



THE 5-2-3

HOW IT IS USED AT THE EURO 2020



ENGLAND



DENMARK



BELGIUM



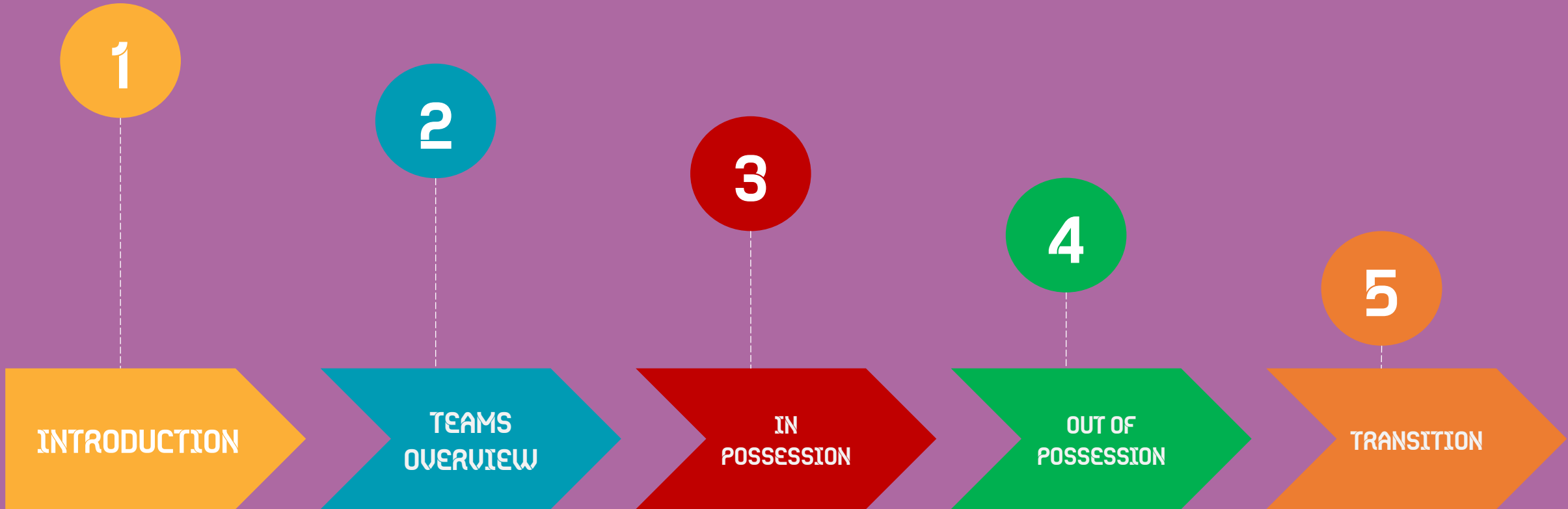
GERMANY

BY DARYL - @DGOUILARD
QUAN - @QUANTUE



CONTENTS

The following report is based on England, Denmark, Belgium and Germany's Euro 2020 matches.
Please note that the videos gathered in this presentation is done manually without any coding or tagging software.
The average position maps and the passing networks are done using Python coding software.





INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

Over the past couple of seasons, the use of the 3-4-3/5-2-3 formation at the club level has seen a significant rise as many modern managers are looking to such formation to provide defensive solidity while also creating fluidity in the offensive and transitioning phase. Along with that, teams who have integrated the 3-4-3 formation into the club's playing style have achieved a level of success and left behind positive opinions after every match that they played (several examples are shown on the right, with Nuno Espírito Santo's Wolverhampton Wanderers missing out due to the lack of space on this slide).

As such, it did not come as a surprise that many international teams chose to approach the Euro 2020 with a similar formation, having seen many of their domestic clubs gained achievements over the past two seasons. And two of the teams who have brought such formation to this tournament, Denmark and England, have reached the semi-final and final respectively.

So, with two club seasons and one major international tournament wrapped up, we are left with one question. How do teams that play with the 3-4-3 formation manage to achieve success with the formation being the focal point? This report will attempt to answer that question at best using examples from four Euro 2020 teams, England, Denmark, Belgium and Germany. At the same time, using data and videos, this report will also attempt to provide a general look into how teams can make the most of the formation, while also leaving the coaches with rooms to use the formation in the most fluid way as possible based on their own preferred style and suiting the players that they have.

ACHIEVEMENTS WON BY TEAMS USING THE 3-4-3 FORMATION



Atalanta B.C.:

- Reached the quarter-final of the 2019/20 Champions League in their debut season.
- Consistently reached the top 4 of the Serie A under Gian Piero Gasperini.



RB Leipzig:

- Reached the semi-final of the 2019/20 Champions League season.
- Runners-up of the 2020/21 DFB-Pokal.
- Consistently reached the top 3 of the Bundesliga under Julian Nagelsmann.



TSG Hoffenheim:

- Qualified for the Champions League for the first time in the club's history by finishing 4th in the Bundesliga under Nagelsmann.



Chelsea FC:

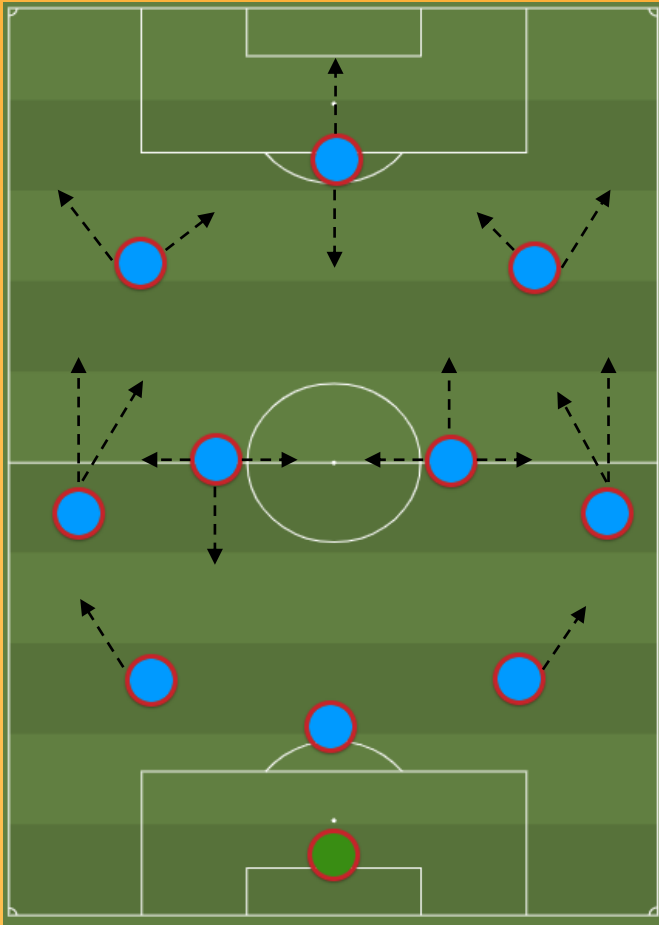
- Won the 2020/21 Champions League in Thomas Tuchel's debut season.
- Runners-up of the 2020/21 FA Cup.



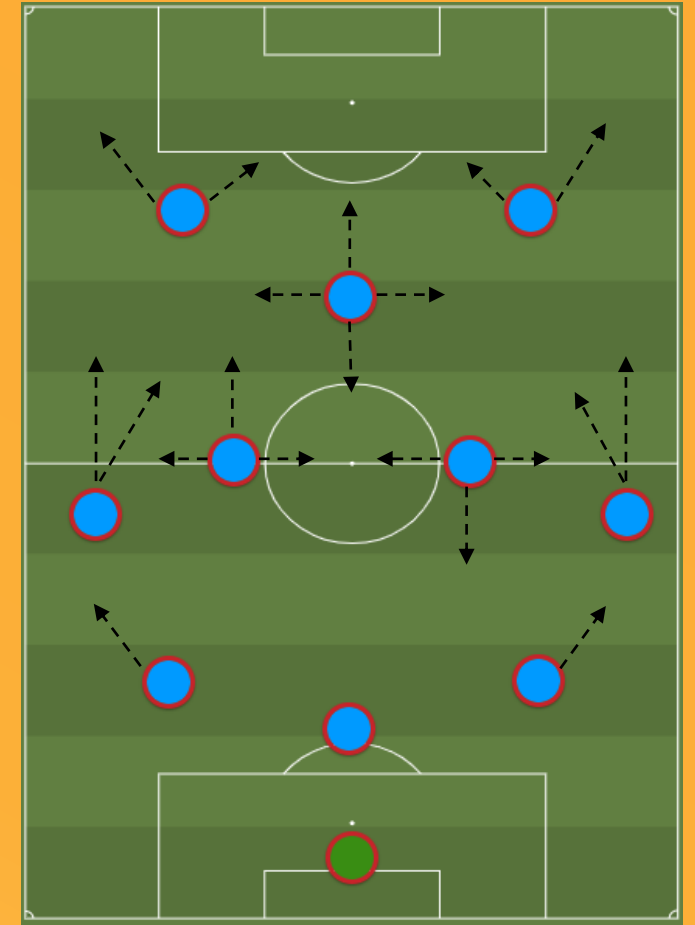
West Ham United:

- Finished 6th in the 2020/21 Premier League season with David Moyes and returned to the Europa League since the 2016-17 season.

5-2-3



- Can be seen as a 3-4-3 when in possession.
- Three centre-backs staying in front of the 16-yard box.
- Both wing-backs stay higher and are more attacking than traditional full-backs.
- Two central midfielders take on both defending and attacking responsibilities.
- Two wide attacking midfielders/wingers can either stay wide like traditional wingers or sit narrow like inside forwards.
- Lone striker up front can either lead the line or drop deep into the position of a #10.



5-2-1-2/3-4-1-2: A VARIANT OF THE 5-2-3



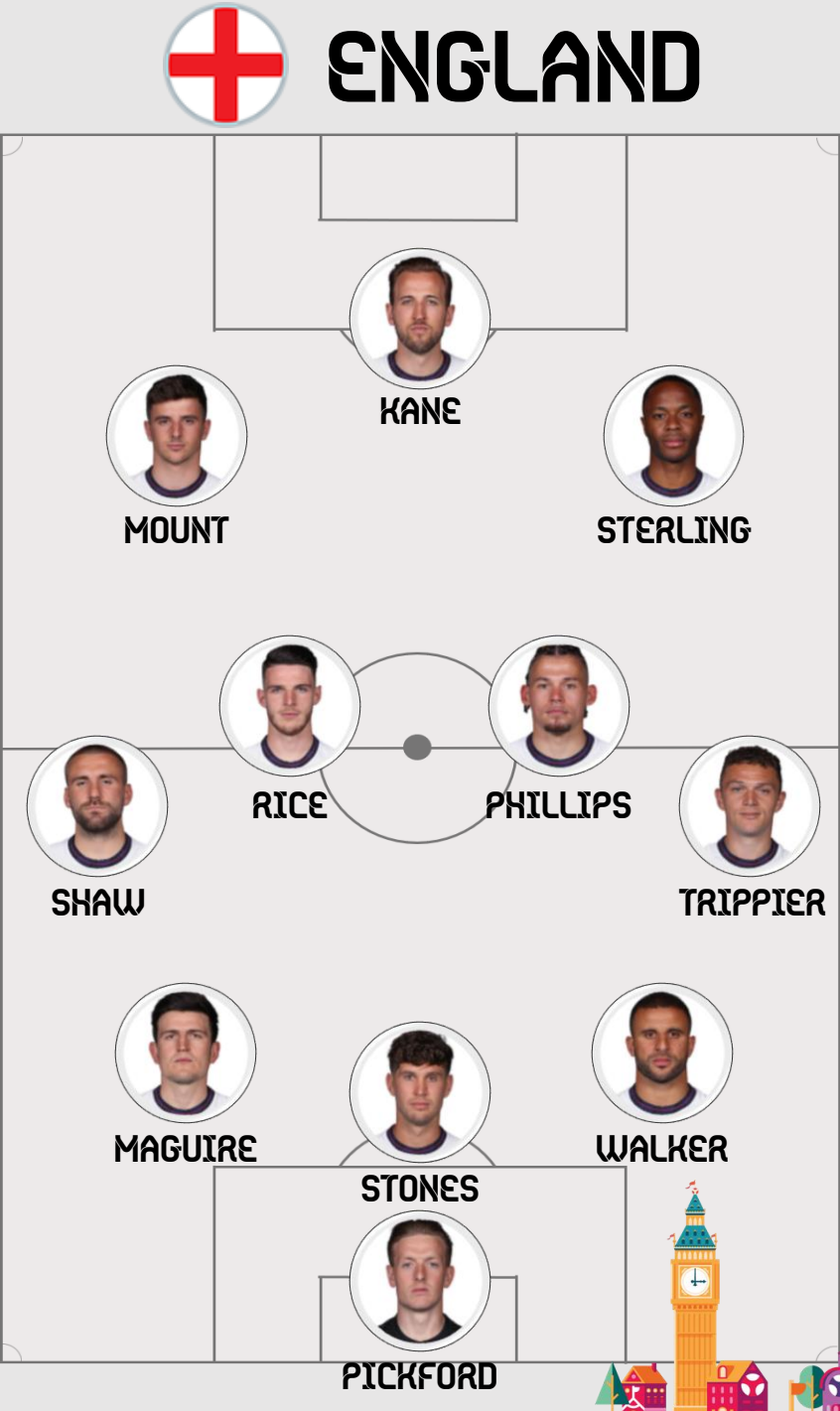
TEAMS OVERVIEW

(USING DATA)



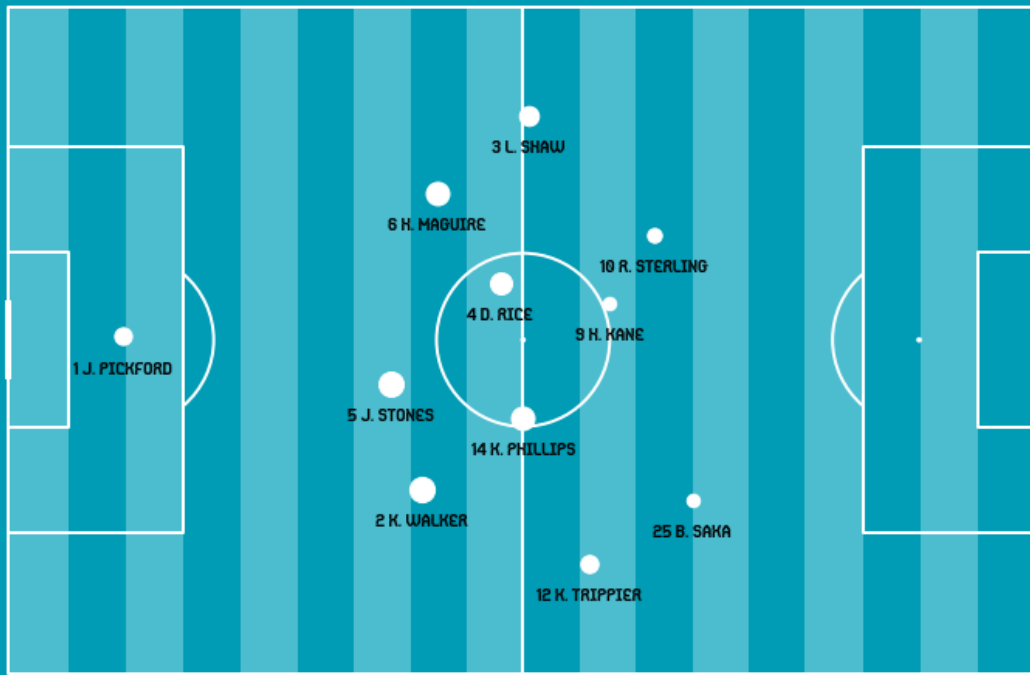
NO.	PLAYER'S NAME	90s	GOALS	npxG	ASSISTS	xA	PASS %	PRESS. %
1	JORDAN PICKFORD	7.7	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	64.6	N/A
2	KYLE WALKER	6.7	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.02	86.5	32.7
3	LUKE SHAW	6.4	0.16	0.03	0.47	0.18	82.7	25.0
4	DECLAN RICE	5.9	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.01	92.7	33.3
5	JOHN STONES	7.5	0.00	0.06	0.00	0.00	94.7	35.6
6	HARRY MAGUIRE	5.7	0.18	0.07	0.00	0.03	91.0	36.0
7	JACK GREALISH	2.0	0.00	0.07	1.00	0.49	83.1	20.6
8	JORDAN HENDERSON	1.7	0.59	0.15	0.00	0.00	85.6	29.4
9	HARRY KANE (C)	7.2	0.56	0.31	0.00	0.07	70.6	19.4
10	RAHEEM STERLING	7.1	0.42	0.34	0.14	0.10	83.2	29.9
11	MARCUS RASHFORD	1.0	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	82.1	19.0
12	KIERAN TRIPPIER	3.2	0.00	0.02	0.31	0.13	75.8	22.6
14	KALVIN PHILLIPS	7.4	0.00	0.01	0.14	0.04	86.8	20.5
15	TYRONE MINGS	2.1	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.03	91.3	55.6
17	JADON SANCHO	1.1	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	91.8	21.9
18	DOMINIC CALVERT-LEWIN	0.2	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	66.7	14.3
19	MASON MOUNT	5.1	0.00	0.10	0.00	0.21	81.0	23.5
20	PHIL FODEN	1.8	0.00	0.09	0.00	0.08	84.0	31.0
24	REECE JAMES	1.0	0.00	0.09	0.00	0.33	97.7	33.3
25	BUKAYO SAKA	3.0	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	76.7	21.7
26	JUDE BELLINGHAM	0.6	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	81.8	21.7

(All stats are from FBRef and are per 90s basis)

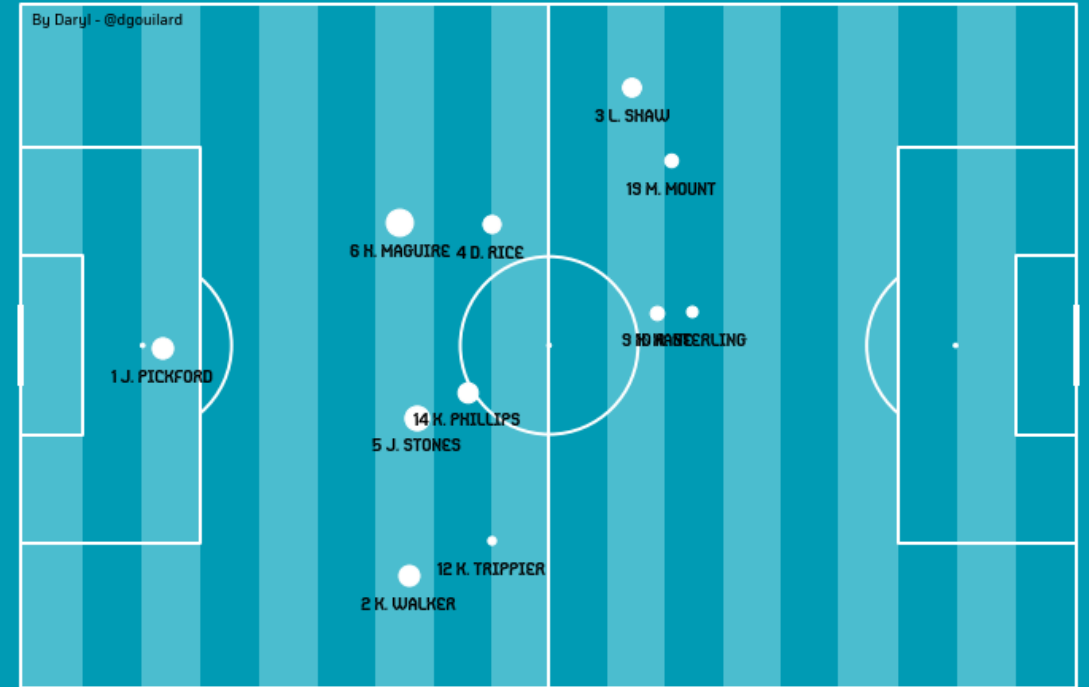


AVERAGE POSITIONS

ATTACKING DIRECTION →



AVERAGE POSITIONS VS GERMANY – ROUND OF 16



AVERAGE POSITIONS VS ITALY- FINAL



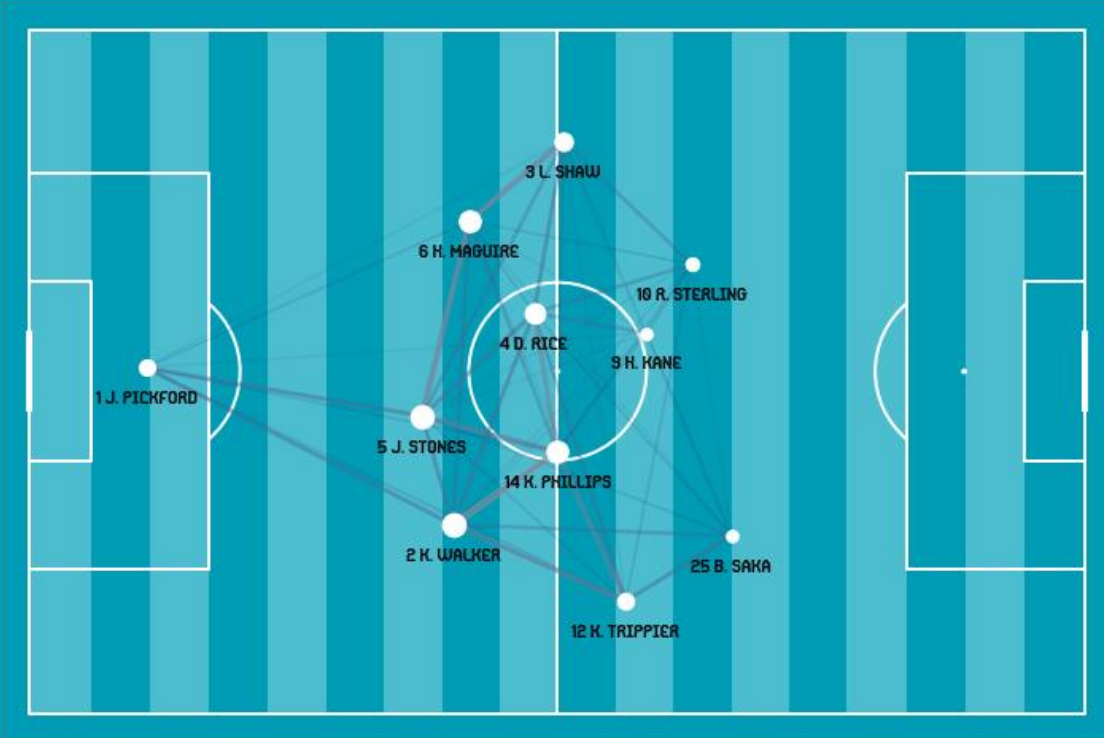
PASSING NETWORKS

MORE
PASSES

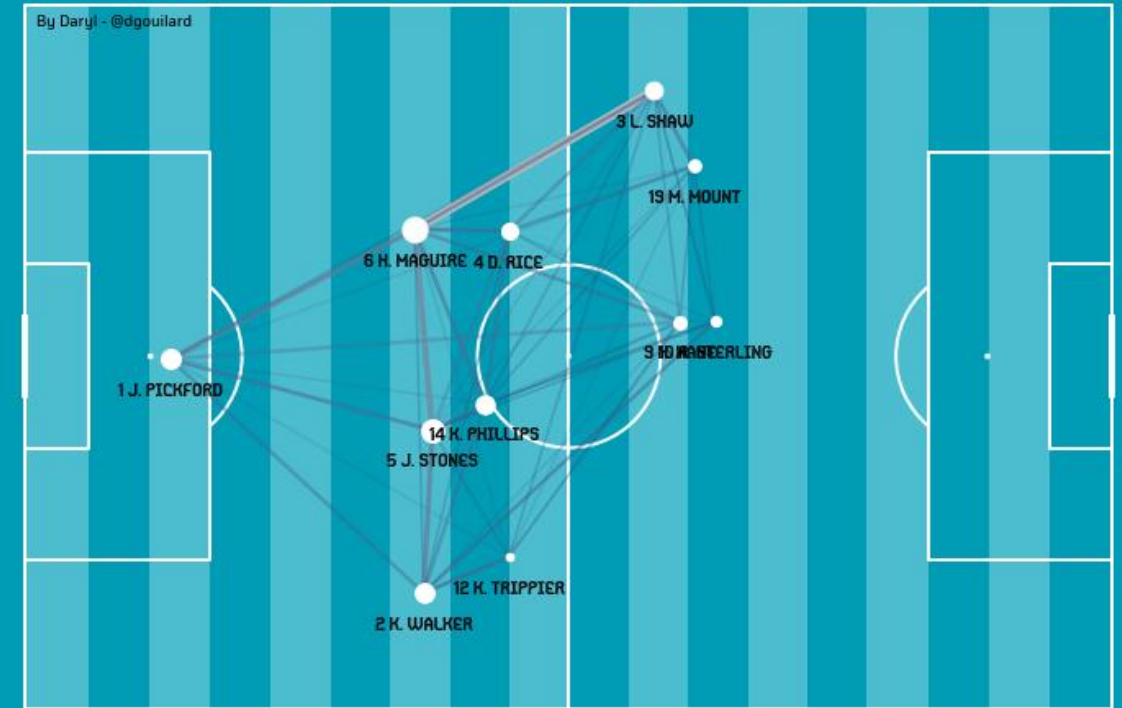
LESS
PASSES

LESS
SUCCESSFUL
PASSES

MORE
SUCCESSFUL
PASSES



PASSING NETWORK VS GERMANY – ROUND OF 16

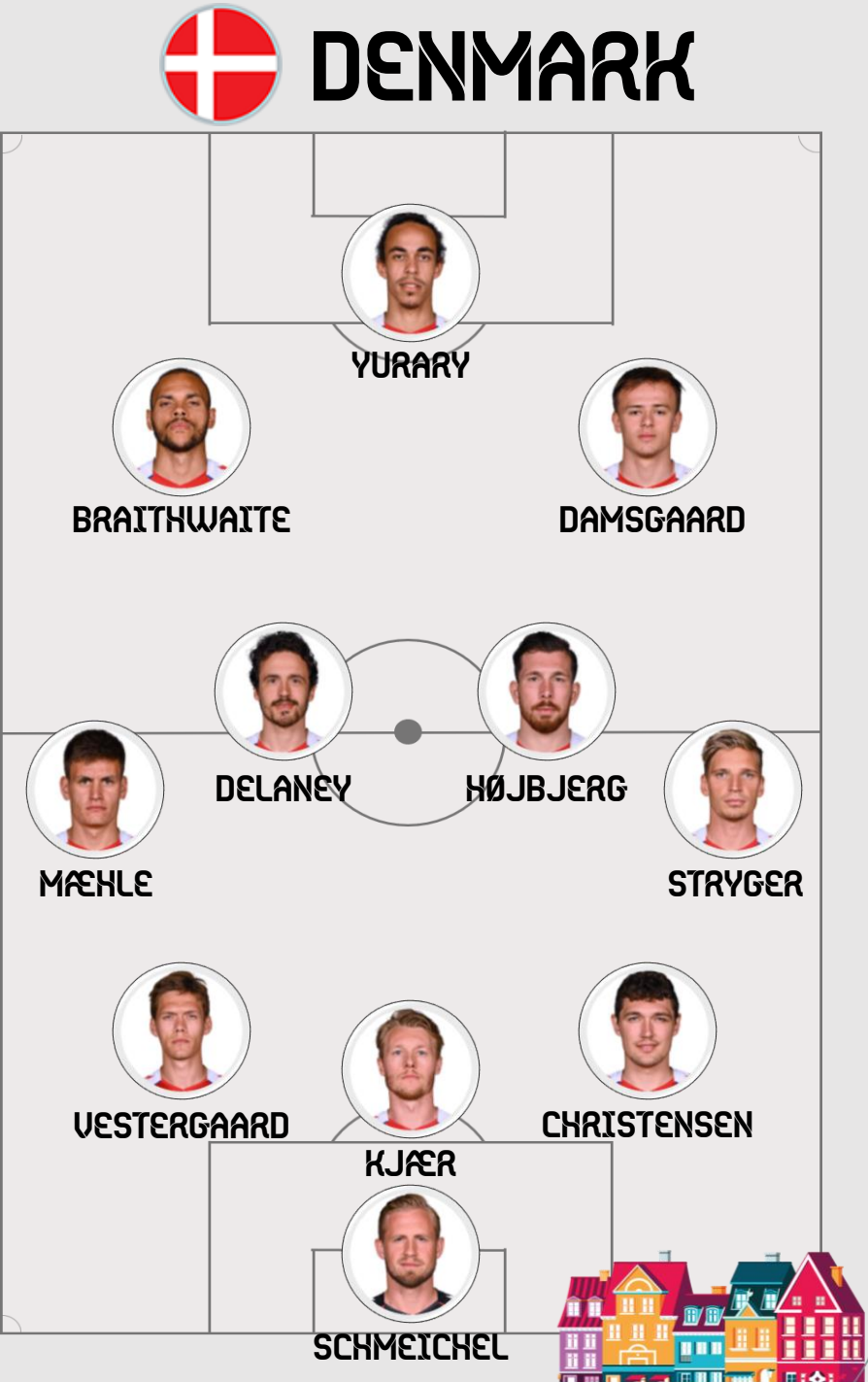


PASSING NETWORK VS ITALY - FINAL



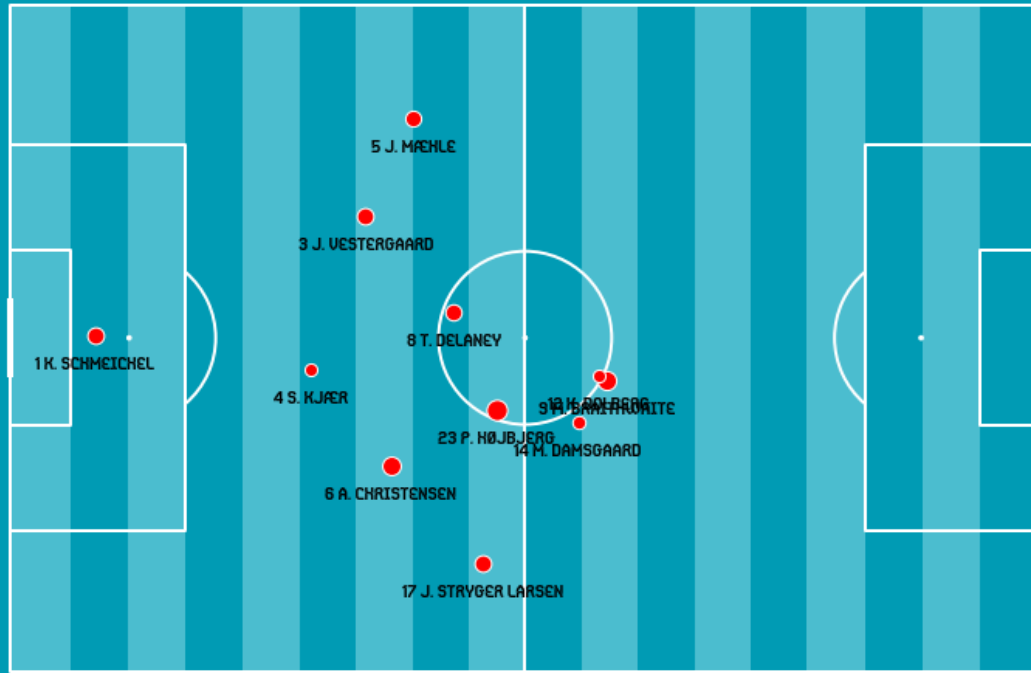
NO.	PLAYER'S NAME	90s	GOALS	npG	ASSISTS	xA	PASS %	PRESS. %
1	KASPER SCHMEICHEL	6.3	N/A	N/A	N/A	0.01	67.5	N/A
2	JOACHIM ANDERSEN	0.7	0.00	0.10	0.00	0.00	94.7	15.8
3	JANNIK VESTERGAARD	5.4	0.00	0.10	0.00	0.04	87.7	41.7
4	SIMON KJÆR (C)	5.9	0.00	0.10	0.00	0.02	89.4	42.6
5	JOAKIM MÆHLE	6.3	0.32	0.19	0.16	0.09	85.0	36.5
6	ANDREAS CHRISTENSEN	5.8	0.17	0.03	0.00	0.00	91.1	25.0
8	THOMAS DELANEY	5.1	0.20	0.08	0.00	0.05	79.0	27.5
9	MARTIN BRAITHWAITE	6.3	0.16	0.29	0.00	0.06	75.7	38.6
10	CHRISTIAN ERIKSEN	0.5	0.00	0.17	0.00	0.23	73.3	60.0
11	ANDREAS SKOV OLSEN	0.4	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.27	89.5	20.0
12	KASPER DOLBERG	2.5	1.20	0.31	0.00	0.03	77.6	17.9
14	MIKKEL DAMSGAARD	3.6	0.56	0.24	0.28	0.11	75.6	31.6
15	CHRISTIAN NØRGAARD	1.8	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.09	90.0	19.2
17	JENS STRYGER LARSEN	3.2	0.00	0.00	0.31	0.28	71.4	39.1
18	DANIEL WASS	3.0	0.00	0.05	0.00	0.07	80.0	14.3
19	JONAS WIND	0.9	0.00	0.32	0.00	0.07	94.4	66.7
20	YUSSUF POULSEN	3.3	0.61	0.42	0.61	0.21	67.3	27.3
21	ANDREAS CORNELIUS	0.7	0.00	0.30	1.43	0.42	70.4	37.5
23	PIERRE-EMILE HØJBJERG	6.3	0.00	0.03	0.48	0.11	84.7	24.0
24	MATHIAS JENSEN	1.6	0.00	0.05	0.63	0.14	75.0	20.8
26	NICOLAI BOILESEN	0.2	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	80.0	N/A

(All stats are from FBRef and are per 90s basis)

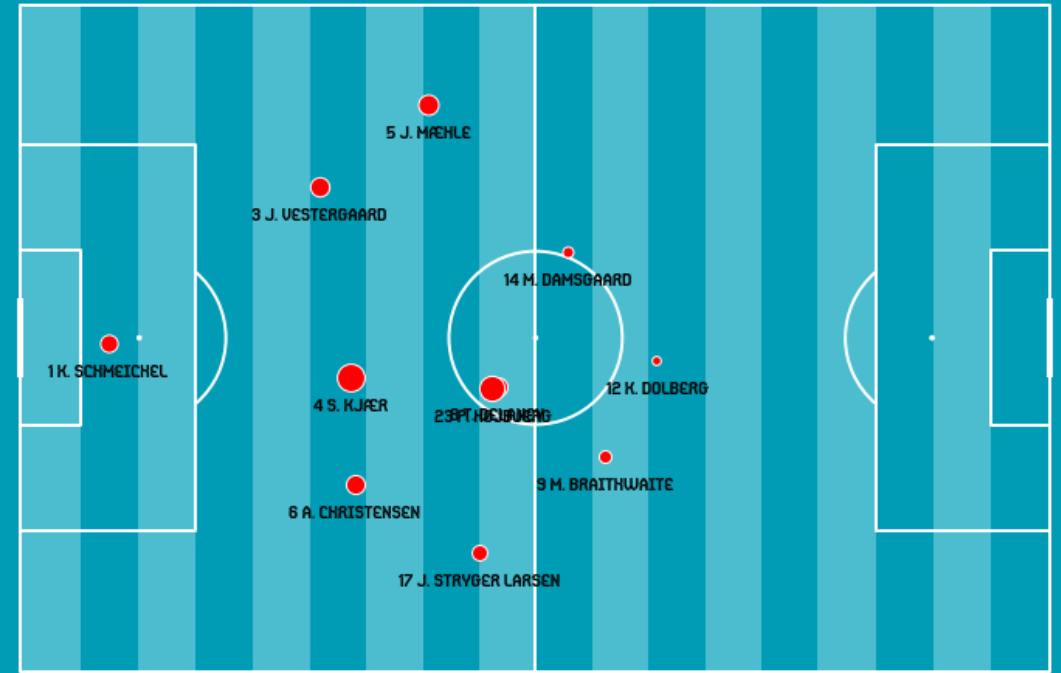


AVERAGE POSITIONS

ATTACKING DIRECTION



AVERAGE POSITIONS VS CZECH REPUBLIC – QUARTER-FINAL



AVERAGE POSITIONS VS ENGLAND – SEMI-FINAL



PASSING NETWORKS

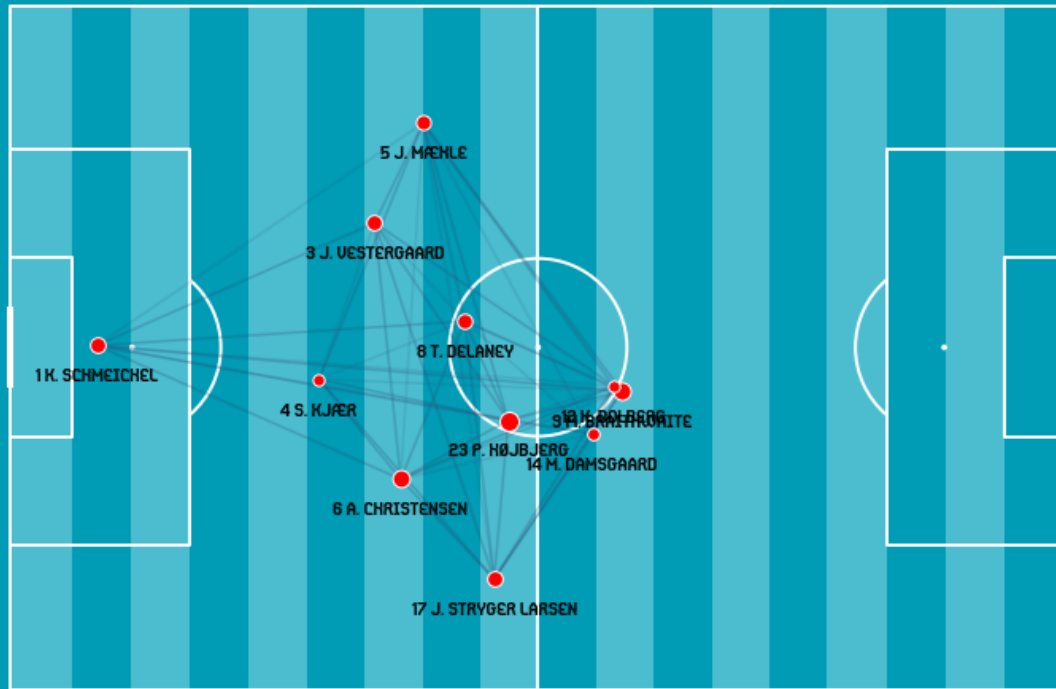
MORE
PASSES

LESS
PASSES

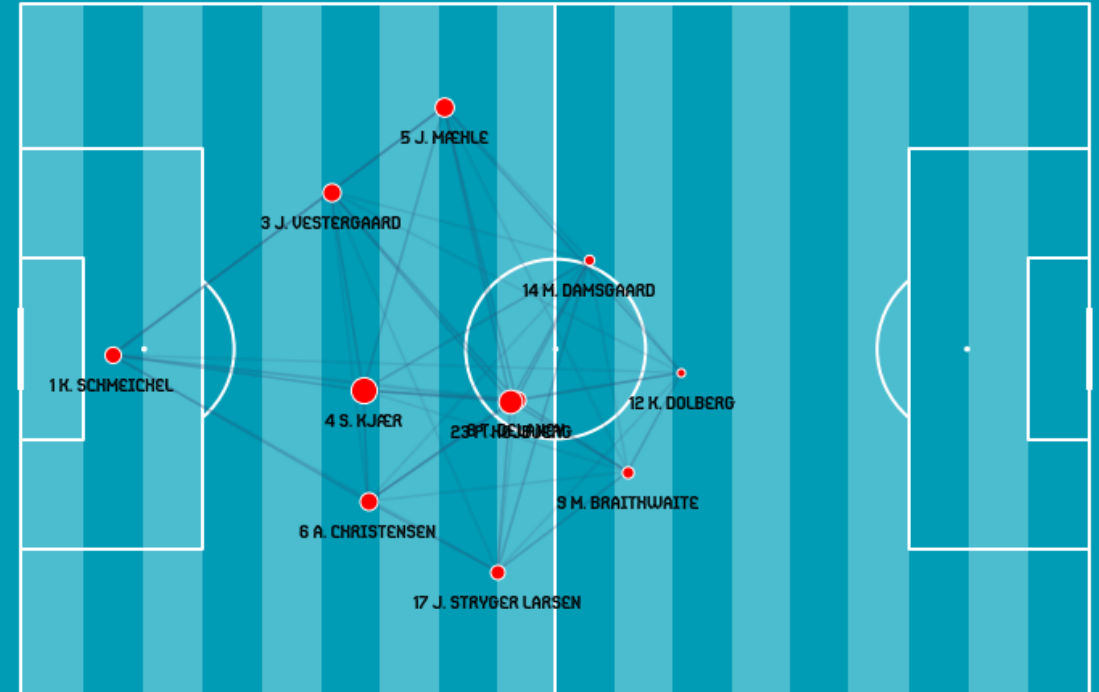
LESS
SUCCESSFUL
PASSES



MORE
SUCCESSFUL
PASSES



PASSING NETWORK VS CZECH REPUBLIC – QUARTER-FINAL

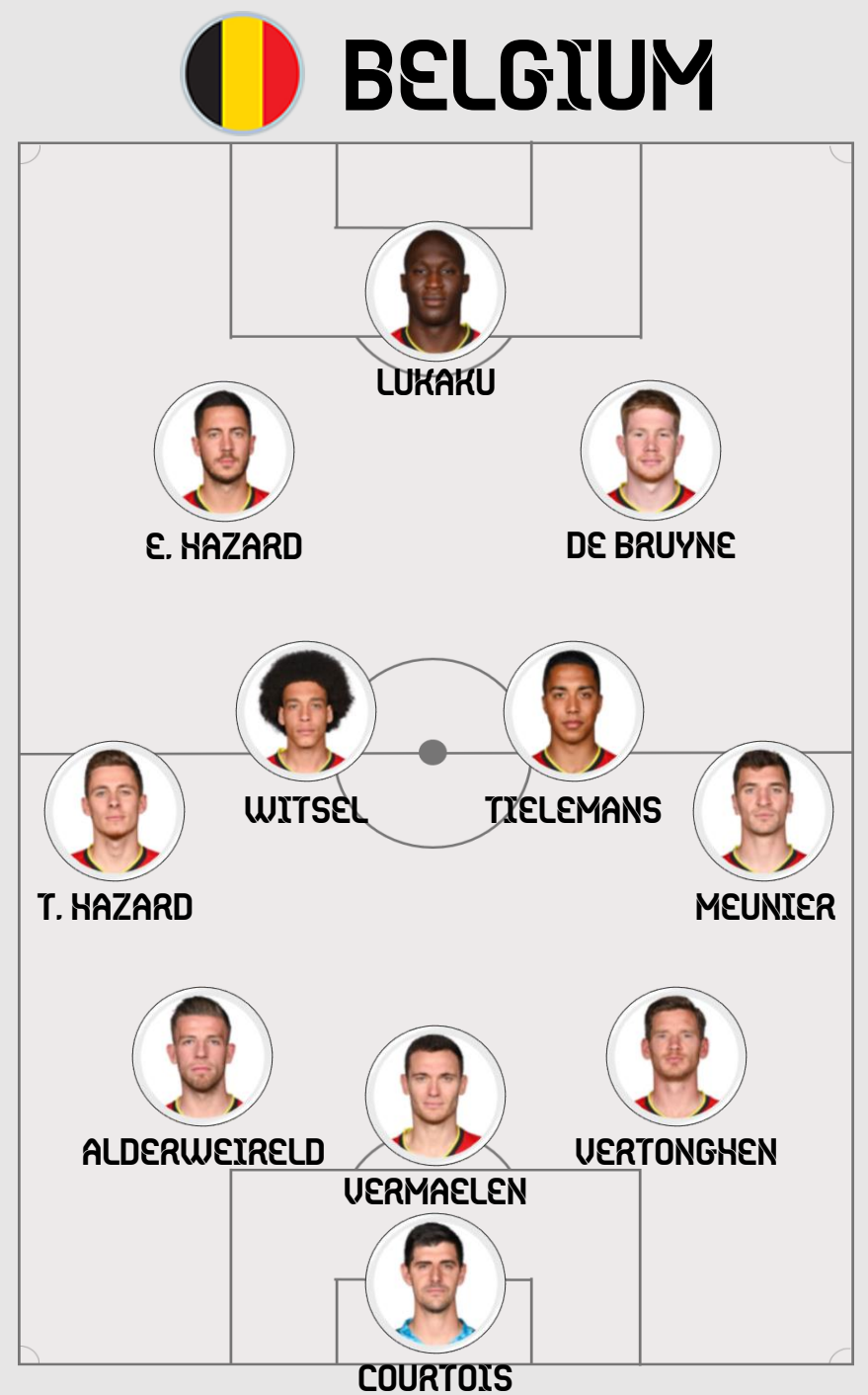


PASSING NETWORK VS ENGLAND – SEMI-FINAL



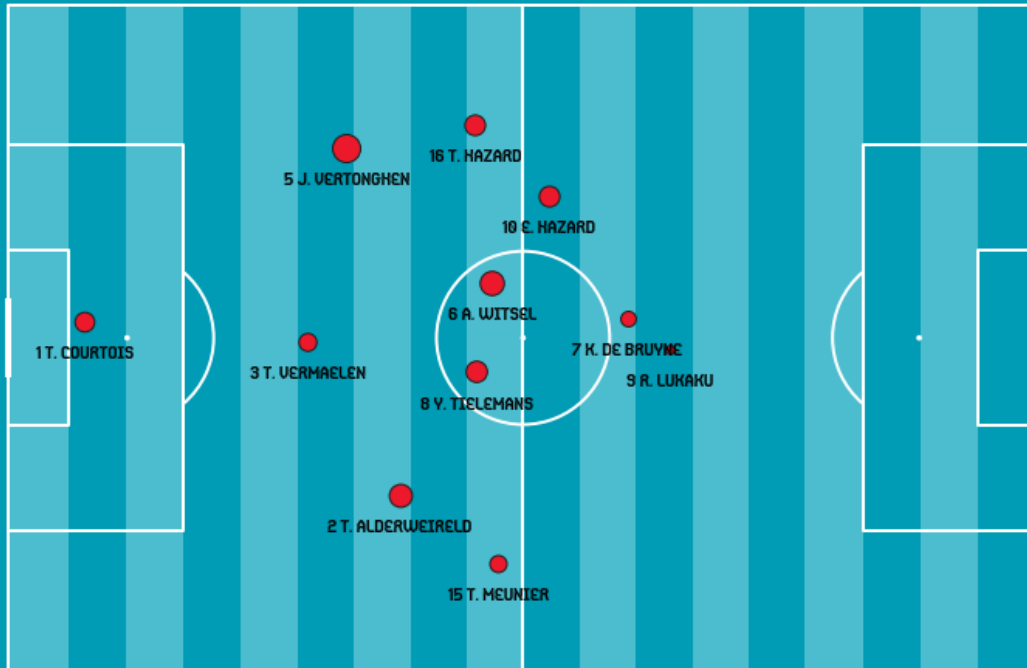
NO.	PLAYER'S NAME	90s	GOALS	npvG	ASSISTS	xA	PASS %	PRESS. %
1	THIBAUT COURTOIS	5.0	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	81.9	N/A
2	TOBY ALDERWEIRELD	4.0	0.00	0.01	0.00	0.00	87.3	33.3
3	THOMAS VERMAELEN	3.2	0.00	0.05	0.00	0.00	95.0	50.0
4	DEDRYCK BOYATA	2.0	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.01	98.8	36.4
5	JAN VERTONGHEN	3.8	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.03	91.3	23.8
6	AXEL WITSEL	3.4	0.00	0.02	0.00	0.07	95.7	31.1
7	KEVIN DE BRUYNE	3.0	0.33	0.08	0.67	0.74	74.7	15.7
8	YOURI TIELEMANS	3.8	0.00	0.01	0.00	0.06	85.5	33.3
9	ROMELU LUKAKU	4.9	0.82	0.43	0.00	0.03	65.4	16.7
10	EDEN HAZARD (C)	2.5	0.00	0.13	0.40	0.05	87.1	10.0
11	YANNICK CARRASCO	1.5	0.00	0.08	0.00	0.03	77.1	18.2
14	DRIES MERTENS	2.0	0.00	0.05	0.50	0.03	60.4	19.1
15	THOMAS MEUNIER	3.7	0.27	0.21	0.54	0.08	76.0	25.6
16	THORGAN HAZARD	4.0	0.50	0.21	0.00	0.01	88.0	12.0
18	JASON DENAYER	2.0	0.00	0.02	0.00	0.00	93.7	22.7
19	LEANDER DENDONCKER	1.7	0.00	0.05	0.00	0.00	86.7	20.6
21	TIMOTHY CASTAGNE	0.3	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	90.9	20.0
22	NACER CHADLI	1.0	0.00	0.09	0.00	0.01	85.7	43.8
23	MICHY BATSHUAYI	0.2	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	91.7	0.00
24	LEANDRO TROSSARD	0.8	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	85.5	21.1
25	JEREMY DOKU	1.8	0.00	0.10	0.00	0.13	80.0	29.2
26	DENNIS PRAET	0.3	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	88.9	0.00

(All stats are from FBRef and are per 90s basis)

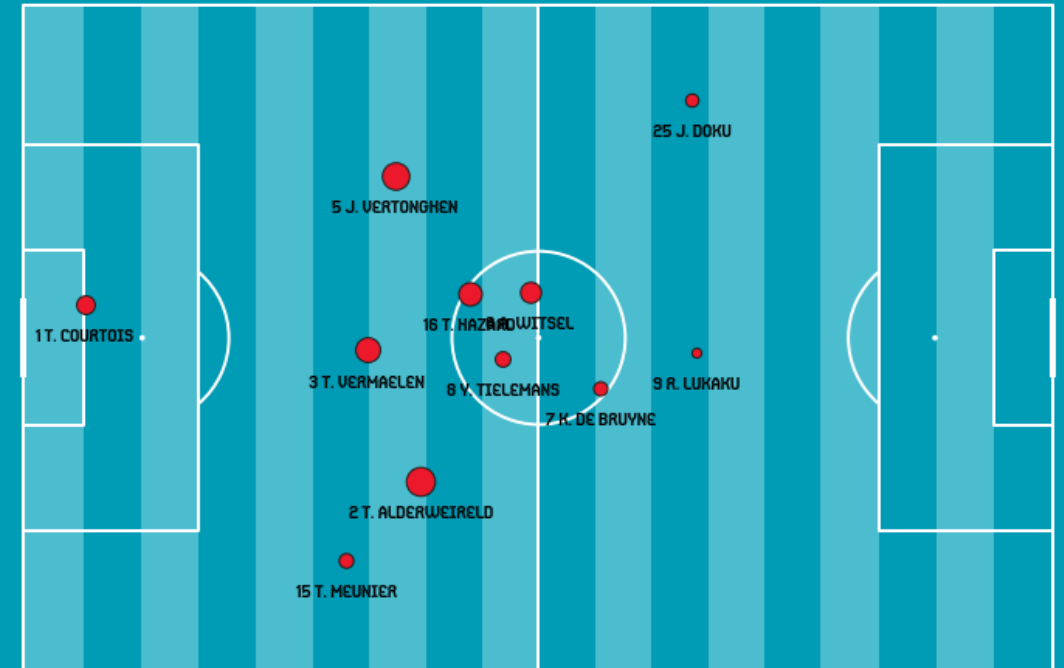


AVERAGE POSITIONS

ATTACKING DIRECTION →



AVERAGE POSITIONS VS PORTUGAL – ROUND OF 16



AVERAGE POSITIONS VS ITALY – QUARTER-FINAL



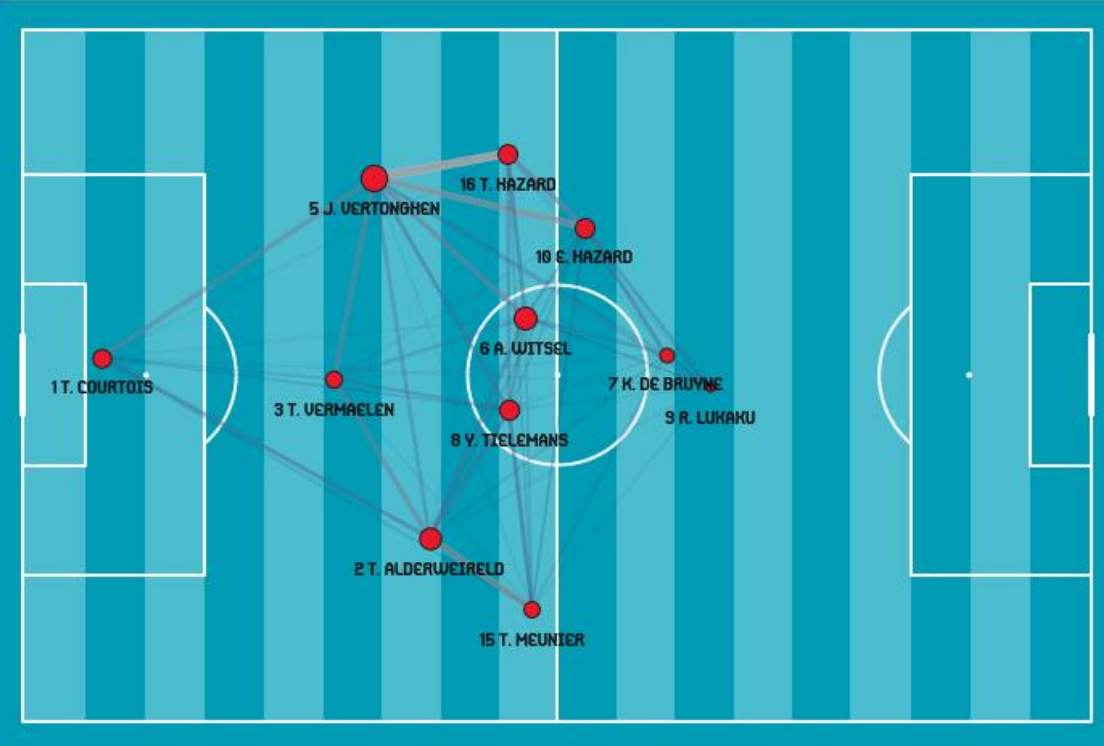
PASSING NETWORKS

MORE
PASSES

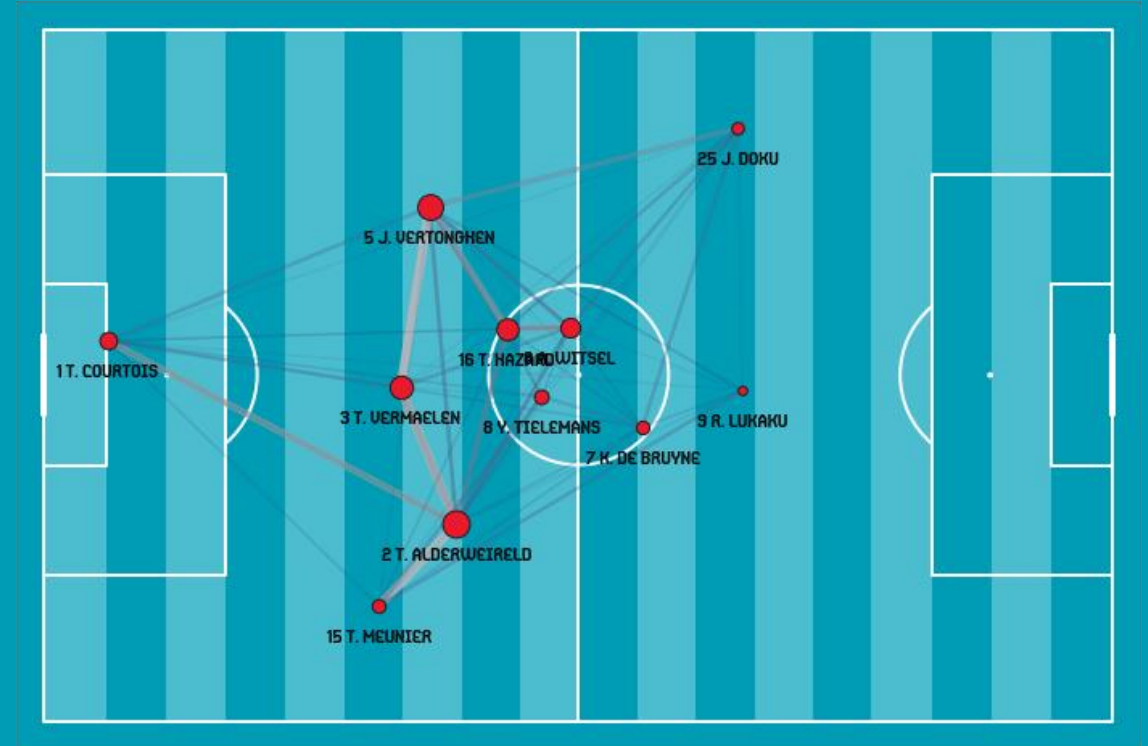
LESS
PASSES

LESS
SUCCESSFUL
PASSES

MORE
SUCCESSFUL
PASSES



PASSING NETWORK VS PORTUGAL – ROUND OF 16



PASSING NETWORK VS ITALY – QUARTER-FINAL

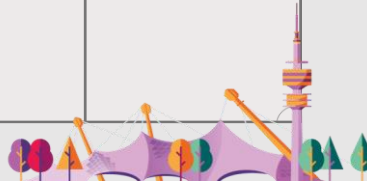
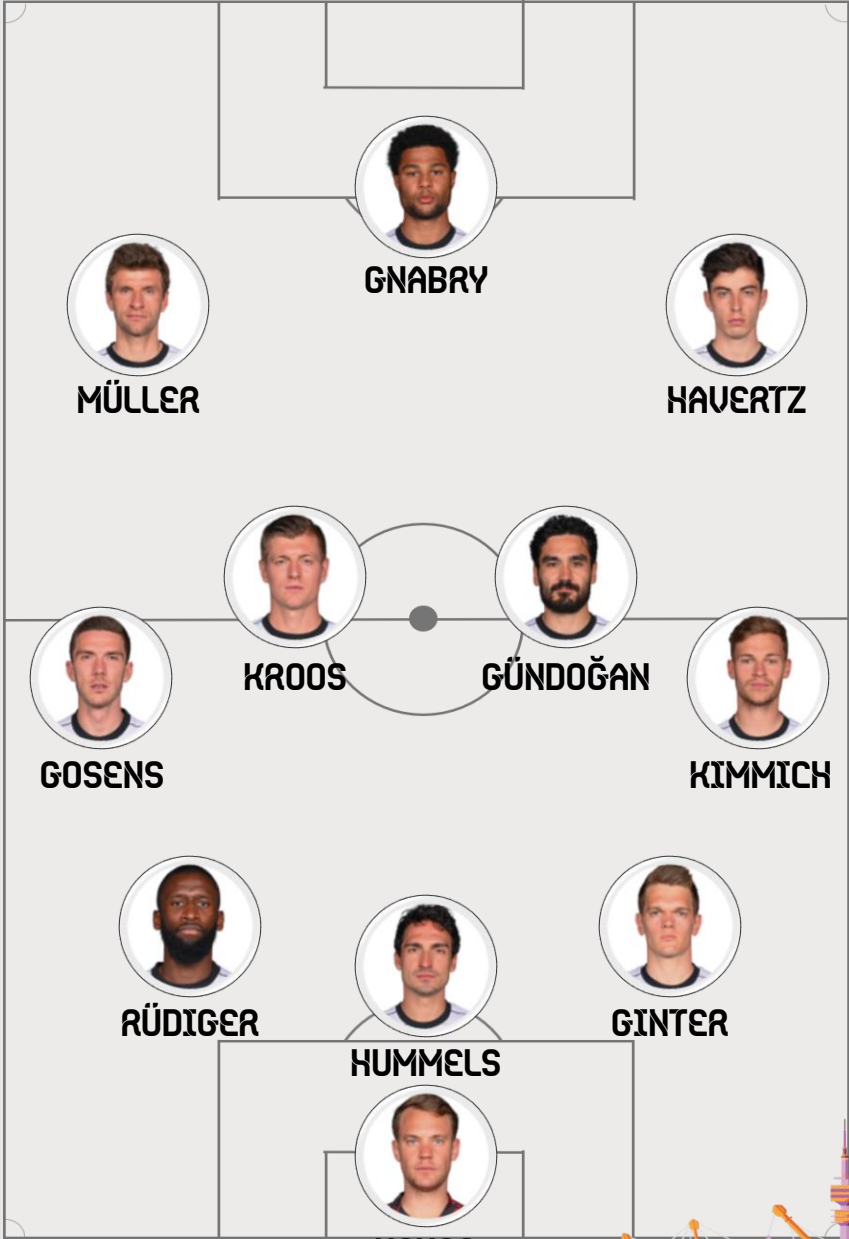


NO.	PLAYER'S NAME	90s	GOALS	npG	ASSISTS	xA	PASS %	PRESS. %
1	MANUEL NEUER (C)	4.0	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	85.1	N/A
2	ANTONIO RÜDIGER	4.0	0.00	0.01	0.00	0.00	93.9	10.3
3	MARCEL HALSTENBERG	0.3	0.00	0.07	0.00	0.39	81.8	28.6
4	MATTHIAS GINTER	3.8	0.00	0.12	0.00	0.01	87.4	50.0
5	MATS HUMMELS	3.7	0.00	0.12	0.27	0.04	94.0	37.5
6	JOSHUA KIMMICH	4.0	0.00	0.04	0.25	0.26	85.1	30.0
7	KAI HAVERTZ	3.3	0.61	0.72	0.00	0.28	82.8	30.2
8	TONI KROOS	4.0	0.00	0.05	0.00	0.10	90.0	31.2
9	KEVIN VOLLAND	0.1	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	80.0	50.0
10	SERGE GNABRY	2.8	0.00	0.07	0.00	0.05	78.8	34.9
11	TIMO WERNER	1.2	0.00	0.38	0.00	0.00	76.5	36.4
14	JAMAL MUSIALA	0.1	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	100.0	100.0
15	NIKLAS SÜLE	0.2	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	100.0	0.00
18	LEON GORETZKA	1.6	0.63	0.23	0.00	0.07	91.7	21.7
19	LEROY SANÉ	1.3	0.00	0.04	0.00	0.02	81.3	36.4
20	ROBIN GOSENS	3.5	0.29	0.25	0.29	0.31	83.7	21.4
21	İLKAY GÜNDOĞAN	2.4	0.00	0.06	0.00	0.00	94.0	22.2
23	EMRE CAN	0.4	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	91.1	40.0
25	THOMAS MÜLLER	3.2	0.00	0.26	0.00	0.20	75.8	28.6

(All stats are from FBRef and are per 90s basis)

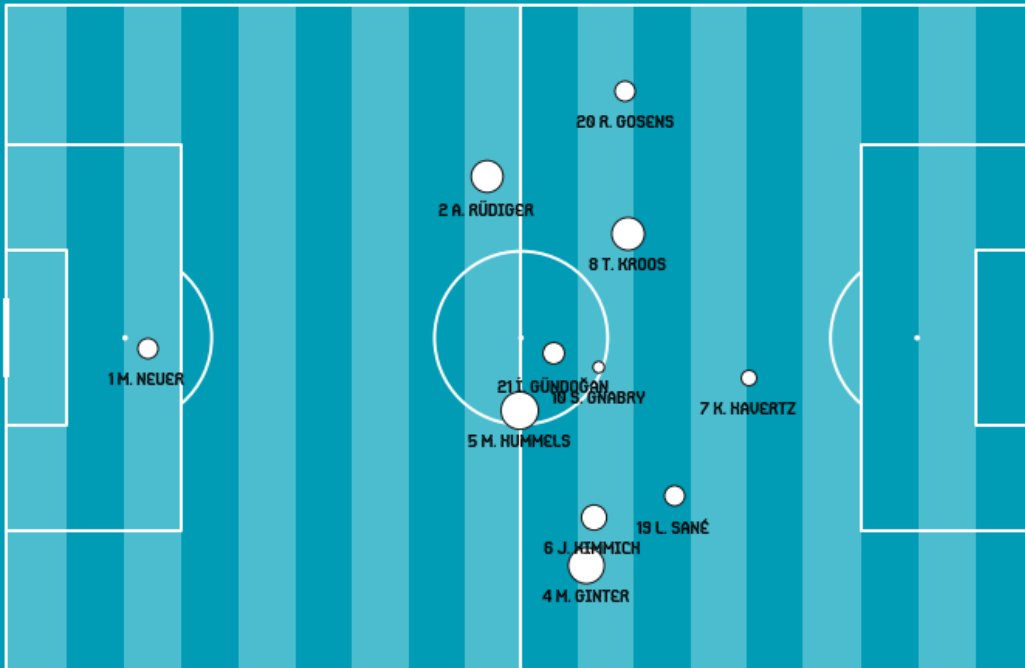


GERMANY

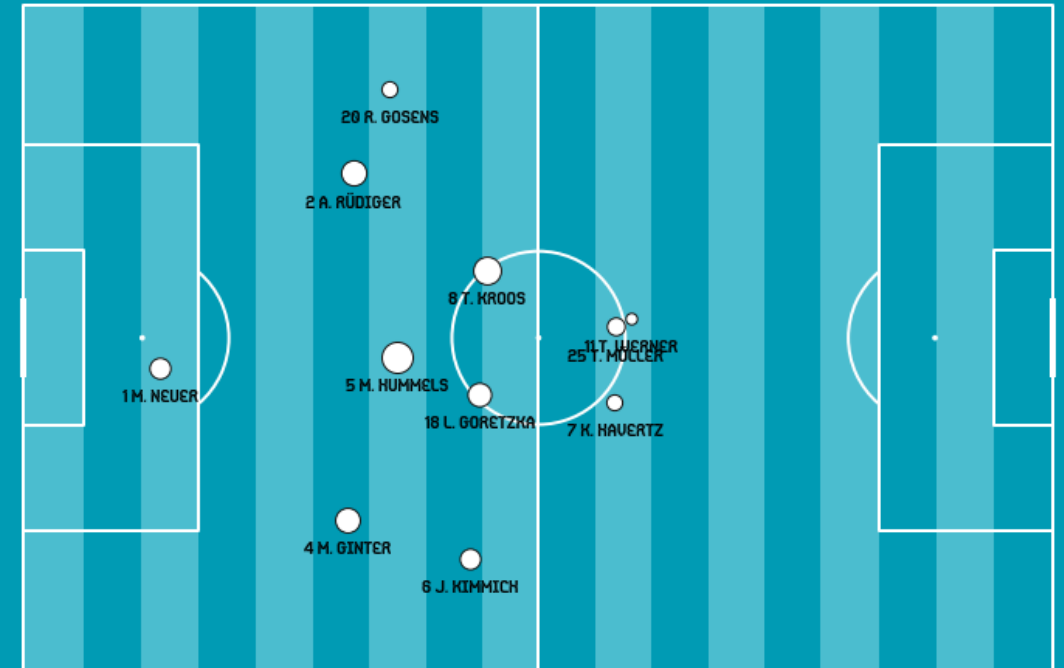


AVERAGE POSITIONS

ATTACKING DIRECTION



AVERAGE POSITIONS VS HUNGARY – GROUP STAGE/M3



AVERAGE POSITIONS VS ENGLAND – ROUND OF 16



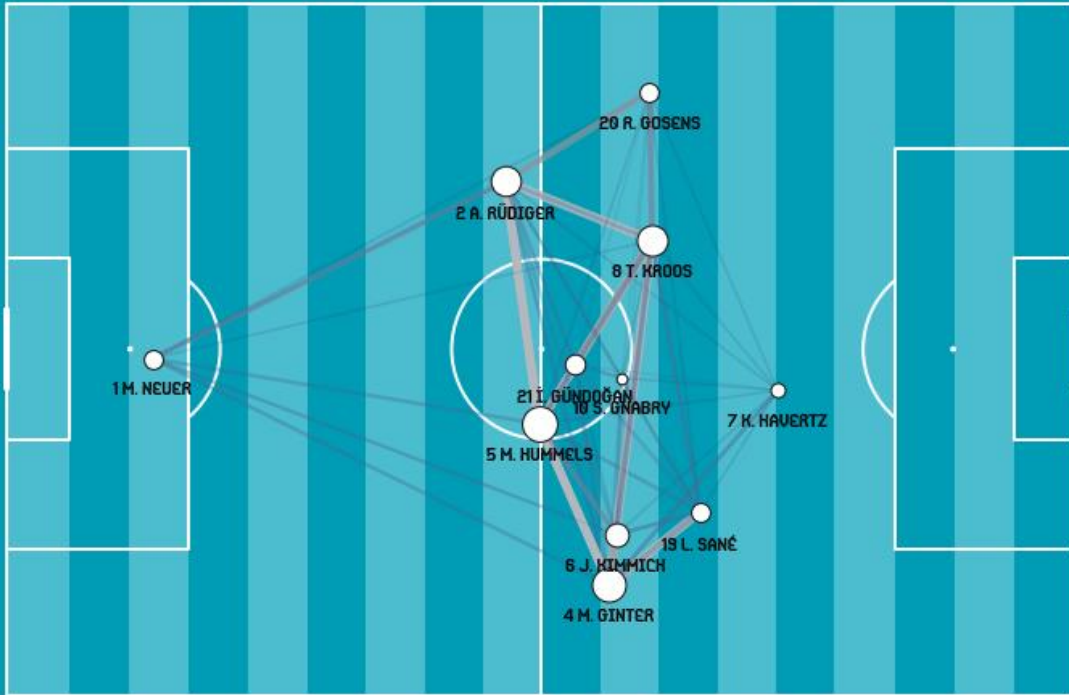
PASSING NETWORKS

MORE
PASSES

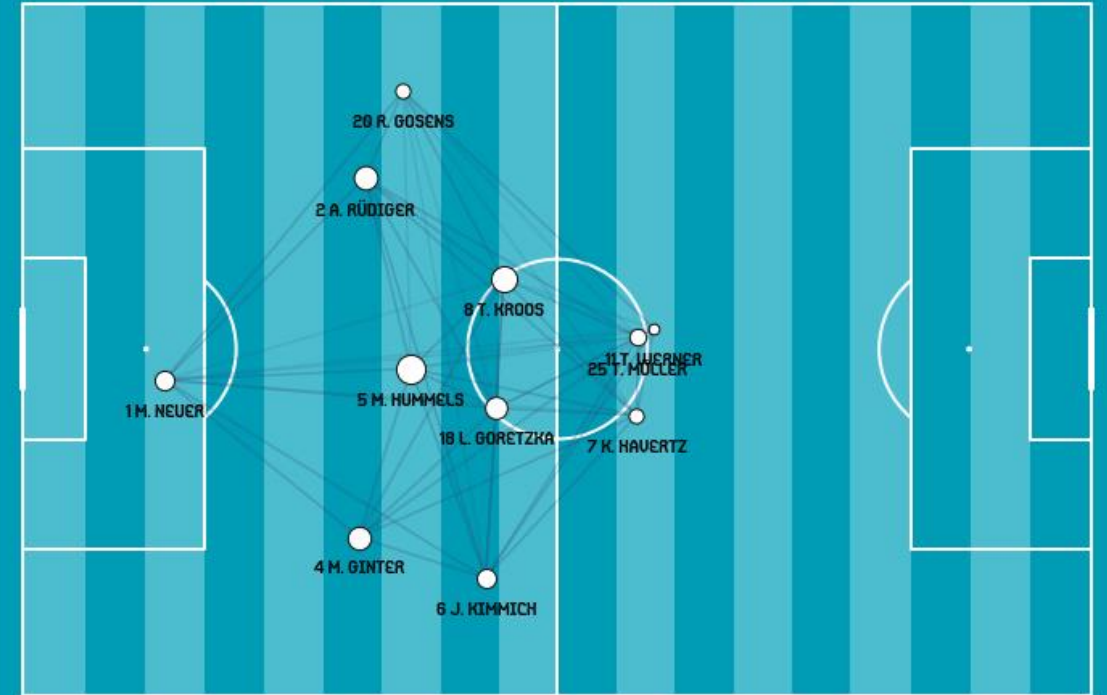
LESS
PASSES

LESS
SUCCESSFUL
PASSES

MORE
SUCCESSFUL
PASSES



PASSING NETWORK VS HUNGARY – GROUP STAGE/M3



PASSING NETWORK VS ENGLAND – ROUND OF 16



DATA CONCLUSIONS

AVERAGE POSITIONS

- Either one or both outside CBs can take up a wider position when the WBs stay higher up the pitch, and, sometimes, fill into the FB position.
- Teams prefer to have one WB taking on a slightly more attacking position than the other.
- WBs can also be inverted in order to create space out wide for the winger to operate (Germany's Joshua Kimmich & Belgium's Thorgan Hazard).
- Teams also prefer to have one winger operating in a wider position than the other. If not, both WBs can be seen in a very wide position.
- The double pivot play in two different roles, with one being slightly more defensive-minded than the other and also taking on a slightly deeper position than the other.
- In matches where teams distinctively use the 3-4-3 until the end of the match, the average position map show the formation very clearly. If not, the map will show several players' positions are slightly out of position compare to their position in the 3-4-3 formation.

PASSING NETWORKS

- Most teams prefer to have the ball be circulated among their CBs before passing the ball wide to the WB (the connection between the outside CB and the WB is strong for all of the assessed teams).
- The pivots can also act as distribution centres in the central area of the pitch in situations where they are more comfortable with holding the ball.





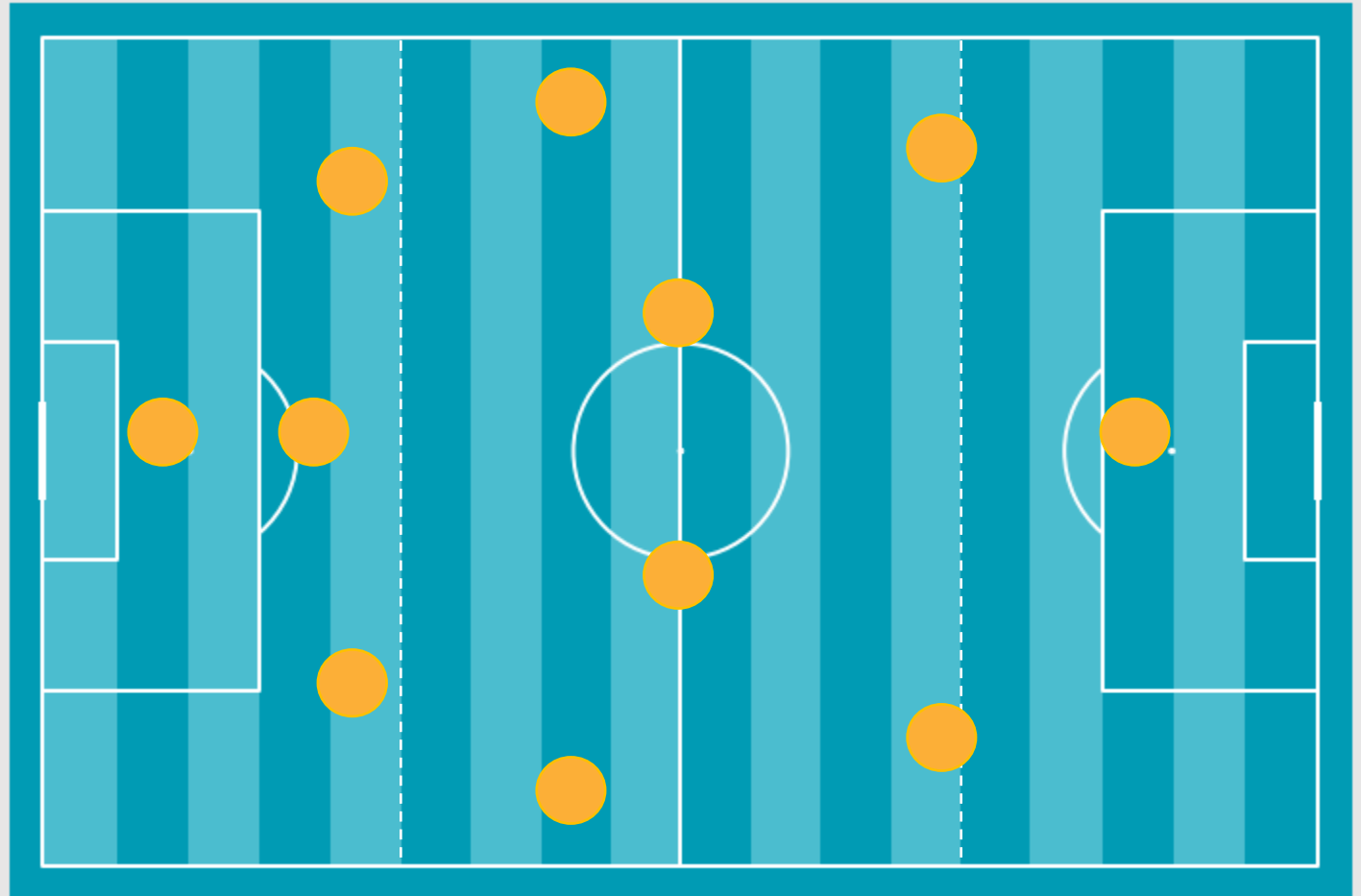
IN POSSESSION

BALL POSSESSION (BP)

BUILD UP PHASE

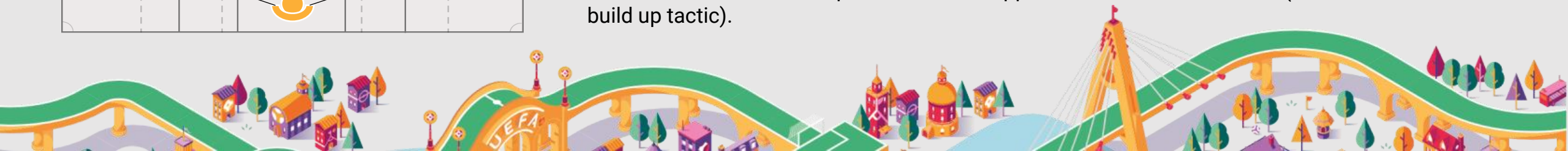
CREATE PHASE

FINISHING PHASE

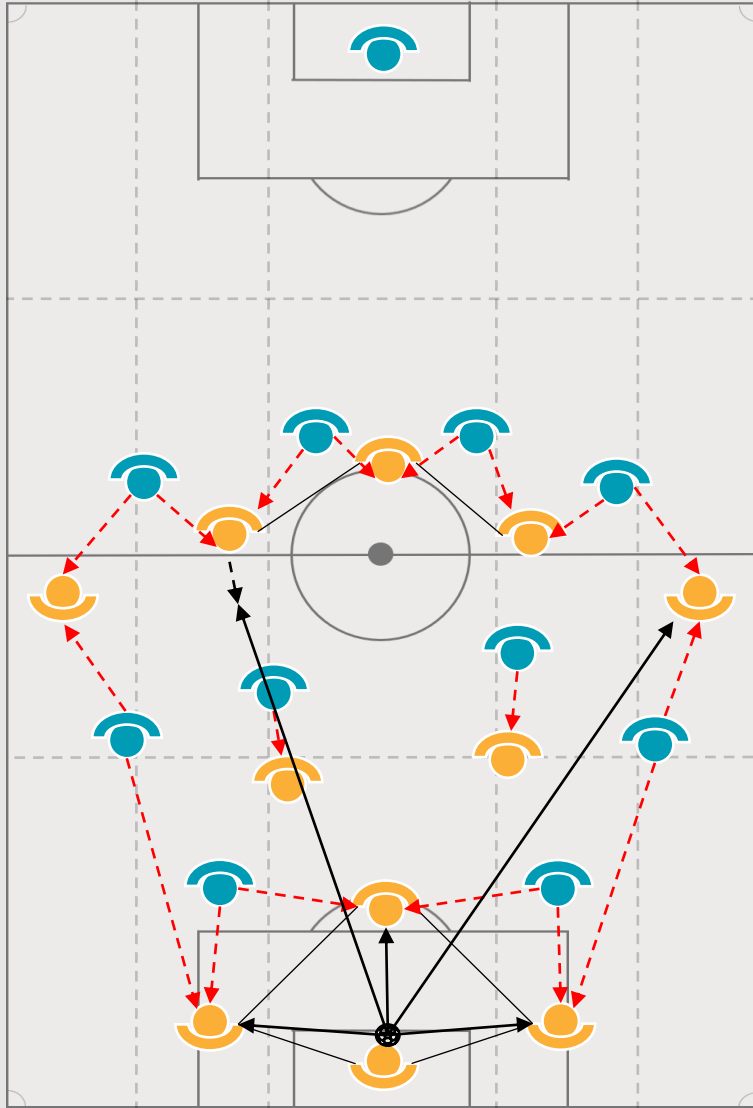


The diagram illustrates a network topology overlaid on a basketball court. A central node, represented by a black dot, is connected to several peripheral nodes (orange and blue) via solid black lines. Some connections are dashed red lines. The court layout includes the key, three-point arc, and center circle.

- Playing out from deep with a 3-4-3 prevent the team in possession from being overwhelmed at the back by the opposition, who are using a front three in this set up.
- With a back three and at least one central midfielder dropping deep, the team in possession are able to outnumber the opposition's front three (should the opposition's central midfielder opt not to follow the in possession team's central midfielder) or create space inside the half-space (should the opposite scenario happens).
- Having two outside CBs on the sides of the GK, this requires the opposition winger to close the CB down immediately after he receives the ball from the GK. Thus, this will create space out wide for the WB to roam forward.
- A team with good understanding and tactical awareness will be able to play the ball out of the opposition's press using short link up play between the CBs and the CMs, allowing them to pass the ball forward to the WB and create an attacking situation having left five opposition players behind.
- The positioning of the WBs is key in this set up, as they position themselves high up the pitch in order to create a 5v4 (or at least a 4v4 with 1 WB moving forward) situation up front. With the front three staying narrow, specifically in between the channels, the team in possession are capable of attacking the space behind the opposition's last defensive line using through balls (likened to Denmark's build up tactic).
- Having one winger dropping deep into the space that was created by the central midfielders will not only provide a passing option for the GK, but also creating space up front for the other attackers to move into and attack the space behind the opposition's last defensive line (also likened to Denmark's build up tactic).



BUILD-UP PHASE – FROM A GOAL-KICK



- Against an opposition that play with a front two, 3 CBs can easily outnumber the opposition CFs and, at the same time, asking the question of whether the CF should close down the top CB or the nearest side CB.
- This allow switching the play to take place more often and easy since there will be an available passing option for the CB and the GK on both sides of the pitch to play out of the opposition's press.
- With both CMs moving close to the CBs, this also asks the question of whether the opposition's CM should remain in their position to prevent the space behind them from being exploited, or move forward to close the CM in front of them down.
- Up front, the positioning of the WBs is, once again, playing a key role as it still provide a 5v4 (or at least a 4v4) advantage to the team in possession. This creates a dilemma for the opposition's wingers as they have to consider whether to cover a significant distance to push forward and close down the opposition's CB or stay put and close the passing lane to the WB (this can be exploited when playing against teams who press aggressively).
- The positioning of the WB also creates a tough situation for the opposition's defenders as each defender is now being responsible to mark two players. Should one of the wingers moves into the space behind the opposition's CMs, the opposition's defenders are being presented with two options, either move out of their position to close down a possible passing option for the GK and risk the chance of being exploited by one of the remaining attackers, or stay in their position and defend with the rest of the line while leaving the winger to receive the ball from the GK.



The diagram shows a soccer field with a central circle and a goal at the top. A black dot is located in the lower-left quadrant, representing a central node. Several orange and blue player icons are positioned around the field. Solid black arrows point from the black dot to four orange player icons. Dashed black arrows point from orange player icons to blue player icons, indicating a sequence of movement or a specific type of interaction. A red arrow points from a blue player icon to an orange player icon, indicating a different type of interaction or a specific action.

- When one of the outside CBs receives the ball from the GK, one of the CMs should act off that and drop deep to provide a possible passing option. Using the GK as one of the build-up option, this will allow the team in possession to have a 5v4 advantage against the opposition (should they play with a front three).
- With the opposition playing with a front three, two wingers will look to close down the two CBs, and the CF will try to stay in between the central CB and the GK as an attempt to close down one of the two passing lanes. As a result, luring the CF to move forward and close down the GK will create two progressive passing options behind the CF's back, allowing the CB to pass the ball forward to either the CB or the CM dropping deep.
- Should the CF opts to close down the central CB, a short pass back to the GK is also capable with the GK have a similar number of passing options as the ball-carrying CB.
- A long pass forward is also a possible option here, providing that one of the three CBs are capable of doing so. As mentioned, with two WBs already pushed high up the pitch, they can act as possible passing options out wide. When the ball is passed to the WB, the winger inside should either try to attack the space behind the opposition's FB, or dropping deep to receive the ball from the WB and allowing the WB to attack that space.
- The winger can also become a passing option should one of the two opposition CMs has already been out of position, as this will allow the winger to move into the space that the opposition CM has created to receive the ball and quickly play it to the nearest teammate, either out wide to the WB or centrally to the CF or the far side winger.

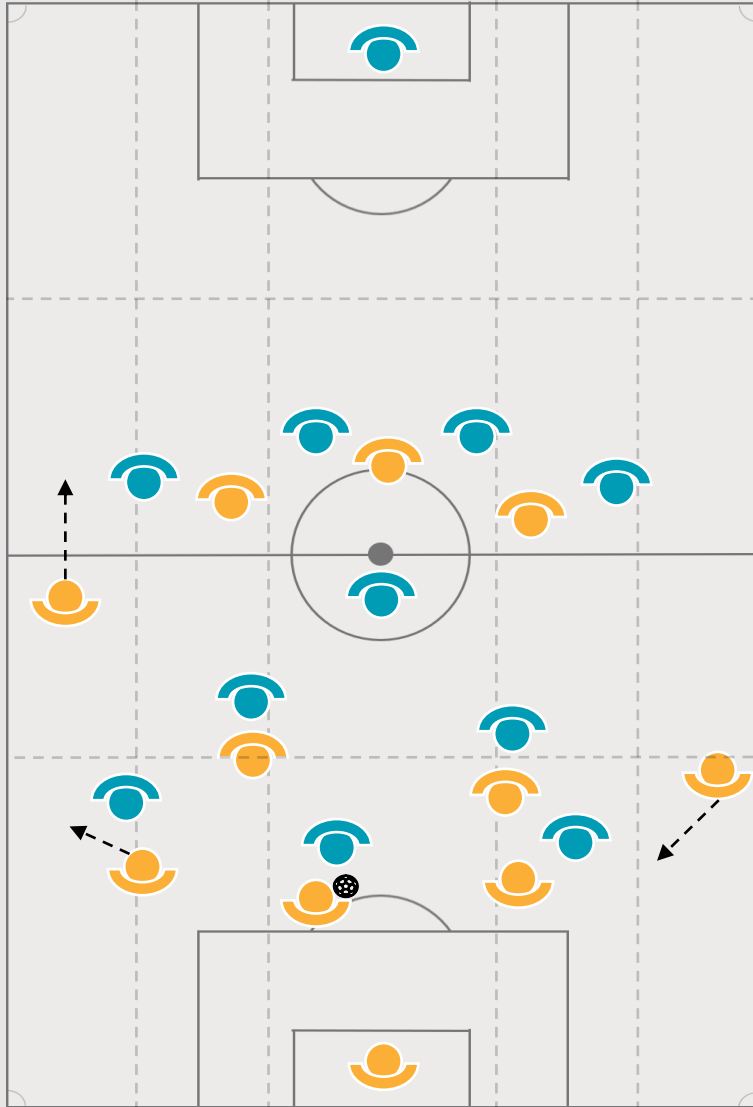


A diagram of a soccer field illustrating player positions and movement. The field is marked with standard soccer field lines, including the center circle, half-way line, and goal areas. Players are represented by icons: blue for one team and orange for the other. A black dot in the lower-left quadrant represents a specific player. From this dot, several arrows originate: a solid black arrow pointing towards the top-left, a solid black arrow pointing towards the top-right, a solid black arrow pointing towards the bottom-right, a dashed black arrow pointing towards the top, and a red dashed arrow pointing towards the bottom-left. Other players are positioned around the field, with some having small red arrows indicating movement direction.

- A similar set up can also be applied when the opposition play with a front two, but also assuming that the opposition are a team who prefer to press aggressively.
- In this set up, usually the far side CF will look to close down the far side CB, while the nearest CF will close down the central CB. Also assuming that the nearest winger will accept to cover a significant distance to close down the ball-carrying CB, this will open up a long passing option to the WB up front.
- Long passing options to either the CF or the far side winger are also capable, given that the opposition CMs have been dragged to near the 16-yard box. This will allow a quick attacking situation where the team in possession will have at least a 5v4 advantage against the opposition defenders.
- In case the opposition winger maintains position, the ball-carrying CB can carry the ball forward and lure the winger out of position. At the same time, the CB can also create a passing block with the CM, the WB and the winger inside the middle third to continue moving the ball into the opposition's half.



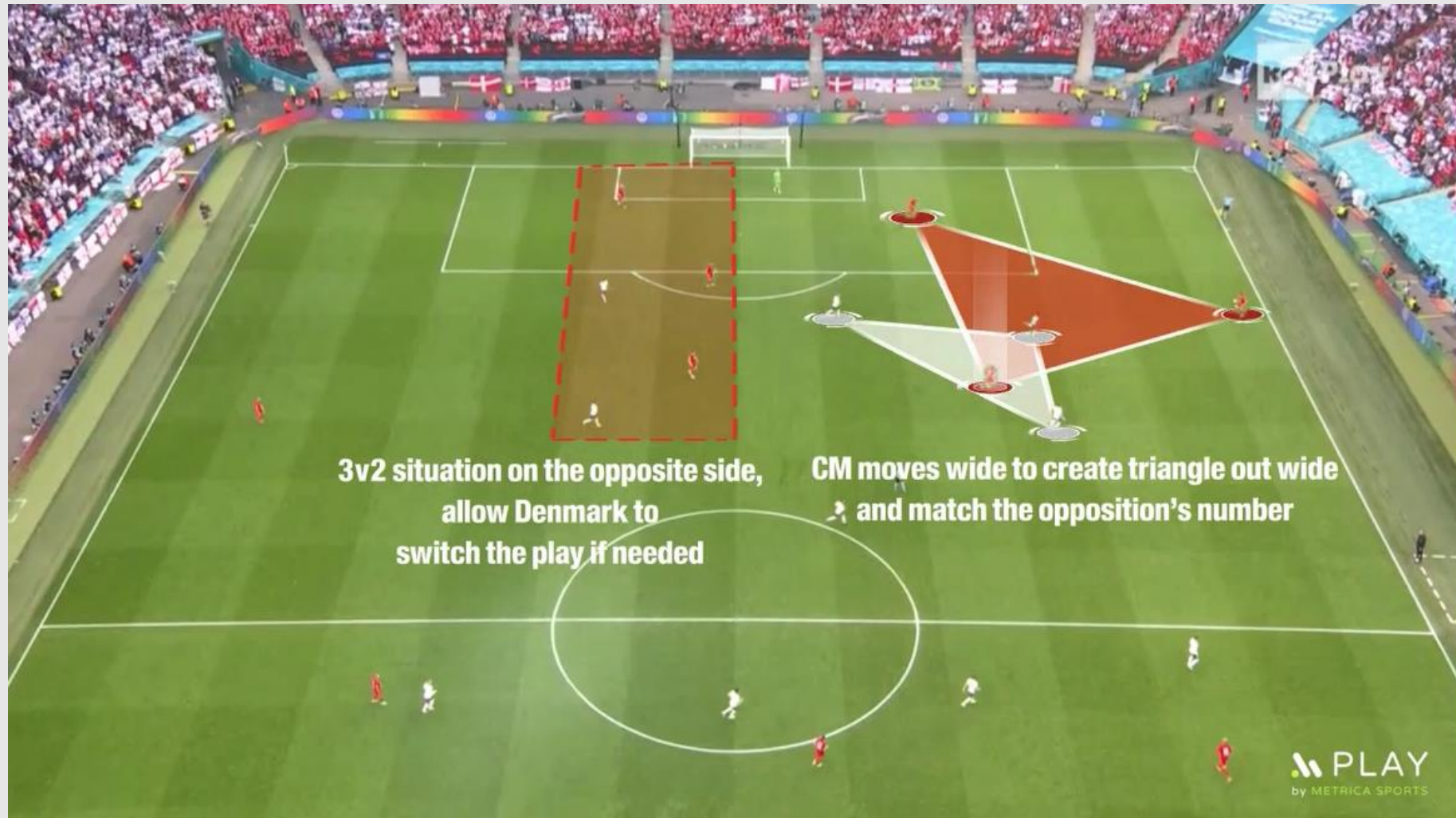
BUILD-UP PHASE – WB'S ROLE



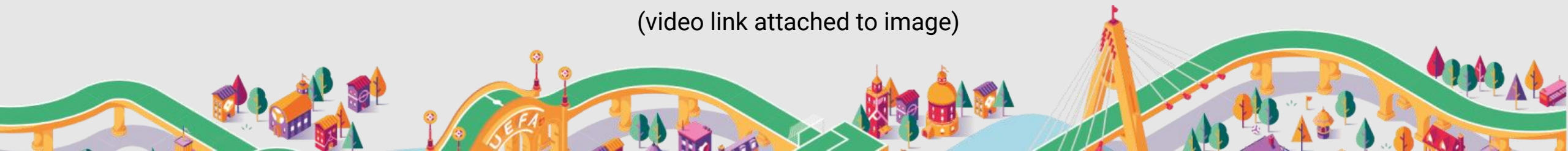
- The WB's role in the 3-4-3 is crucial as it can help the team in possession to create numerical advantage either during the build-up phase, or the creating and finishing phase.
- In previous set ups (similar to Denmark's set up), both WBs take up a very high position, specifically near the opposition's FBs in order to create a 5v4 situation. In that situation, when one of the attackers has the ball, one teammate can use the other to create space for themselves while also receiving a through ball either from that teammate or from another teammate.
- In this set up (similar to England's set up), one WB pushes forward while the other remains in position. This allows the team to not be outnumbered up front (maintaining a 4v4 situation) and also have the numerical advantage at the back by creating a back four to play out against the opposition's front three.
- In other scenarios (particularly Belgium's set up against Italy), one WB can be inverted to take up a more central position while the winger in front of him will stay wide. This can be particularly useful when the team in possession want to create confusion for the opposition defenders and midfielders as they can be confused of who to mark and can also be dragged out of position.
- Examples of an inverted WB being used at the Euro 2020: Denmark's Joakim Mæhle, Belgium's Thorgan Hazard, Italy's Leonardo Spinazzola.



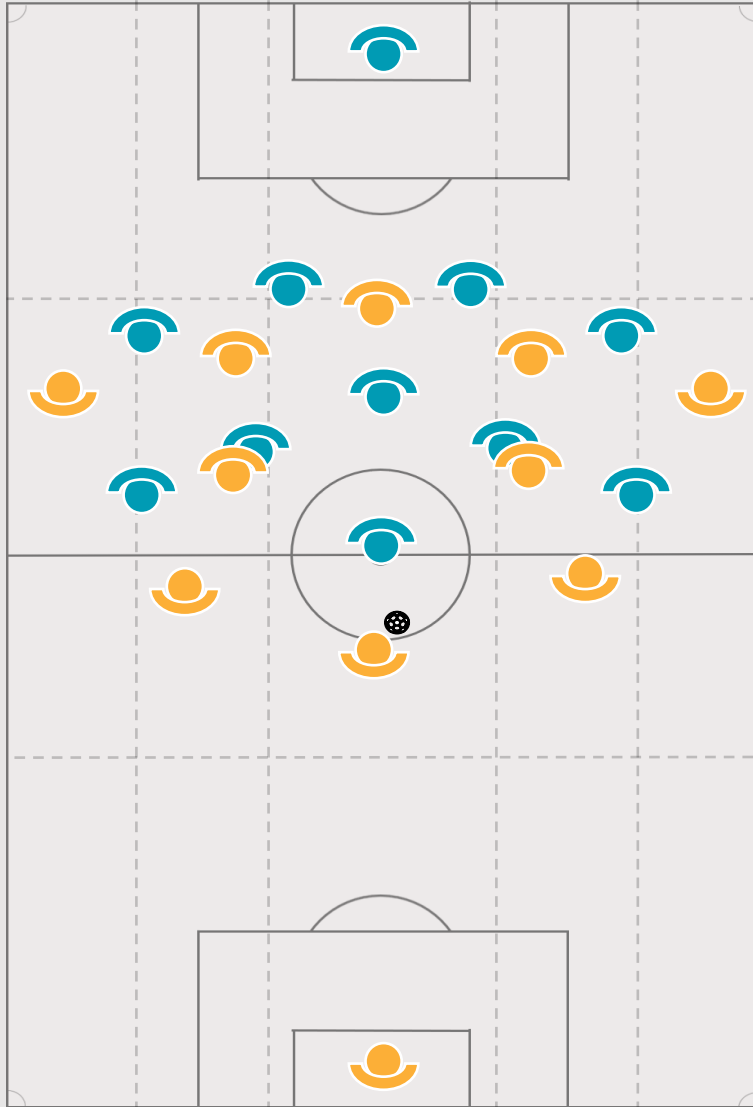
EXAMPLES



(video link attached to image)



CREATE PHASE – SHAPE



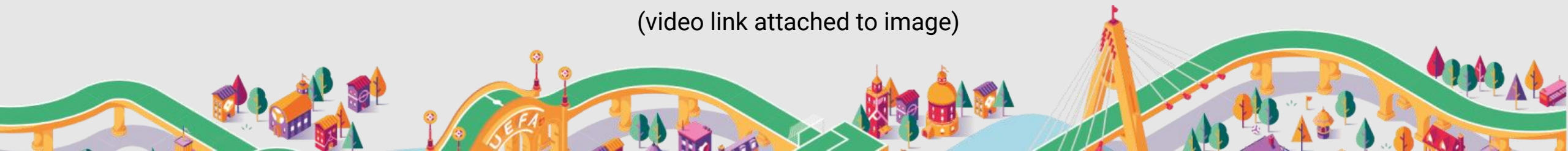
- “The main aim when entering and operating in the create phase is to try and draw opponents out of their block through individual player movements. Ideally, in when entering the create phase, you enter the finishing phase as soon as possible in the form of a counter-attack.” – Russell Pope
- When entering the create phase, the team in possession’s shape should be a 3-2-5, with 3 CBs behind the ball.
- Ideally, rather than taking up a central role, both CMs should move slightly into the half space or into the space between the opposition’s CM and winger to link up with the players out wide (Denmark’s Thomas Delaney and Pierre-Emile Højbjerg’s usual traits during the Euro 2020).
- The outside CBs should also be inside the half-spaces as they are expected to lure the opposition wingers out of their positions, allowing his teammates to create a passing triangle out wide to move the ball forward.
- Both WBs should remain high and wide, specifically near the opposition FBs’ shoulders. This will allow them to make runs in behind the opposition FBs when a through ball is played to them, either by the CB or the winger inside.
- The front three remain narrowly and continue to look to exploit the channels in between the opposition defenders, with the CF being able to react to the game by moving wide to swap positions with the winger, or drop deep to receive the ball from the CB, or remain up front to attack the space in between the two opposition’s CBs.



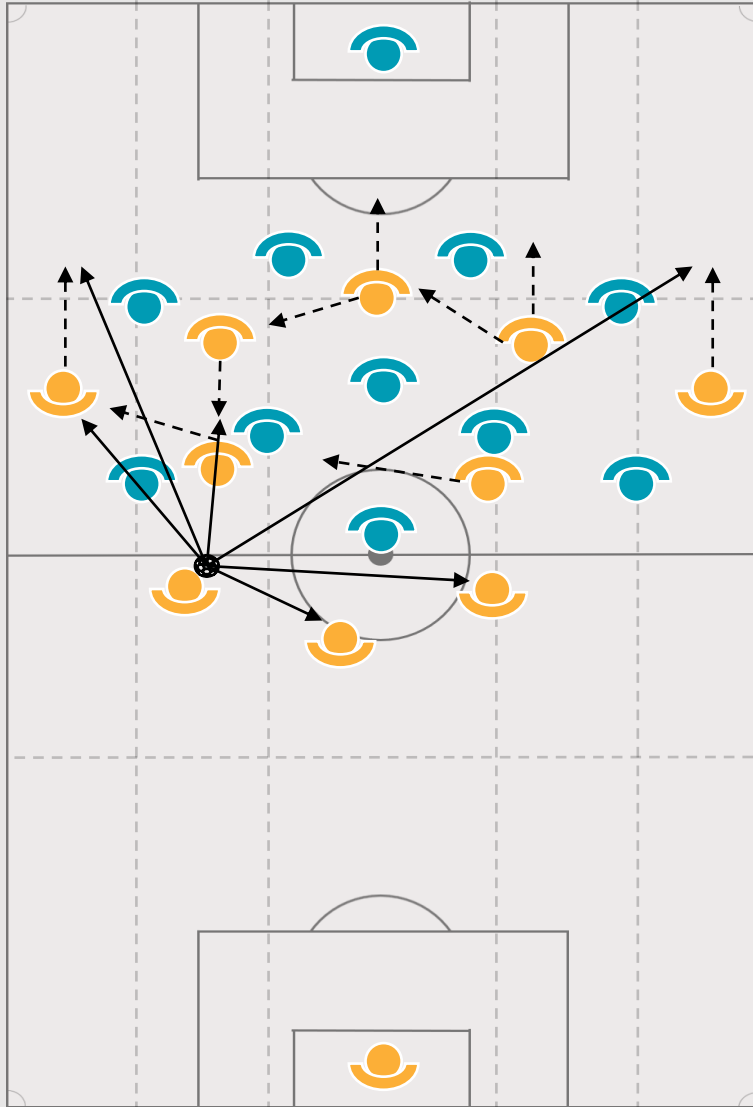
EXAMPLES



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CREATE PHASE – MOVEMENTS/ROTATIONS



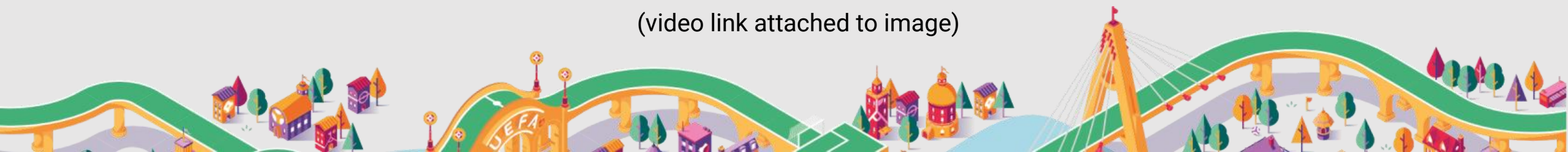
- With the 3-4-3, the best attacking area is the half-space and the wide space as it will allow the team in possession to utilise the numerical advantage that they have inside both areas.
- The aim is to either pass the ball to the WB, who is looking to make a run in behind the opposition FB, or to one of the wingers, who can attack the channel and link up with the WB out wide.
- The WB should always remain high and wide to look for an opportunity to attack the space behind the back of the opposition FB. At the same time, his positioning can also draw the FB out of position, allowing the winger or the CF to run into that area and open up a long passing opportunity for the ball-carrying CB.
- Should the winger opts to drop deep from his position (this can help luring the opposition FB out of position as well), the CM can move into the space that was left behind by the WB to create space for the winger to move into and also create a possible progressive passing option for the CB.
- If the group on one side of the pitch is unable to move the ball into the final third and are being overwhelmed by the opposition, the far side CM can move close to the area and provide a passing option to play the ball out of the overloading area. From there, he can either carry the ball to the other side and create a counter-attack with the far side WB and winger, or play a long ball into the WB's path to accelerate the speed of the counter-attack.
- Meanwhile, the CF should rely on the situation to act as he can either remain in position to attack the space in between the opposition CBs and receive a through ball from his teammate, or move wide and help with moving the ball into the final third.



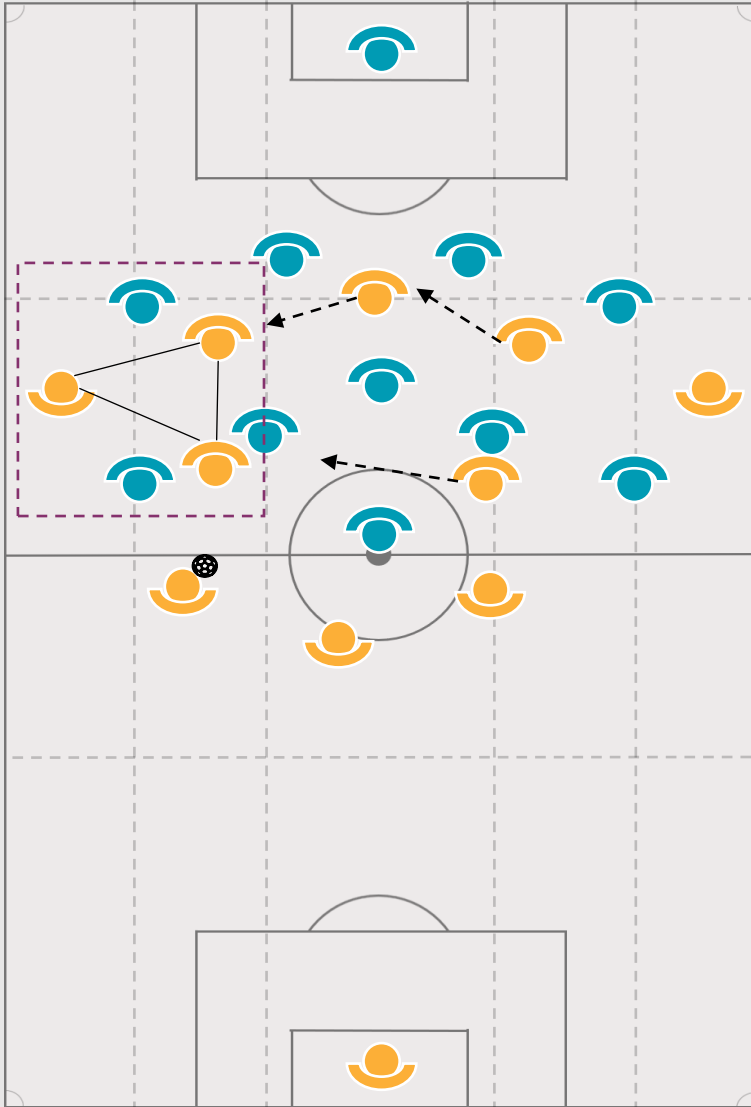
EXAMPLES



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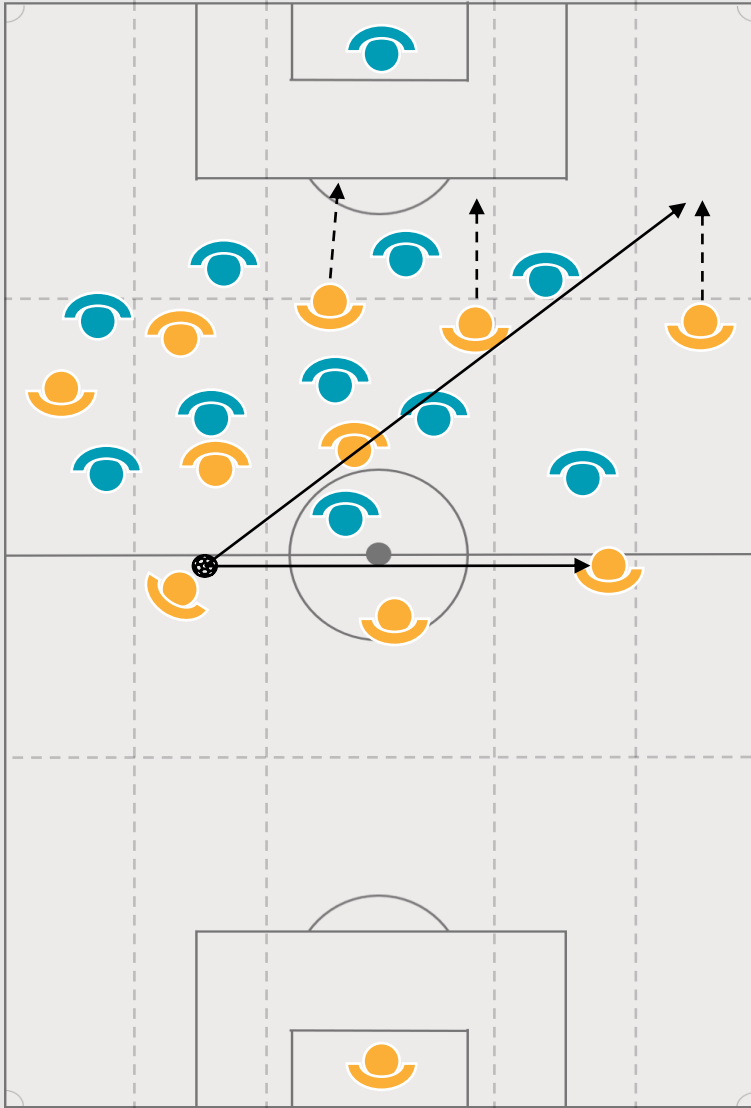
CREATE/FINISHING PHASE – LOW BLOCK PENETRATING



- The 3-4-3 shape provide the team in possession the opportunity to create overloads out wide through passing triangles.
- Against a low-block, creating overloads (such as a 3v2, similar to the set up) can help the team move the ball forward into the final third.
- Along with the aim of getting the WB into a position where he can receive the ball inside the final third, the overload that the team have created out wide can allow the players to rotate positions with each other and allowing the WB to attack a free space creating by dragging the opposition players out of their positions and move into the final third.



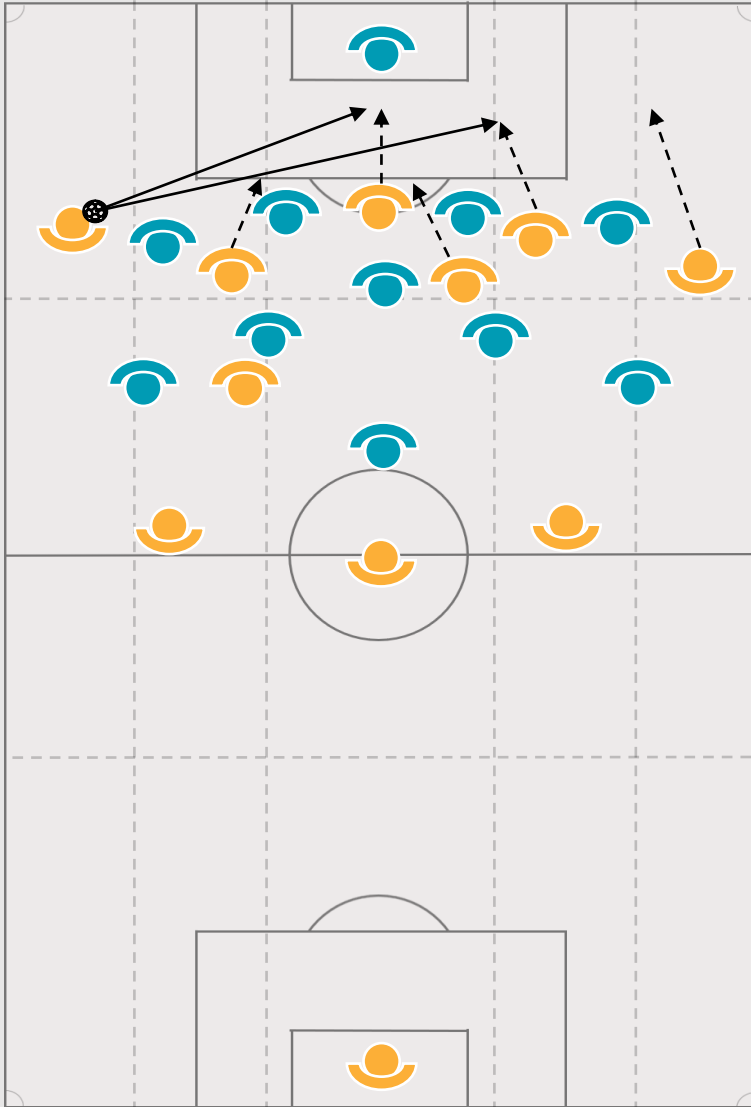
CREATE/FINISHING PHASE – LOW BLOCK PENETRATING



- In scenarios where the opposition are quick to react to the defending situation and shift their defensive shape to the team in possession's attacking side, switching the play can become a dangerous weapon to get the ball into the final third.
- The positioning of the far side's CB will allow the WB to venture forward without being closing down, as the CB can stay slightly wider and pin the opposition winger to himself.
- With the positioning of the front three already pinned down the opposition CB and, especially the FB, the ball-carrying CB can make a long ball towards the path of the overlapping WB. This will allow the team in possession to create a quick counter-attack by utilising the space that the opposition cannot cover when they shift their defensive shape to one side of the pitch.



CREATE/FINISHING PHASE – LOW BLOCK PENETRATING



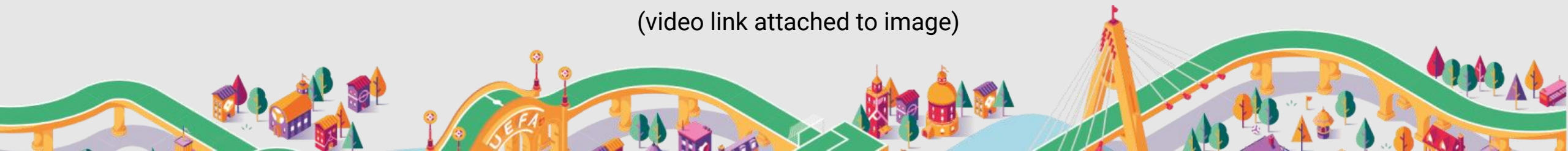
- After getting the WB into a position where he has received the ball and can attack the 16-yard box, the team in possession can now utilise the positioning of the front three to get bodies into the box and they should do so as quick as possible to prevent the opposition from swarming players into the box.
- Using the CF and the far side winger, they can attack the channel in between the opposition defenders to get into the box and receive the cross from the WB.
- At the same time, the near side winger and one of the CMs should get themselves to the edge of the box to provide a crossing option in that area and also be ready to win second balls from the opposition's clearance.
- The far side WB can also get forward to near the 16-yard box to pick up the ball should the cross not reaches anyone inside the box. This will allow the team to retain possession and open up another attacking opportunity.
- The physical ability of the players will determine where the WB should play the cross to. Should the CF has good aerial ability, the cross should be aimed at the CF, who can easily meet the ball in an unmarked situation. Should the CF/the far side winger has good pace, the cross should be aimed at the far post where there will be two players receiving the ball and lower the chance of the cross not being met by anyone inside the box.



EXAMPLES



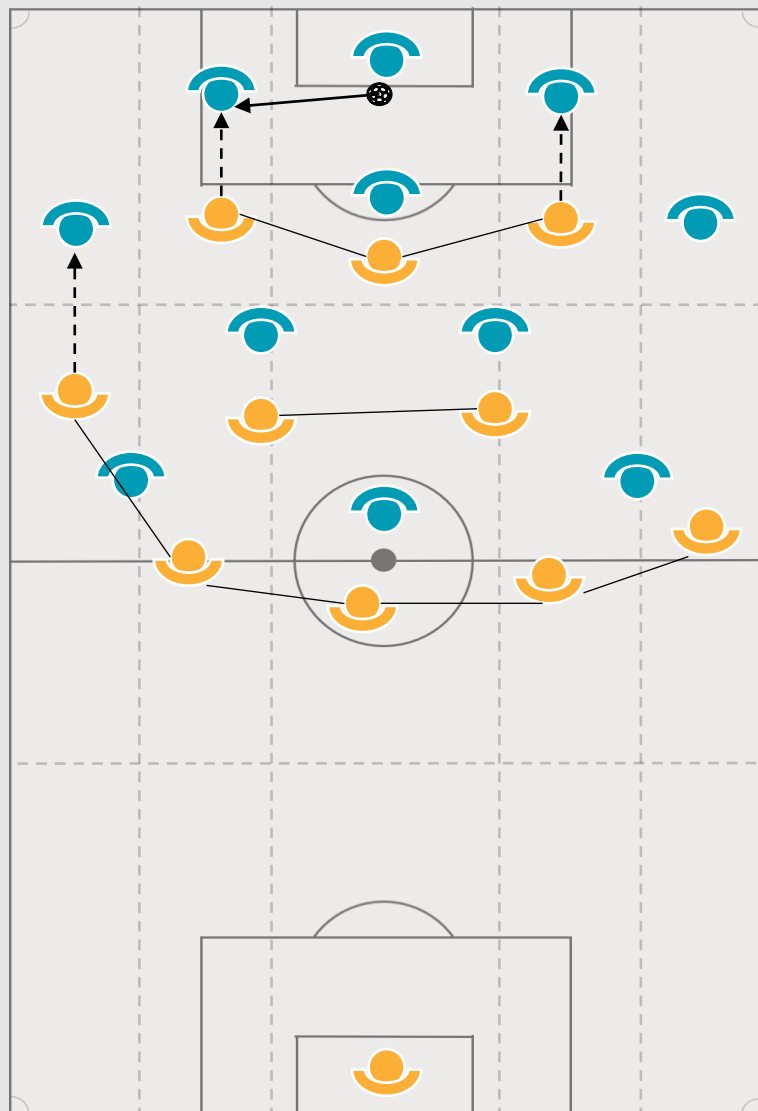
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OUT OF POSSESSION

DEFENDING FROM THE FRONT



- When pressing the opposition high up the pitch, the narrow front three set up can benefit the team as they are able to match the number of opposition players involving in the build-up from the goal-kick.
- Closing the opposition CBs down immediately after they receive the ball is an option, but the winger should know when he should do so in order not to open a passing lane from the opposition CB to the opposition CM.
- The CF can find himself marking the DM/central CB, but he should also looking for opportunity to close the GK down and prevent him from making short distributions. An aggressive front three will force the opposition to clear the ball out from the back, allowing the defenders at the back (after maintaining a high line) to regain possession inside the middle third.
- Should the opposition continue to play the ball short, and move the ball wide, the WB can also push forward to close down the opposition's FB. At the same time, the WB on the opposite side can move back alongside the CB to create a back four. This will prevent the CBs from being in a 1v1 situation should one of the opposition attackers receives the ball and immediately create a counter-attack (Atalanta B.C. and Denmark are good examples of teams who have excelled in doing so).
- Meanwhile, two CMs will be tasked to zonally mark the central area of the pitch, while also slightly screening the defence. Should the opposition CMs attack, they will be the first player to close down and can act aggressive in the central area to prevent the attack from happening.

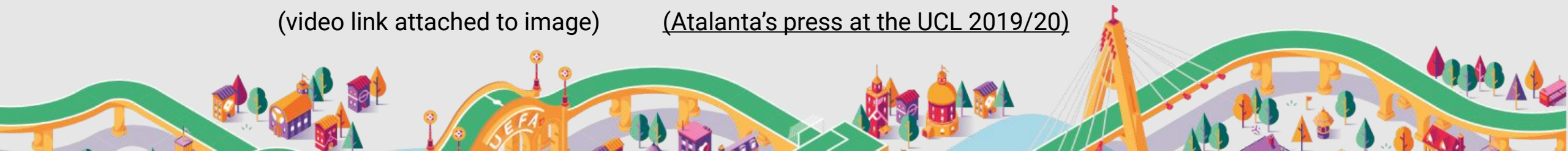


EXAMPLES



(video link attached to image)

(Atalanta's press at the UCL 2019/20)



The diagram shows a soccer field with a central circle and a dashed purple rectangle. Nodes are represented by blue and orange icons. Solid lines connect nodes within the rectangle, and dashed arrows show movement paths. A black dot is located near the top left, and a grey dot is near the center.

- The main aim of defending in the mid block is to guide the opposition to areas where the team can easily create overloads to regain possession, and with a 5-2-3, that area is on both sides of the field.
- In order to guide the opposition to move the ball wide effectively, the front three should be the first to act when the opposition CB has the ball. They should be able to isolate the ball-carrying player and two nearest passing options into a 3v3 situation and away from the rest of the defence, but they should not look to press them as aggressive as when the opposition have the ball inside their defensive third.
- The CF should be responsible for the ball-carrying CB, but will also look to close down possible passing lanes into the central area and force the CB to look for options out wide. Meanwhile, the wingers will track the nearest passing options to the CB and close them down. This set up will force the CB to pass the ball wide, allowing for the rest of the team to start pressing.
- When the ball reaches the FB, the team should react immediately and aggressively to try and regain possession out wide. The aim here is to shut off all available passing options around the FB using numerical superiority and be aggressive to win the ball back as soon as possible.
- Maintaining a slightly wide back five is also crucial when the rest of the team are pressing the opposition. This allows the far side WB to engage and close down the ball receiver as quick as possible should the opposition opt to switch the play, while also delaying the opposition to allow the pressing group to move across and restart the press on the opposite side of the pitch.



EXAMPLES

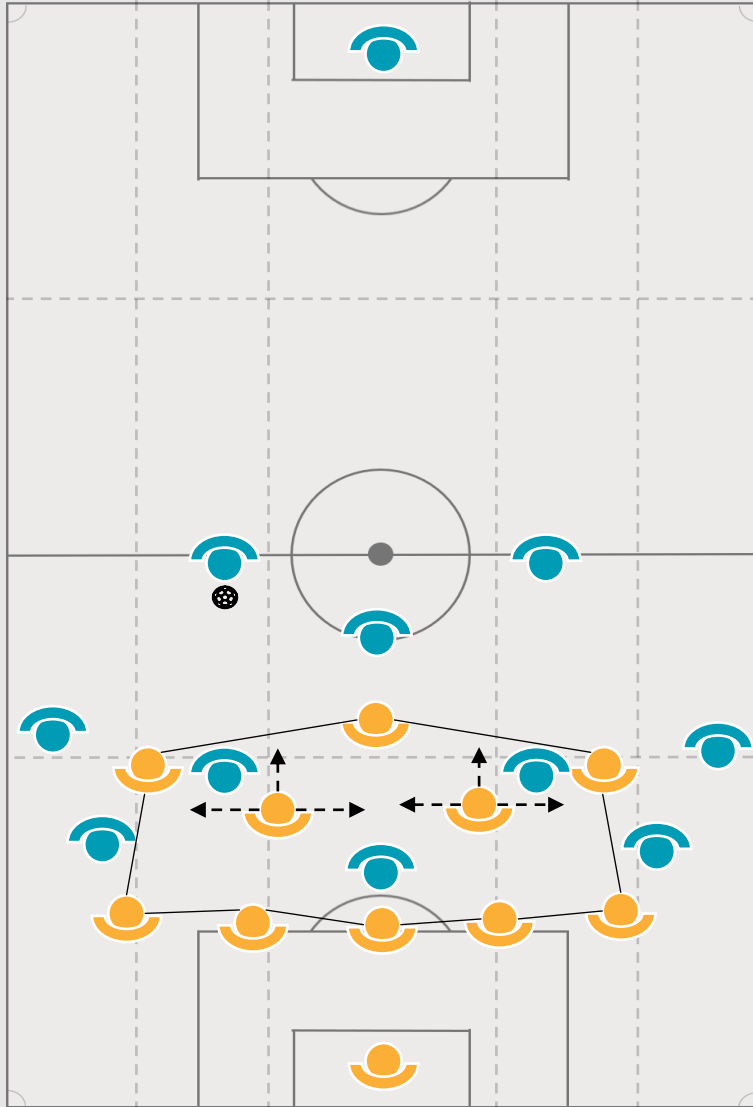


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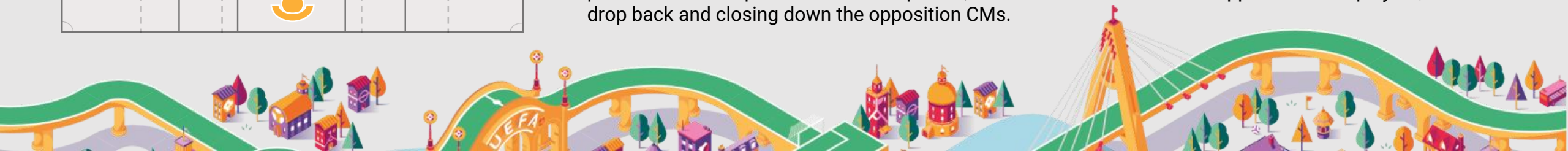
(video 2)



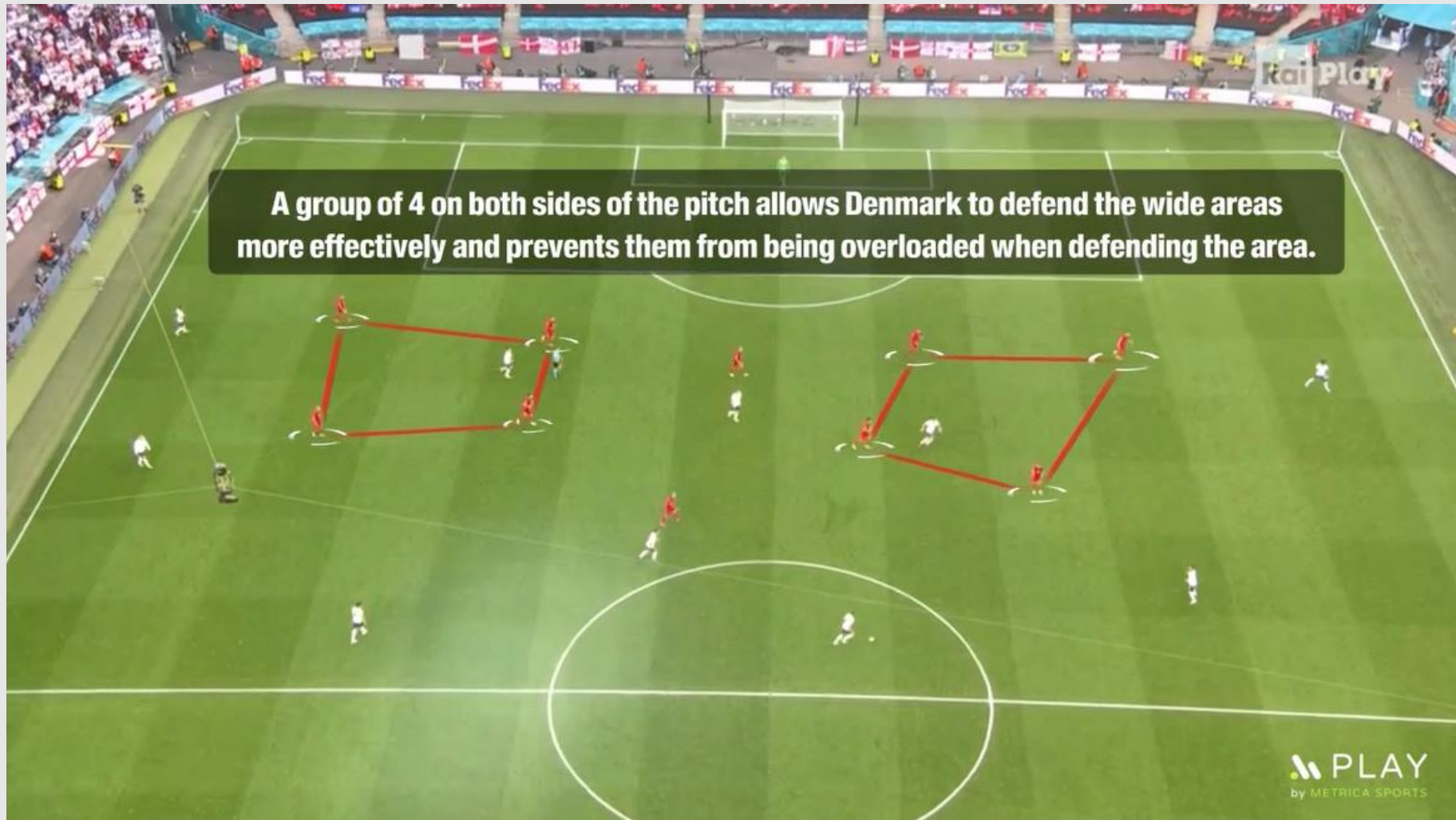
DEFENDING DEEP- LOW BLOCK DEFENDING



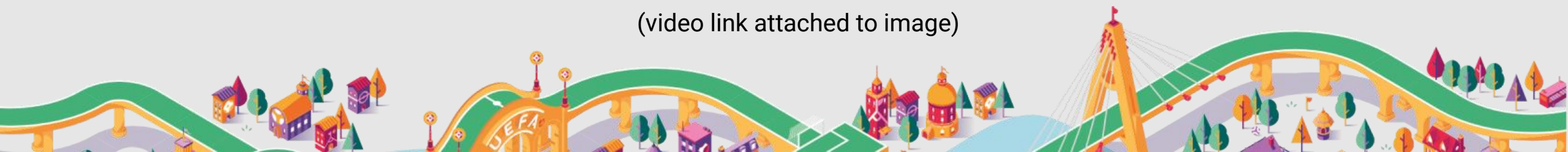
- If the team are unable to regain possession while defending in a mid block, moving from a 5-2-3 mid block to a 5-4-1 mid block is a good option as a 5-4-1 allows the team to cover an extensive area inside their own defensive third.
- Following similar principles to when defending in a mid block, the main aim of defending in a low block is still attempting to dictate the opposition into moving the ball into wide areas. This will allow the team to react in a similar way to when they defend in a mid block by teaming up with each other and overloading the wide areas.
- In those areas, the players can be slightly aggressive in either closing down passing options around the FB and look to intercept passes to regain possession, or in duels in an attempt to win the ball back as quick as possible, though, this might lead to a higher number of fouls committed around the defensive third.
- Making clearances after regaining possession is also another option, but it can only benefit the team if they are more comfortable defending in a mid block and the opposition look to press immediately and aggressively after losing the ball. If the team have good understanding and tactical awareness, playing out of the press or force the opposition to commit fouls are better options.
- With both wingers now dropping into the role of a wide midfielder (WM), they are able to react quicker when the ball reaches the opposition FB and allow them to team up with the FB behind their back and the CM to defend the wide area.
- The role of the CMs here is crucial as they are responsible for screening the defence and also providing numerical advantage out wide. They should be players who have good physicality as they are expected to constantly moving in between the defensive lines while also moving from one side to the other to support the wide players. They are also expected to read the situation well to know when to move out of their positions to push forward and provide numbers up front, or when to move wide and support the wide players, or when to drop back and closing down the opposition CMs.



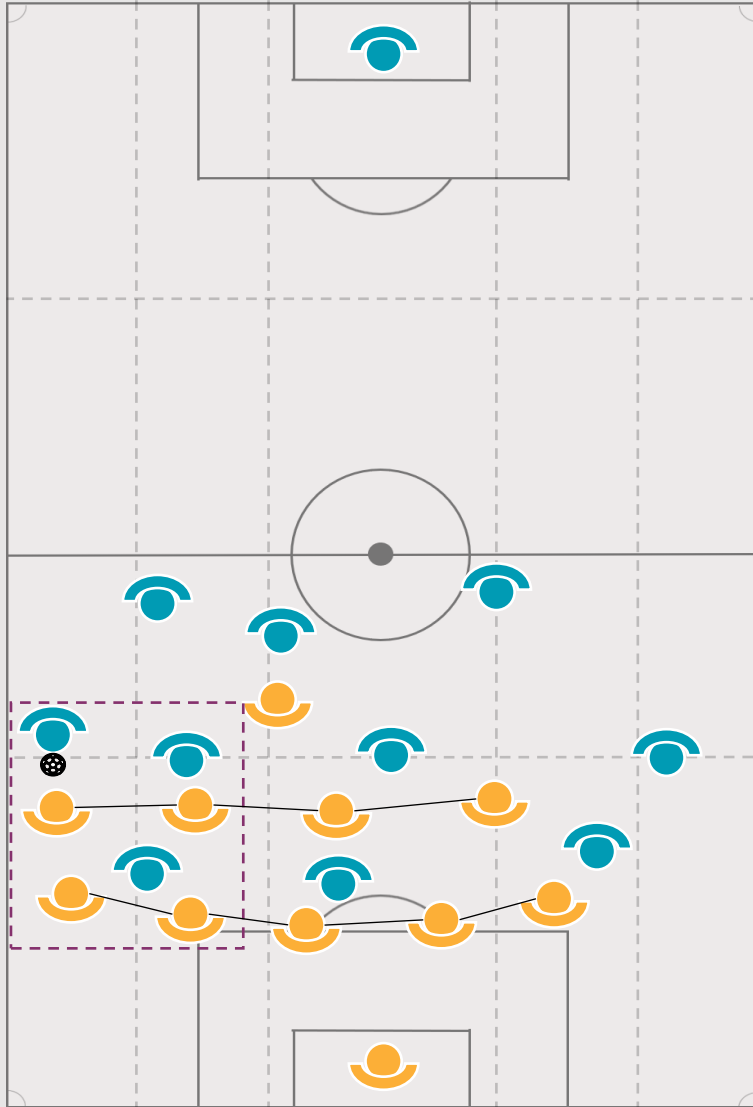
EXAMPLES



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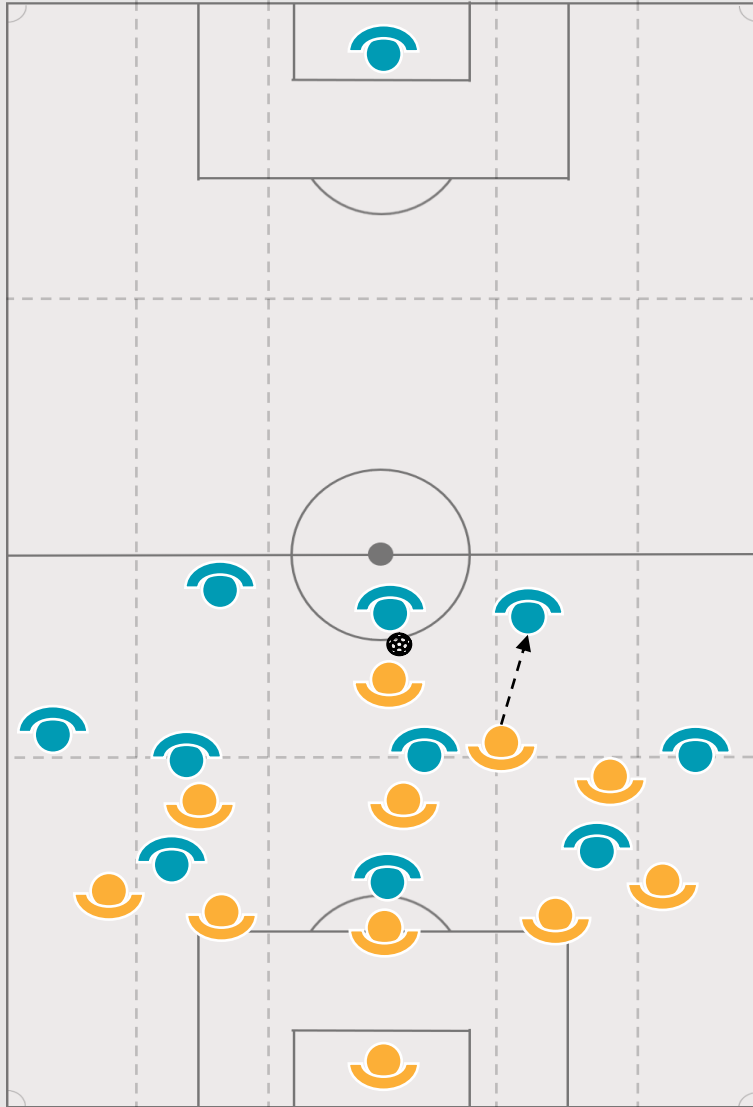
DEFENDING DEEP – MOVING AS A UNIT



- A 5-4-1 is particularly useful when the team are looking to defend the wide areas as this allow the team to create overloads easily with at least four players involving in the defending situation.
- The WM and the FB will be the first two players who react to the situation by closing down the area while waiting for the nearest CM and CB to join the press.
- From there, the WM and the CM will look to close down the opposition FB and CM, while the FB and the CB will close the channel that the opposition winger can exploit.
- This is one of the advantages of defending with a 5-4-1 as having five defenders at the back can prevent the opposition from exploiting the channels in between the defenders. Playing against a front two or a front three does not matter as the team will always have the advantage of defending with at least one more player (5v2/5v4 and 5v3 respectively) at the back.
- When moving from one side to the other, the team will also have a slight advantage by having at least one player who can react to the long ball immediately (either the FB or the WM). That player can look to close down the ball carrier while waiting for the rest of the team to move across and provide support by closing down the nearest passing options to the opposition ball carrier.



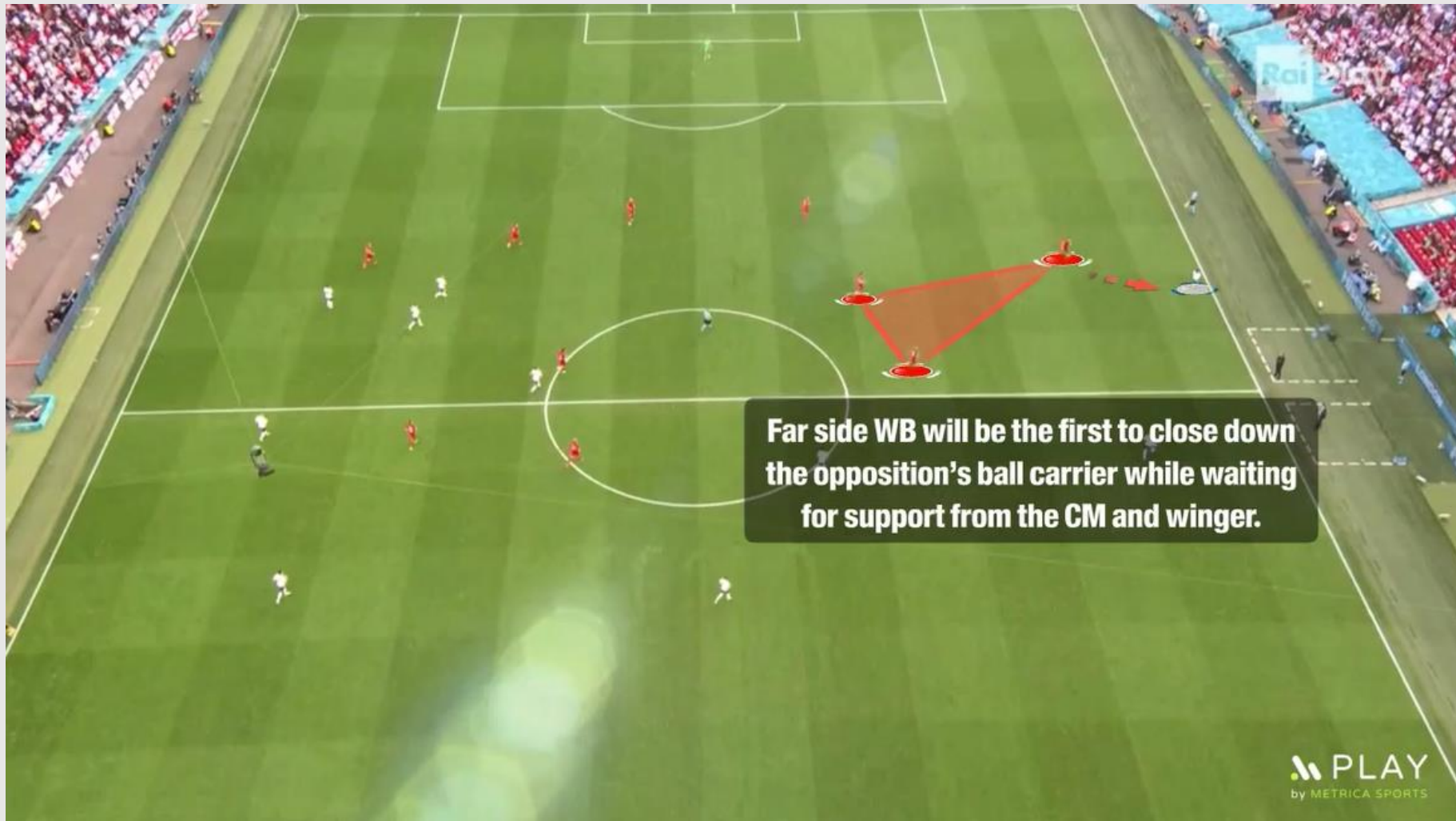
DEFENDING DEEP – MOVING AS A UNIT



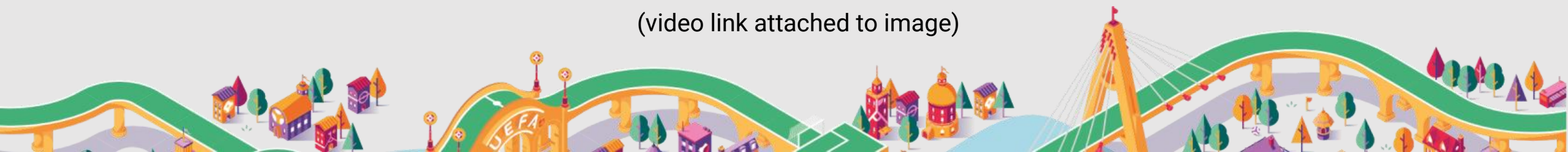
- When the opposition look to either attack down the central area, or look to pass the ball wide, it is possible for one of the two CMs to move out of position and close down one of the available passing options or even apply pressure to the ball carrier.
- This can be happened when the far side WM takes on the responsibility of marking the opposition's far side CM and the remaining CM takes on the opposition's remaining CM. With all of the opposition players inside the central area are being marked, this allows one CM to move forward and close down the opposition FB/CB/DM while also prevent the ball from being passed to the wide areas.
- This, however, requires good tactical discipline from all the players because this can be a risky move and it can lead to the opposition overwhelming the central area while the CM has not moved back to position.
- But this is also a high risk move with a high reward of forcing a turnover, where the team can have at least 4 players (CF, CM and both wingers) involving in the counter-attacking situation, after the CM wins the ball back.



EXAMPLES



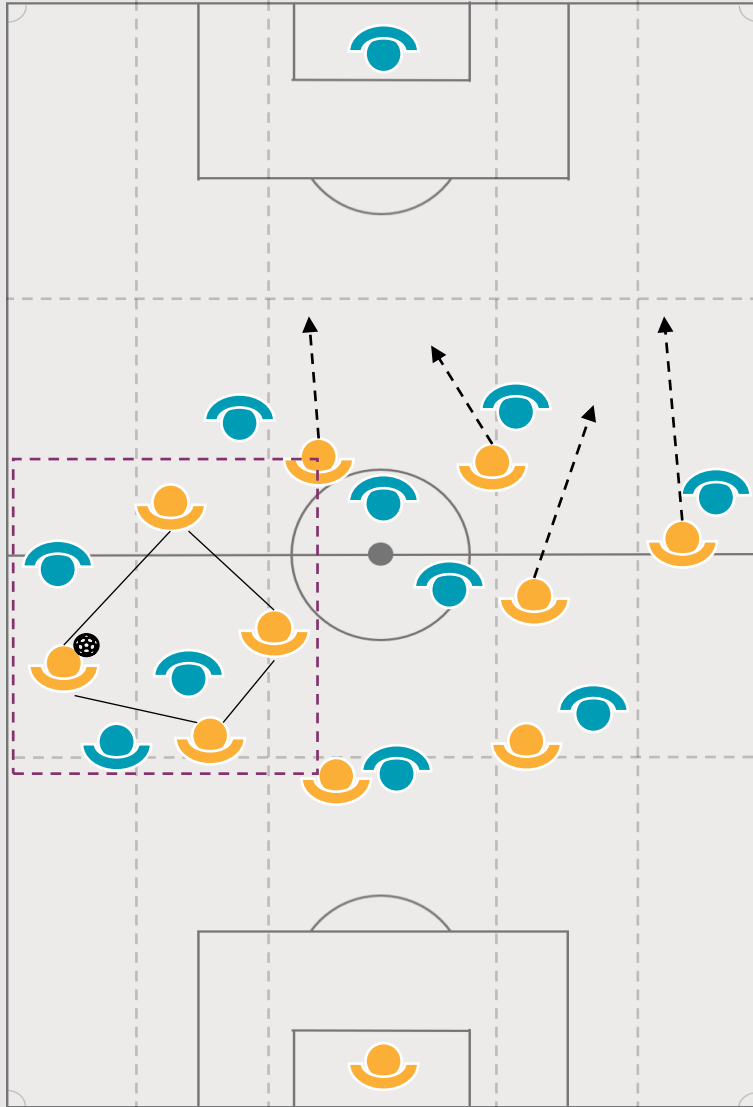
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TRANSITIONING

DEFEND -> ATTACK



- After successfully regain possession from defending in a low block, the opposition will look to either press aggressively or track back to reform a mid block. Meanwhile, the team in possession can now change to a 3-4-3 in order to prevent the second scenario from happening by encouraging players to move forward as quick as possible.
- The aim is to attack down either flank by utilising the wide positioning of either WB and encourage the front three to move forward. This can be done by encouraging the far side WB to move immediately after regaining possession and attack the space that the opposition FB left behind.
- At the same time, the far side winger and CF will look to attack the channels in between the opposition defenders while also making sure they are not in an offside position when receiving the through ball from their teammate. The far side CM can also join the attack, but preferably join later than the other three as the CM can provide a late run into the box to receive crosses.
- On the ball side, look to utilise the CB and create an overload around the ball area to play the ball out of the opposition's press and get the ball to either the WB or the winger, who should be attacking the space that the FB left behind.
- To prevent the opposition from creating a counter-attack, have 3 CBs (1 CM is optional) rest while the team are attacking as this will prevent the opposition from outnumbering the defence and also allowing the player nearest to the ball carrier to close him down while also receiving coverage from teammates around.



EXAMPLES



(video link attached to image)

