

The basics of football

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Football is a very complex sport. We understand football in its entirety, but we can divide football into four different games; some call it moments, others call it four types of sports or four different games.

We have the moment when we recover the ball, which we will call offensive transition.

We have the moment with the ball, where our team is in possession of the ball. Therefore, we are attacking.

We have the moment when we lose the ball, which we will call defensive transition.

We have the moment when we don't have the ball. Therefore, we are defending.

In addition to all these four moments, we have the moment when we defend set plays and the moment when we attack set plays.

The idea behind differentiating these moments is that the team's behavior will differ each moment.

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Next, we will analyze each moment and what kind of behaviors we need to consider in each one.

We start from moment 1. Offensive transition.

Looking at the graph, when we recover the ball, we can have different behaviors depending on the opponent and how our team is positioned, where we recover the ball, etc.

During our offensive transition, we have two clear behaviors:

- 1.- Carry out a quick attack or counterattack.
- 2.- Make a safety pass to secure possession and start a positional attack.

Based on our team and opponent, we will decide which behavior or action to take. We must be clear that the main objective is to reach the goal as quickly as possible, so we will carry out a quick attack or counterattack whenever possible.

We must train our players to consider this possibility a first option.

If this option is not possible or too risky, we should make a safety pass and start what we understand as an organized or positional attack.

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This leads us to moment two: The moment with the ball.

Within moment two, we include the counterattack, direct attack, and positional attack, organized attack, or elaborate play.

Quick attack:

Suppose we decide to make a counterattack or a quick attack. In that case, we must do it with determination, taking advantage of the opponent's disorganization, speeding up the ball, looking for depth, using fast players, and using few touches.

The goal is to reach the opponent's goal quickly and finish the action.

Organized attack:

If, on the other hand, we decide to make an organized attack, we must consider, as a primary objective, securing ball possession.

Then, using possession and position play, we will advance using concepts that we will discuss later, such as changing orientation, driving the ball to fix advantages on the field, attracting players with the ball, etc.

As we advance on the field, we will ideally end up near the opposing goal, where we will try to finish; we will consider duels, crosses, shots, rebounds, etc.

Always during moment two, when we have the ball, whether we have decided to make an organized attack or a quick attack, we must have defensive balance, that is, we must be prepared for a possible loss of the ball.

This means that, for example, when we are attacking, our two central defenders will stay with their forward, if it is the case that they play with a forward; our full-back will be closing a possible passing line with the winger, if the full-back is not involved in the attack, etc.

If at any time we lose the ball, we will find ourselves in moment 3, or what we know as defensive transition.

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Moment 3 - Defensive Transition:

We enter the defensive transition the moment we lose the ball.

We can have two behaviors at this moment, just like in offensive transition:

- 1.- Pressure after loss.
- 2.- We fall back.

Just like in moment one, we will decide which behavior to have based on our structure

and the opponent's structure.

For example, if we just made a quick attack where we attacked with three men against a defense of four and two more who joined, we are three against six; we will not press after loss if we are outnumbered and with a very large space. On the contrary, if we just made an organized attack, we arrived with many players to an area and lose the ball there and we are not outnumbered, or if we are it's by one player but we are in a favorable position, it's a good idea to press.

But, obviously, this will depend on our position, the opponent's position, our qualities, and the opponent's qualities.

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Moment 4 - Moment without the ball:

If we haven't recovered the ball with pressure after loss, we will enter other defensive phases.

These defensive phases will depend on the actions of the opponent; if the opponent makes a direct attack, we will defend the direct attack. Focusing on 1v1 disputes and defending the space behind the defense. We must defend running backward.

If the opponent makes an organized or positional attack, we will defend the ball's exit, we will make a pressing zonal defense, and we will work on the defense of the last line.

Finally, if the opponent reaches the finishing area, we will defend duels, centers, shots, rebounds, etc.

While we don't have the ball, we must have offensive balance, that is, players in offensive disposition prepared in case we recover the ball to make a quick attack or counterattack.

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Moments of set plays:

In addition to the moments we have discussed, we have set plays.

We cannot consider the other game within the game of football. And we can differentiate between offensive set plays and defensive set plays.

In lower categories, we don't usually work on these plays much, although we can; it is useful to understand some concepts such as zone defense, man-to-man defense, attacking the ball, timing movements based on the pass, etc.

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In lower categories, in training ages, we will use associative play. We do this since, if we practice associative play, players can easily adapt to other types of play such as counterattacking, defending with a low block, and others.

When we practice associative play, we must understand the game. Mainly we must understand time and space. We must also understand what space we occupy on the field and our body position. In addition to knowing how to maintain a structure. With this structure and with some tactical actions that we will see later, the goal is to create superiorities.

Obviously, in competitive football or adult football, there are many different ways to win, and we are not here to analyze and decide which is the best game model to win.

We have many examples throughout the history of football of teams that have won playing defensively, as Italian teams have historically done, playing with a direct game as German teams have historically done, and playing with different styles of play.

But we are here to educate, and we understand that, to educate, the best way is associative play. With associative play, the player is much more in contact with the ball; we want to be protagonists of the game through the ball, which will improve our technical, tactical skills, and knowledge of the game.

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Time and space are the basis of associative play.

We must understand that we play an associative game because we understand that there are more chances of success than otherwise.

NOTE: Here we should get a tactical board, either real or online, and explain through player movement how we attract players through the pass to generate superiorities. As well as if we start with the ball from the back, we have superiority with our defenders and the goalkeeper against their forwards and how, if we play a long ball, we have fewer forwards than the others have defenders.

Free tactical board: <https://tactical-board.com/uk/big-football>

Through this explanation, we have to make future coaches understand why we should be open on the field to have more time and space, why sometimes we must advance with the ball to attract the defender and thus one of our teammates has more time and space, and also explain what we have explained above about why it is a good idea to start playing from the back since we have more time and space and we have a numerical superiority.

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Types of Advantages

We will differentiate between numerical advantage, where we have more players than the opponents. It's the basic type of superiority in football. It's when we try to create a 2v1 in attack.

Positional advantage, where, even with the same number of players or even fewer, our position on the field is advantageous. This might be because their profile is better; this means their body is in a better position to run towards a free space, for example. It could also be that they have positional superiority because their interpretation of the situation is better and can take advantage as they position themselves in the right place.

Apart from these two superiorities, we have two more that can be grouped into individual superiority:

Conditional superiority, where a player might not have positional or numerical superiority, but their physical conditions are stronger than the opponent's. A clear example would be the superiority of Cristiano Ronaldo in his prime in a race to space against another player.

Qualitative superiority, where a player without positional or numerical superiority has superiority due to their quality. A clear example would be the superiority of Messi in front of two defenders.

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We divide football into technique, tactics, and collective play.

In some way, it's from smallest to largest; technique is all about the player with the ball, tactics are all about the nearby player without the ball, that is, situations of two against one, one against two, or two against two, and collective play is all about larger structures like the defensive line, the midfield line, the offensive line, or the entire team. In the case of collective play, what we seek is that in a game situation the entire team reacts in the same way.

Later in the course, we will delve deeply into technique, what the technical actions are, what the details of technical extractions are, and some ideas to train them.

As a small appetizer, here you can see that the offensive technical actions are control, pass, shot, ball driving, dribbling, and ball protection.

And the defensive technical actions are rejection and tackle.

As we mentioned, we will delve into all of this later.