (Intersectorial): Build Up Play vs 4-2 (from 4-4-2) and Fast Transition to Defend in a Dynamic Practice

Sub-Principles of Play

- Playing out from the back to the midfield line.
- Creating positional advantages.
- Creating overloads in the central and wide channels.
- Pressing to win the ball.

Sub-Sub-Principles of Play

- Positional play (creating triangles for passing angles).
- Mobility (switching positions).
- High speed of play and quick reactions to transition.
- Create "Pressure Zone" and stop opponent playing forward.

Practice Organisation

- Area: Half pitch.
- Time: 10 x 30 second sets.
- Numbers: 12-16 outfield players + 1 GK.
- Coaching breaks: Only between repetitions (recovery).

Practice Description

- **Objective:** Building up play, creating overloads against the 4-4-2 formation with a high defensive block.
- The blue team have a goalkeeper, the back 4 and 2 central midfielders. The red team defend high up the pitch with their midfield 4 and 2 forwards.
- We mark out 5 channels (white lines) as a guide for the players' positional roles.
- The practice always starts from the blue team's goalkeeper.
- The blues use the sub-principles and sub-sub-principles and build up play with specific patterns set out by the coach.
- The aim for the blue team is to receive a pass within the "Goal Zone" to score.
- If the blues are successful, the coach passes a new ball in for the reds to launch a quick counter attack.
- At this point, the blues must make a fast transition to defence, creating a "Pressure Zone" around the ball area, preventing the reds from playing forward and ultimately regaining possession.
- If the blues are unsuccessful in the first phase and the reds win the ball from them, the reds launch a counter attack right away.

Practice 3 (Intersectorial): Build Up Play and Creating Overloads in a Dynamic 9 v 9 Zonal Game

Sub-Principles of Play

- Playing out from the back to the midfield line.
- Creating positional advantages.
- Creating overloads in the central and wide channels.
- Pressing to win the ball.

Sub-Sub-Principles of Play

- Positional play (creating triangles for passing angles).
- Mobility (switching positions).
- High speed of play and quick reactions to transition.
- Create "Pressure Zone" and stop opponent playing forward.

Practice Organisation

- Area: Half pitch (narrower) + 10 yards.
- Time: 10 x 30 second sets.
- Numbers: 16-20 outfield players + 2 GKs.
- Coaching breaks: Only between repetitions (recovery).

Practice Description

- **Objective:** Building up play and creating overloads against an opposition using the 4-4-2 formation with a high defensive block.
- The area is split into 2 equal zones (halves) and we also mark out 3 channels (white lines) as a guide for the players' positional roles.
- The practice always starts from the blue team's goalkeeper in zone 1.
- The blues build up play with the aim of playing into zone 2 and creating an overload for a successful attack.
- In zone 1, the central midfielder drops back to create a 5 v 4 numerical advantage. In the diagram example, he receives and switches the play to the winger in zone 2.
- As soon as the ball is played into zone 2, the 2 full backs can move forward to again create a 5 v 4 overload.
- In the diagram example, the full back makes an overlapping run to create a 2 v 1 overload in the wide channel - he receives and crosses for the attacking midfielder to score.
- If the reds win the ball at any time, they launch a quick counter attack and there are no longer any restrictions for movement between the 2 zones.

FRIDAY: LOWER LEARNING OF GAME MODEL (SPEED OF PLAY)

SESSION OBJECTIVES (TRANSITION PHASES):

- Defending direct play towards two forwards and winning the second ball.
- Switch play or play a forward pass very quickly to avoid the first pressure after winning the ball.

Practice 1 (Sectorial): Defending Direct Play into 2 Forwards and Winning the Second Ball in a Dynamic Practice

Sub-Sub-Principles of Play

- Dropping off and winning the second ball.
- Using the correct defensive body shape.
- Marking while always keeping aware of the spaces, the ball and the goal to get a positional advantage.
- Second ball awareness.
- Timing runs to arrive in finishing positions.
- Making runs on the blind side of defenders.

Practice Organisation

- Time: 12 x 20 second sets.
- Numbers: Players work in pairs as shown + 1 GK.
- Coaching breaks: Only between repetitions (recovery).

Practice Description

- We mark out an area in the centre as shown and we have 2 blue centre backs against 2 red forwards.
- Each team has a central midfielder waiting outside, and there are also 2 yellow neutral wingers at the sides.
- The practice starts with a long diagonal ball from the coach into the central area - the blue centre backs and red forwards compete in a duel.
- Both central midfielders (red and blue) move forward to try and win the second ball.
- Whichever central midfielder (red or blue) gains possession, that team launches a 5 v 3 attack utilising the neutral wingers who enter the pitch at this point.
- In the diagram example, the red central midfielder gains possession and the reds have 6 seconds to score.
- The blues drop off and defend their goal, trying to win possession back. If they do, they then launch a fast break attack (5 v 3) and the first pass must be forward or out wide to a winger.
- When the first phase is finished, the coach passes a second ball to the team that was defending and the 2 teams compete for 20 seconds of transition actions.
- The offside rule is applied throughout.

Practice 2 (Sectorial): Defending Direct Play into 2 Forwards and Winning the Second Ball in a 7 v 7 Practice

Sub-Sub-Principles of Play

- Dropping off and winning the second ball.
- Defensive coordination of the back four.
- Using the correct defensive body shape.
- Marking while always keeping aware of the spaces, the ball and the goal to get a positional advantage.
- Second ball awareness.
- Timing runs to arrive in finishing positions.
- Making runs on the blind side of defenders.

Practice Organisation

- Time: 12 x 20 second sets.
- Coaching breaks: Only between repetitions (recovery).

Practice Description

- In this progression of the previous practice, we now play 6 v 6. The practice starts with a long diagonal pass from a red central midfielder to a forward.
- The blue centre backs and red forwards compete in a duel.
- All of the central midfielders (red and blue) move to try and win the second ball.
- Whichever team's central midfielder (red or blue) gains possession, that team launches an attack.
- In the diagram example, the red central midfielder gains possession and the reds have 6 seconds to score. They should utilise their wingers for the attack.
- The blues drop off and defend their goal, trying to win possession back. If they do, they then launch a fast break attack and the first pass must be forward or out wide to a winger.
- When the first phase is finished, the coach passes a second ball to the team that was defending and the 2 teams compete for 20 seconds of transition actions.
- The offside rule is applied throughout.

Practice 3 (Intersectorial): Attacking & Defensive Transitions in a 5 (+4) v 5 (+4) Small Sided Game

Sub-Sub-Principles of Play

- Changing attitude (defence -> attack and vice versa).
- Playing forward.
- Opening up passing lines with good positioning and movement.
- Stopping the opponent from playing forward.
- Forcing the opponent to play with their weaker foot.
- Closing passing lines.

Practice Organisation

- Area: 35 metres / 40 yards x double depth of penalty area.
- Time: 12 x 20 second sets.
- Numbers: 16-18 outfield players + 2 GKs.
- Coaching breaks: Only between repetitions (recovery).

Practice Description

- For this game, we have a 4 v 4 situation, with each team having an additional 4 players in the outside positions shown.
- The practice always starts from one of the goalkeepers.
- The first aim is to build up play, utilising the outside players and the 8 v 4 numerical advantage to try and score.
- However, the focus of this practice is on the transitions. The defending team (blues in diagram) try to press together and win the ball - if they do, their first pass ***MUST*** be forward.
- The aim is to launch a fast break attack and score as quickly as possible, as shown in the diagram example.
- The outside players are limited to 2 touches and can be pressed by the opposing inside players.

Variation

- The outside players can enter when their team wins possession, to create overloads for the counter attack.

SATURDAY: PRE-GAME ACTIVATION (STRATEGIC TRAINING)

SESSION OBJECTIVES (ALL PHASES):

- Midfielders making forward runs from the second line of attack.
- Pressing: Making play predictable by directing the opponent to play out with their left centre back, as he is right footed and has problems technically.

Practice I (Collective): Attacking with "Third Man Runs" in a Zonal II v 7 Positional Practice

Sub-Principles of Play

- Playing out from the back to the midfield line (creating positional advantage).
- Midfielders making forward runs from second line of attack, timed to receive in behind.

Sub-Sub-Principles of Play

- Positional play to create passing angles (triangles).
- Mobility (switching positions).
- High speed of play.
- Creating "Pressure Zone" after losing the ball and stopping the opponent from playing forward.

Practice Organisation

- Area: 70 x 60 metres / 75 x 65 yards.
- Time: 4 x 3 minute sets.
- Numbers: 14-16 outfield players + 2 GKs.
- Coaching breaks: Only between repetitions (recovery time).

Practice Description

- The practice always starts with the blue goalkeeper.
- The blues practice building up play against a 4-4-2 structure (4-2).
- The aim is to use the midfielders to make forward runs in behind (third man runs), receive in the blue "Scoring Zone" and finish 1 v 1 against the red team's goalkeeper.
- If the reds win the ball at any time, they launch a quick counter attack.
- The 5 channels marked out (white lines) are just there as a guide for the players' positional roles.

Practice 2 (Collective): Team Pressing Against the 4-4-2 in a Dynamic 10 v 9 Game

Sub-Principles of Play

- Directing the opponent one way to make the play predictable.
- "Pressing all together" to force the opponent to make a mistake and give the ball away.
- Regaining ball possession.

Sub-Sub-Principles of Play

- Communication (starting positions).
- Switching markers.
- Half and half positions.
- Identifying “Tactical Cues for Pressing.”

Practice Organisation

- Area: 60 x 65 metres / 65 x 70 yards.
- Time: 5 x 2 minute sets.
- Numbers: 18-20 outfield players + 1 GK.
- Coaching breaks: Only between repetitions (recovery).

Practice Description

- The practice always starts with the red goalkeeper.
- The reds are in a 4-2 formation (from 4-4-2) and the blues are in a 4-3-3 or 4-2-3-1 formation.
- The red players have restrictions in relation to the 2 zones (halves) - they have 5 players in each zone and they are not allowed to move outside of them.
- The blue players are free to move across the 2 zones and create defensive overloads.
- The reds build up play, try to pass to their teammates in zone 2 and then score.
- The blues use collective pressing in relation to the ball position. They should ideally try to direct their opponent "outside".
- The main aim is to press the ball carrier high up the pitch and create a numerical advantage around the ball zone.
- When the blues win the ball, they launch a quick counter attack.

Practice 3 (Collective): Team Pressing Against the 4-4-2 in a Dynamic 10 v 11 Game

Sub-Principles of Play

- Directing the opponent one way to make the play predictable.
- "Pressing all together" to force the opponent to make a mistake and give the ball away
- Regaining ball possession.

Sub-Sub-Principles of Play

- Communication (starting positions).
- Switching markers.
- Half and half positions.
- Identifying "Tactical Cues for Pressing."

Practice Organisation

- Area: Half pitch + 10 yards.
- Time: 5 x 2 minute sets.
- Numbers: 20 outfield players + 1 GK.
- Coaching breaks: Only between repetitions (recovery time).

Practice Description

- This is a progression of the previous practice.
- We now use the full width of the pitch.
- The rules for the zones (halves) are the same.
- We add the 2 wingers for the red team to make it harder for the blues to press and win the ball.
- The 5 channels marked out (white lines) are just used as a guide for the players' positional roles.

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