



UNAI EMERY'S Secrets

Game Idea | Game Model | Training Methodology

Training The Match We Want To Play | Team Management

| Leadership Dilemmas

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Summary

Summary

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Presentation

In this work, we want to present the secrets of Unai Emery.

Unai Emery, in the 2020/2021 season, rewrote his name in the UEFA EUROPE LEAGUE history by winning it for the 4th time. After 3 consecutive wins at the service of Seville FC and a final lost when coaching Arsenal, last season the Spanish coach won the competition again, showing the football community the ability and strategic sense he deploys in his teams. In this work, we will present:

- Game idea by Unai Emery;
- Our analysis of Unai Emery's Game Model as Villarreal's coach;
- Training methodology based on a microcycle planning;
- Train the match we want to play (analysis of the training session on the eve of the UEFA EUROPE LEAGUE final and link between the strategy for the fixture in the training session and its match deployment);
- Emery's winning method used in managing his teams;
- Proposals for solving leadership dilemmas.

Emery is a winner. He brings together in the best possible way a great knowledge and match reading, training knowledge, and a contagious and motivating energy in leading his teams.

The die is cast, so stay with us.

Chapter 1

Game Idea

Unai Emery sees intensity and aggressiveness, defensive or offensive, as extremely important factors in achieving success. The basis of his game idea is founded on these two very important concepts in modern football. But there are others that Emery does not abdicate in the day-to-day running of his teams:

- Intelligence: smart players make an intelligent team that is ready to make the right decisions on the pitch;
- Stamina: physically and emotionally resilient team;
- Solidarity: solidarity is fundamental when we live in a group;
- Competitiveness: players have to be competitive, first with teammates and then with opponents;
- Communication: it is important that the players participate. They should express themselves, be sincere, benefiting the work group;
- Leadership: among the players, leaders are needed. They will be the extension of the coach within the pitch;
- Personality: the goal is to have players with a behavioral pattern that positively benefits the group.

01 Game Idea

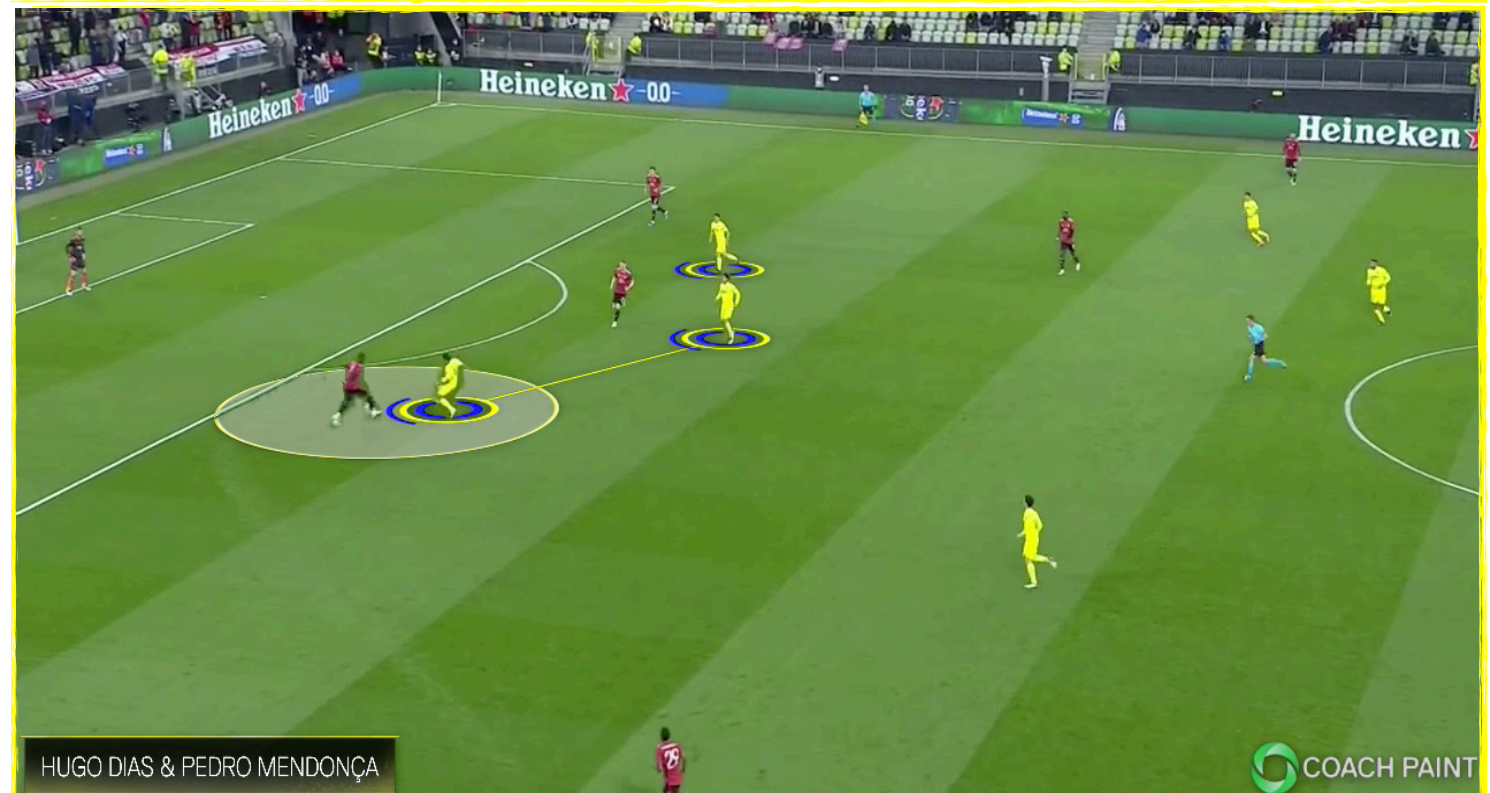
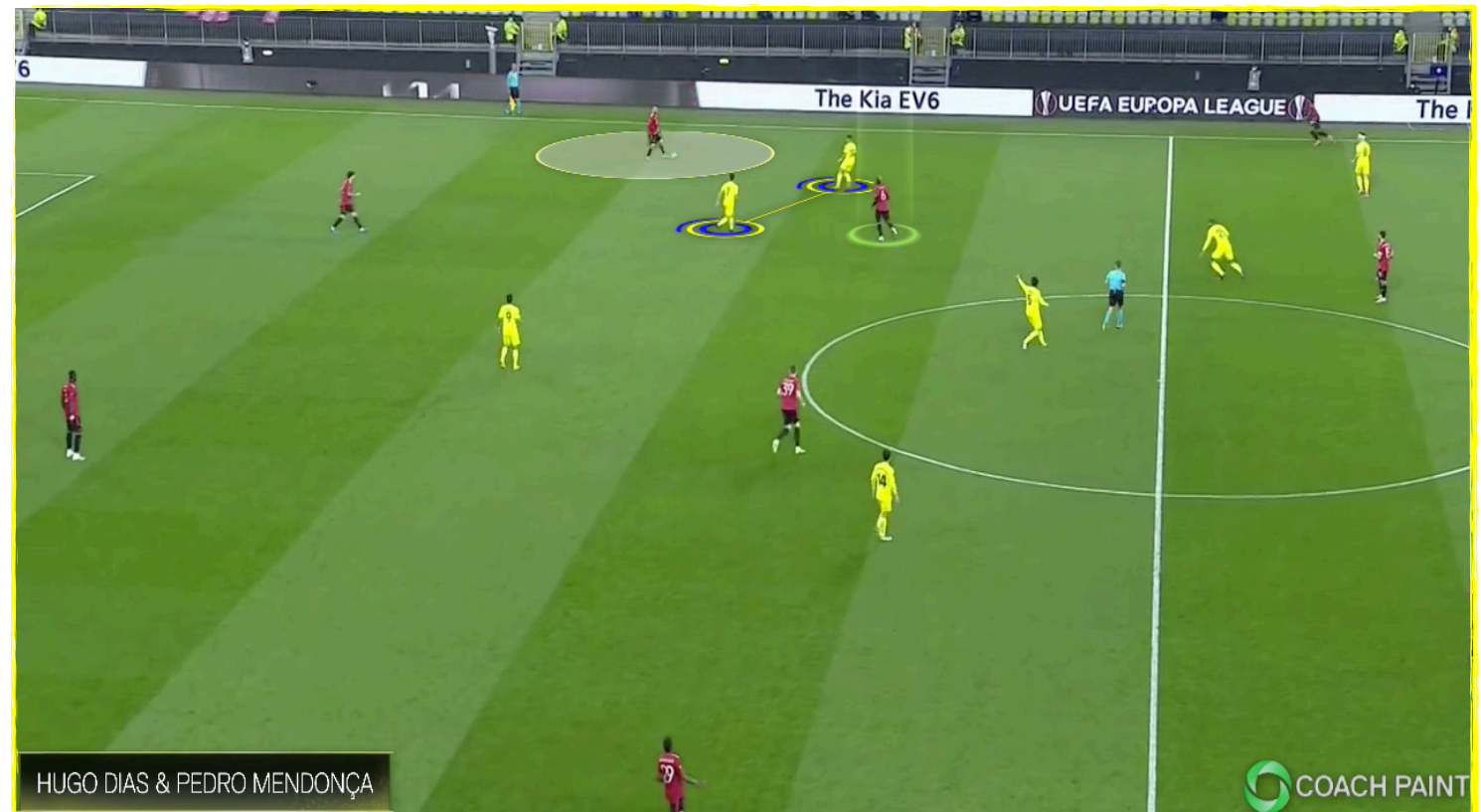
Defense

Typology:

Pressuring zonal defense.

The defensive main actions in Unai Emery's game idea are:

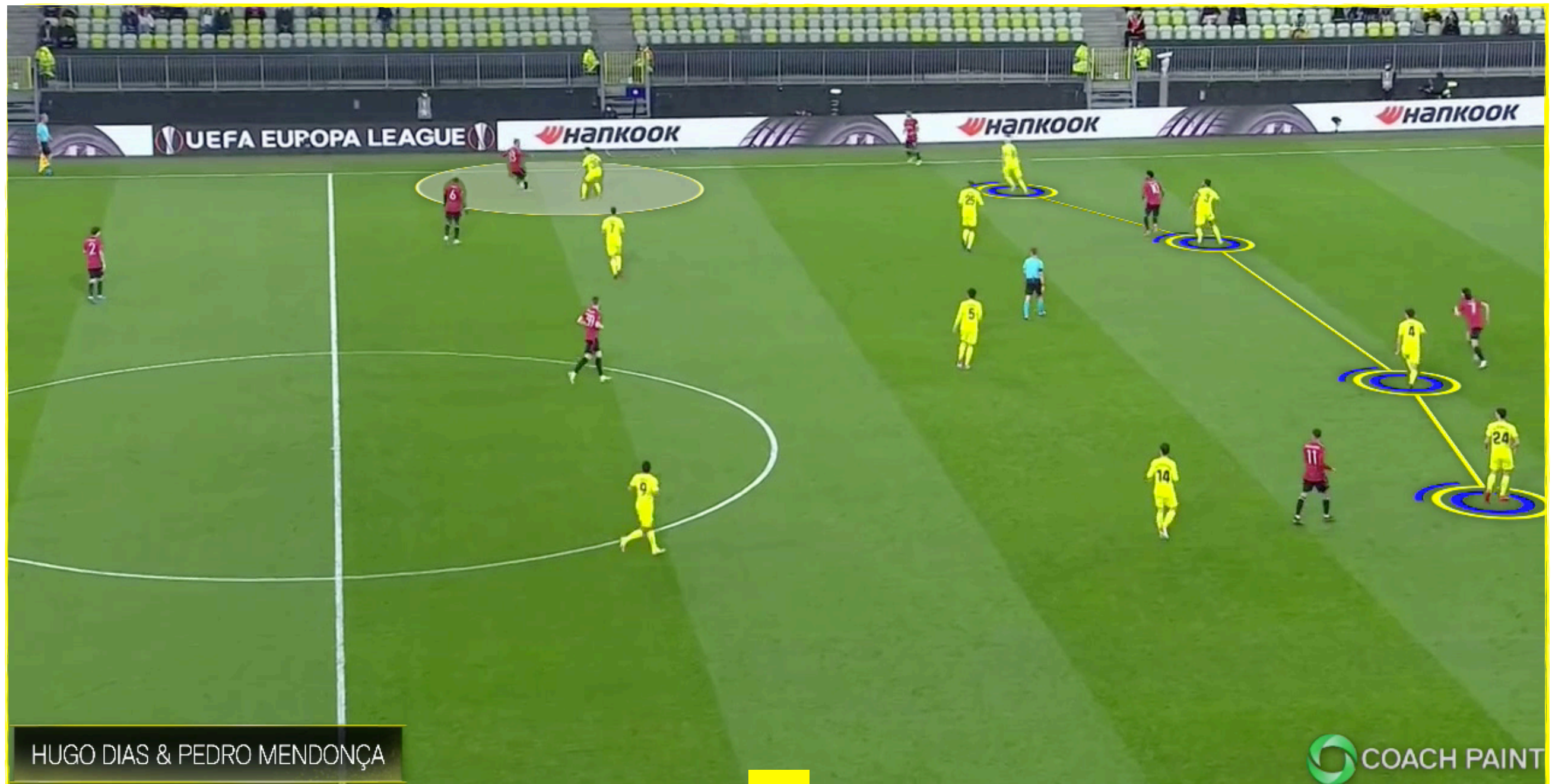
1. Blocking passing lines;
2. Pressing the ball carrier.



01 Game Idea

The basic concepts in guiding the last defensive line are:

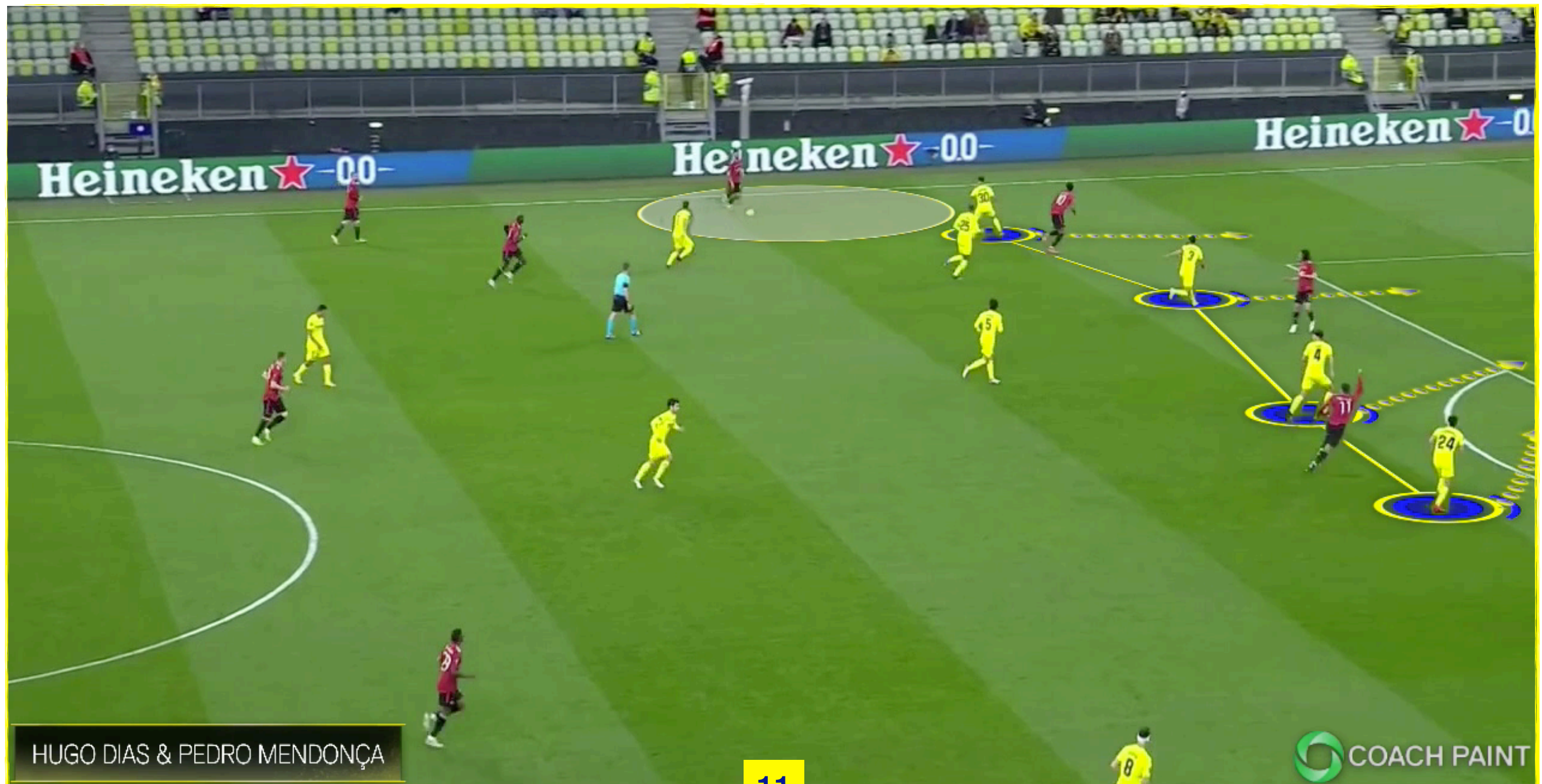
- If the opponent with the ball is pressured, the defensive line holds the line.



01 Game Idea

The basic concepts in guiding the last defensive line are:

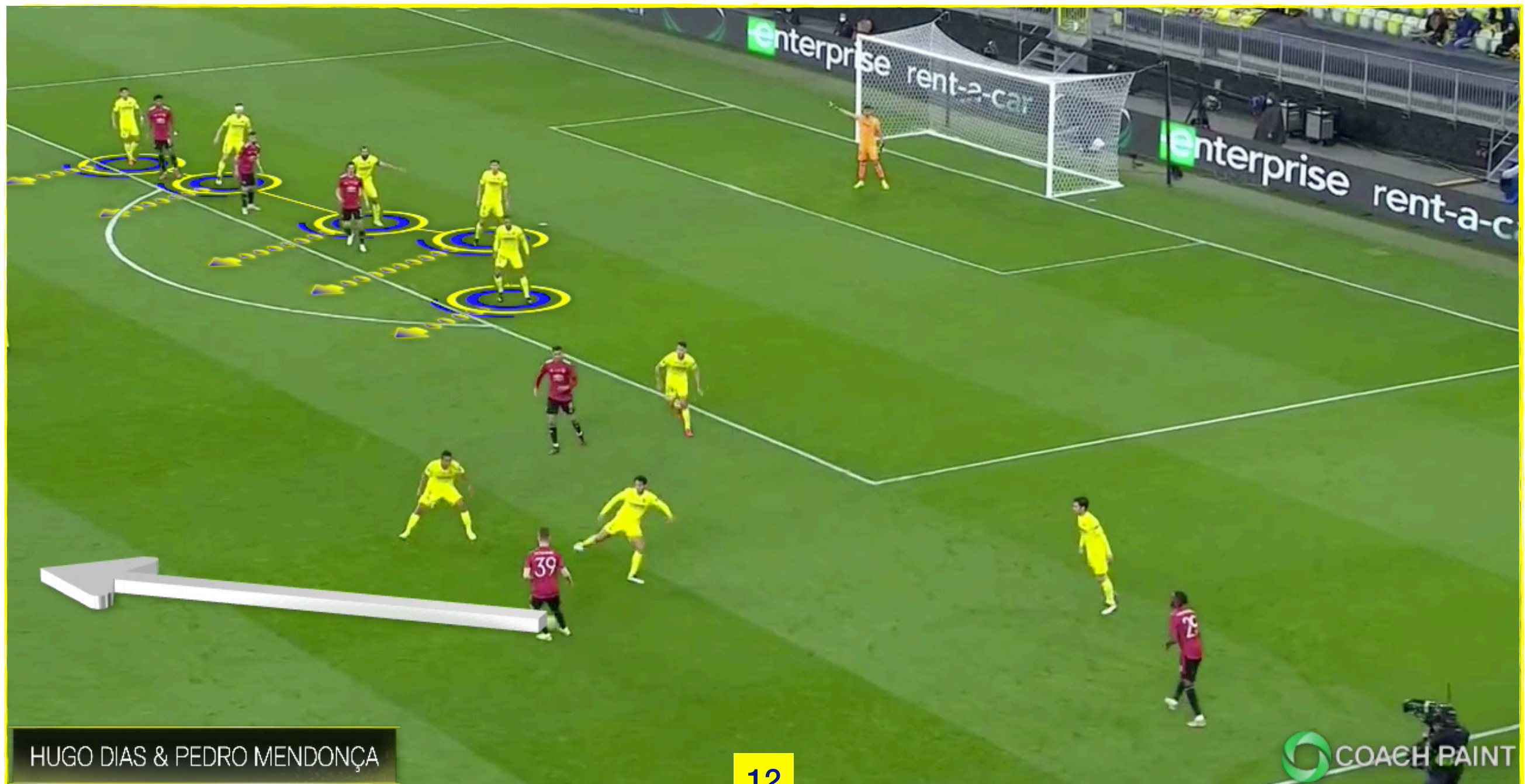
- If the opponent player progresses with the ball unopposed, the defensive line steps back.



01 Game Idea

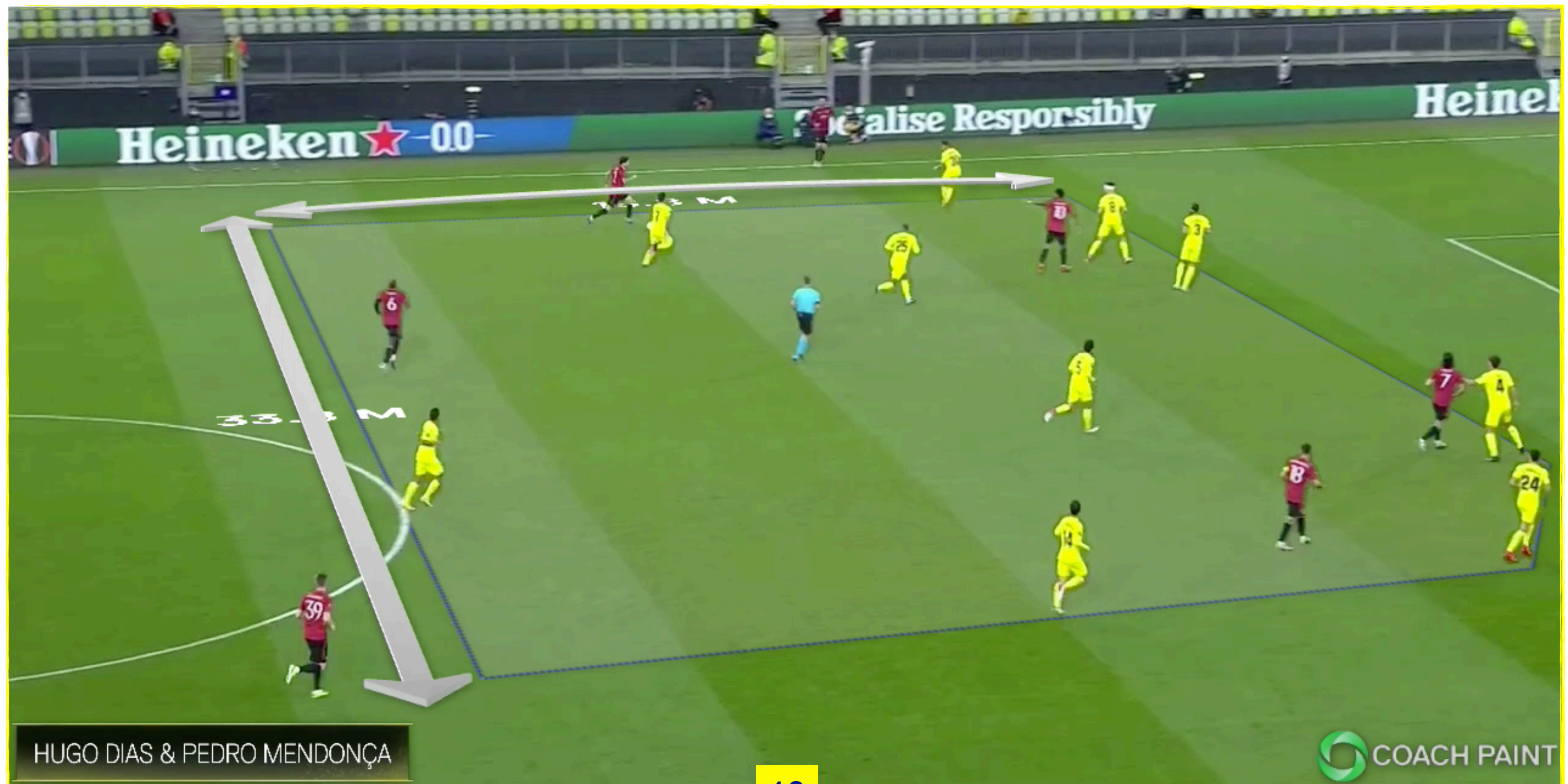
The basic concepts in guiding the last defensive line are:

- If the opponent makes a backward pass, the defensive line moves forward.



01 Game Idea

Unai Emery sees the defensive moment as one where efforts must be spread out. Therefore, his idea is to form a compact block distributed in 40X40m. This situation happens because of the game strategy or when quickly winning possession failed.



Attack

Typology:

Combinative wide and vertical game.

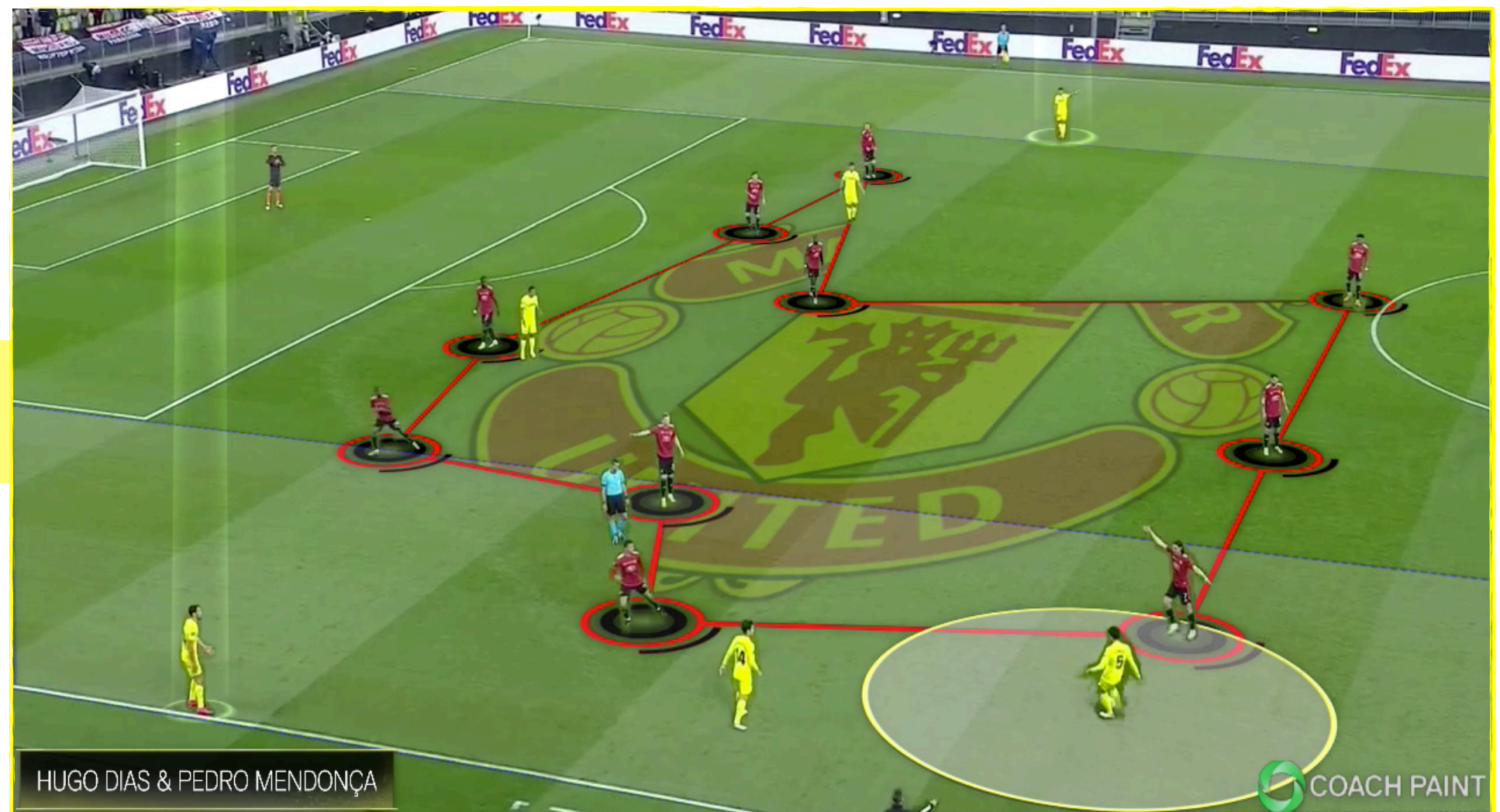
When his team has the ball, Emery wants his players to adopt an aggressive and intense posture. He prefers his attacks to be planned patiently, but the ball circulation must be fast. The main objective is always to look for the opponent's goal, whether in possession or in more vertical actions. For this, it always depends on what the opponent "offers". Other important actions Emery wants his team to do when they have the ball is to look for moments of numerical superiority or 1x1. The general attacking principles are:

- Width;
- Depth;
- Mobility.

Attack

General Principles

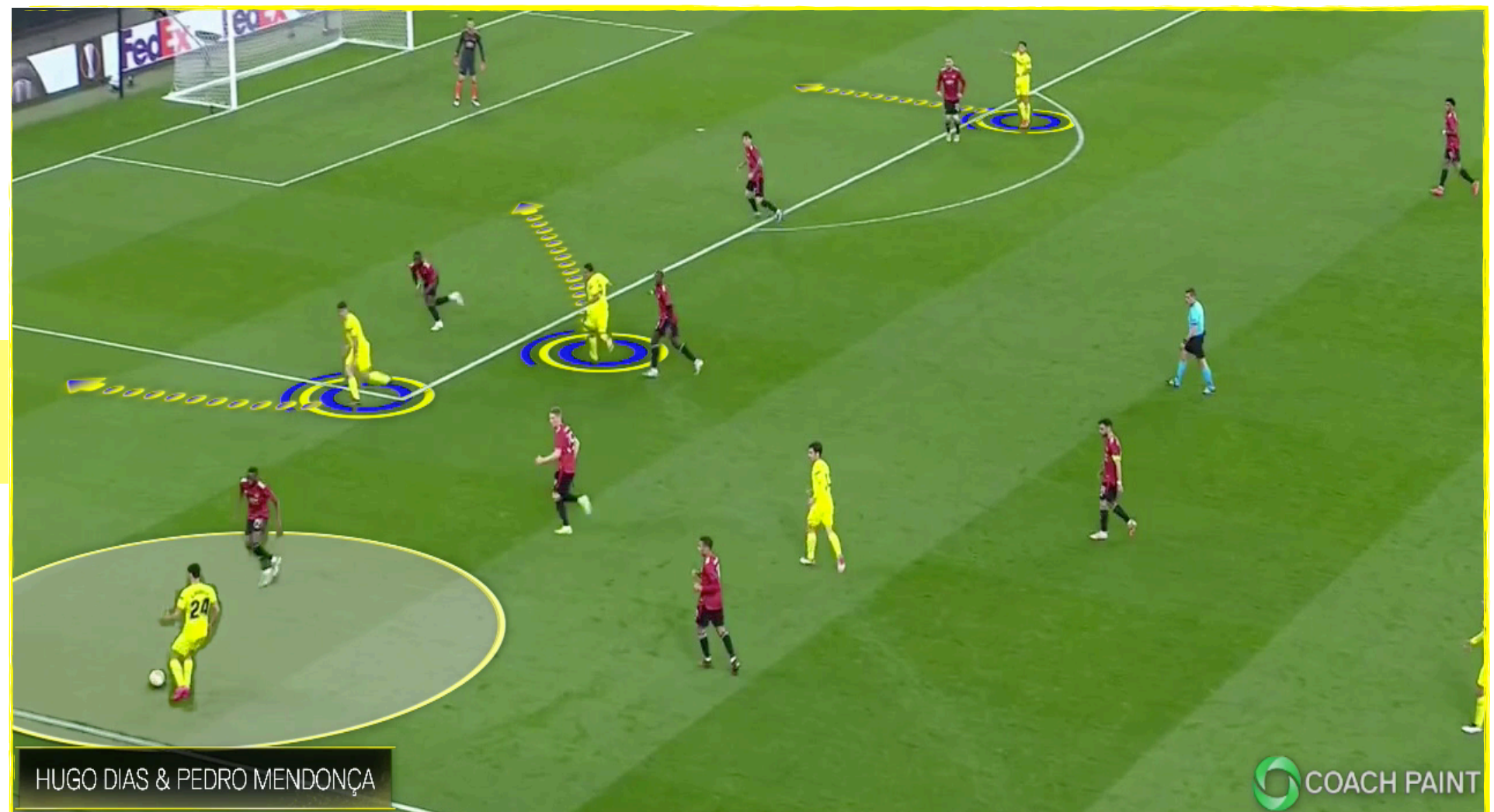
WIDTH



Attack

General Principles

DEPTH



Attack

General Principles

MOBILITY



Attack

General Principles

Regarding mobility/position switching, we give the example of the way Emery structures his team and the freedom he gives his players in two different tactical systems:

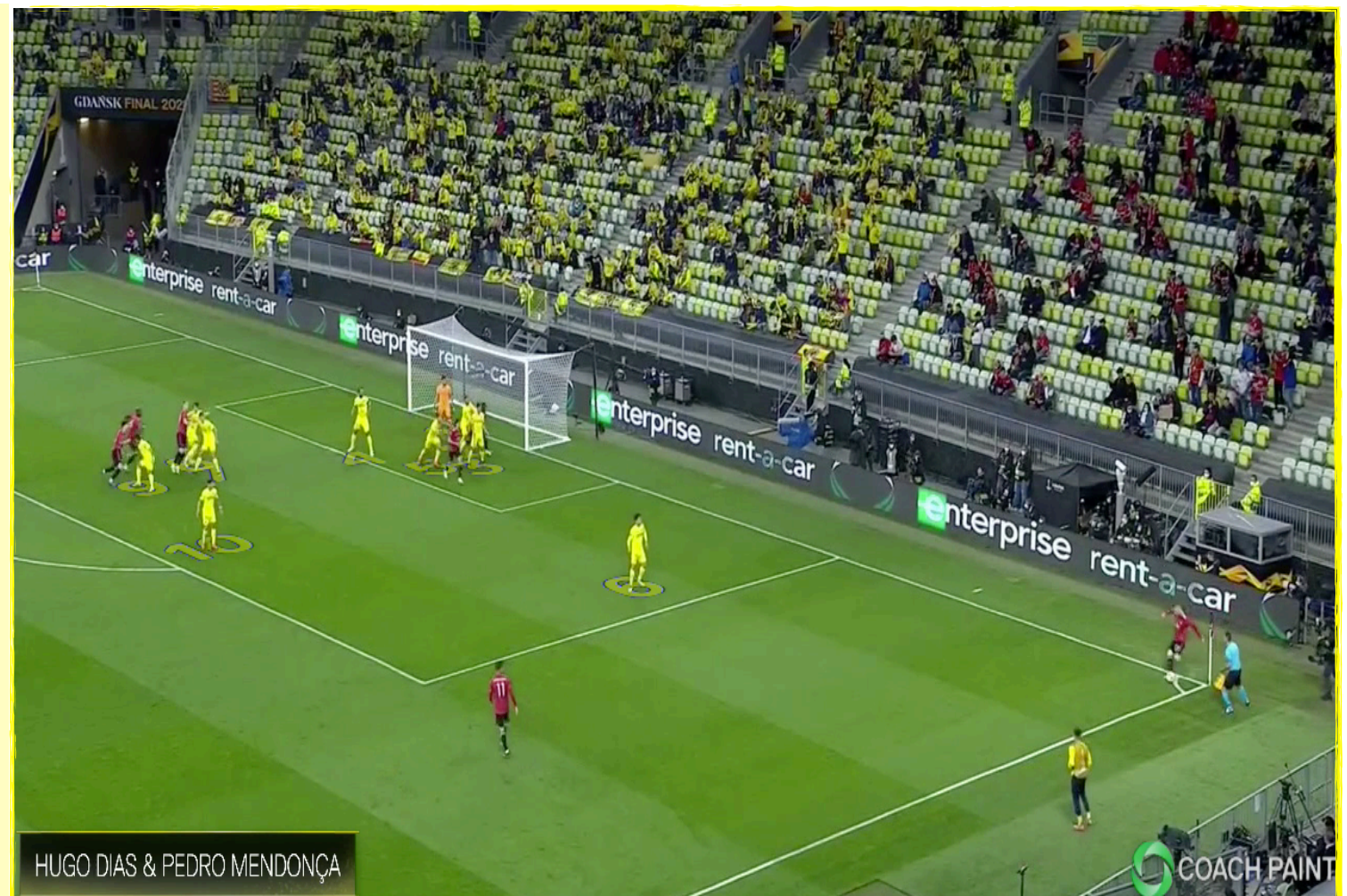
- 1-4-4-2: the 4 defenders and 1 center midfielder keep their positions within the structure and the remaining players give mobility to the attack;
- 1-4-2-3-1: the 4 defenders and the two midfielders keep their positions within the structure, and the remaining players (offensive midfielder, wingers, and forward) give mobility to the attack.

Defensive Set Pieces

Typology:

Zonal Marking

In defensive set pieces, players must share responsibilities, be supportive, and have a strong commitment. The defined typology is zonal defense, but, depending on the limitation imposed by the opponent, the defense can be mixed marking or, in extreme situations, individual marking.



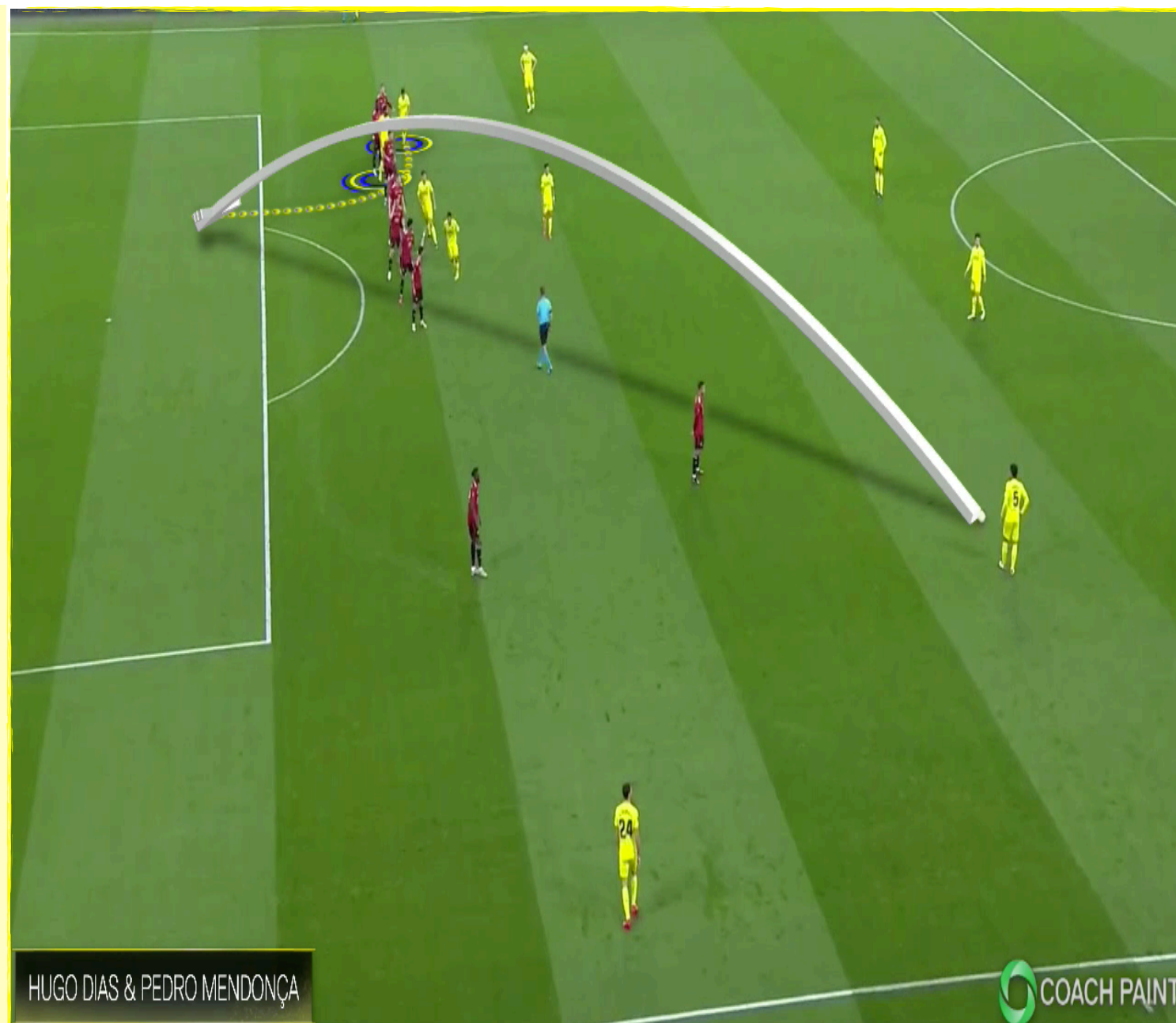
Offensive Set Pieces

Typology:

Unpredictability

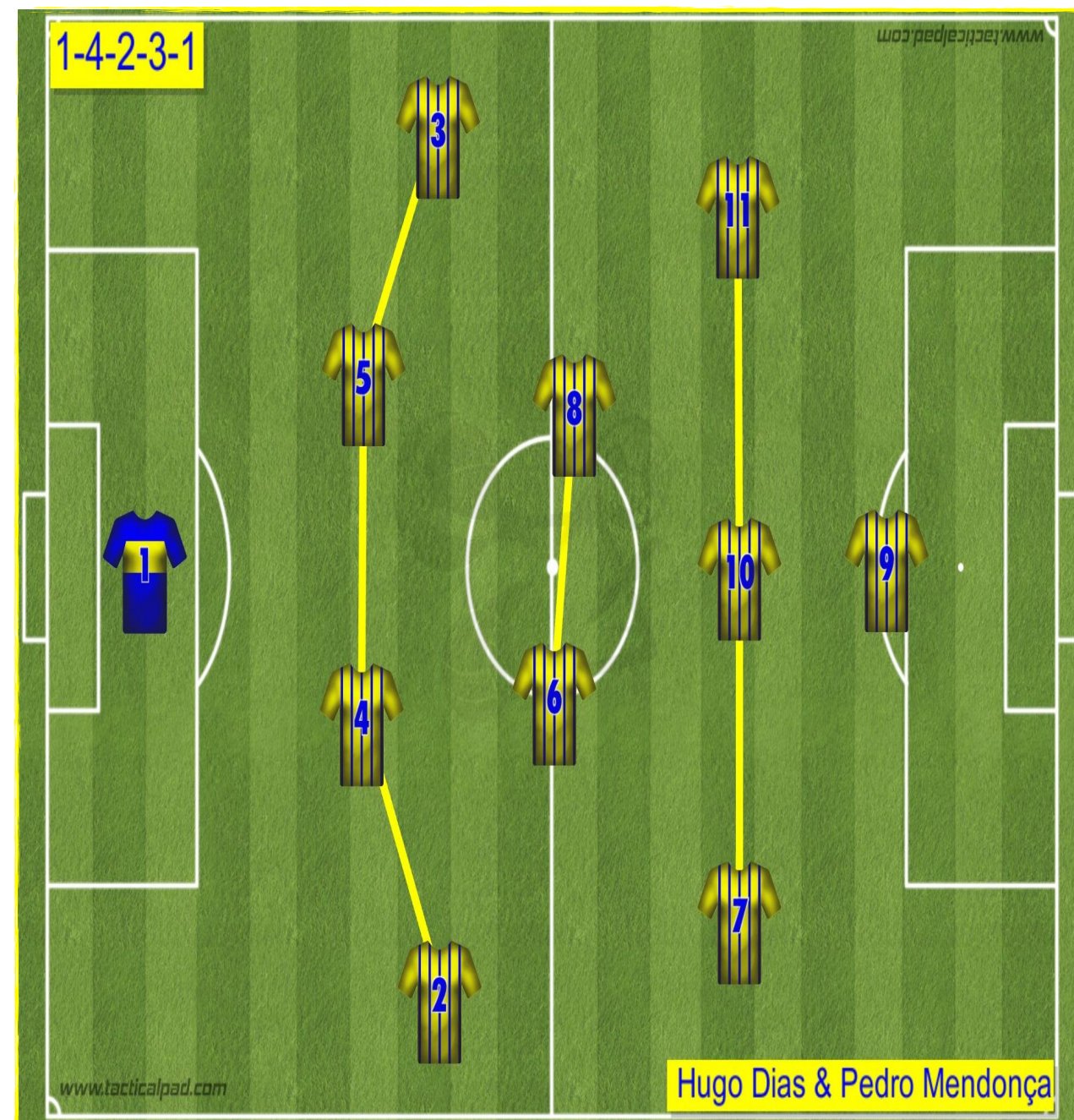
The main actions Unai Emery asks of his players in an offensive set piece, in order of priority:

1. Speed: speed in executing the set piece when there is a chance of taking advantage of some opponent's defensive weaknesses;
2. Short build-up: the short pass, even if the ball is then played to the box, will disrupt the opposing defensive line;
3. Ball placement: placing the ball in strategic zones.



Tactical Systems

The tactical systems that Emery preferably adopts in his teams:



Chapter 2

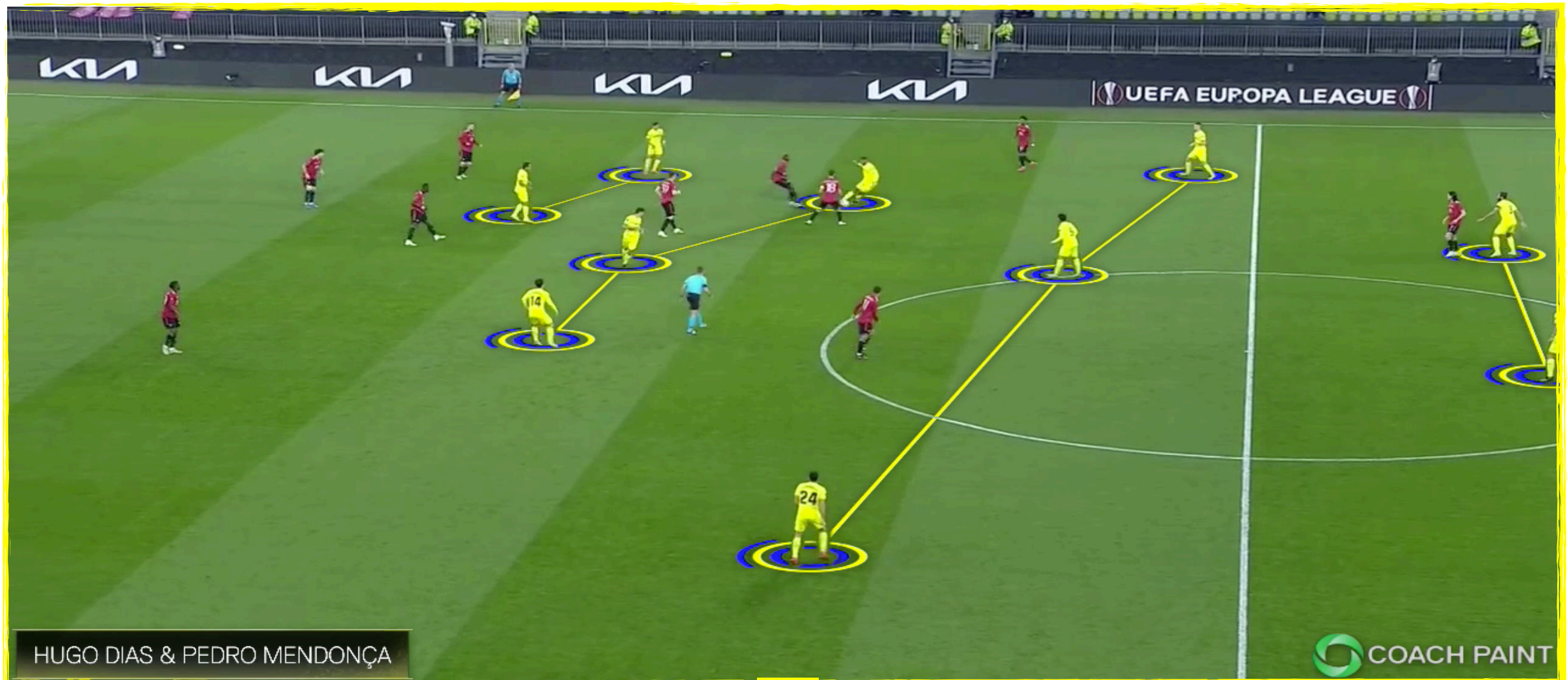
Game Model

Offensive Organization

Offensive Structure: 1-4-4-2

Offensive variants: 1-2-3-3-2 / 1-2-1-3-4

Typology: objective ball possession



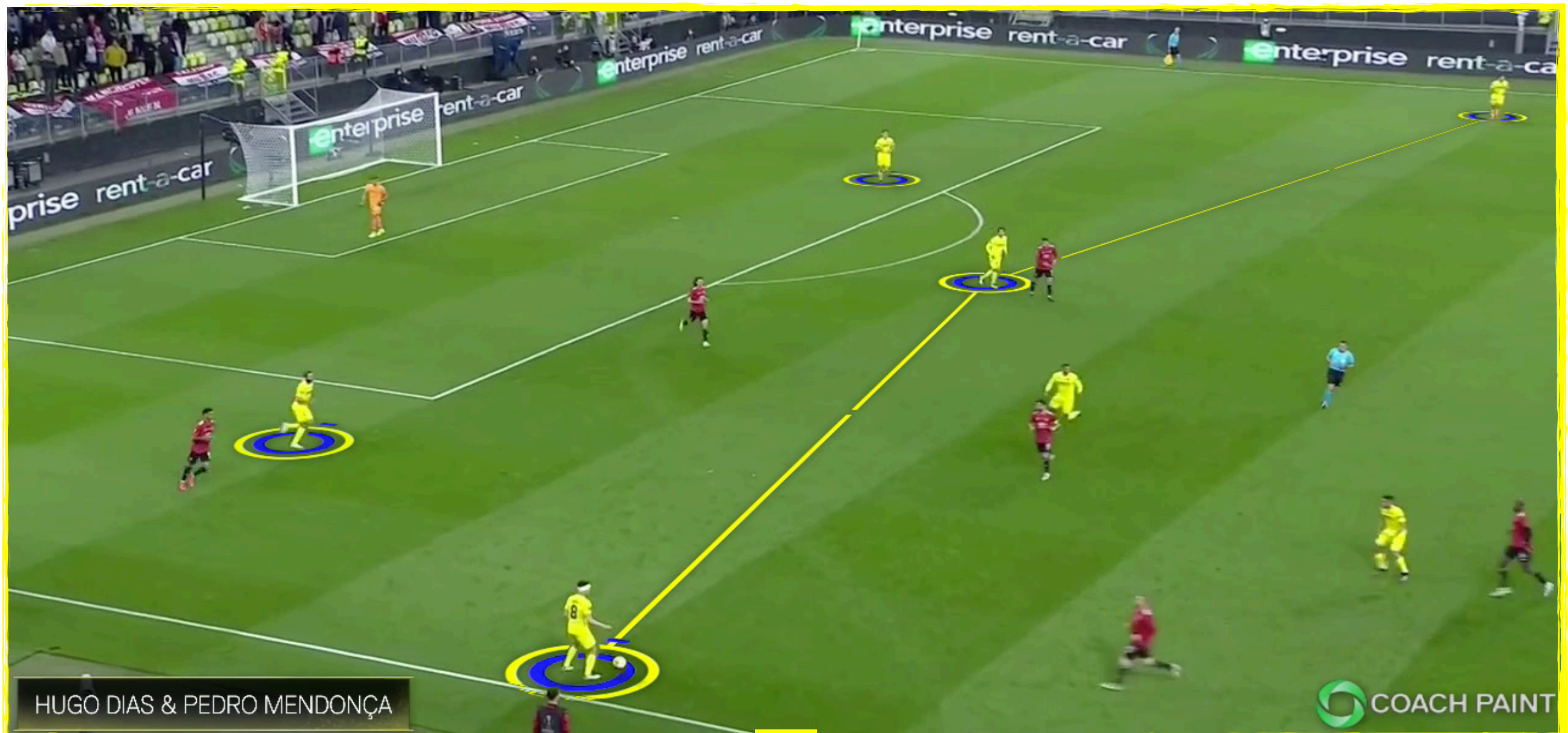
Building the Offensive Game

Two-player build-up: Villarreal CF looks for a short build-up through supported football. This process is initiated by the center backs who are positioned to increase the game width.



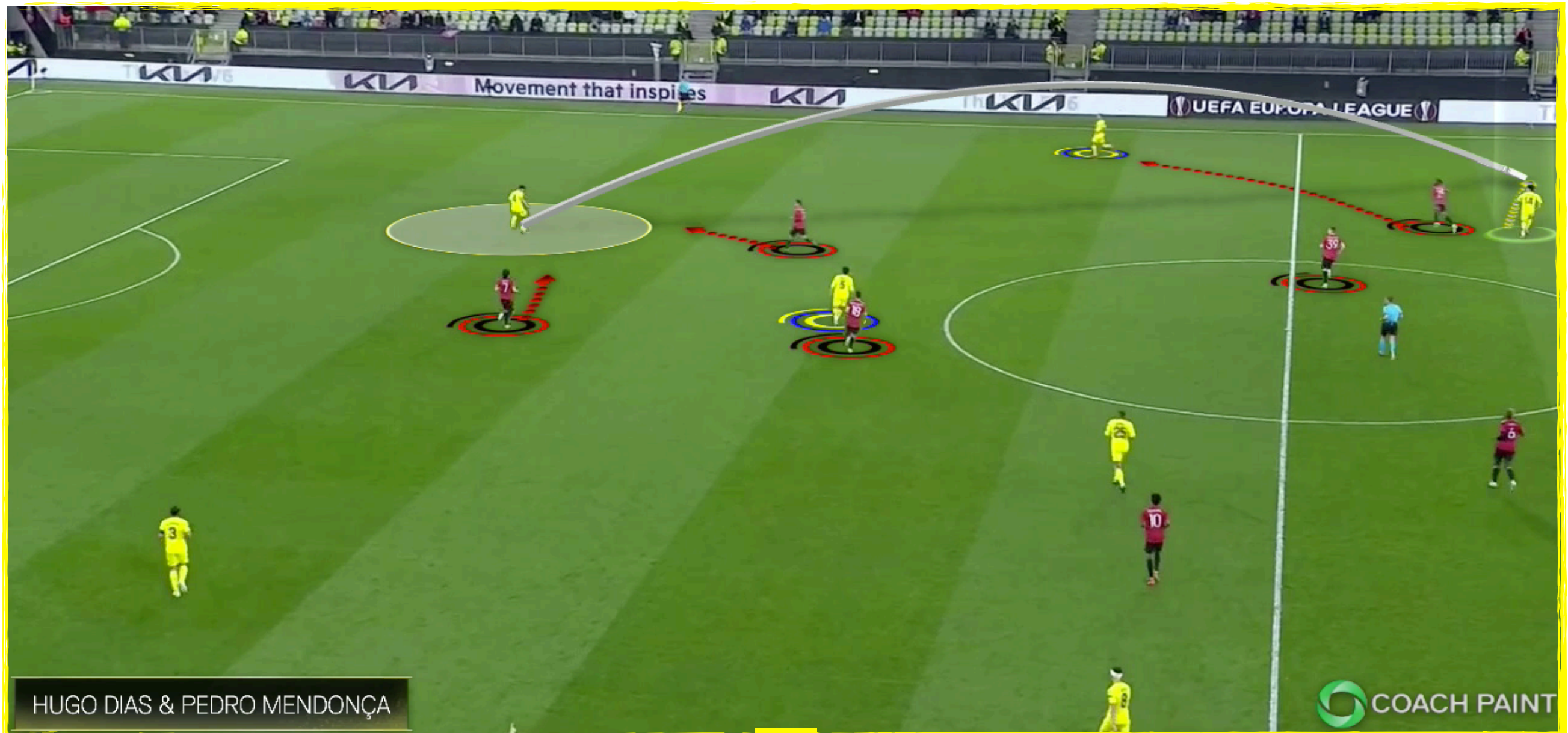
Building the Offensive Game

Bringing full-backs and midfielders closer together: In Villarreal's short build-up, the full-backs approach the center-backs to support this first building moment. In the same way, one of the midfielders approaches the central corridor, places himself in the same line as the full-backs and supports the short build-up.



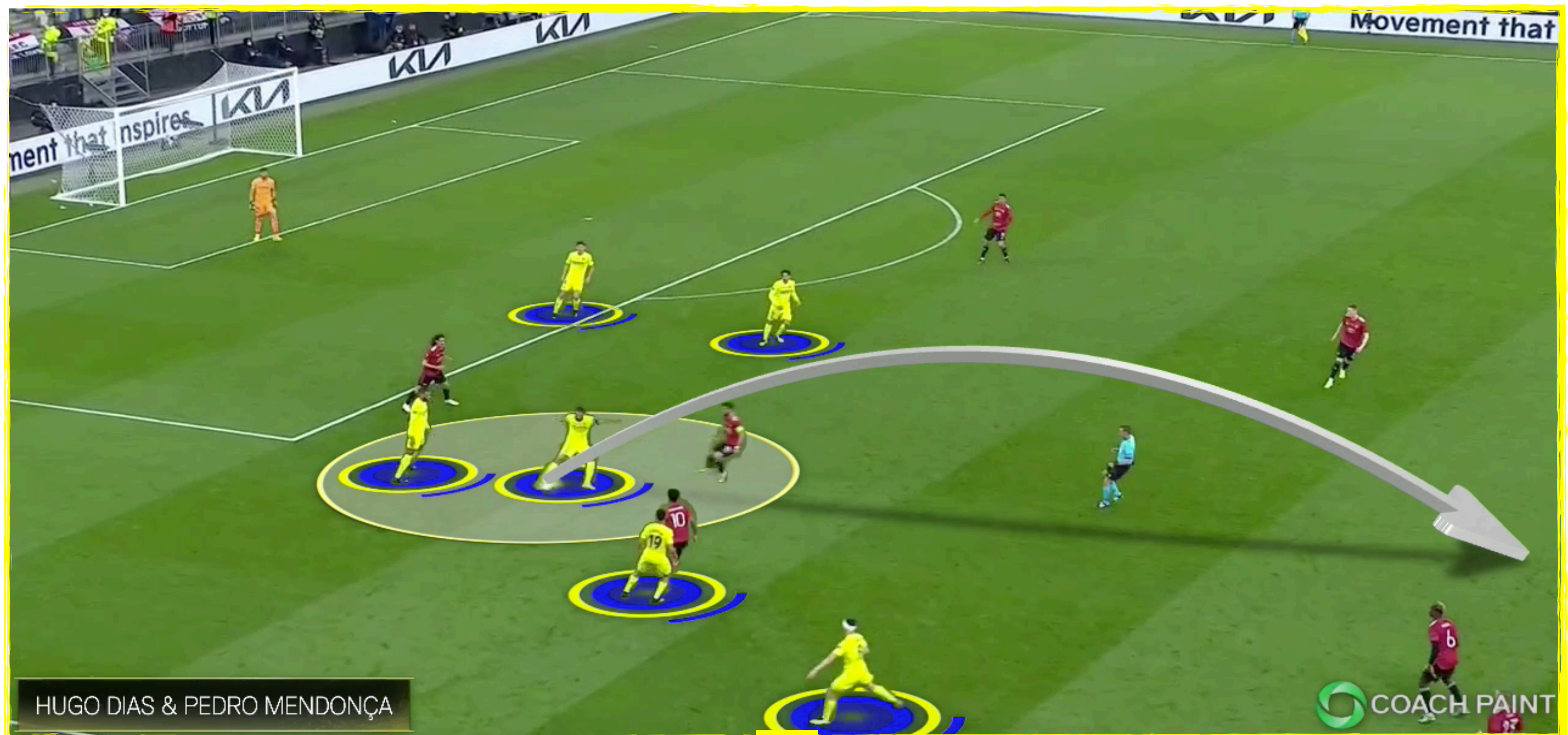
Building the Offensive Game

Playing the ball forward: By placing a high number of players close together at the building moment, Villarreal CF attracts the opponents' attention and opens free space in front which, through a long, direct pass, the team tries to take advantage of.



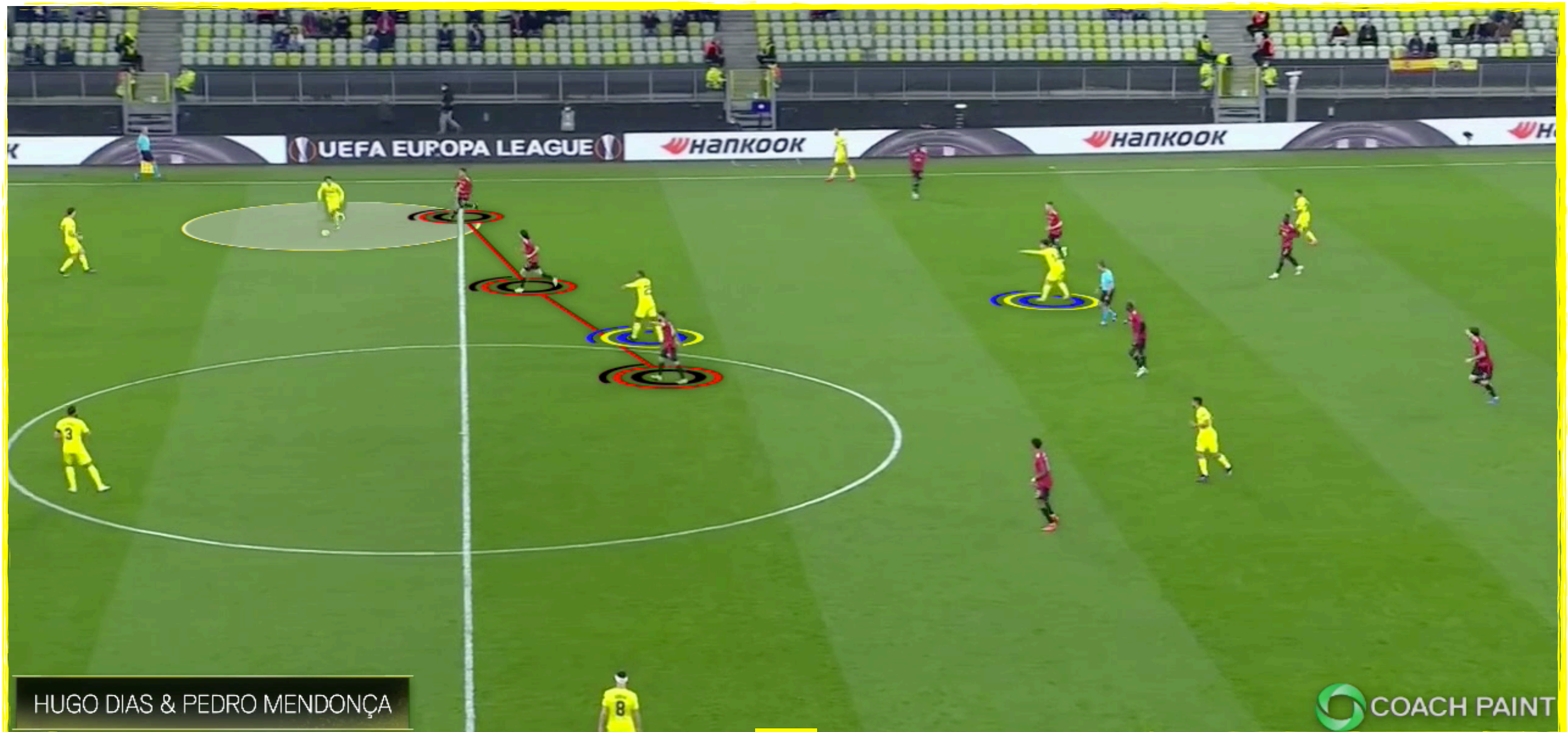
Building the Offensive Game

Avoiding mistakes: The short build-up is sustained by several players to create numerical superiority and prepare for an eventual loss of the ball in that zone of the pitch. Players should avoid making mistakes and it is preferable to play the ball forward whenever there is a danger of losing possession.



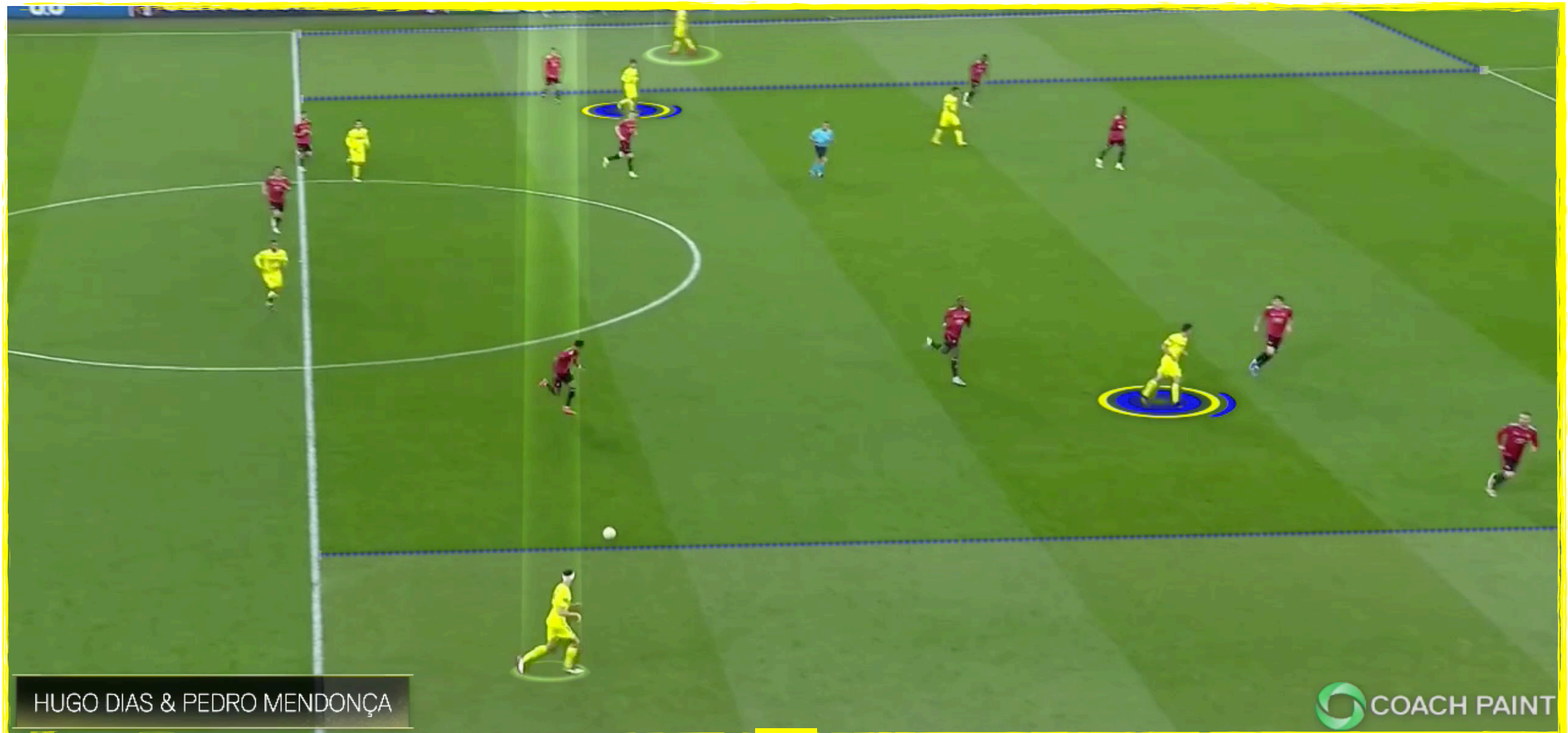
Elaboration of the Offensive Game

Prioritizing combinative football: The midfield players have great flexibility to ensure a fluid possession. If one of the midfielders steps back on the pitch to sustain the short build-up; the other, along with one of the side midfielders (the one closest to the ball) position himself inwardly behind the opponent's first line of pressure.



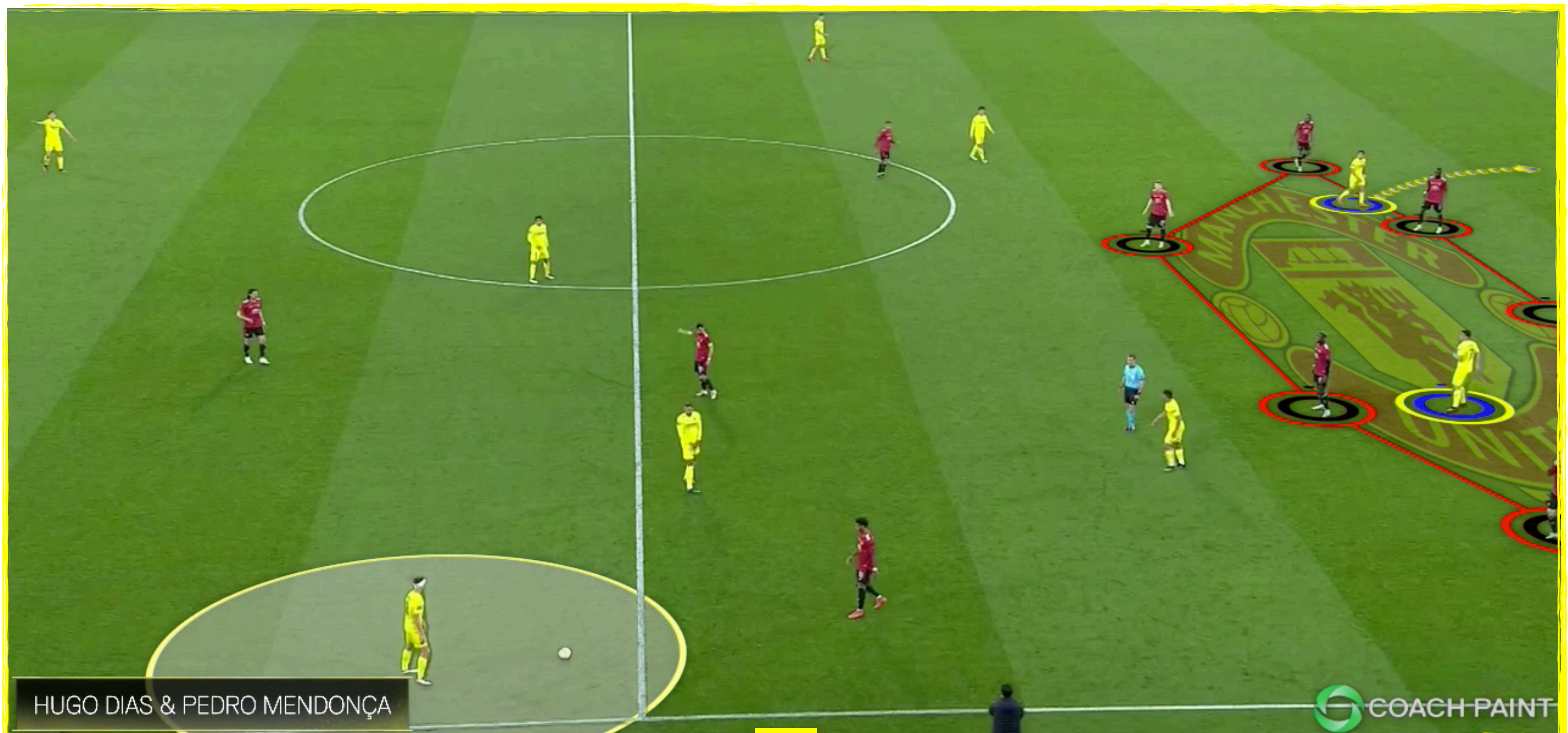
Elaboration of the Offensive Game

Increasing width: The full-backs are responsible for increasing the width and depth in their corridors. In turn, the side midfielders join the central corridor.



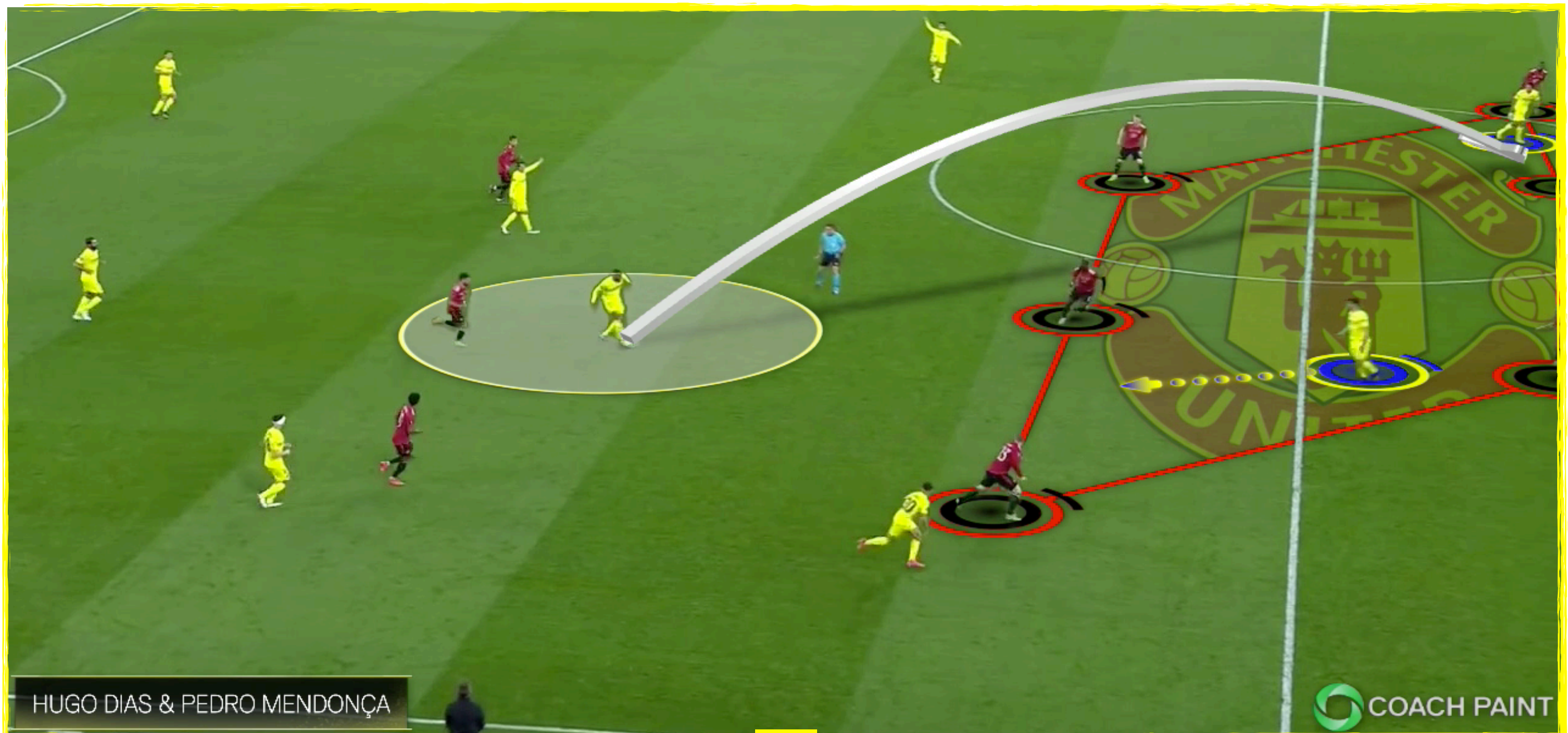
Elaboration of the Offensive Game

Connecting the game with the forwards: The forwards are responsible for offering great mobility and disrupting the opponent's defensive line. Two of the behaviors observed: increasing the width and opening pass lines. The example is when a full-back has the ball still behind the midfield and one of the forwards looks for width and depth and the other one positions himself between the opponent's defensive and midfield lines.



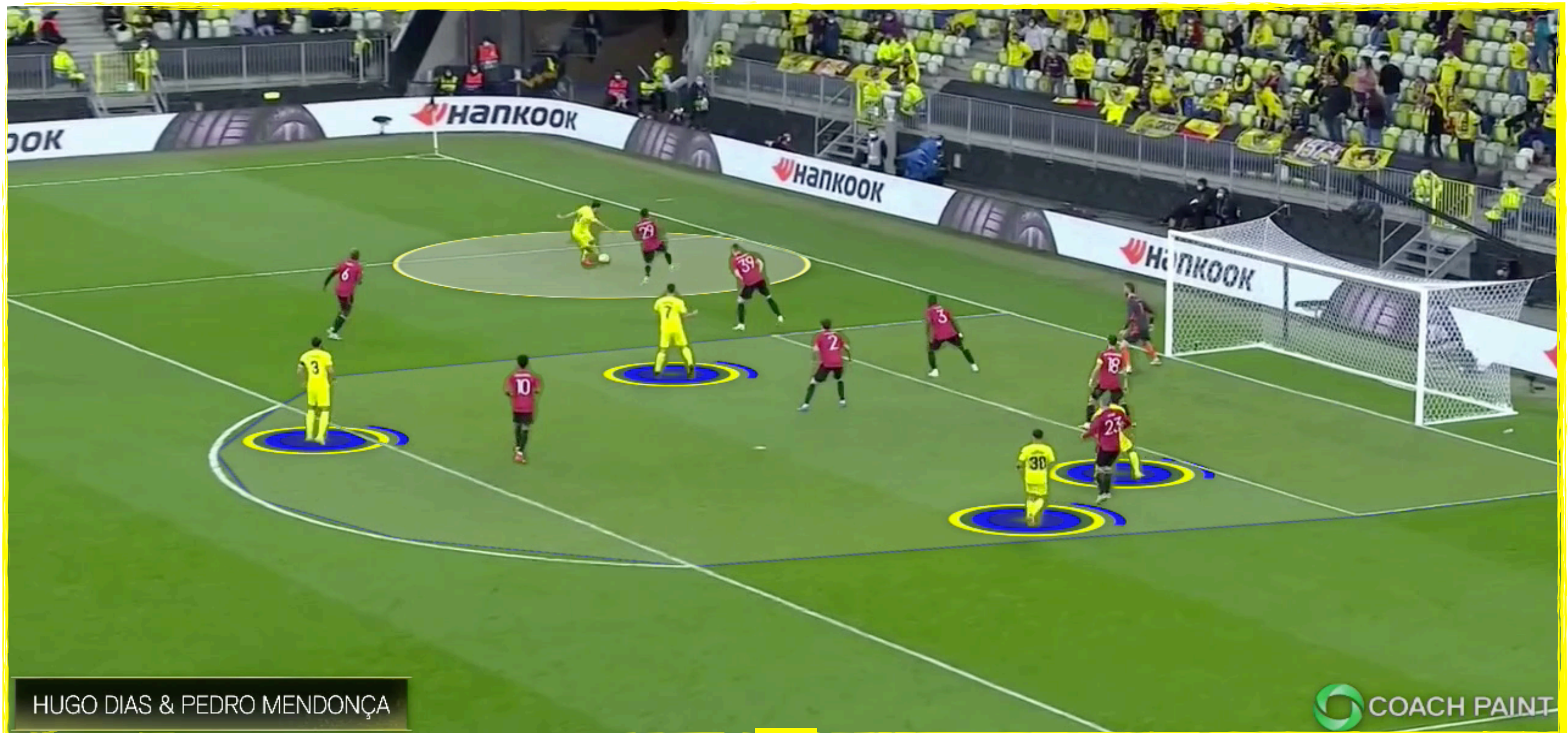
Elaboration of the Offensive Game

Searching for space behind the back of the opposing defensive line: Whenever possible, midfielders look to make a pass to the back of the opposing defensive line. One of the behaviors observed was to bring one forward close to draw the defensive line and have the other attack the depth.



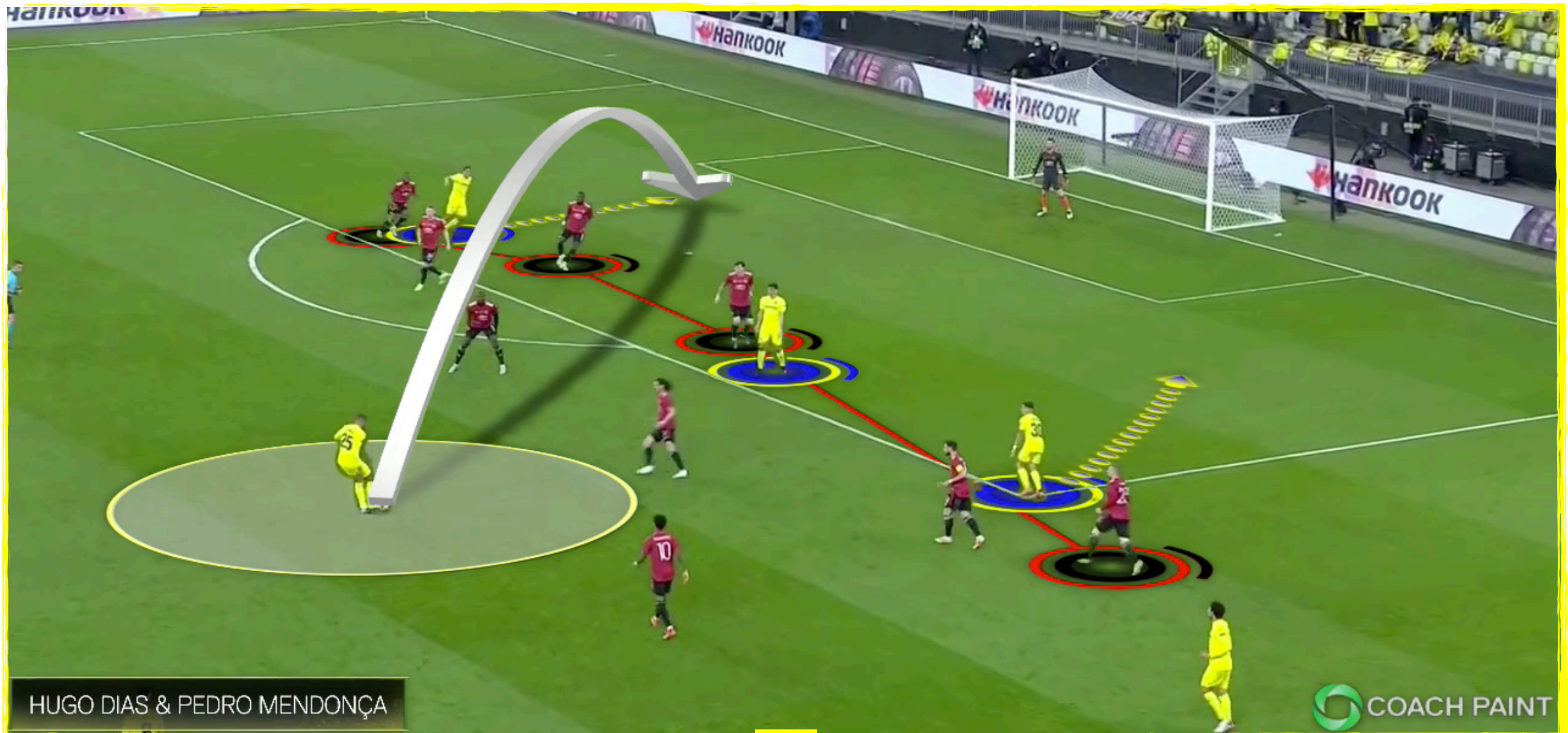
Conclusion of the Offensive Game

Appear in favorable zones: To complete the attacking actions, players must appear in the area near the goal and at the entrance to the box. Great aggressiveness is required from all players to attack/appear in the zone where the ball drops.



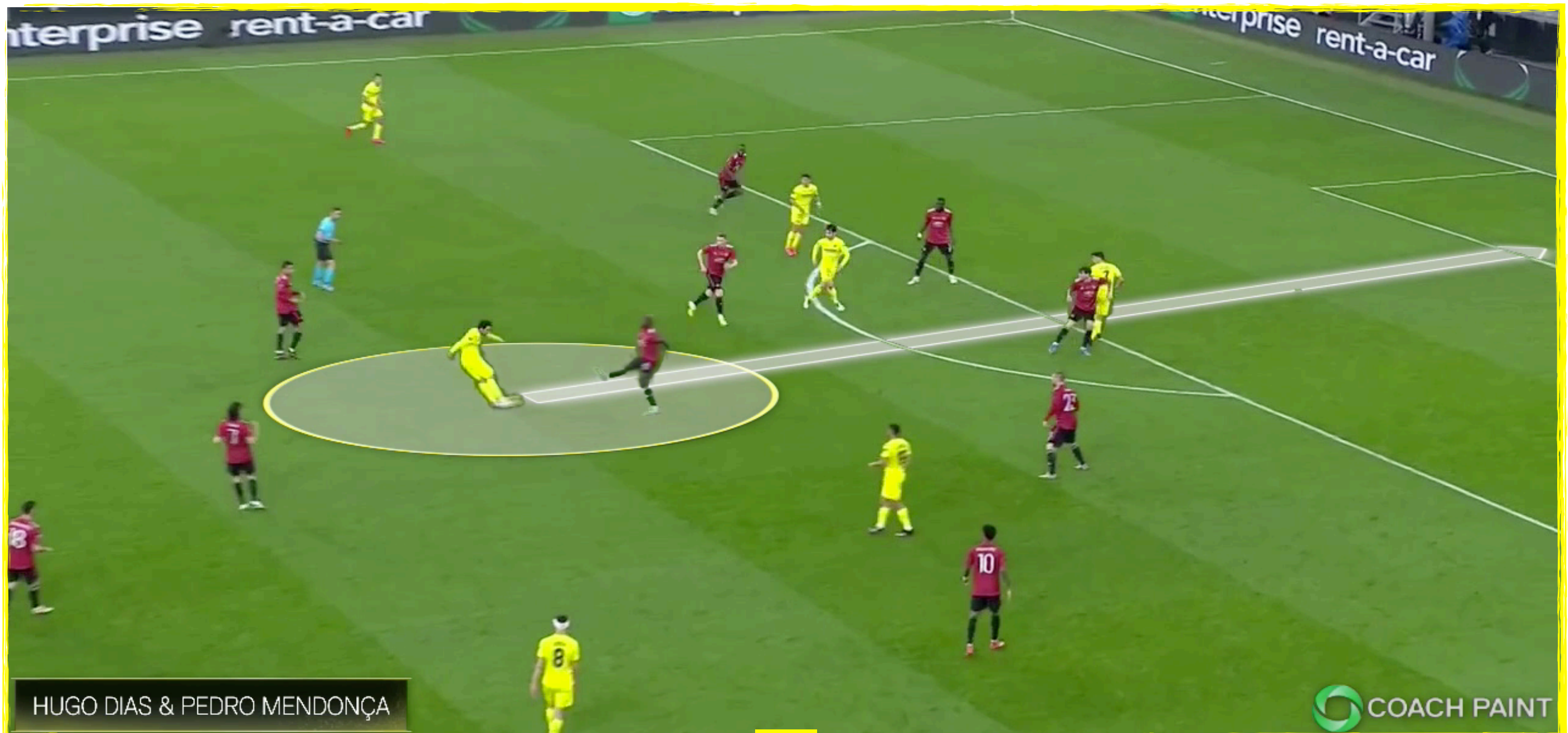
Conclusion of the Offensive Game

Attacking the depth: The forwards attack the depth and try to take advantage of all the spaces behind the opposing defensive line.



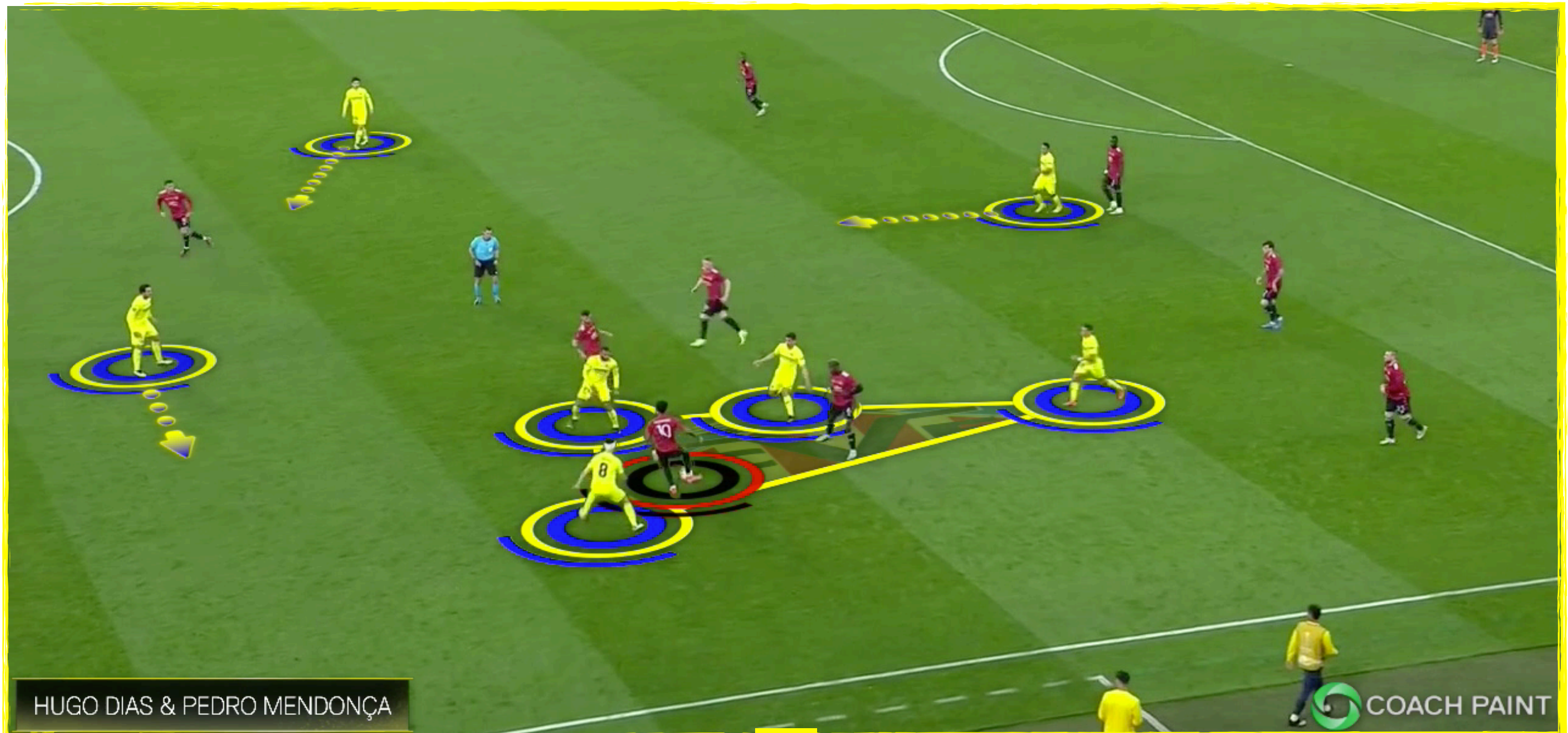
Conclusion of the Offensive Game

Shooting wherever possible: Players should try to shoot whenever possible. They should make quick decisions, whether shooting or passing, to take advantage of any opponent's defensive imbalance.



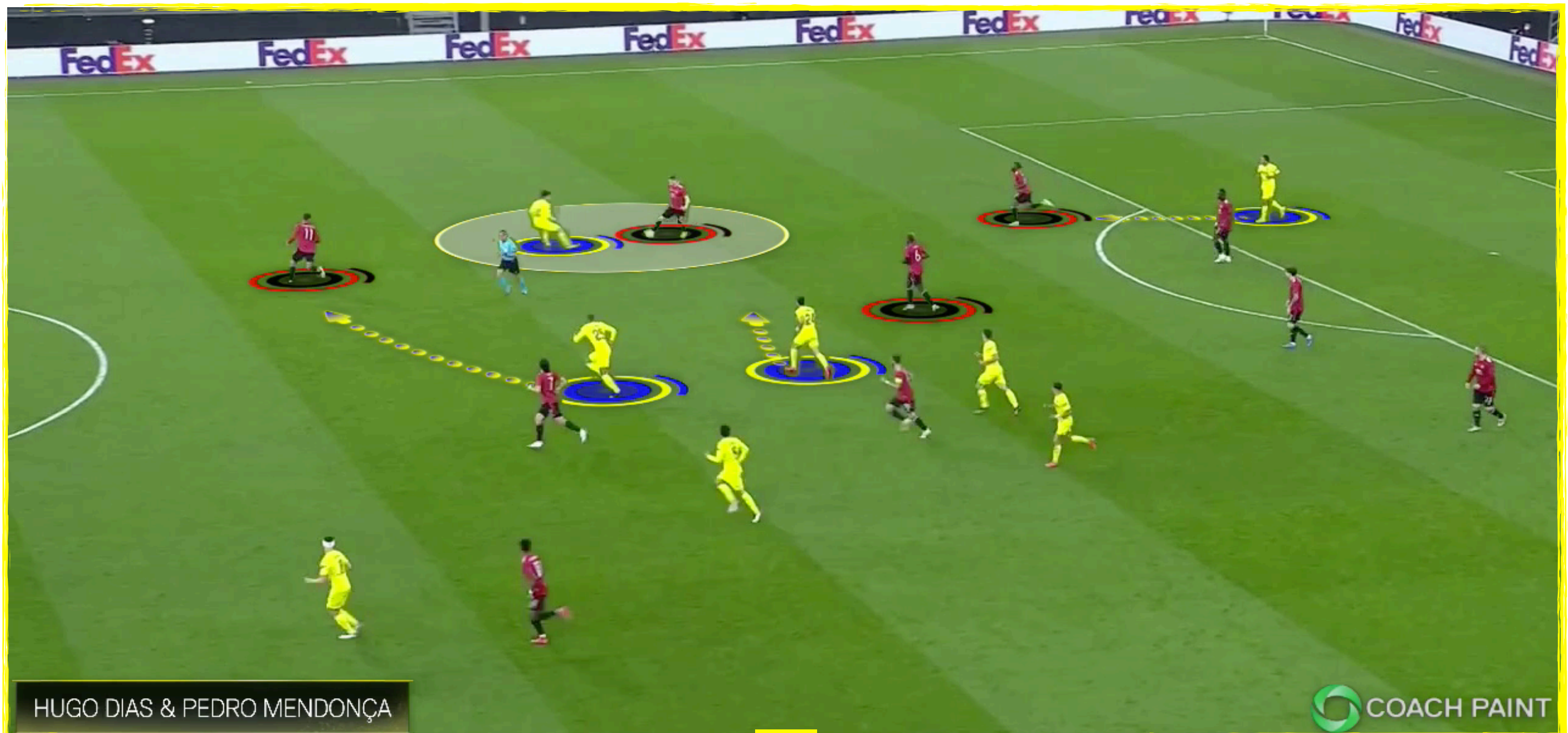
Defensive Transition

Pressing aggressively: When Villarreal CF loses the ball, the predominant behavior is to press with major aggressiveness the opponent player with the ball and the space closest to him. The whole team must react quickly and coordinated to the loss of the ball.



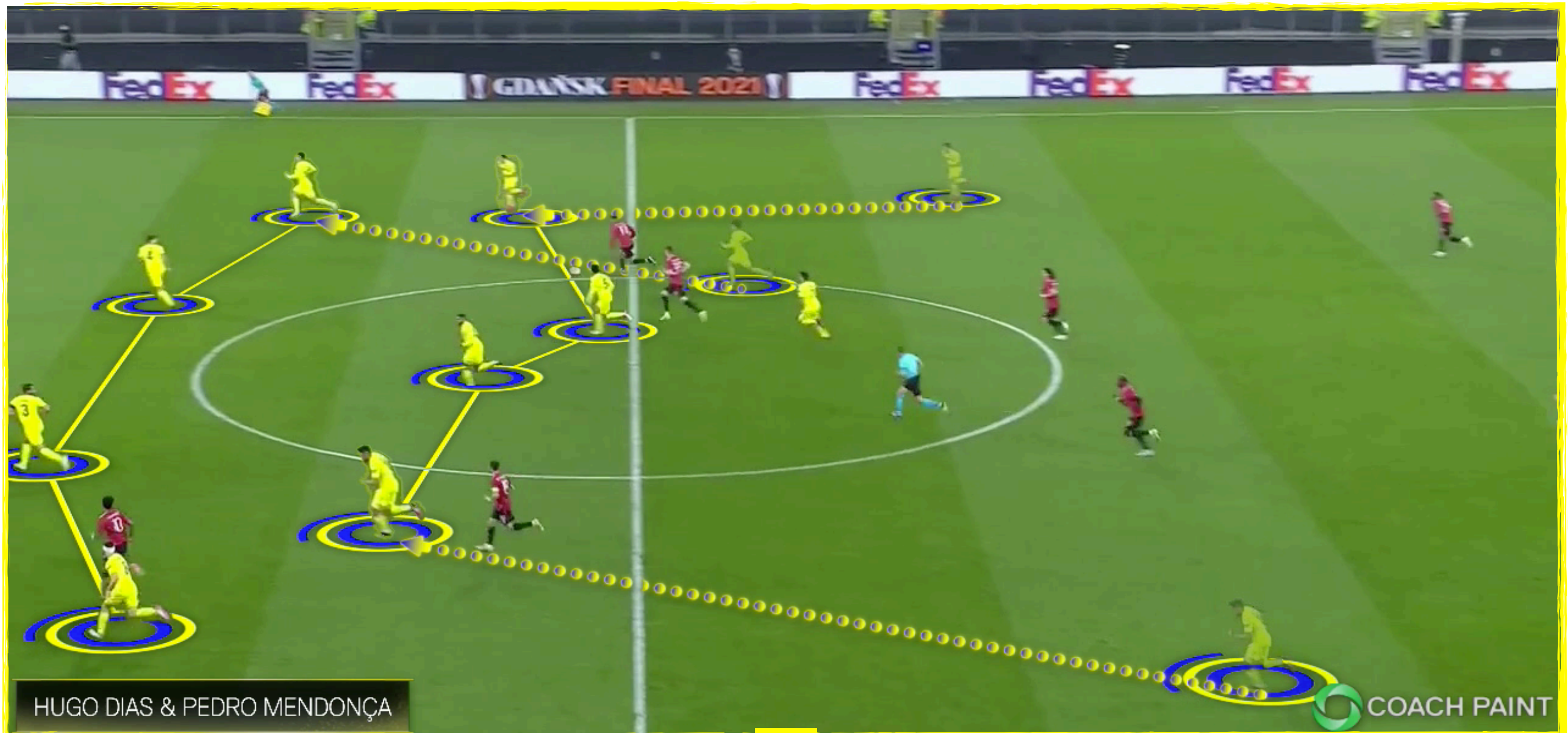
Defensive Transition

Avoiding being beaten: At this point, players cannot be beaten. Great security and aggressiveness are required from the player who is in the first line of pressure, and the solidarity of the others to ensure coverages and compensations.



Defensive Transition

Gathering the team: If the initial pressure fails, the whole team must group together, join sectors, and close the space where the ball is.

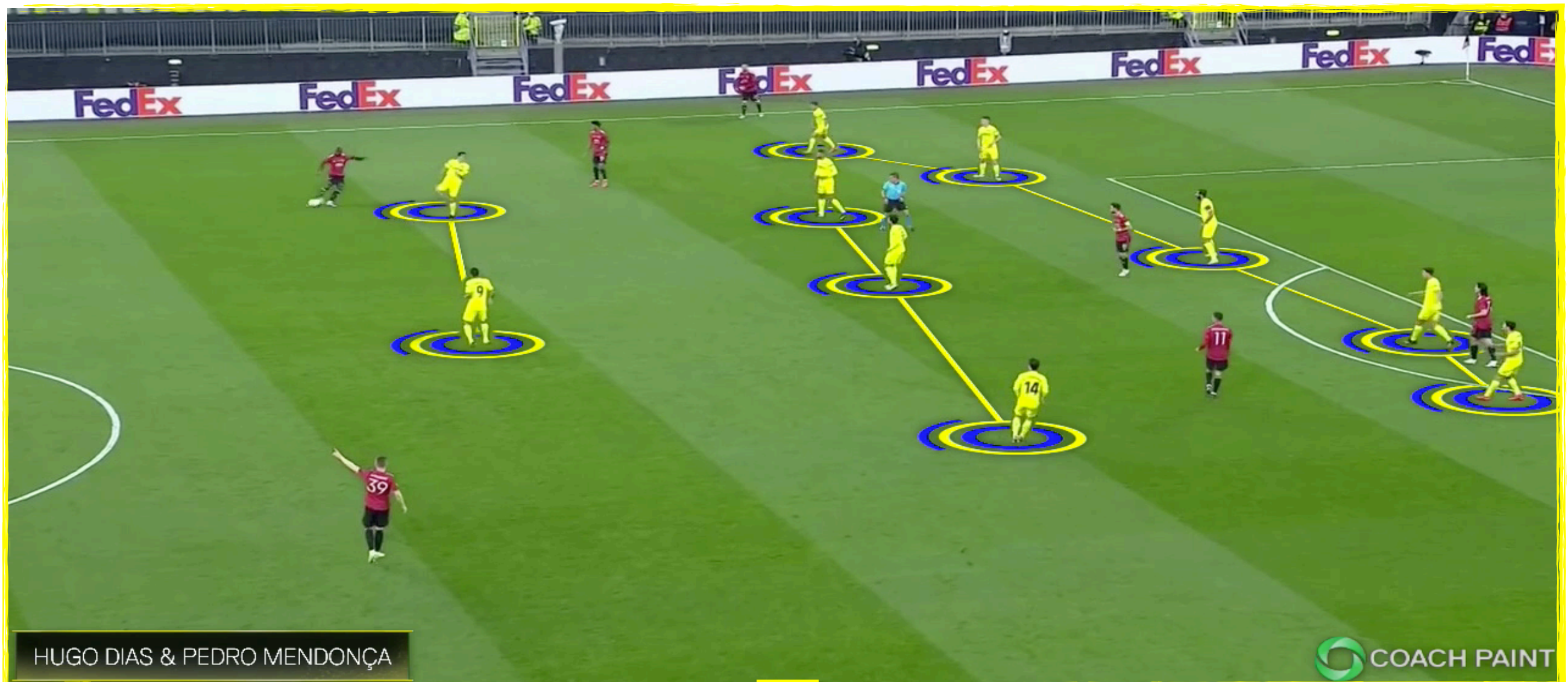


Defensive Organization

Defensive structure: 1-4-4-2

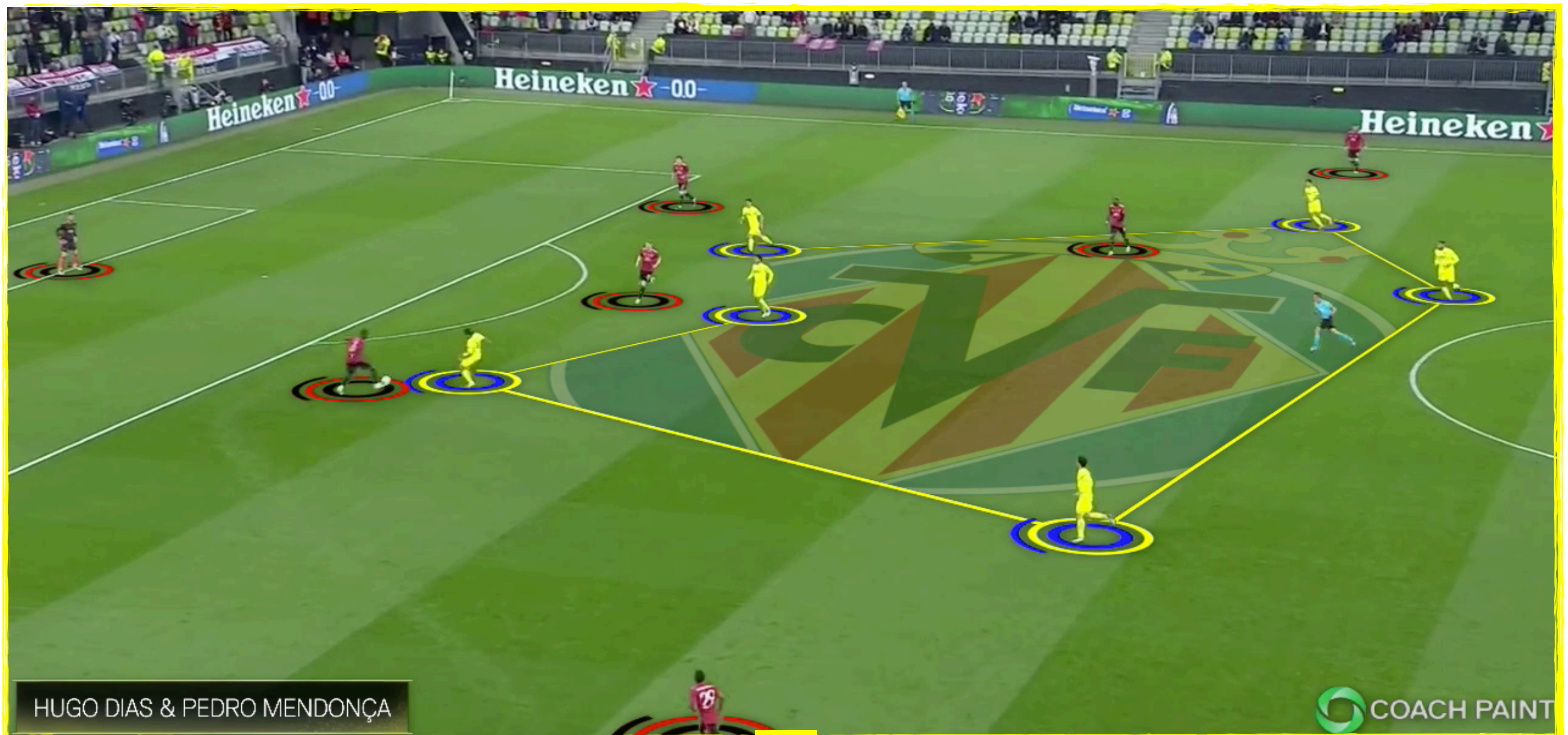
Defensive variants: 1-5-3-2 / 1-4-1-3-2

Typology: pressuring zonal defense



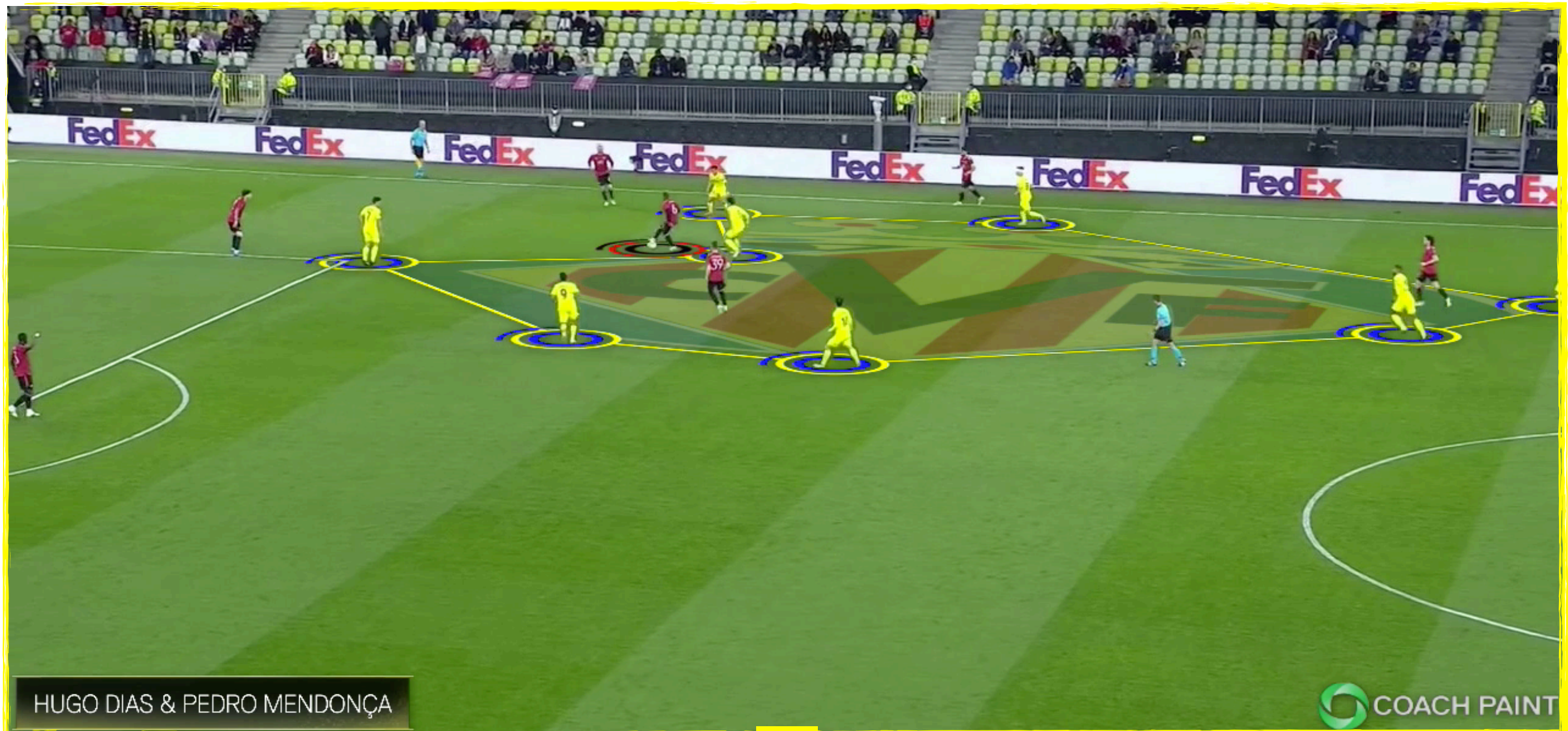
Opponent's Offensive Game Build-up

Bringing the team closer together: When the opponent is building the offensive game and wants to impose a short build-up, the team gets closer, forming a block to condition and create difficulties in the opponent's building phase.



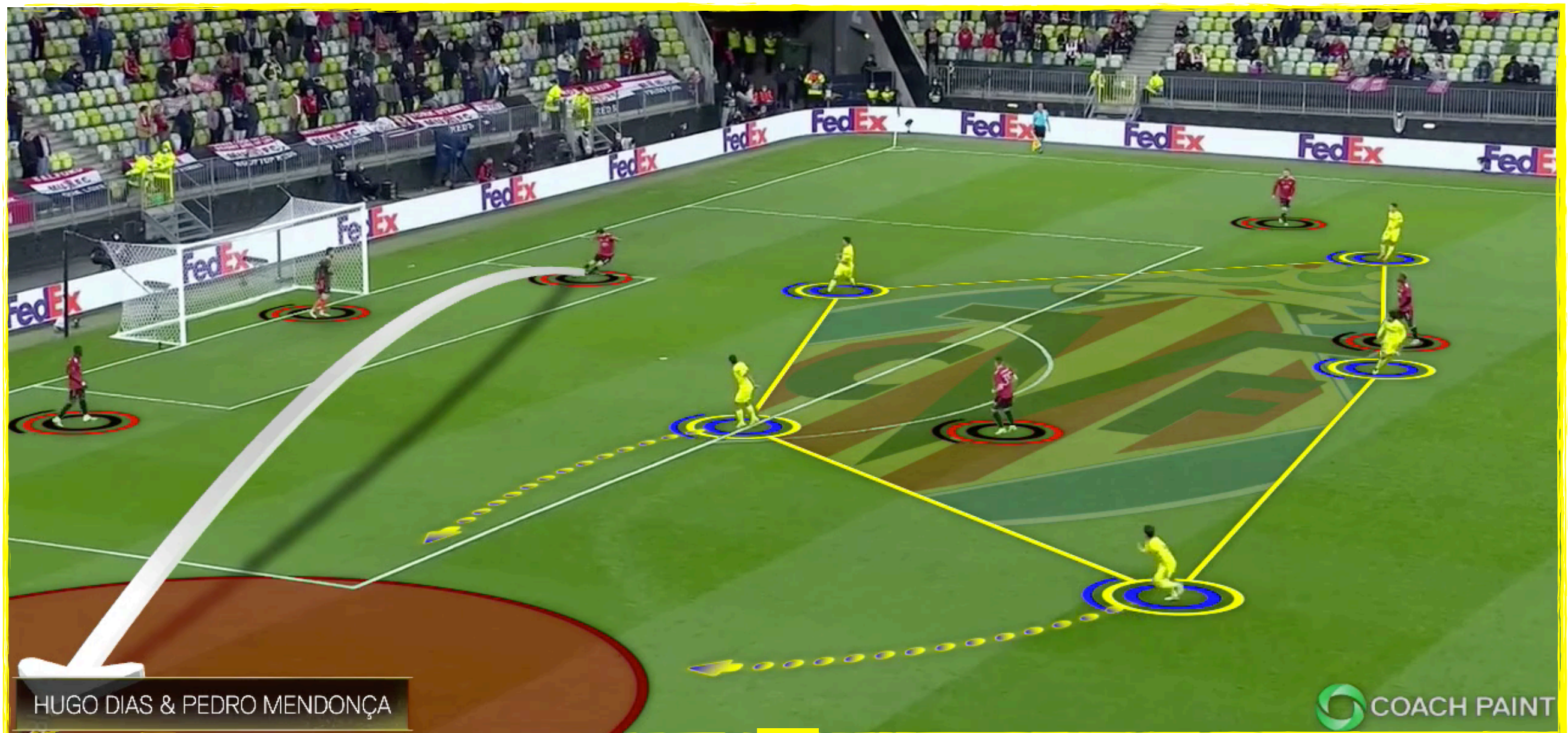
Opponent's Offensive Game Build-up

Pressing to create errors: The entire block-shaped team conditions the opponent's build-up, focused on trying to recover the ball when there is an opponent's mistake. This can be a wrong pass, a poorly executed reception, or even a "blind" reception.



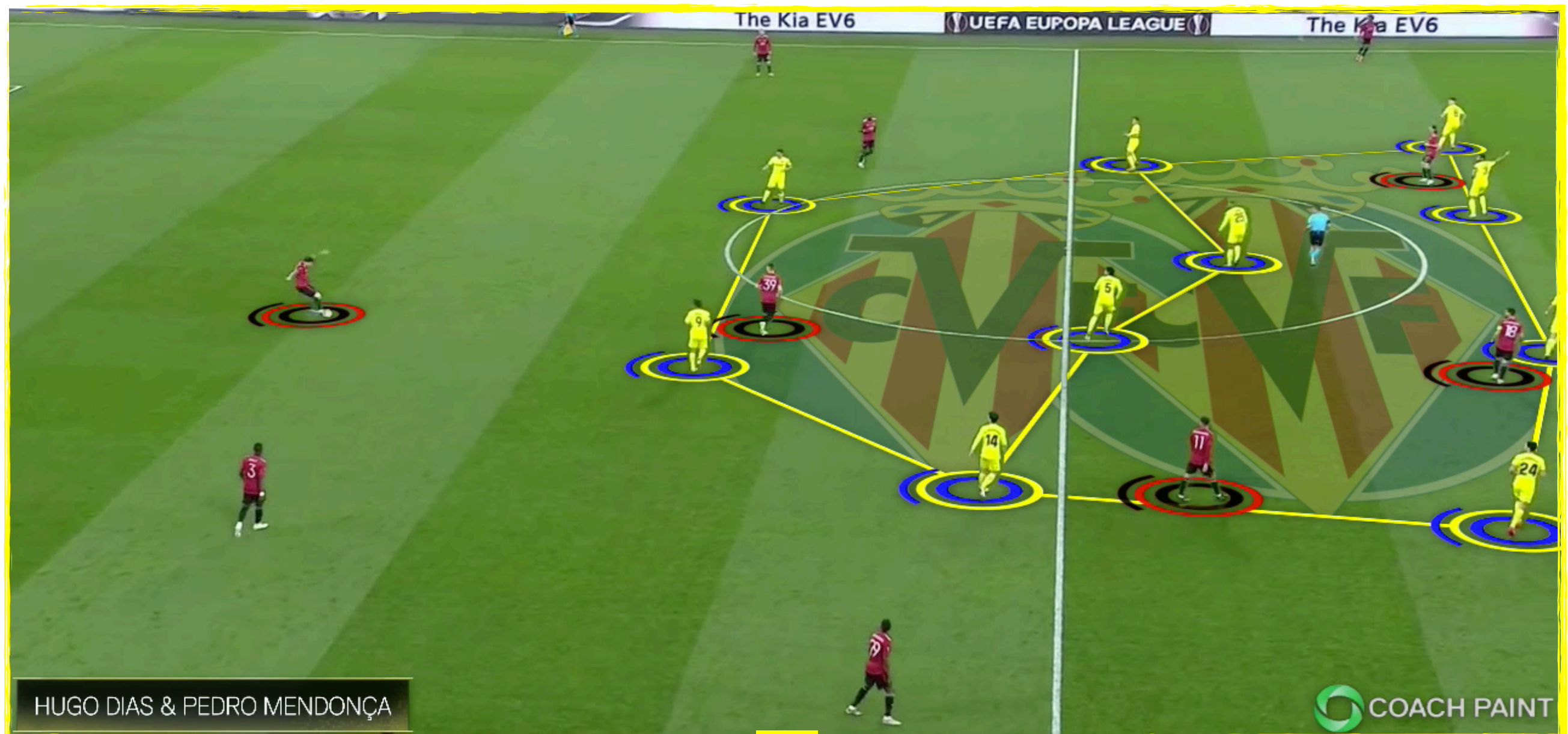
Opponent's Offensive Game Build-up

Conditioning the short build-up: The pressure is only intense when the opponent makes a mistake, but there is always the intention to influence the opponent to make a mistake or to play long balls to the attack. The first line of pressure is usually composed of the two forwards and one of the midfielders.



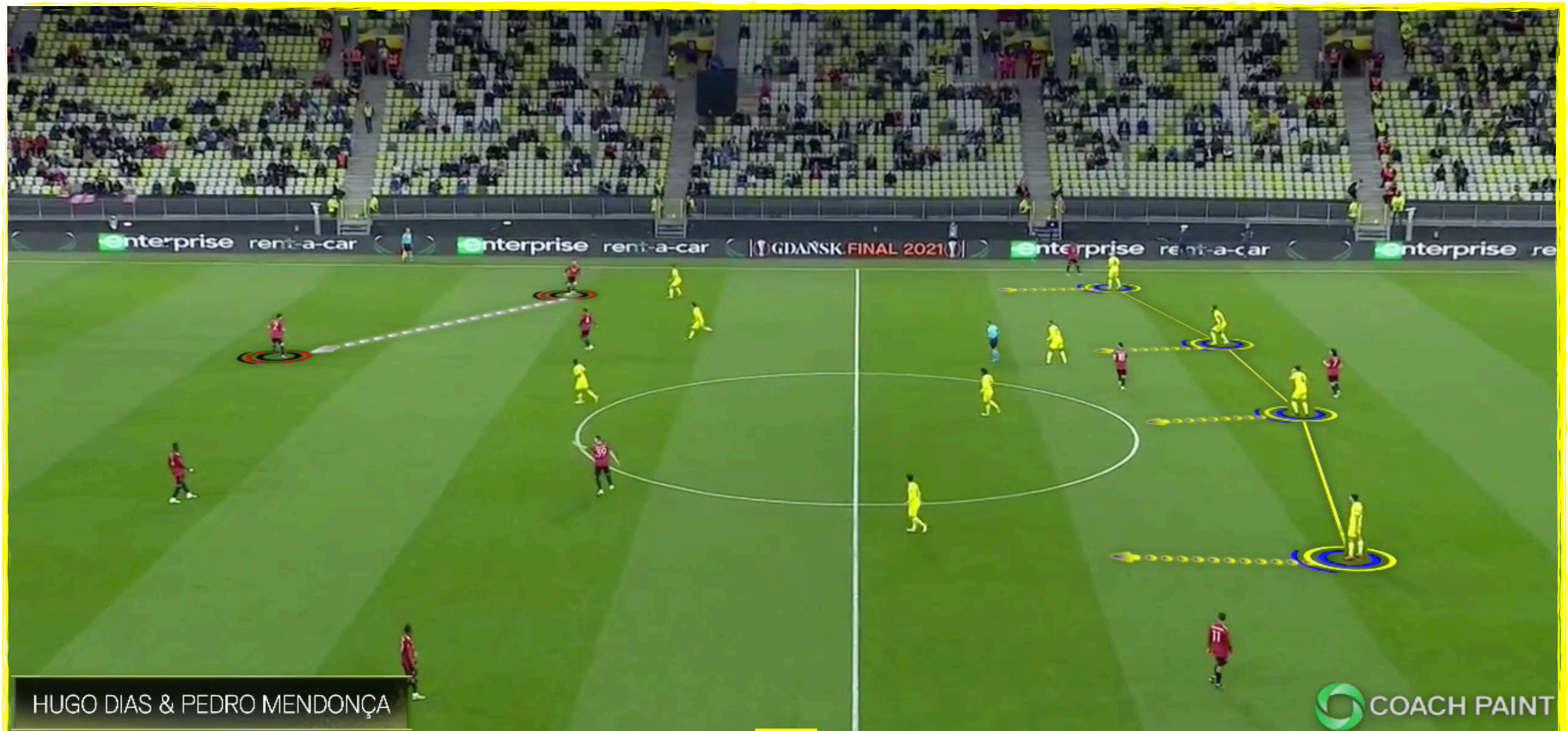
Elaboration of the Opponent's Offensive Game

Compacting the team: Villarreal CF compacts its entire team and usually manages to prevent the opponent from finding space between the attacking and midline and the midline and defensive line.



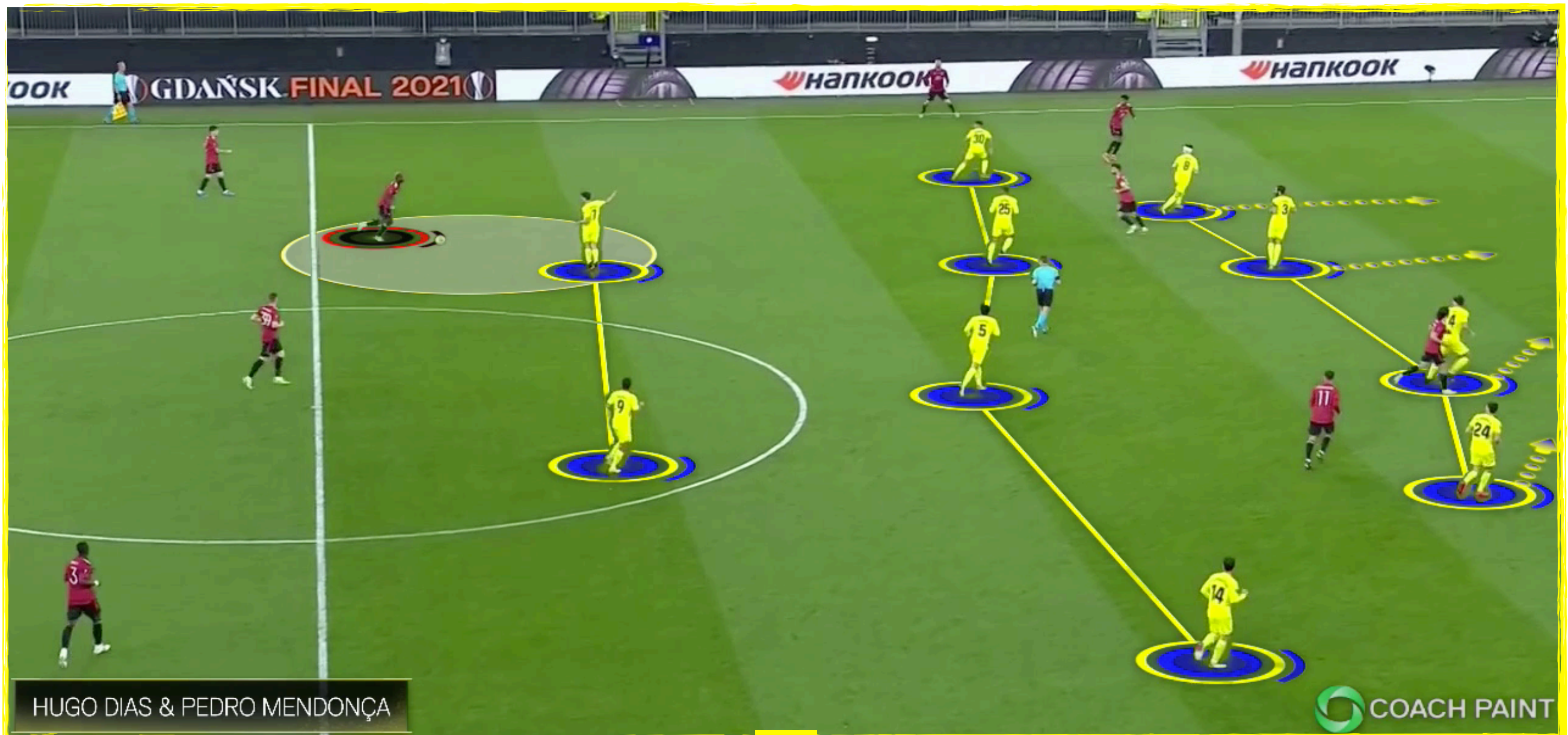
Elaboration of the Opponent's Offensive Game

Advancing on the pitch: The entire defensive block advances on the pitch in two situations: whenever a backward pass is made and whenever the opponent makes a blind reception.



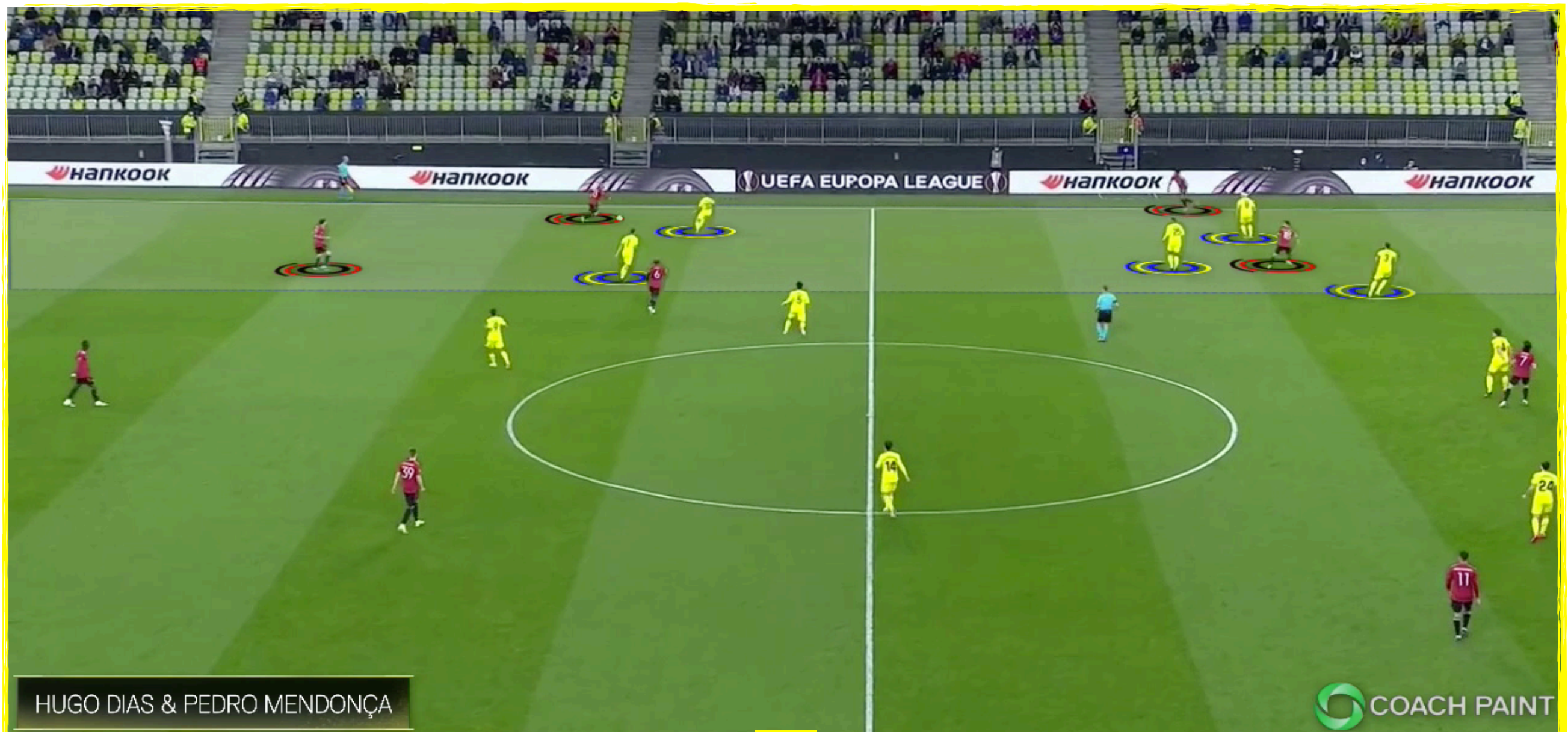
Elaboration of the Opponent's Offensive Game

Controlling depth: The whole team is responsible for controlling the opponent's depth quite strictly. The offensive line, but mainly the midline, is responsible for covering every ball. The goal is to prevent passes from being made with freedom, and the defensive line is responsible for nullifying the opponent's depth. To do this, it is important that the players always have their footrests well placed and are prepared to run backwards.



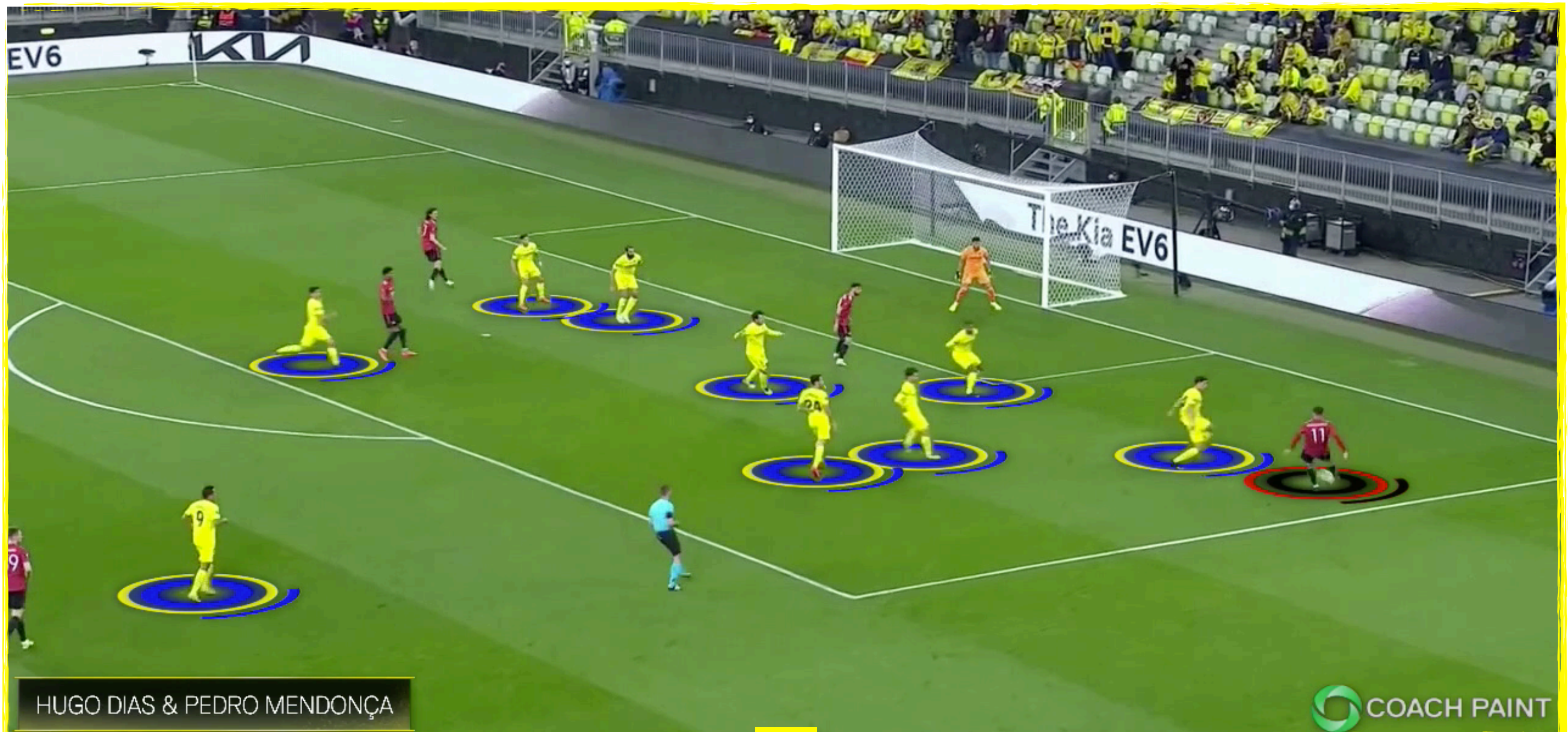
Elaboration of the Opponent's Offensive Game

Creating numerical superiority: The team defending in a compact block increases the chances of being in numerical superiority. In the side corridors, when the whole team regroups on that side of the pitch, the fullback, side midfielder and inside midfielder guarantee superiority in that zone. In the central corridor, the forwards are responsible for approaching the two midfielders and filling that zone of the pitch.



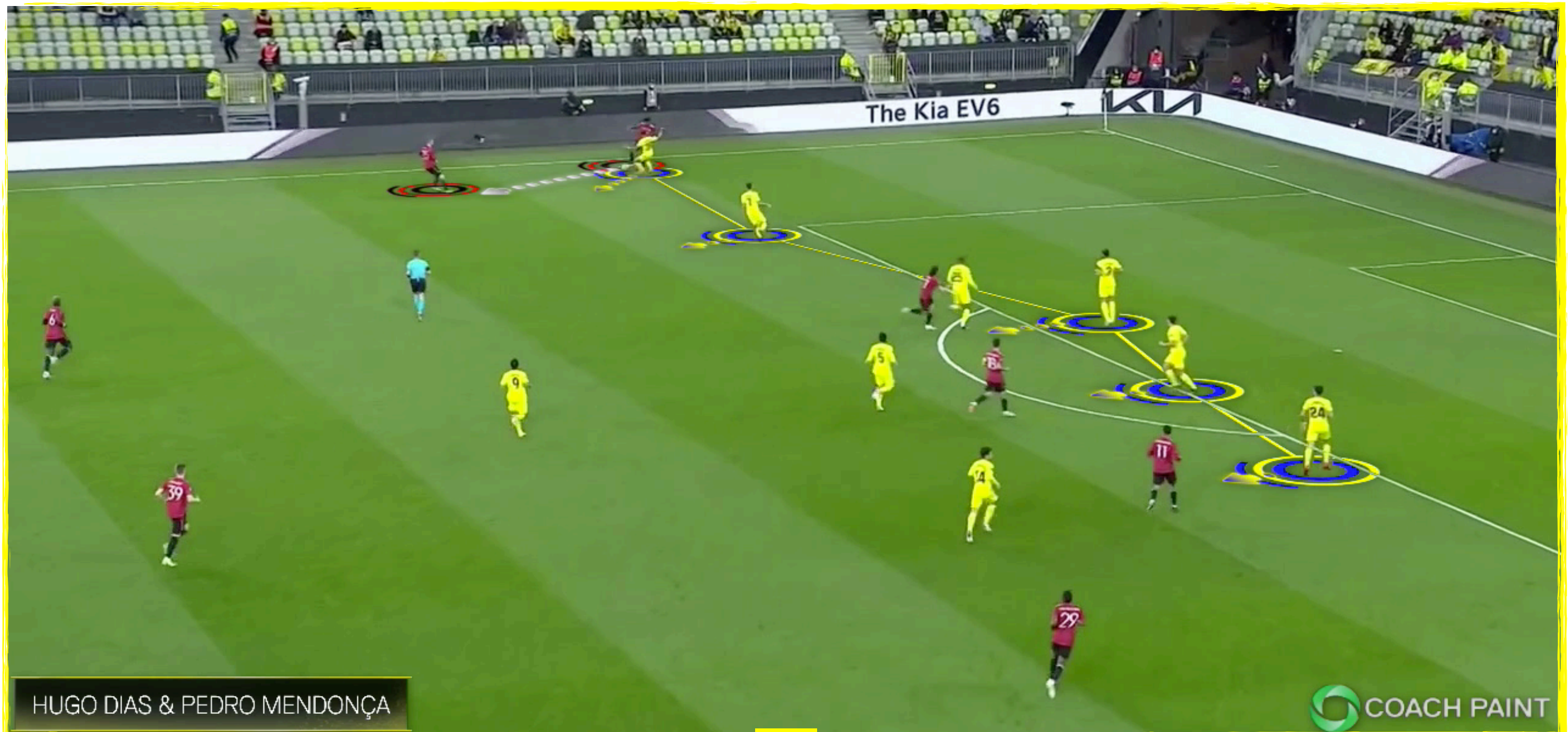
Conclusion of the Opponent's Offensive Game

Positioning players in key zones: Players should be strategically positioned in the potentially most dangerous zones (1st post, central goal area, 2nd post, penalty area, box entrance).



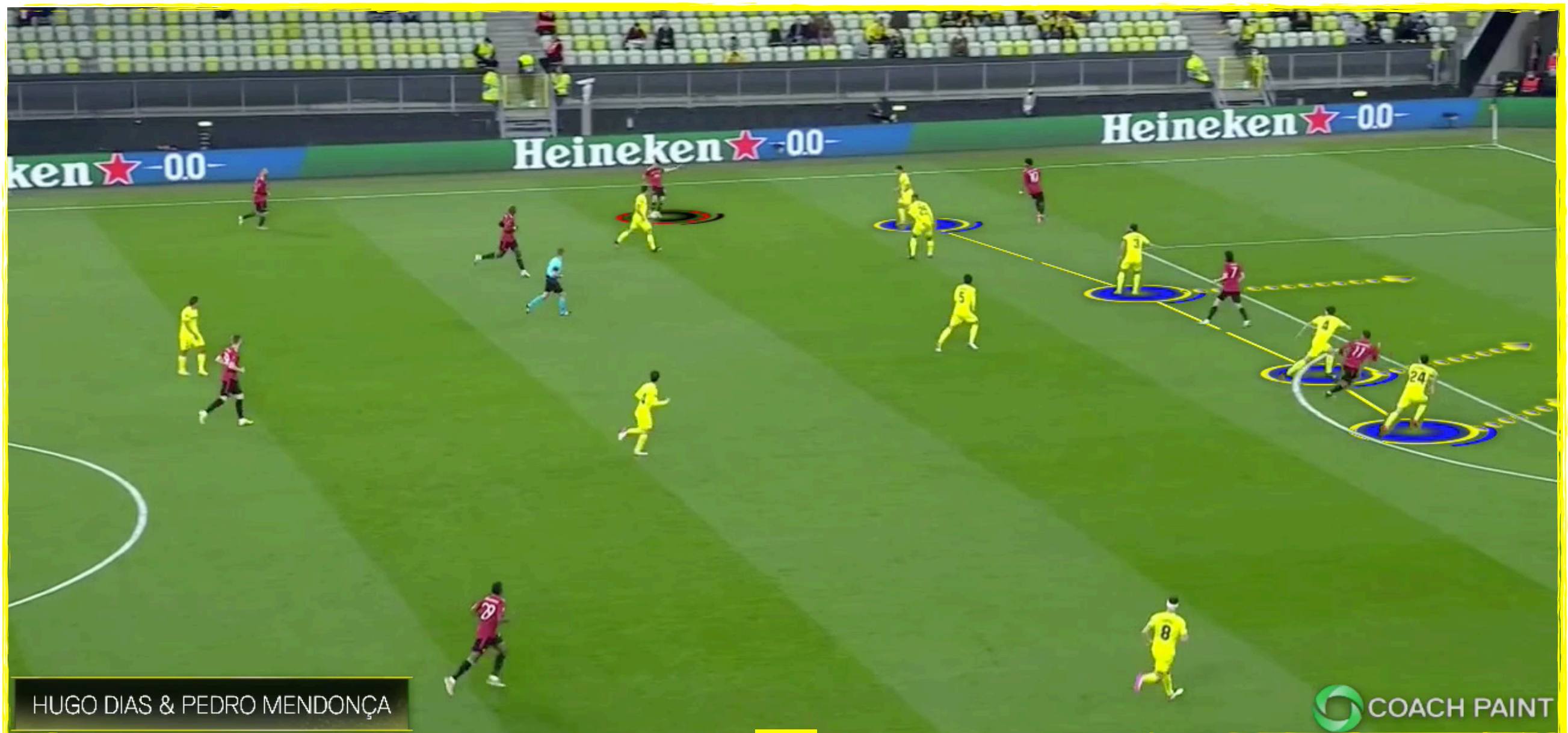
Conclusion of the Opponent's Offensive Game

Advancing on the pitch: In this phase of defensive organization, the defensive block also goes up in the pitch whenever a backward pass is made and whenever the opponent makes a “blind” reception.



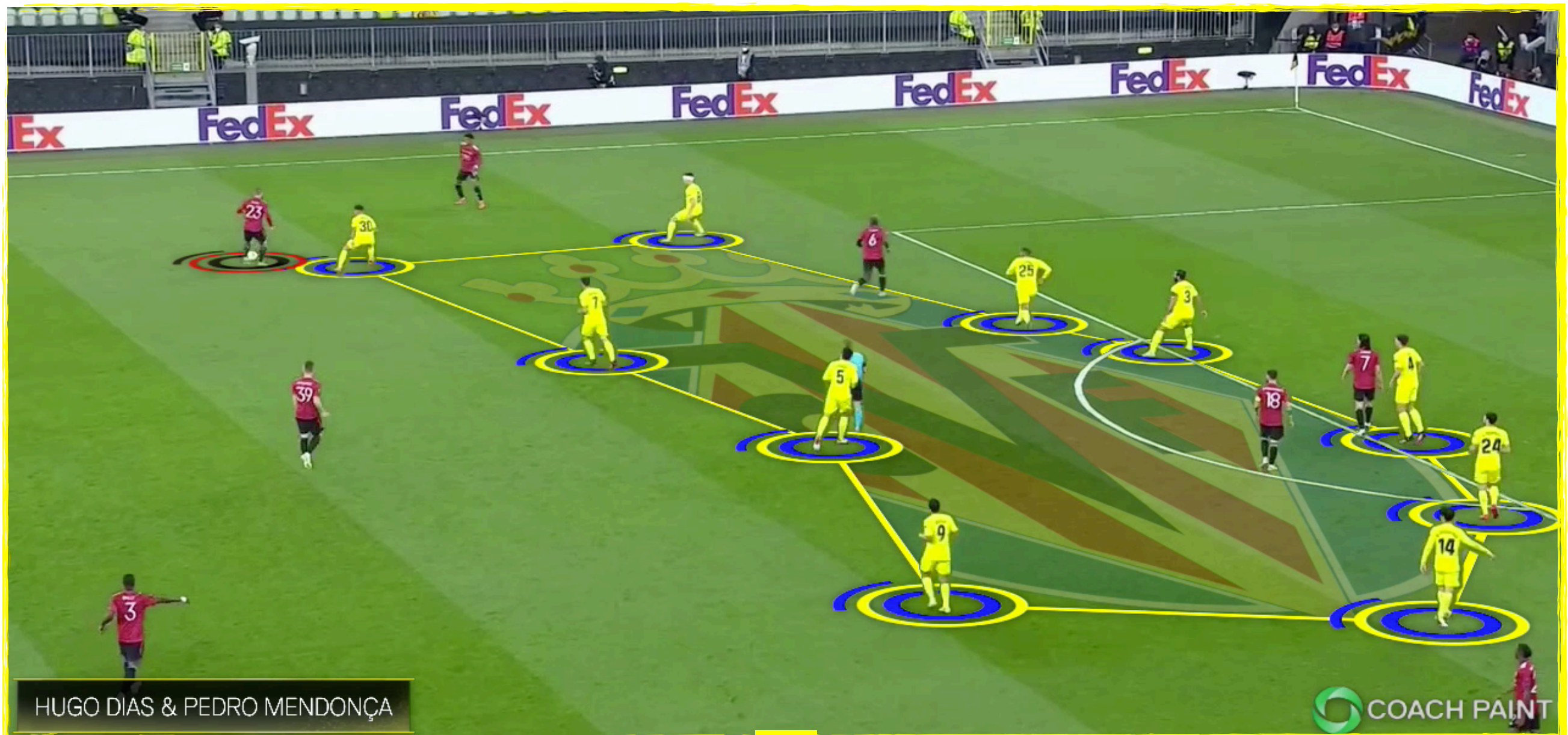
Conclusion of the Opponent's Offensive Game

Undoing the depth: The defensive line has a rigorous and quality behavior to nullify the opponent's offensive depth: footrests correctly placed and players deeply focused to run backwards when it is necessary to eliminate the danger of a ball played to the back of the defensive line.



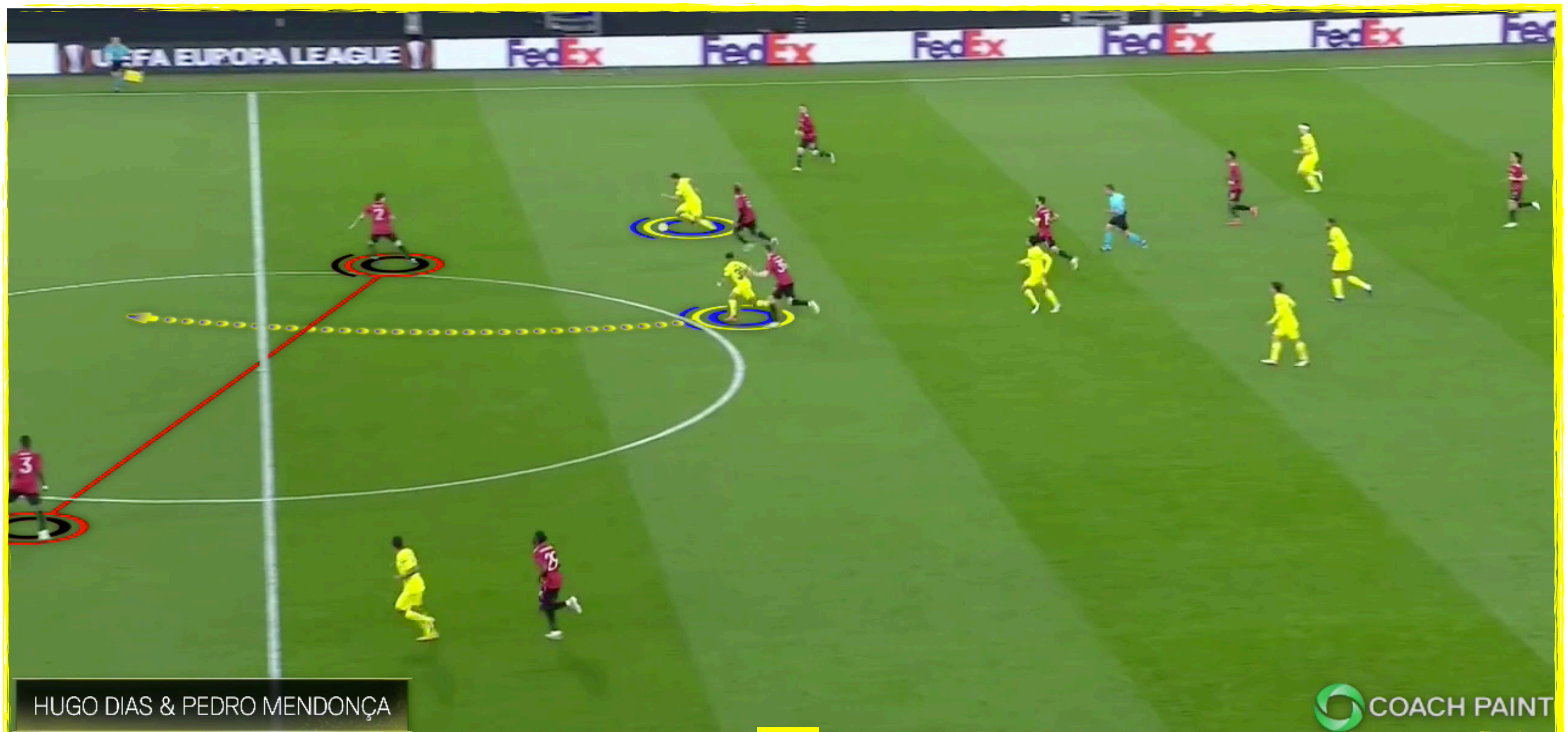
Conclusion of the Opponent's Offensive Game

Creating a defensive unit: All players defend aggressively and extremely focused. Defensive line, midline, and also the forward line are positioned in a low, compact block.



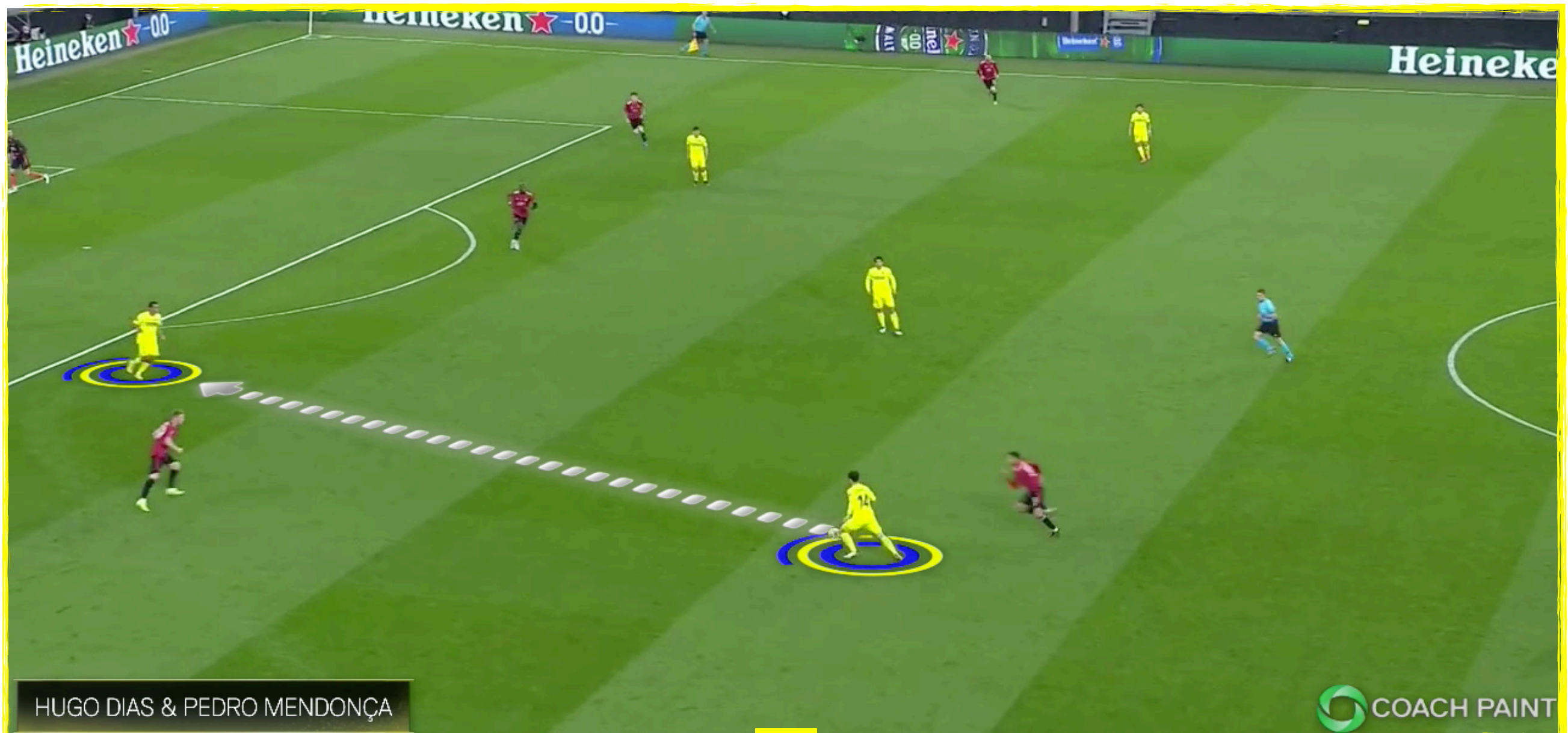
Offensive Transition

Accelerating and decelerating: The team, depending on its game strategy, usually speeds up or slows down when it regains the ball. With urgency to score a goal and/or in situations where there are great possibilities of taking advantage of the opponent's defensive disorganization, the team quickly places the ball on the forwards and accelerates its games. If the result is positive, the team tends to elaborate its attack with short passes and a game style that is always objective, but now more patient.



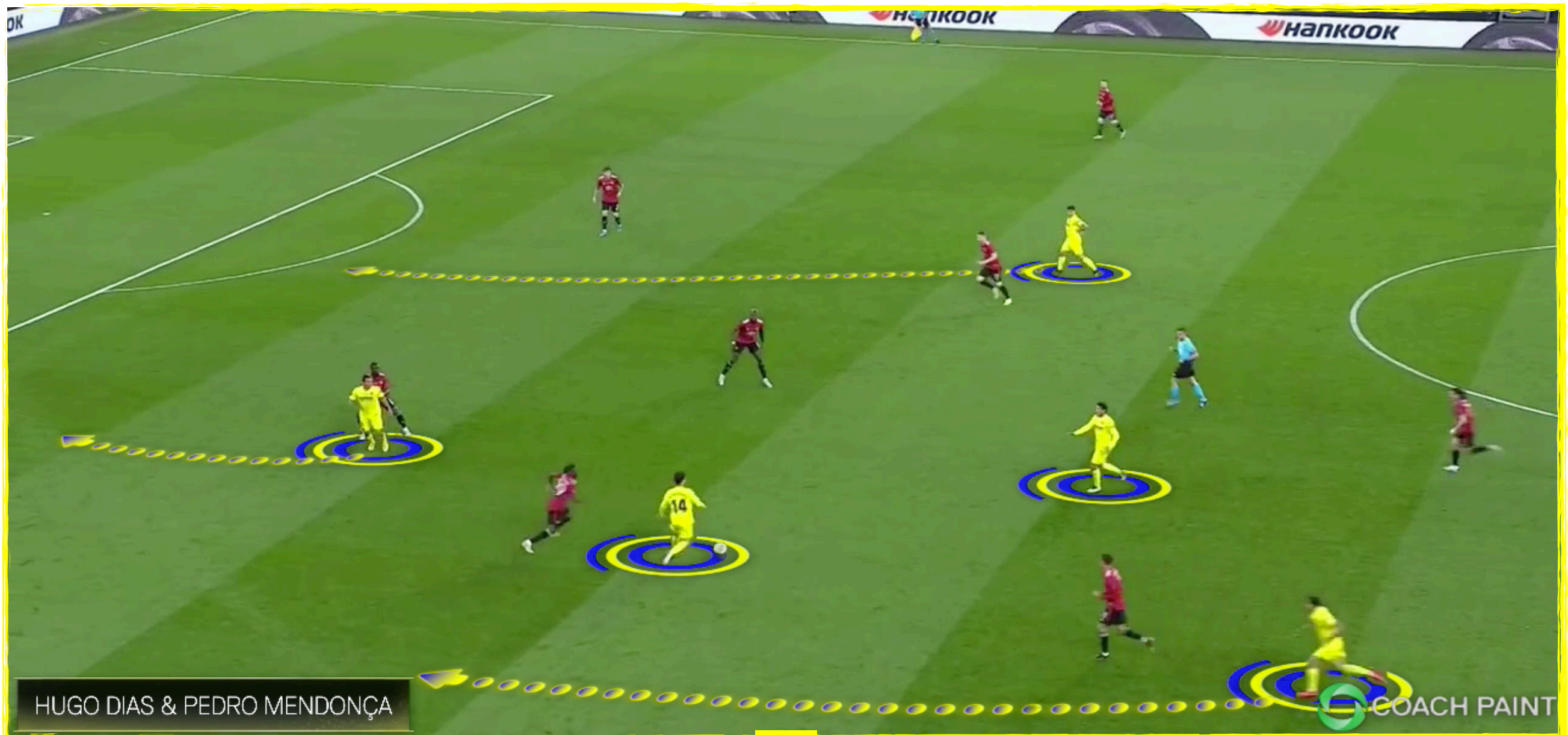
Offensive Transition

Beating opponents: The opponents closest to the place where the ball is recovered must be quickly beaten, either through quick moves and short passes, or through ball progression. Ball progression is a clear bet on the offensive transition. Ball progression attracts opponents and opens spaces that must be taken advantage of.



Offensive Transition

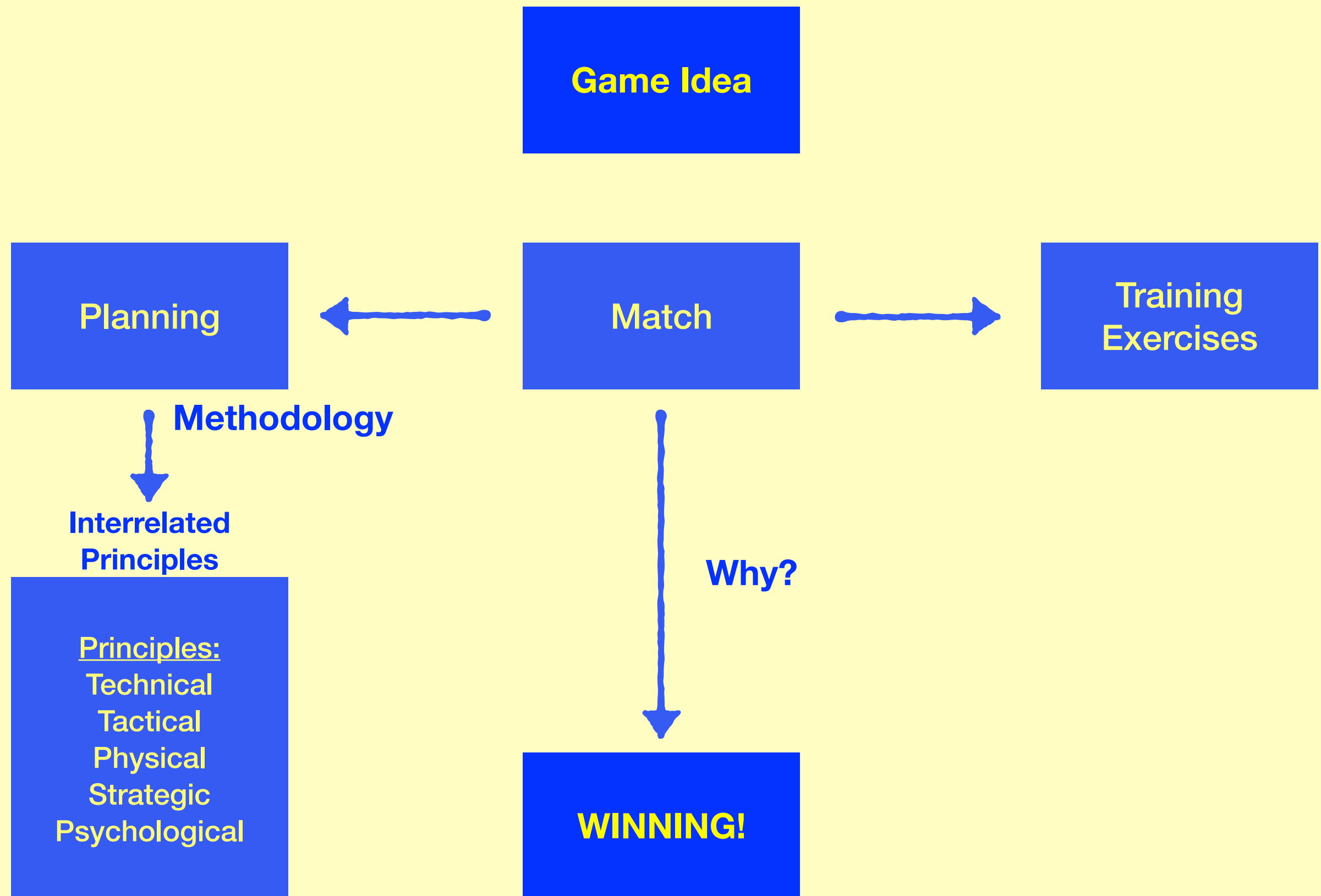
Creating space through the mobility of the forwards: The two forwards make deep movements, usually from inside to outside, to take advantage of the ball recovery moment and create a scoring situation. The mobility of the players in front of the ball is important to create empty spaces and increase the direct football's success.



Chapter 3

Training Methodology

03 Training Methodology



Planning a Microcycle

Below is Unai Emery's planning of a microcycle with a day off (Monday) and a match on Sunday:

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
MATCH	Day off	Conditional Endurance Training	Conditional Strength Training	Conditional Endurance Training	Conditional Speed Training	Pre-activation with specific game situations	MATCH

Tuesday

1. Endurance work: ball possession/pressure:

- A possession/pressure exercise is done with a focus on physical work, but geared towards the Sunday fixture: one team uses their own team scheme and the other team uses the opponent's scheme.
- Example: 10 v 10 ball possession (a 1-4-4-2 scheme versus a 1-4-2-3-1 scheme)

2. A match is organized with the previous game schemes, but focusing on the key point of the match:

- Example: Divide 2 zones to work on the pressure build-up. In one zone, one team is positioned in 4-2 (defenders + center midfielders) and the other in 3-2 (center midfielder + side midfielders + forwards), against an opponent positioned in 1-3 in the first zone (midfielder + wingers and forwards) and the second in 4-2 (defensive line + center midfielders). Since the objective is to work the short build-up with an opponent who presses high, they use the game mainly in the build-up area with conditionals (to reach other areas while driving the ball forward, with a minimum number of passes, etc.).

Note: When working on the concept of conditional resistance training, Unai Emery uses percentages to adapt the pitch to the exercises. So, in an 11v11 exercise, he uses the actual pitch size (100%). Here are two examples:

- 10v10 exercise: 90% pitch size;
- 8x8 exercise: 72% pitch size;

Wednesday

1. Strength work: circuit + scoring actions:

- While performing conditional strength work, they also perform offensive scoring actions to be replicated in the next match. The idea is to create offensive automatisms so that these actions come naturally in the match.

2. Exercises through subsystems within the game system:

- The exercises will be executed in rows or tracks, but always with the actual space that will be available during the match.
- Example: Ball possession exercise in a lateral zone of pitch 3 v 2 (full-back + side midfielder + midfielder v “opponent” full-back and winger). When the team in inferiority recovers the ball, they must score on a mini-goal. In this exercise, they work on defensive transitions in the lateral zone, because they know that the rival is strong at counter-attacking from the outside.

Thursday

1. Subsystem work taking into account the whole system:

- For example, the work of the previous day can be replaced, but with more players. That is, when the ball is recovered, the two players can play with the rest of the team to score a goal, but always starting from the main work area. The space used is larger and mini-goals are scrapped.

2. Match replicating the actual size of the upcoming Sunday fixture:

- Example: the previous exercise is continued and a full pitch is used. A match is played in a real context, but, to automate the movements, they continue to create game constraints on the sides of the pitch.

Friday

1. Exercises and games of speed, agility and coordination:

- Relaxed exercises to motivate the players, where positive communication is always present.

2. Set pieces strategy:

- First, defensive positioning is worked on according to the opponent's set pieces, but always with continuity; i.e., adding at least one unit of competition (an offensive transition, an organized attack, etc.).
- Offensive set pieces are extensively worked through competition units. In this case, the most common is a defensive transition.

Saturday

1. Work on specific match situations:

- A match is organized where the intended match and the one the opponent is likely to deploy are simulated. At the beginning, the starting eleven players are used, the game style is imposed and the concepts developed during the week are executed, but always close to reality, without many limitations.
- They can add typical match conditions: having one player less, having one player more, system changes when ahead or behind in the scoreboard, etc.

Chapter 4

Training the Match we want to Play

04 Training the Match we want to Play

Under Unai Emery's command, Villarreal CF won a European competition for the first time in its history, against the giant Manchester United. As always, Emery prepared this match carefully, giving his players all the necessary information so they could step into the match aware of what awaited them. The Spanish coach managed to optimize his team in the best way. In doing so, he balanced the forces against a theoretically superior opponent. Based on percentage values, Unai Emery prepares his microcycle focusing 70% of his attention on his team and 30% on the opponent. And, as it was the final and the opponent was a team with more resources, the match focused more on defensive organization and offensive transition.

04 Training the Match we want to Play

Training Session

Training session the day before the match (Europa League Final).

Context: Pre-activation | Specific match situations.

Length: 60 minutes

1. Motivational speech.

Length: 1'30"

2. GK's Activation. Work done by the GK's coach.

3. Dynamic Activation and '21v3 Rondos'.

Length: 10'

04 Training the Match we want to Play

Training Session

4. Speed / Agility / Quickness exercises and speed-fostering drills.

Length: 4'

5. Upcoming match strategy (defensive organization and offensive transition).

Game 'GK + (4coaches + 6) v 10 + GK'. The exercises were carried out with a goal placed at the edge of the box. The exercise always started with a simulation of the opponent's build-up and, in case of ball recovery, an unopposed offensive transition took place.

Length: 18'

04 Training the Match we want to Play

Training Session

6. Game GK + 11 v 11 + GK:

A match to improve concepts that the coach intended to execute in the final.

Length: 9'

7. Exercise with scoring actions:

2(crossing) + 2(scoring) v 2(coaches) + GK. The exercise started with a combination in the lateral zone, followed by a cross to the box, with two players ready to score.

Length: 5'30"

8. Set pieces (free-kicks near the box and penalties).

04 Training the Match we want to Play

Training Session

(link to the videos: <https://www.patreon.com/posts/51708316>)



TRAINING SESSION (60')
GDAŃSK
FINAL 2021
Matchday -1



1. Motivational Speech (1'30")



2. GK's Activation



3. Dynamic Activation +
Rondos 21v3 (10')



4. SAQ + Reaction Speed (4')



5. Game Strategy - Defensive
Org. + Offensive Transition (18')



6. Game GK+11v11+GK (9')



7. Crossing & Shooting
"(2+2)v2+GK" (5'30")



8. Set Pieces Training (4')

Edited by Pedro Mendonça

Match Strategy

Opponent Analysis:

Manchester United often deploys a 1-4-2-3-1 and, looking at their offensive game, we notice that the main characteristics of the English team in this offensive stage are dependent on a short build-up, supported by their two center backs with the interior support of two pivots/midfielders. These players are positioned to receive the ball “hidden” from the opponent’s first line of pressure and take advantage of the team’s good positional balance in this phase. Regarding the offensive build-up, United depends a lot on Bruno Fernandes’ intelligence to take advantage of the space between the midline and the opponent’s defensive line. The Portuguese player is quite strong when he has the opponent’s defensive line in front of him. He is decisive.

Match Strategy

Executing:

When we witnessed Villarreal's training session the day before the final, although it wasn't much different from a typical pre-activation session, there was one exercise that deserved our full attention and that was replicated in the match following Unai Emery's strategic interpretation for the final.

Match Strategy

The training drill was GK + 4 (3 coaches) + 6 (1 coach) v 10 + GK. The coaches, who knew the opponent best, were part of the opposing structure (two as center backs, one as left full-back and one as offensive midfielder). The two center backs simulated the short build-up and the direction of the match, the full-back simulated the game on the side corridor and the offensive midfielder “was” Bruno Fernandes. On the other side, GK + 10 players replicated the match that Villarreal would adopt, starting in a 1-4-4-2 structure. Considering the opponent’s analysis, this is what we noticed:

- Conditioning the opponent’s short build-up;
- Controlling the depth using the side corridors.

Match Strategy

Regarding the sub-principle of conditioning the opponent's short build-up, Unai Emery worked this in two ways:

- High block pressure, moving up one of the midfielders (the team structured in a 1-4-1-2-1-2) to nullify the opponent's construction and force them to rush the ball forward. Emery also prepared his team for the opponent's direct approach, with the nearest center back fighting for the ball and the remaining defensive line covering the depth. It's also important to underline that the team was trained to attack the zone where the ball would drop;
- Pressure using a mid/high block: the two forwards kept an eye on the center backs and cut the passing lines to the pivots, one of the midfielders approached the pivots' zone and the other was focused on the offensive midfielder's positioning.

Match Strategy

Regarding the strategy prepared to control United's depth in the side corridors, Emery firstly asked the side midfielders to shorten the block. Secondly, they should follow the progression of United's full-backs, and so did the full-backs chosen as responsible for controlling the opposing wingers' movements. In the side zone, individual references in the marking were part of the game strategy.

04 Training the Match we want to Play

Playing the Way we Trained

On matchday, Villarreal CF managed to competently execute Unai Emery's strategy. It happened as expected: Manchester United had more possession, in the build-up and in the offensive game; however, Villarreal CF always kept its balance. Throughout the match, the Spanish team managed to condition United and take the game to a penalty shootout.

Villarreal CF was defensively very competent, with a compact and solid block that didn't open spaces for the opponent, even nullifying United's short build-up. The match strategy, especially in relation to United's short build-up with the two pivots, worked perfectly. Pogba and McTominay could not receive the ball behind the forwards to face the opposing goal. Bruno Fernandes couldn't find room to receive the ball between the lines. Also, in the offensive stage, the team was always ready to hurt the opponent, in transition and in the moments when they kept the ball and made more combinations. Unai Emery and his players made history in the Yellow Submarine, winning the Europa League. An emotional and fair victory, with a good football display.

Chapter 5

Team Management

‘Individually we are a drop. Together we are an ocean.’

Ryunosuke Satoro

Unai Emery's Method

Team spirit

Building a real team, where the whole group has the same direction, strength, confidence and optimism is one of the most important endeavors of a football coach.

What must a coach do to turn a group of people into a team? Emery highlights five aspects:

- Commitment: people commit to projects that make them dream through strong goals. Teams are driven by major objectives that must be achieved together;
- Communication: objectives must be communicated and emphasized often. Coaches must realize that communication should not only be done vocally, but with the whole body. It is the right way to communicate with a team, letting all our honesty and frankness show through;
- Trust: to receive trust, we must convey trust. Trust is key to a successful relationship between staff, players and board. Creating, giving and receiving trust is essential to a team's success;
- Accountability: what is not measurable is not achievable. We have to establish tangible goals (points, table position, knock-out wins) and then emphasize the small and big objectives that have been conquered;
- Specify: a team is much more than the sum of all the individuals. For continuous improvement, a coach must be blunt with each player, letting them know what they have done right and what they can improve on.

Unai Emery's Method

‘Winning is not everything but wanting to win is.’
Vince Lombardi

Winning mentality

A winning mentality is not that we always want to win, but that we always think about victory, winning. At no time can we forsake the winning mentality, even when all the circumstances of a match are against us. We must keep looking for every opportunity and believe in it. Emery thinks so.

The core of the winning mentality rests on three factors:

- Competitiveness: knowing how to compete, with everyone giving their best;
- Confidence: having confidence in oneself and in teammates and always act with positive thinking;
- Posture: knowing how to face victory and defeat.

Unai Emery's Method

'If you meet triumph and disaster, treat those two imposters the same.'

Rudyard Kipling

Winning mentality

In football, and even in life, we must be prepared to suffer. Suffering is part of the game, but even in suffering we must keep our winning mentality. Emery firmly believes in the importance of generating a winning mentality in his players, and communication is essential to 'infect' this mentality. The ability of a coach to create trusting relationships by identifying each player's 'fuel' is important for the success of a team and in creating a strong group. Unai Emery is recognized for being a very active coach during matches, gesturing profusely near the sideline. He does this to be close to his players and because he believes that this makes them work even harder. At the end of the match, calm comes out, in victory or defeat.

Unai Emery's Method

'You were born to win, but to be a winner, you must plan to win, prepare to win, and expect to win.'

Zig Ziglar

Winning mentality

We must always keep the winning mentality, especially the most difficult ones. To do this, we need to have attitude and be 'eagles'. There is an American Indian legend that tells the story of an eagle who grew up next to the chickens and thought she was a chicken too, behaving like one. But when she saw an eagle flying over the chicken coop, she said, '- How wonderful, what a way to fly, I wish I could be an eagle.' '- Not even in your dreams, you are just a simple chicken', a hen replied. And the eagle lived until the end of her days thinking she was a chicken. Moral of the story: we can be whoever we want. With our mentality and attitude, we must have the courage to be the 'eagle'. Emery chooses the eagle for his teams.

Channeling the effort

‘Success is dependent on effort.’

Sophocles

Stepping out of the comfort zone

Our effort basically happens when we get out of our comfort zone. All players must be prepared to get out of their comfort zone. In relation to a coach's life, it's important to be ready to step out of our comfort zone. To learn new languages, new football cultures and to take risks in new challenges, presenting our game idea in places where we are not so comfortable at the beginning.

Channeling the effort

Game Idea

Emery has a terrific perspective on the essence of the game, the essence of football. For him, it is better to win a match with a 5-4 score than by 1-0. Few coaches think this way. For him, winning a match by 5-4 accomplishes two objectives: winning, which is the most important thing; and respecting what football should be: a show.

Emery respects his game style and tries to replicate it in the football clubs where he works, without denying the obvious adaptations that each reality requires. His philosophy is offensive, but, as it is easily perceptible, his defensive idea has great virtues. He believes that rotating players throughout the season is positive for the team, for two reasons:

- It divides the physical effort among the players;
- It makes all the players feel important.

Channeling the effort

Beware of perfectionism

We must know ourselves well, master our strengths, and take advantage of our opportunities to improve. Emery has tried to improve his altruism and the way he seeks and accepts opinions from his employees. These days, Emery is a perfectionist, obsessed with flawlessness, but he knows that the latter does not exist. He tries to live with his faults and the faults of others. We should not confuse negative perfectionism, which is inflexible and neurotic, with positive perfectionism, which is adaptive and healthy.

Emery currently watches several videos of rival teams and analyzes them thoroughly. But he always shares this with his staff. This increases experience, knowledge, and information.

The important thing is to focus on what we can improve. After matches, Emery immediately disconnects from what happened, whether it was a victory or defeat, because nothing can be changed after the final whistle. The next day, he wakes up with a smile in case of victory and immediately fixes mistakes in case of defeat.

Channeling the effort

‘There is no excess in the world so commendable as excessive gratitude.’

Jean de la Bruyère

Gratitude

Associated with effort is gratitude. Gratitude leads us to see the positive side of everything. It is a miracle therapy because it focuses us on the positive part of what we experience and receive. Gratitude fosters personal relationships, enlivens, infects a group, and makes us happier.

Channeling the effort

Filtering team-related news

In sport and in life, we cannot be influenced by unfounded news, as we risk losing valuable energy. Emery filters the news that reaches the group in the following way:

- It has to be real news;
- It has to be positive news for the team;
- It has to be useful news.

Reason + Emotion: healthy balance to win

‘Most of our problems arise when we think instead of feel and feel instead of think.’

Jean-Paul Sartre

We play as we train

In our day-to-day life, we must perfectly combine reason with emotion. Our game style is materialized in the match, in the competition. But this begins to be defined in training. Football is a whole and everything is related. The organization is done by everyone: coach, staff, medical team... from this organization, reason and emotion define our match style. Emery's game style is focused on winning. To win, he holds a philosophy and an idea within an organization, where there are physical, tactical and psychological components. Emery's teams are intense defensively and offensively, aggressive and intelligent to fulfill the goal of victory. They are teams prepared to think, they are physically strong, resistant and fast to surprise their rivals. Emery prepares his teams to be supportive, competitive, communicative, with proactive and participative leaders.

Reason + Emotion: healthy balance to win

The defense, midfield and attack influence 70% of the team's qualities, and the rival team influences the remaining 30%. Playing away or at home also conditions the match preparation. In the offensive aspect, there may be a short or wide match, with width and depth to have the ball, with positional changes, looking for individual duels, speed and variation. The team must know when to have the ball or when to be more vertical. In the defensive strategy, the team maintains a zone of solidarity and commitment, with good positioning and defensive coverages. With all this, Emery plans for the team to apply a winning philosophy in the match.

The preparation of an away match will be different from the preparation of a home match, but the style and philosophy of the team remain the same. It is easy to understand that a match played at the rival's stadium presents circumstances that a home match does not.

Reason + Emotion: healthy balance to win

‘He who subdues his anger subdues his worst enemy.’

Confucius

Searching for balance

Coaches must deal positively and constructively with players’ egos. Individual success is only possible when there is collective success. It is necessary to create an environment of great psychological comfort, where the interests of different people coexist harmoniously. For this, humility is the best recipe, and it all starts with the humility of the team leader: the coach. So that negative emotions do not arise, it is important that the oral and visual communication is positive among everyone.

It is also important for the balance of a team to realize that not everything is wrong in a defeat and not everything is fine in a victory. The joys of a win are short-lived. Victory should be used to seek continuous improvement, and we should look at defeat as a learning experience, without ignoring what was positive in the match.

In football, the focus is on the result. For Emery, winning is important, but for him the biggest compliment is to be told in good Spanish “fue un partidazo”. Football is a show and entertaining the crowd is everything. The balance between reason and emotion is difficult. But when we manage to achieve this balance, the result is powerful. For Emery, the result was four Europa Leagues with exciting football.

Serendipity

‘If one advances confidently in the direction of his dreams, he will meet with a success unexpected in common hours.’

Henry David Thoreau

The term serendipity can be defined as happy chance, unexpected luck, or fortuitous success.

According to Richard Wiseman, inciting “good luck” has 4 principles:

- Believing in and extending one’s own opportunities: people with good luck strive to have many good opportunities;
- Making fortunate decisions through intuition: intuition is an unconscious part of intelligence and we must take it into consideration;
- Building self-fulfilling prophecies: for example, “prophesying” that the next match will be great, and seeing that “prophecy” come true;
- Adopting a resilient attitude: endure steadfastly, serenely, learning to turn moments of “bad luck” into moments of ‘good luck’.

Serendipity

‘Circumstances? I create my own circumstances.’

Napoléon Bonaparte

Fortuitous successes can be the consequence of thinking and acting with respect for others. To build ‘good luck’ in a team, we must start by building a team in the true sense of the word, avoiding mediocrity and cowardice, defending dignity to obtain fortuitous successes that at first sight are casual. Emery believes in chance... and this is born from the will.

To be lucky, in football and in life, we must work hard and believe to create.

Unai Emery's Method

The keys to Unai Emery's method regarding team management:

- Team spirit;
- Winning mentality;
- Channeling the effort;
- Reason + Emotion;
- Serendipity.

Chapter 6

10 Leadership

Dilemmas

How to spot talent

‘Only one in 10 companies tries to extract the most out of their professionals.’

Silvia Damiano

We must take advantage of the talent that arises in our way. According to Mikel Jáuregui, a talent is ‘someone who is different, who stands out from others. Someone with talent is someone who stirs emotion, makes you laugh and cry, causes fear and surprises’. In the football realm, it is difficult to explore talent and detect it. But talent alone is not enough; it takes hard work and dedication.

A coach has the obligation to keep an open mind, to help carve a player’s professional and personal journey. A player can be “bad” today and be excellent tomorrow, it all depends on his state of confidence, motivation and concentration. The difference is always in the player’s mental capacity, so players should always be the best they can be, trying to overcome the obstacles that come along the way.

Besides spotting a talented player, developing him to reach the elite level is difficult. Emery is pure energy, and that is the fuel needed for many players to develop qualitatively.

How to improve a professional

‘Being a leader involves finding a balance between compassion and courage.’

Robin Sharma

First, to get the most out of each player, you need to have a healthy relationship with them.

It is important to find balance between demanding and generosity with the players, taking into account these 5 aspects:

- Kindness, closeness, and direct communication;
- Recognize what they do well and their effort in a concrete, day-to-day way, both in training and during matches;
- Foster a healthy sense of humor, without losing respect or focus;
- Trust the players so that the players trust the coach;
- Acknowledge one's own mistake, because it is impossible to trust a leader who thinks he is perfect.

How to improve a professional

Defeat, even the cruelest, can and should be used to improve a player. The times we rise are more important than the times we fall. Emery doesn't regret defeats, he learns from them and looks to the future. His players follow him.

All this, together with a deep knowledge of the game, are essential factors in promoting player development.

How to present the season's objectives

First, one must set the major season objective and make sure that all the players are identified with it. But Emery sets short and medium-term targets that he believes are achievable. He just tells the players the short-term goals, to figure out if they are knowledgeable about the next opponent. And, with his energy, he goes on to set goals for the next match or fixtures to come. Finally, there are the individual goals for each player, which they must achieve to improve. For example, with a forward we can define a number of goals; with the team captain, the objectives may be related to leadership.

How to present the season's objectives

Management by objectives (MBO) and the Balanced Scorecard published by Peter Ducker in 1954 revolutionized leadership and management in companies and can be applied to football. Emery does it. Management by objectives follows these steps:

- Define the team's objectives for the season;
- Define and frame the team's overall objectives with the individual targets of each player;
- Monitor the performance of each player;
- Manage the performance of each player as a team member;
- Recognize the merit of each player and reward them;
- Monitor the team's progress and set new targets if necessary.

How to solve conflicts between players

‘Conflict is inevitable, but combat is optional.’

Max Lugado

The players consciously or unconsciously compete against each other, something important to have them ready to face opponents. Ideally, the results of a team should be better than the results of each individual player. But, even when that doesn't happen, the team is still everything. Everyone is important.

It has been proven that success creates more conflict than defeat. With defeat, solidarity emerges; with victory, euphoria and sometimes ‘temptation’. In case of conflict, Emery tries to mediate it by talking to the most wound-up player. In this type of situations, the coach must understand everything that happened. And, in the face of negative emotions, it is necessary to calm the situation down and ask the players to reconsider their position. Emery only gives his players one chance, because if one can't ‘move on’, the situation can ‘snowball’. In the ‘Odyssey’, Homer gave advice to Ulysses to overcome fears: ‘face the fear, the team’. We must leave the past behind, ‘nostalgia is a mistake and rancor is the team's suicide.’

How to solve conflicts between players

The best strategy against conflict is assertiveness. Assertiveness is a strategy and a communication style. How to be assertive? There are three assumptions:

- Empathy;
- Self-confidence;
- Search together for a solution where interests are reconciled.

How to overcome a poor streak

Unai Emery has a toolbox to manage negative streaks in the team's performance.

Three tools address physical needs:

- Rest if necessary;
- Breathe well;
- Relax.

Two tools respond to emotional needs:

- Expressing oneself with transparency;
- Think positively and constructively about the situation, supporting the teammate.

How to overcome a poor streak

Two are rational:

- Effective communication;
- Creativity in responses to situations.

Finally, two tools are related to the team's values:

- More focused than ever;
- More cohesive than ever (together we can make it).

The winning mentality has to be maintained by the team even in the negative streaks; with effort, positive communication, learning, no breakdowns.

How to release a player

To release a player is a thankless task. Emery prefers to make these decisions at the end of the season. When a player doesn't perform, Emery is tolerant. But, when the whole group is being affected, the player must be warned, in an action aligned with the team captains. If it has no effect, the decision to remove the player from the club is made. To dismiss a player in a cordial manner, the following steps are recommended:

- Observe the player's past performance, trying to gather as much information about him as possible;
- Warn the player (everyone deserves a second chance);
- Understand the cause of the player's lack of performance before making any decisions;
- Release the player, with respect, offer the player a decent exit;
- Do it briefly, directly, and as smoothly as possible;
- Once the decision is made, the player should not show his anger to the team at the club's facilities;
- Do not get into conflict;
- Perform the action and wrap the issue.

How to manage the locker room environment

‘Don’t trust everyone, only those who deserve it. The former is a sign of stupidity, the latter is a sign of prudence.’

Democritus

A good coach and leader must raise the levels of self-esteem of his team, individually and collectively. When everyone’s self-esteem is high, it’s easier to control the egos of all players because, when self-esteem is lacking, the ego gets bigger. Self-esteem is built on useful, positive, and constructive messages, and is lost with useless, destructive, and negative messages.

In the development of players’ self-esteem, good coaches know and make demanding and self-control essential.

Without discipline and serenity, self-esteem falls.

How to manage the locker room environment

To foster team spirit and best manage the environment in the locker room, there is one key word and that is sharing:

- Sharing experiences;
- Sharing ambitions;
- Sharing challenges;
- Sharing recognition and rewards;
- Sharing the fun;
- Sharing the same physical space;
- Sharing relationships (take friendship outside the club and involve families);
- Sharing values;
- Sharing knowledge and learning.

How to ask the players for extra effort

‘Laziness and fear are the great threats of intelligence.’

José Antonio Marina

To ask for extra effort from the players, we first must thank them for everything they have done up to that point. Gratitude is fundamental. We can't ask more of them without acknowledging what they have done.

For a good performance, we must act according to the following actions:

- Causing surprise with the intended objectives (first, success must be in our heads and hearts);
- Clarifying what is expected from the players (conveying confidence and showing what players can do);
- Cheering, inspiring, and fostering positive energy (the coach must believe as much or more than the team);
- Anticipating obstacles (taking risks and controlling anxiety and stress when facing new challenges);
- Acting accordingly (recognizing the players' effort).

How to celebrate and value successes

‘Success is not a popularity contest.’

Robin Sharma

Unai Emery celebrates his successes with the people closest to him. He is a coach with a contagious optimism. His positive mindset ‘makes good things happen’, like excellent player performance and wins. But, in victory, he is a calmer man and tries to celebrate with those he wants and those who want him.

Emery knows that it is easier to get to the top of the mountain than to stay there. So, it is important to celebrate, but without uncontrolled euphoria.

How to lead your boss

‘Better than with words, the serenity of our actions.’

William Shakespeare

There are 4 types of difficult bosses:

- Those who think they know more than they really do;
- The stressed ones;
- The manipulators;
- The authoritarians.

How to lead your boss

Each case requires different actions. Regarding those who think they know more than they really do, we must be convincing and transparent, without making them feel that we are competing with them. When facing the stressed type, reassurance is key. We must deliver what we promise and simplify things. When facing manipulators, we must clarify what is negotiable or non-negotiable with respect. We must be firm in our convictions. Finally, in the face of authoritarian bosses, we must not be afraid. We must show reassurance when they have negative behaviors and win their respect with our confidence and assertiveness

Unau Emery highlights three important aspects of being leaders of our bosses:

- The boss has to be okay;
- Loyalty;
- We must have solutions to the problems.

Conclusion

Conclusion

The goal of this effort was to present the winning method that Unai Emery uses in managing his teams. We started by showing Unai Emery's game idea and then presented our analysis of Emery's Game Model as coach of Villarreal CF. The third chapter of this work concerns the training methodology implemented by the Spanish coach, considering the planning of a training microcycle. Unai Emery, in the 2020/2021 season, made history by winning the Europa League with the "Yellow Submarine". We analyzed the training session on the eve of that match and made a connection between how the strategy for the match was executed during training and what happened the next day. Seeing the way Unai Emery works with his players inspired us. The last two chapters were purely theoretical, but quite motivating and enriching. With that, we presented Unai Emery's winning method in managing his teams and the ten leadership dilemmas and their solutions.

Unai Emery is a remarkable professional. He is a man with tremendous "will" to succeed. He is a leader with enormous motivation power and resilience, dazzling with the positive energy he transmits to his teams. This work, as all the others we have written, is based on the value of sharing. Sharing ideas and knowledge allows us to raise the bar and evolve.

Thank you for being on that side.

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