

FOOTBALL FORMATIONS AND STRATEGIES

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**A SIMPLIFIED GUIDE TO FOOTBALL FORMATIONS BROKEN DOWN
INTO THE KEY CHARACTERISTICS AND STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES
WHEN IN AND OUT OF POSSESSION**

Inspired by the coaches and managers that utilise these systems



WHAT'S INCLUDED:

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4-2-3-1

RATIONALE

4-3-3

4-1-2-1-2

Over the past few months, If you have followed my twitter, you'll know that I post infographs around formations and strategies, I try to post alongside natural strengths and weaknesses of the systems as well as using best practice examples of these formations/strategies when in possession and out of possession. This document aims to make it easier for you guys to be able to access my content in one place.

4-2-2-2

As a disclaimer, this document will contain some personal opinions on how best to utilise the system in a given phase, this is not to say that it is right or wrong. A good coach/manager is able to adapt specific ideas and theories to fit both their own philosophy and their players capabilities.

4-4-2

There are different opinions on how best to utilise a specific system and which systems/shapes are better suited to certain match situations. Variety is the spice of life and it's the variety in football that makes the beautiful game so interesting.

4-3-2-1

3-4-3

With that being said, I hope you will enjoy this document. I aim to update this regularly as a portfolio of my work, keeping this document as fluid and relevant as possible. This document is and will remain COMPLETELY FREE so feel at liberty to share with other people/coaches/analysts/players etc. Any questions or queries, feel free to contact me on my socials listed on the top right of each slide.

3-4-3

Diamond

Russell

3-5-2

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4-2-3-1

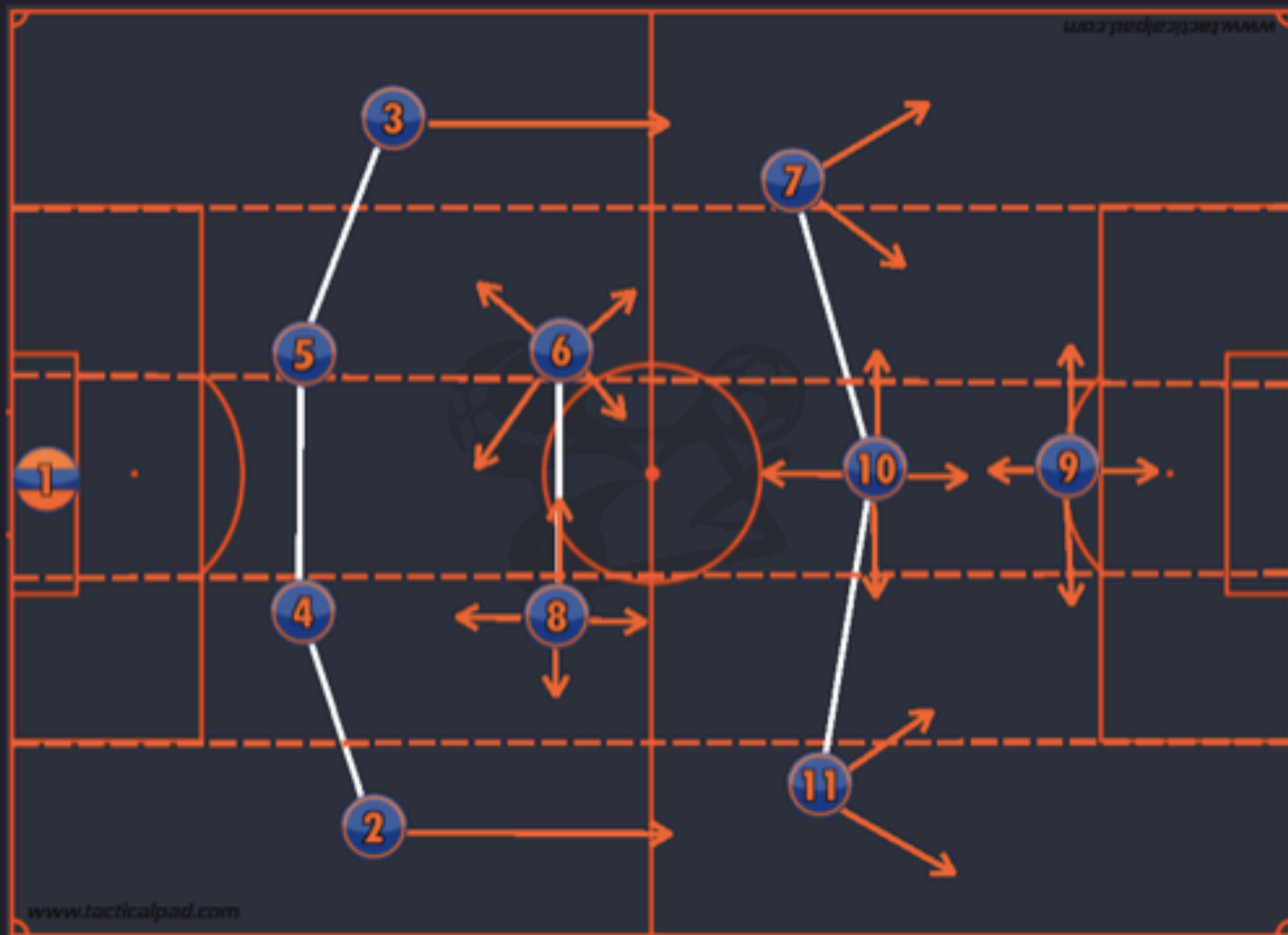
STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES OF THE 4-2-3-1

THE 4-2-3-1 IS ARGUABLY THE MOST FLEXIBLE FORMATION IN FOOTBALL
IT CAN SHIFT TO A NUMBER OF OTHER SHAPES WHEN IN SPECIFIC
MATCH SITUATIONS (4-4-2, 4-3-3, 4-5-1, 4-4-1-1)

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NATURAL STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

INITIAL SET-UP



STRENGTHS

- THE 4-2-3-1 IS A VERY FLEXIBLE STRATEGY THAT CAN ADAPT ITS SHAPE TO FIT A SPECIFIC MATCH SITUATION.
- THE 6&8 OFFER ADDED PROTECTION TO THE BACK FOUR, AND CAN COVER MORE SPACE Laterally TO SCREEN THE DEFENCE.
- THE DOUBLE PIVOT OFFER GOOD PASSING ANGLES WHEN BUILDING THE ATTACK FROM DEEP.
- THE NUMBER TEN IN THIS SYSTEM IS THE LINK FROM THE DEEPER MIDFIELDERS TO THE FORWARDS. THE SYSTEM PROMOTES A NATURAL NUMBER 10 POSITION IN ZONE 14.
- THE WIDER PLAYERS (FB&WM'S) ACT AS A PAIR FOR EXTRA DEFENSIVE COVER TO PROTECT AGAINST AN OVERLOAD OUT WIDE.
- THE FB'S CAN BE GIVEN MORE LICENCE TO ATTACK WITH THE INCLUSION OF TWO DEEPER MIDFIELDERS.
- WM'S CAN INVERT TO CREATE OVERLOADS IN THE HALF-SPACE WITH WIDTH OFFERED BY FB'S.
- THE CF IS SUPPORTED BY THREE ATTACKING MIDFIELDERS.

WEAKNESSES

- THE DEFENSIVE SOLIDITY RELIES A LOT ON THE DEEPER MIDFIELDERS. A LACK OF DISCIPLINE CAN LEAD TO SPACES OPENING UP BETWEEN THE DEFENSIVE LINES.
- THE SYSTEM CAN BECOME VULNERABLE TO A DEFENSIVE TRANSITION, ESPECIALLY IN WIDER AREAS, SHOULD THE FB'S MAKE ATTACKING RUNS, SUPPORTING THE WM'S.
- THE LINK BETWEEN MIDFIELD AND FORWARDS CAN BECOME DISJOINTED IF THE NUMBER 10 IS INEFFECTIVE.
- THE SYSTEM CAN BE VULNERABLE TO PLAYING AGAINST A THREE MAN MIDFIELD SET-UP I.E A 4-3-3 ESPECIALLY WHEN THE 4-2-3-1 DEFENDS IN A 4-4-2 SHAPE. THIS LEAVES A 3V2 OVERLOAD IN THE MIDFIELD.
- THE CF CAN BECOME ISOLATED WHEN THE 4-2-3-1 DEFENDS IN A MID/LOW BLOCK.

UTILISING THE HIGH PRESS IN A 4-2-3-1

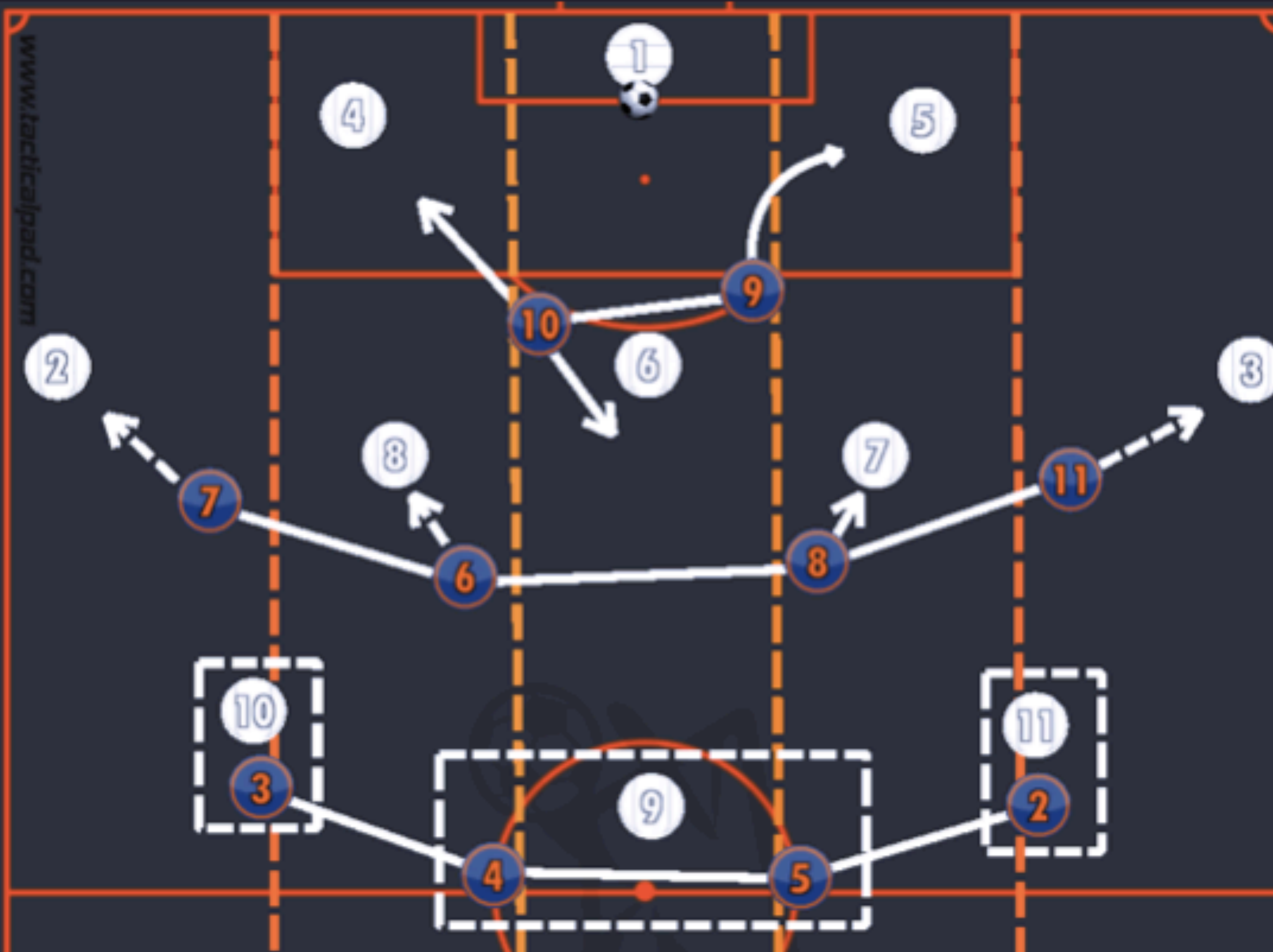
BECAUSE OF THE ADAPTABILITY OF THE 4-2-3-1, IT CAN BE ADVANTAGEOUS TO USE THE SYSTEM AS A PREFERENCE WHEN LOOKING TO PRESS AGGRESSIVELY HIGH UP THE PITCH, THE PITCH COVERAGE OFFERED BY THE SYSTEM CAN MAKE IT HARD TO PLAY AGAINST, WHEN GOOD DISCIPLINE IS SHOWN IN REACTING TO PRESSING TRIGGERS AND THE TIMING OF THE PRESS IS PERFECTED.

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DEFENSIVE SET-UP AT AN OPPOSITION GOAL-KICK

KEY FACTORS:

- AS PER THE FLEXIBILITY IN A 4-2-3-1 SHAPE, WHEN DEFENDING IT CAN SHIFT TO A 4-4-2 SHAPE WITH THE NUMBER 10 MOVING ALONGSIDE THE CF.
- THE SHAPE PROMOTES A MAN-ORIENTED STRUCTURE WITH THE CF/10/WM'S ACCOUNTING FOR THE OPPOSITION CB'S AND FB'S.
- THE 4-4-2 PRESENTS A NATURAL PRESSING TRIGGER WHEN THE BALL IS PLAYED INTO THE FB'S. THE TOUCHLINE CAN THEN BE USED AS AN EXTRA DEFENDER TO FORCE A TURNOVER, OR ANOTHER PRESSING TRIGGER CAN BE INITIATED BY THE SQUARE PASS BACK INTO THE CB.
- WHEN THE INITIAL LINE OF ENGAGEMENT IS PLAYED THROUGH, THE NUMBER 10 CAN RETAIN A POSITION OFF OF THE CF TO TRACK THE PIVOT PLAYER, BUT IS STILL IN A POSITION TO STEP UP AND PRESS THE SQUARE PASS TO THE CB.
- THE TWO DEEPER MIDFIELDERS ARE IN A POSITION TO TRACK THE MORE ADVANCED OPPOSITION MIDFIELDERS.
- THE FB'S IN THIS SET-UP ARE NARROWED TO ACCOUNT FOR THE OPPOSITION WINGERS.
- SHOULD THE OPPOSITION PLAY A LONGER PASS INTO THE FORWARD, THE CF IS ACCOUNTED FOR BY THE TWO CB'S.

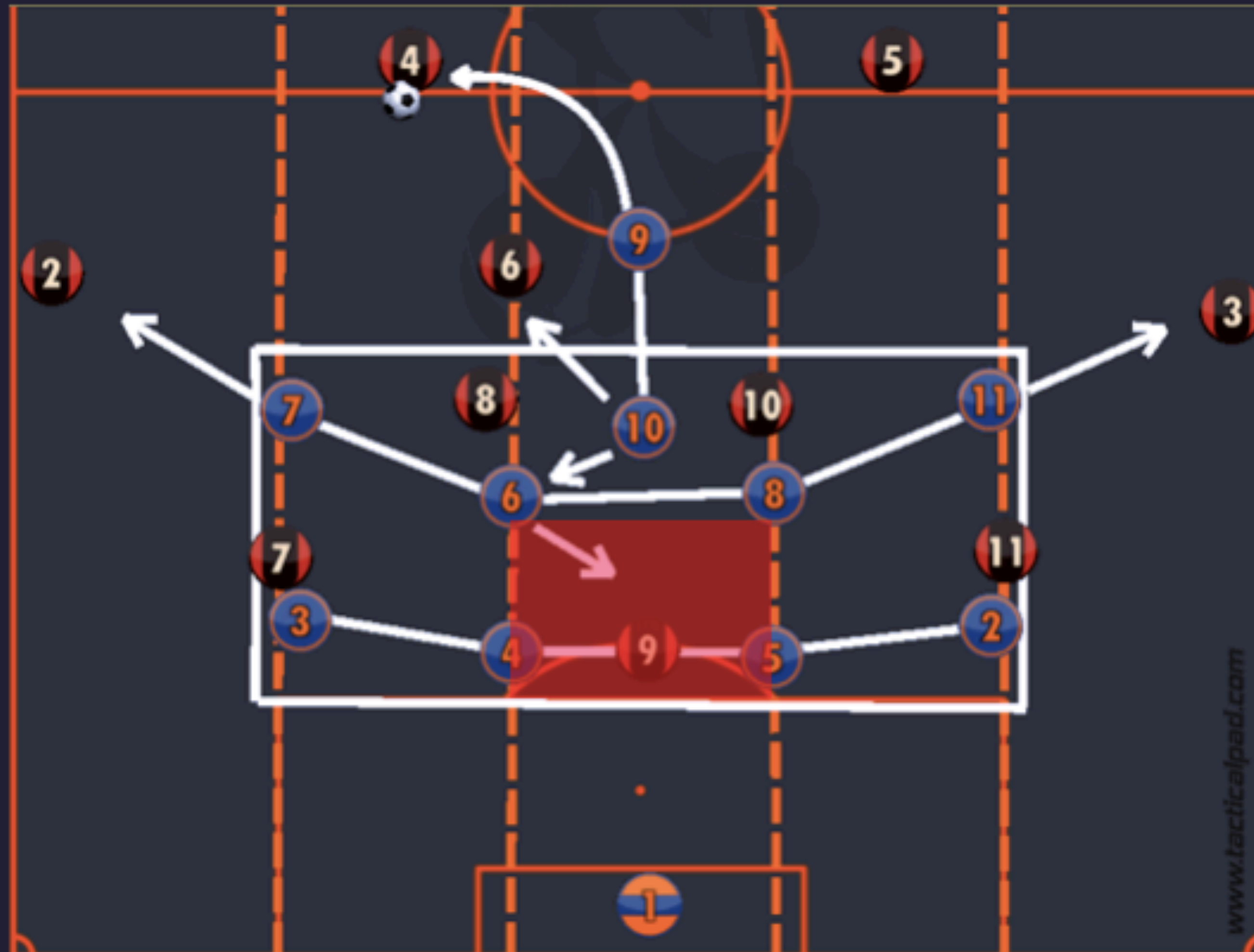


COMPACT DEFENDING IN A 4-2-3-1 MID/LOW BLOCK

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THE 4-2-3-1 RETAINS ITS ADAPTABILITY WHEN REMAINING COMPACT IN MID/LOW BLOCK. THE FORMATIONS SHAPE CAN ADAPT, IT CAN REMAIN AS A 4-4-2, OR SWITCH TO MORE OF A 4-5-1 OR A 4-4-1-1 AS SHOWN BELOW.

MID/LOW BLOCK



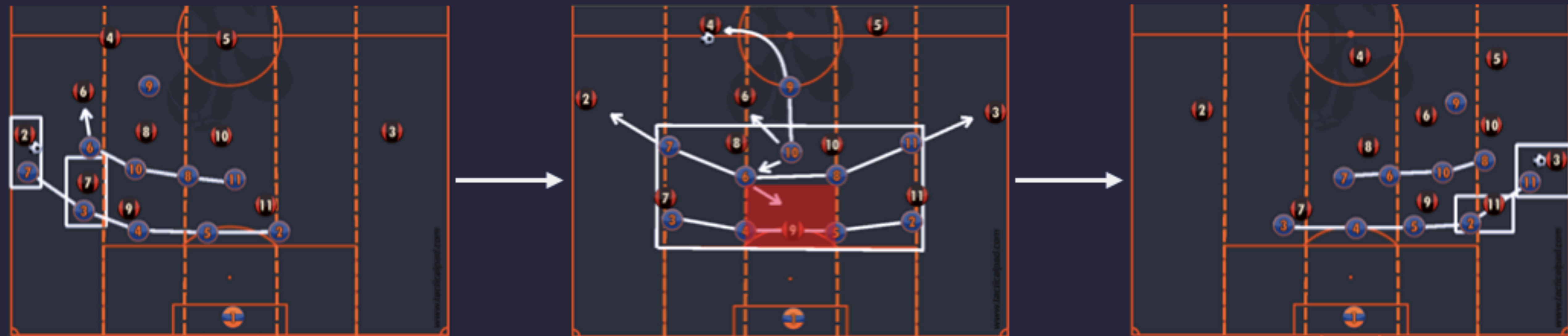
KEY FACTORS

- MAINTAIN VERTICAL COMPACTNESS, LIMITING THE SPACE IN BETWEEN THE LINES.
- CF SHOULD LOOK TO POSITION TO ENGAGE FORCING THE OPPOSITION INTO WIDER AREAS AND OUTSIDE THE DEFENSIVE BLOCK.
- THE CF SHOULD STILL RETAIN A HIGH STARTING POSITION TO BE AN OPTION WHEN ENTERING AN ATTACKING TRANSITION. THIS GIVES THE BEST CHANCE OF STARTING AN ATTACK FROM A DEEP DEFENSIVE POSITION.
- WHEN BALL IS WITH AN OPPOSING PLAYER IN A WIDE AREA, THE TEAM SHOULD SHUFFLE AS A UNIT TO OVERLOAD THE BALL SIDE TO MAKE IT HARD TO PENETRATE, FORCING THE OPPOSITION BACKWARDS.
- THE SHAPE CAN EVEN SHIFT TO A 4-1-4-1 WITH THE SIX DROPPING DEEPER AND THE NUMBER TEN FILLING IN TO THAT POSITION. THIS IS TO ZONAL MARK ZONE 14 (HIGHLIGHTED IN RED)
- THE WIDE PLAYERS (7&11 AND 2&11) MUST BE QUICK TO SHUFFLE WIDER WHEN THE BALL IS PLAYED INTO THOSE AREAS, TO PREVENT A FORWARD PASS.
- WHEN IN THE MID/LOW BLOCK, THE PLAYERS SHOULD BE LOOKING TO MAINTAIN THEIR ZONAL MARKING RESPONSIBILITIES. MARKING THE SPACE INSTEAD OF A PARTICULAR PLAYER, THIS IS TO ENSURE THAT A SPECIFIC PLAYERS MOVEMENT DOESN'T DRAW THEM OUT OF POSITION.

COMPACT DEFENDING IN A 4-2-3-1 MID/LOW BLOCK

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WHEN IN A MID/LOW BLOCK, IT IS ABOUT MAKING IT AS HARD AS POSSIBLE TO PENETRATE THROUGH THE BLOCK. THIS FORCES TEAMS INTO WIDER AREAS WHEN FACING A LOW BLOCK. AS A RESULT OF THIS, THE DEFENCE SHOULD MOVE AS A UNIT TO COVER THE SPACES IN WIDE AREAS.



WHEN SHUFFLING INTO WIDE AREAS, THE 4-2-3-1 SHAPE CAN SHIFT INTO A SHAPE RESEMBLING A 5-4-1 WITH THE WIDER MIDFIELDER SHIFTING INTO A DEEPER POSITION TO COUNTER THE THREAT OF THE ADVANCED OPPOSITION FULL-BACK. AS A RESULT TO THIS, THE FULL-BACK RETAINS A MORE NARROW POSITION TO TRACK THE OPPOSITION WINGER.

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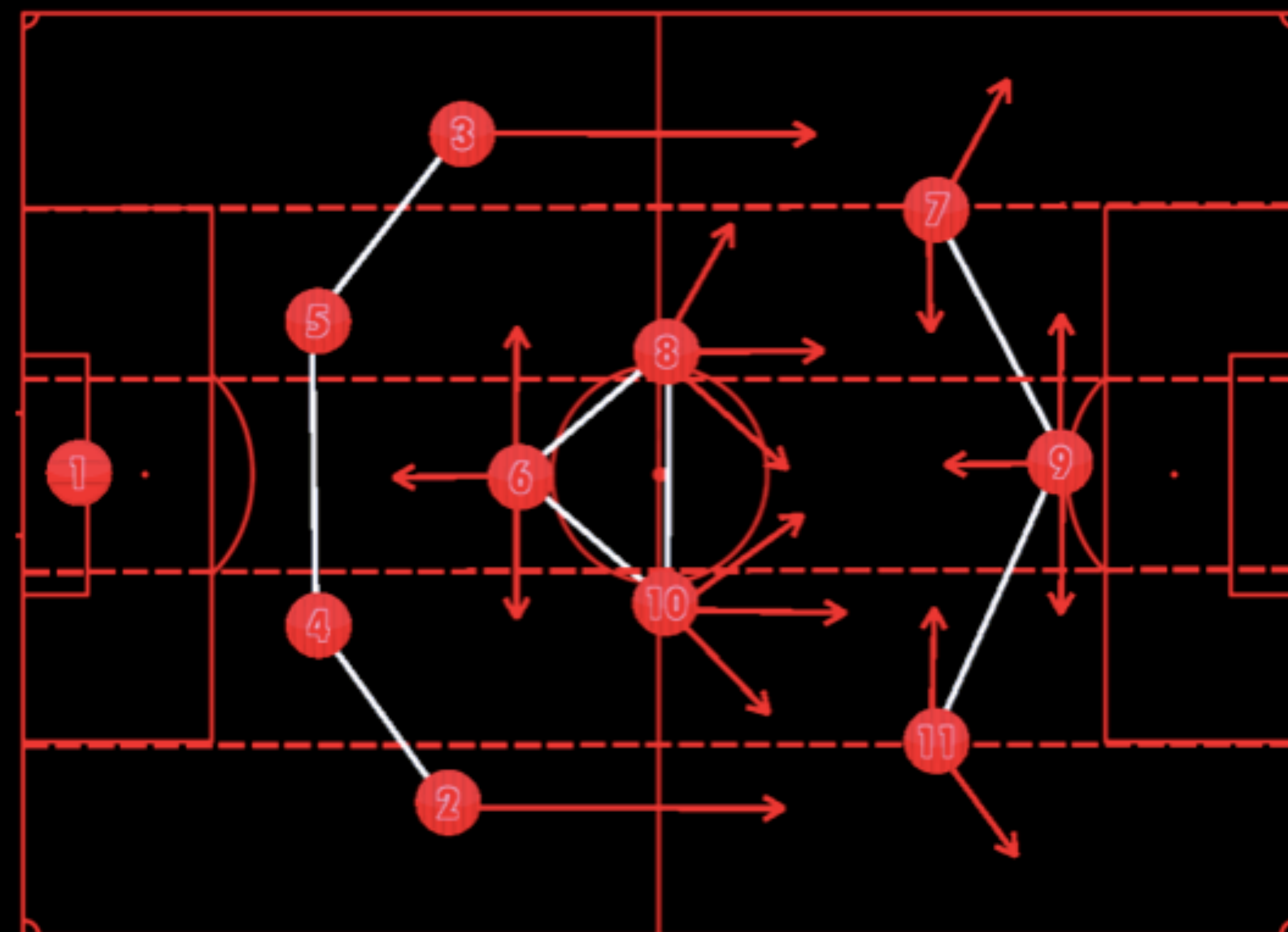
4-3-3

STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES OF THE 4-3-3

ARGUABLY ONE OF THE MOST POPULAR FORMATIONS IN MODERN FOOTBALL, THE 4-3-3 HAS BECOME WIDELY APPRECIATED AS A SOLID STRATEGY IN ALL PHASES OF THE GAME, ALLOWING FOR SUPERB DEFENSIVE COVERAGE WHEN OUT OF POSSESSION, BUT ALSO AN EXTREMELY GOOD SYSTEM WHEN BUILDING PLAY THROUGH SHORT PASSES AND COMBINATIONS, ESPECIALLY THROUGH THE THREE CENTRAL MIDFIELDERS.

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INITIAL SET-UP



NATURAL STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

STRENGTHS

- **PROVIDES EXCELLENT BALANCE IN CENTRAL MIDFIELD WITH THREE CM'S.**
- **THE NUMBER SIX ACTS AS A DEFENSIVE SCREEN FOR THE BACK FOUR.**
- **A DEEP MIDFIELDER ALLOWS THE FB'S MORE FREEDOM TO JOIN THE ATTACK.**
- **THE BALANCE IN THE MIDDLE ALLOWS FOR ONE OR TWO OF THE CM'S TO JOIN THE ATTACK.**
- **NATURAL WIDE PLAYERS ALLOWS FOR PENETRATION IN WIDE AREAS, SUPPORTED BY THE FB'S.**
- **THE SYSTEM CREATES NATURAL PASSING TRIANGLES WHEN IN POSSESSION.**
- **DEFENSIVELY, THE FORMATION CAN SHIFT TO A 4-1-4-1 OR 4-5-1 AND PROVIDES GOOD DEFENSIVE COVERAGE WHEN IN A MID/LOW BLOCK.**

WEAKNESSES

- THE SYSTEM RELIES ON GOOD DEFENSIVE DISCIPLINE FROM THE NUMBER SIX TO PROTECT THE DEFENCE. IF THIS ISN'T THE CASE THEN THE BACK FOUR CAN BE EASILY EXPOSED.
- THE FB'S CAN BECOME ISOLATED 2V1 IF THE WINGERS IN THE SYSTEM ARE CAUGHT HIGH UP THE PITCH.
- THE ABSENCE ON A 'NUMBER 10 MEANS THERE IS A NATURAL LACK OF CREATIVITY IN AND AROUND ZONE 14, ALTHOUGH THE SYSTEM CAN EASILY SWITCH TO A 4-2-3-1 WITH A NUMBER TEN.
- THE CF CAN BECOME ISOLATED IF THE SYSTEM SHIFTS TO A 4-5-1 IN A MID/LOW BLOCK.

STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES OF THE 4-3-3

ARGUABLY ONE OF THE MOST POPULAR FORMATIONS IN MODERN FOOTBALL, THE 4-3-3 HAS BECOME WIDELY APPRECIATED AS A SOLID STRATEGY IN ALL PHASES OF THE GAME, ALLOWING FOR SUPERB DEFENSIVE COVERAGE WHEN OUT OF POSSESSION, BUT ALSO AN EXTREMELY GOOD SYSTEM WHEN BUILDING PLAY THROUGH SHORT PASSES AND COMBINATIONS, ESPECIALLY THROUGH THE THREE CENTRAL MIDFIELDERS.

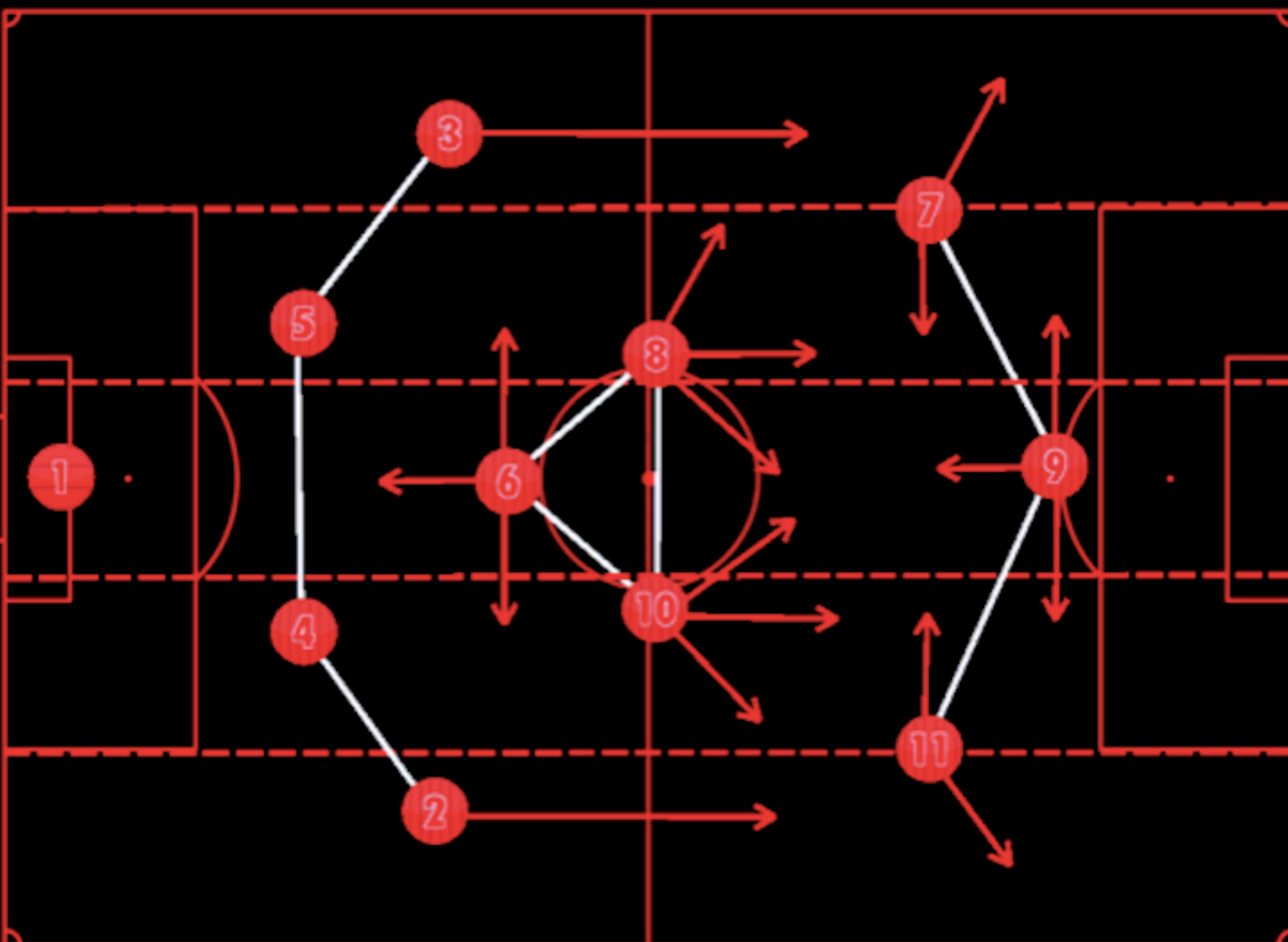
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INITIAL SET-UP

NATURAL STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

STRENGTHS

WEAKNESSES



- PROVIDES EXCELLENT BALANCE IN CENTRAL MIDFIELD WITH THREE CMS.

- THE NUMBER SIX ACTS AS A DEFENSIVE SCREEN FOR THE BACK FOUR.

- A DEEP MIDFIELDER ALLOWS THE FB'S MORE FREEDOM TO JOIN THE ATTACK.

- THE BALANCE IN THE MIDDLE ALLOWS FOR ONE OR TWO OF THE CM'S TO JOIN THE ATTACK.

- NATURAL WIDE PLAYERS ALLOWS FOR PENETRATION IN WIDE AREAS, SUPPORTED BY THE FB'S.

- THE SYTEM CREATES NATURAL PASSING TRIANGLES WHEN IN POSSESSION.

- DEFENSIVELY, THE FORMATION CAN SHIFT TO A 4-1-4-1 OR 4-5-1 AND PROVIDES GOOD DEFENSIVE COVERAGE WHEN IN A MID/LOW BLOCK.

- THE SYSTEM RELIES ON GOOD DEFENSIVE DISCIPLINE FROM THE NUMBER SIX TO PROTECT THE DEFENCE. IF THIS ISN'T THE CASE THEN THE BACK FOUR CAN BE EASILY EXPOSED.

- THE FB'S CAN BECOME ISOLATED 2V1 IF THE WINGERS IN THE SYSTEM ARE CAUGHT HIGH UP THE PITCH.

- THE ABSENCE ON A 'NUMBER 10' MEANS THERE IS A NATURAL LACK OF CREATIVITY IN AND AROUND ZONE 14, ALTHOUGH THE SYSTEM CAN EASILY SWITCH TO A 4-2-3-1 WITH A NUMBER TEN.

- THE CF CAN BECOME ISOLATED IF THE SYSTEM SHIFTS TO A 4-5-1 IN A MID/LOW BLOCK.



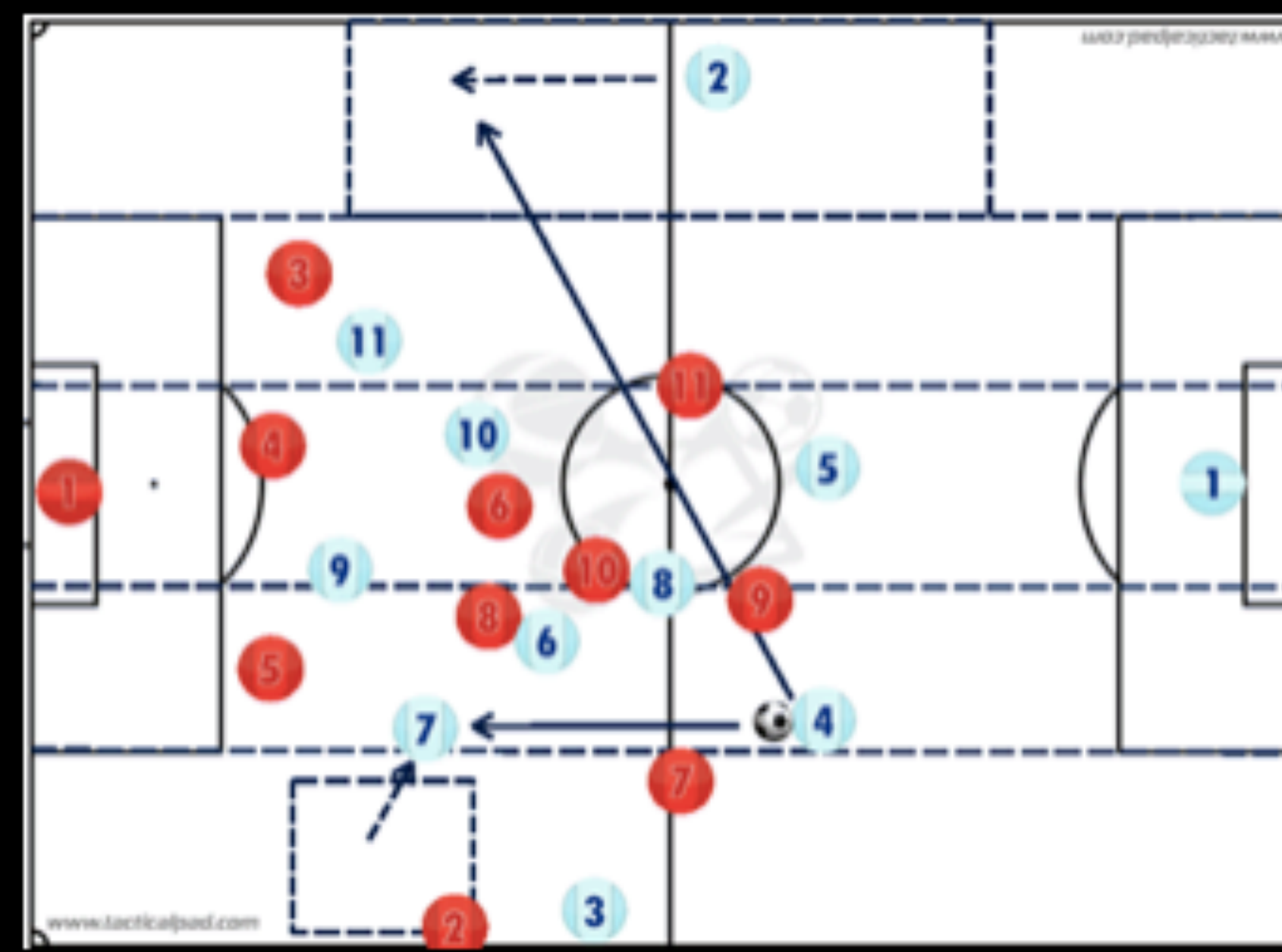
BUILDING FROM DEEP



POSITIONING OF THE CENTRE-BACKS

OFTEN THE CENTRE-BACKS IN AJAX'S BUILD UP PLAY ARE WIDE. TEN HAG PREFERS HIS CENTRE-BACKS TO HAVE THE BALL IN THE HALF SPACES FOR A NUMBER OF REASONS:

1. IT CREATES MORE PASSING OPTIONS, ESPECIALLY WHEN PROGRESSING THE BALL THROUGH THE THIRDS.
2. OFFERS NATURAL WIDTH AND CAN DRAW PLAYERS INTO WIDE AREAS TO FREE UP SPACE IN THE MIDDLE.
3. IT CAN UNLOCK THE POTENTIAL TO EXPLOIT THE OPPOSITE SIDE OF THE PITCH IF THE TEAM DEFENDING BECOME NARROW AND LOOK TO OVERLOAD THE BALL SIDE.
4. IT PRESENTS A VERTICAL PASS TO EITHER A NARROW WINGER OR TO THE CENTRE FORWARD. AS AJAX ALWAYS BUILD WITH ONE OR TWO PLAYERS ADVANCED IN THE HALF-SPACES.



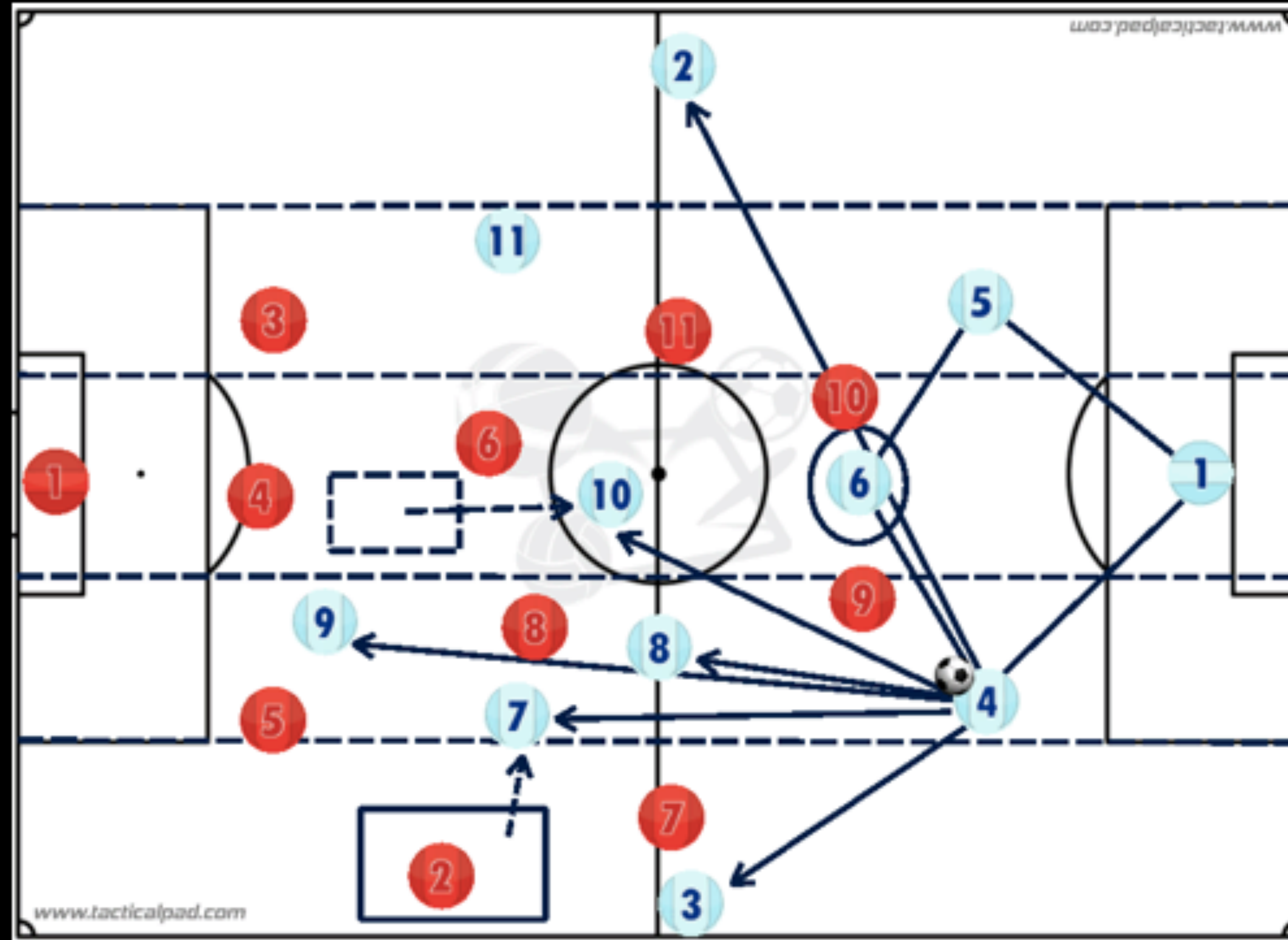


BUILDING FROM DEEP

KEY PLAYER MOVEMENTS



1. CB'S IN HALF SPACE WHEN LOOKING TO PROGRESS THE BALL THROUGH THE THIRDS.
2. FULL-BACKS CREATE THE WIDTH.
3. A PIVOT SHOWS TO CREATE A CENTRAL PASSING OPTION (PIVOT PLAYER ROTATES)
4. ONE OF THE THREE PLAYERS (EITHER WINGER/NUMBER 10) DROPS DEEP.
5. WINGER'S VACATE WIDE SPACE TO INVERT MORE CENTRALLY INTO THE HALF SPACE TO RECEIVE FROM CB'S.
6. CENTRE FORWARD MOVES TO BE VERTICAL WITH THE BALL.



AIM IS TO PROGRESS THE PLAY VERTICALLY AS QUICK AS POSSIBLE BY CREATING A NUMBER OF PASSING OPTIONS.



BUILDING FROM DEEP



STRUCTURE

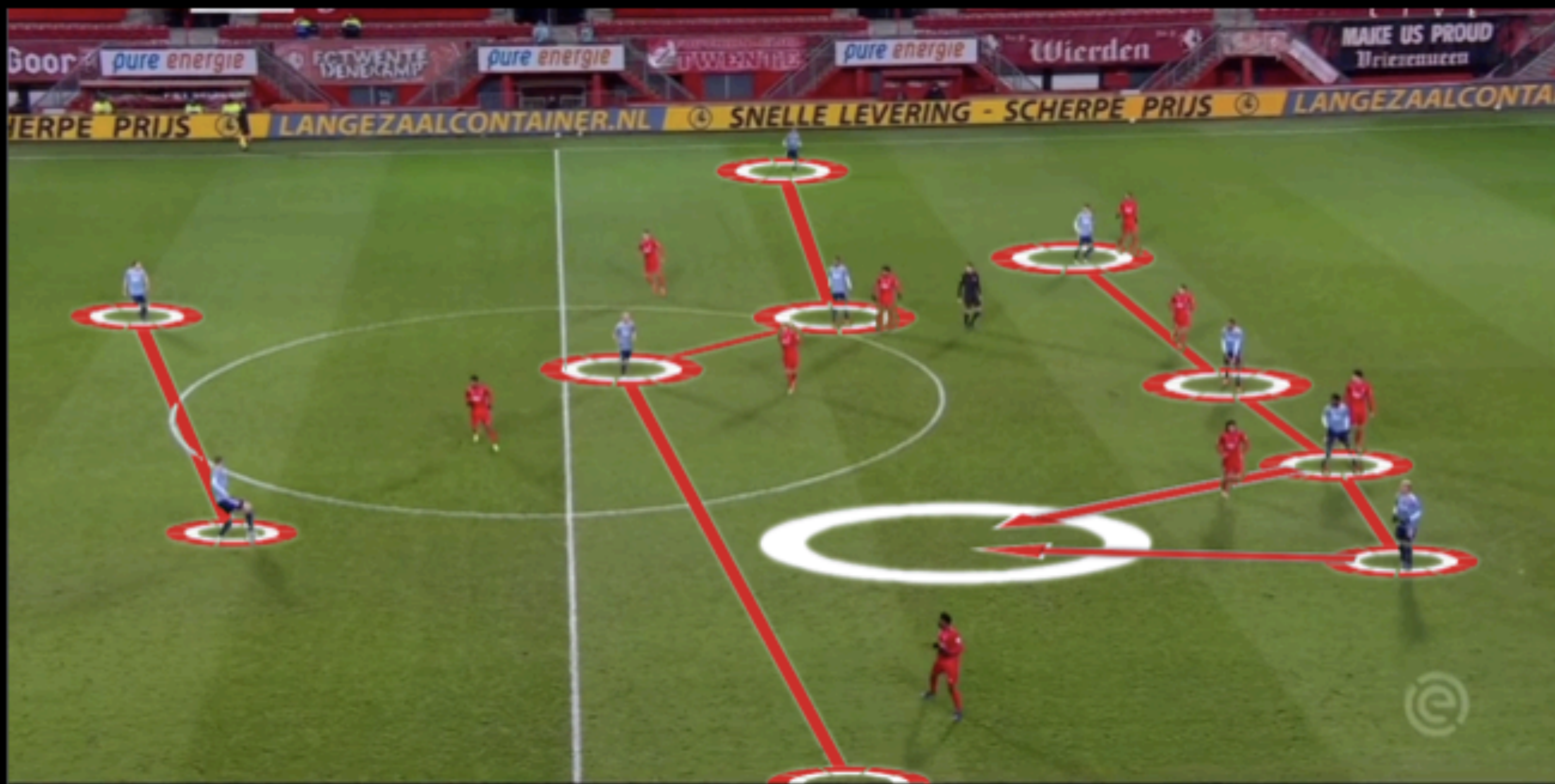
WHEN BUILDING THE PLAY FROM DEEP, AJAX'S STRUCTURE CAN REPLICATE A 2-4-4.

THE 2-4-4 STRUCTURE WHEN BUILDING FROM DEEP SHOWS THE WILLINGNESS TO VERTICALLY PROGRESS THE BALL INTO THE FINAL THIRD AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.

AJAX HAVE EXCELLENT CREATIVE ATTACKING PLAYERS, THEREFORE THEY ARE HAPPY TO RELY ON 1V1 SITUATIONS IN THE ATTACKING THIRD AS A RESULT OF BEING 4V4 IN THIS INSTANCE.

THE FULL-BACKS ALSO RETAIN THEIR WIDTH TO BE ABLE TO PENETRATE FROM WIDER POSITIONS. ESPECIALLY IMPORTANT GIVEN HOW NARROW THE WINGERS BECOME.

ONE OF EITHER THE NUMBER TEN OR A WINGER WILL DROP INTO THE HIGHLIGHTED SPACE TO CREATE A PASSING ANGLE ON THE HALF-TURN IF THEY STRUGGLE TO PROGRESS THE BALL PAST THE MIDDLE THIRD.

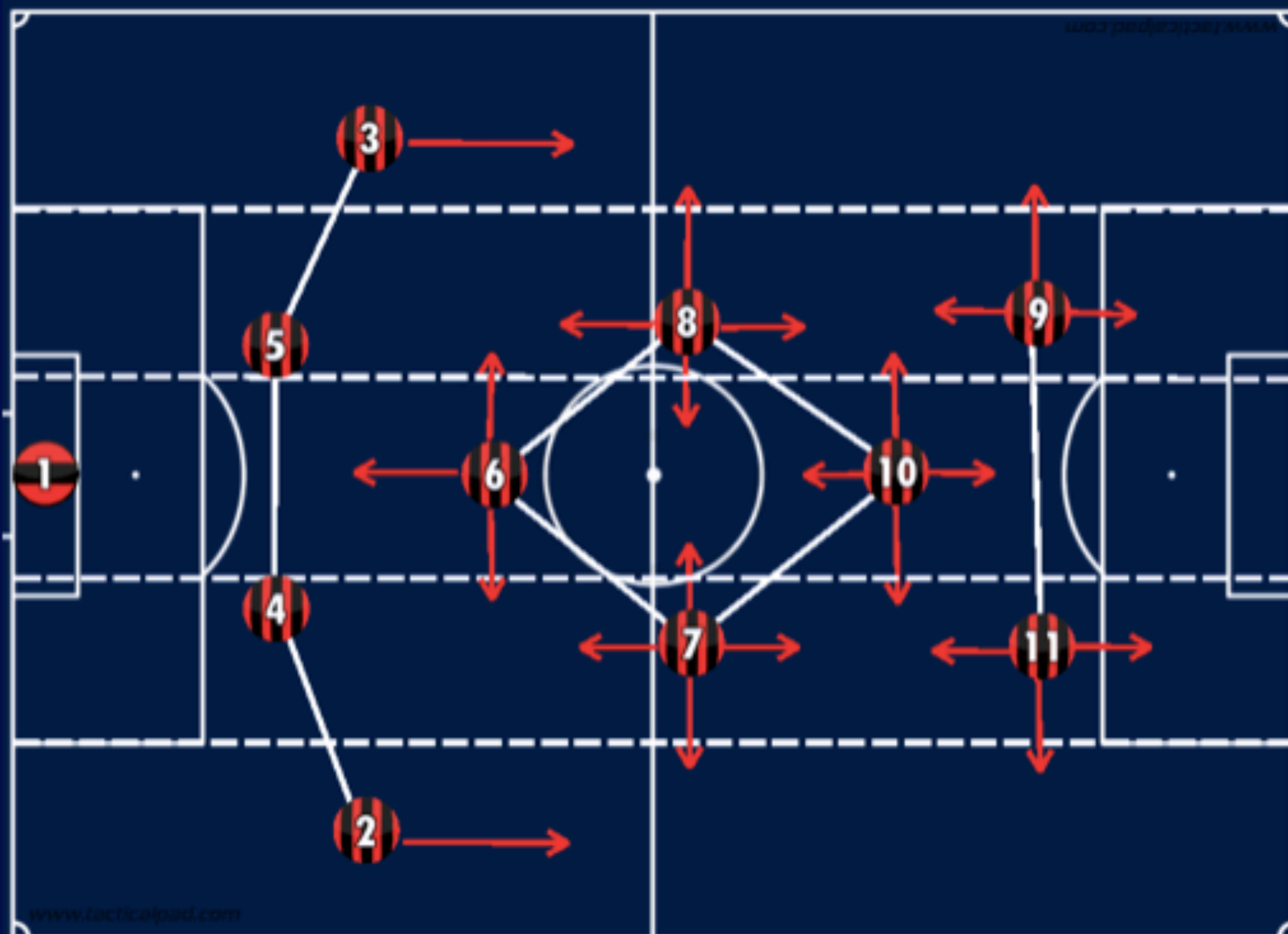


4-1-2-1-2

THE 4-1-2-1-2 (4-4-2 DIAMOND)

NATURAL STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

INITIAL SET-UP



STRENGTHS

- DEFENCE IS PROTECTED BY A DEEPER MIDFIELD SIX WHO IS ABLE TO SCREEN THE BACK FOUR Laterally.
- THE SYSTEM PROMOTES A NUMERICAL SUPERIORITY IN THE CENTRE OF THE PITCH. IT CAN CREATE 4V3 OR EVEN 4V2 CENTRAL OVERLOADS.
- THE WIDER CM'S IN THE DIAMOND CAN SHUTTLE INTO THE HALF-SPACE AND WIDER AREAS TO COUNTER THE RISK OF THE FB BECOMING ISOLATED 2V1 AGAINST THE OPPOSITION.
- THE NUMBER 10 IN THIS SYSTEM IS AN IMPORTANT ROLE WHICH ACTS AS A NATURAL LINK FROM THE MIDFIELD TO THE FORWARDS.
- TWO FORWARD PLAYERS CAN MATCH UP AND PLAY 1V1 AGAINST A TEAM PLAYING 2 CENTRAL DEFENDERS.

WEAKNESSES

- FB'S CAN BECOME OVERLOADED 2V1 IF THE WIDE CM'S DON'T SHUFFLE ACROSS INTO WIDER AREAS.
- IF A CM SHUFFLES INTO WIDER AREAS, POCKETS OF SPACE CAN APPEAR CENTRALLY IF THE OTHER CM'S DON'T REACT OFF THIS MOVEMENT.
- NATURALLY, THE SYSTEM MAKES IT HARDER TO PENETRATE OUT WIDE COMPARED TO SYSTEMS THAT OPERATES WITH WIDE MIDFIELDERS (I.E 4-3-3).
- THE ATTACKING PHASE RELIES A LOT ON THE NUMBER 10. IF THE 10 IS INEFFECTIVE, THE FORWARDS CAN BECOME ISOLATED FROM THE MIDFIELD.

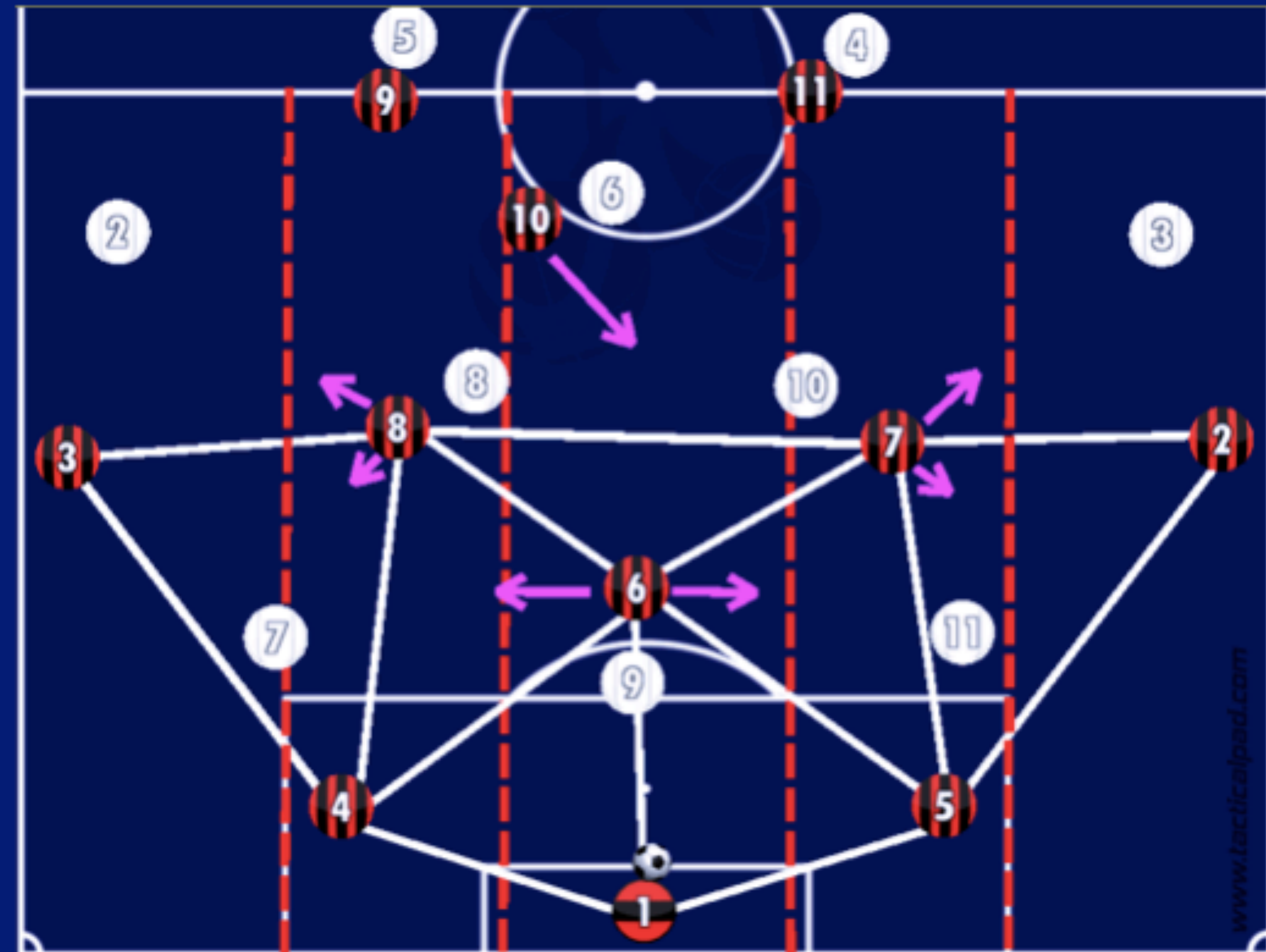
BUILDING THE ATTACK FROM DEEP IN A 4-1-2-1-2

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ATTRACTING PRESSURE TO PLAY VERTICALLY

KEY FACTORS:

BUILDING FROM A GOAL KICK



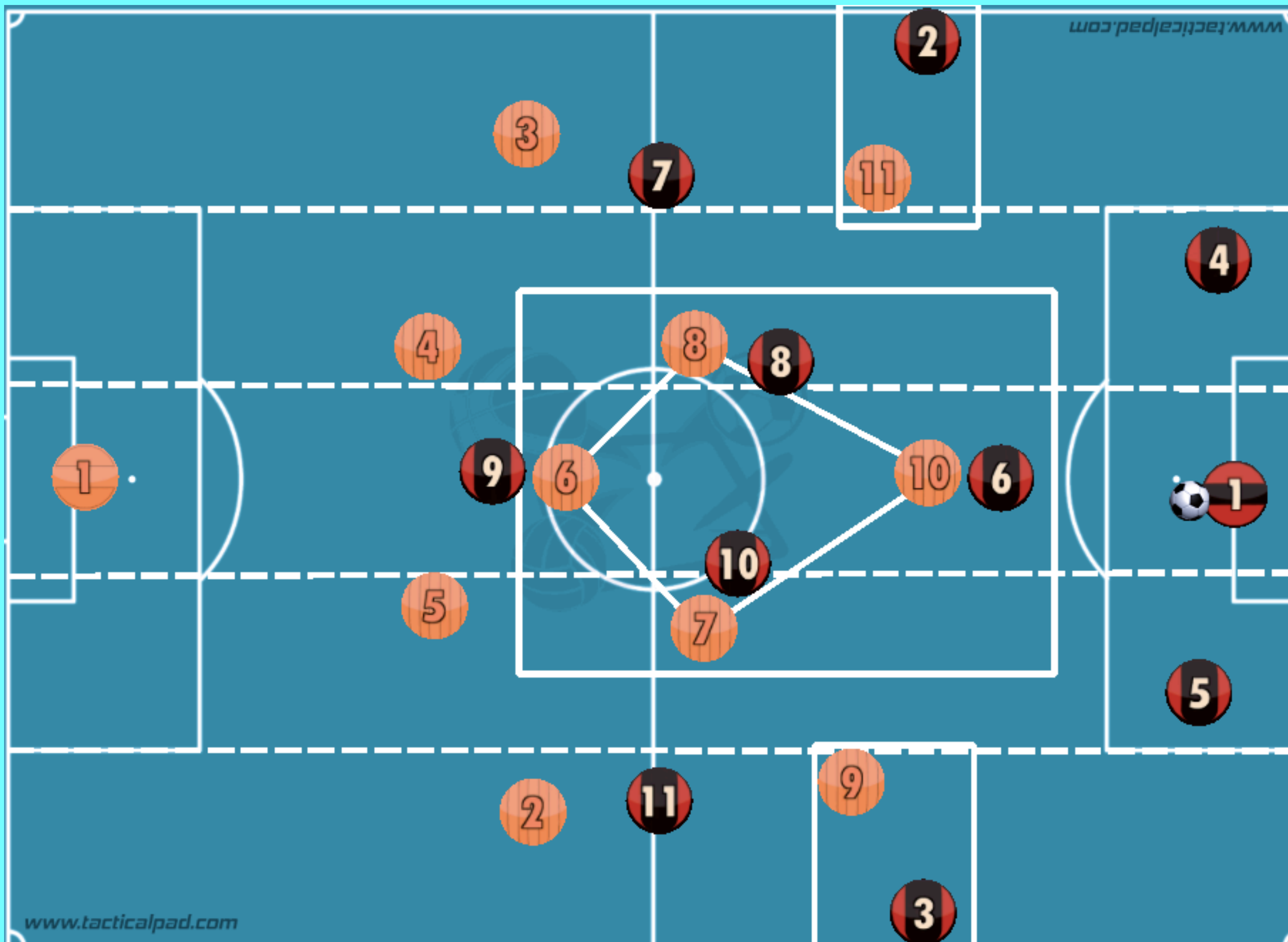
- THE AIM IS TO ATTRACT THE OPPOSITION PRESS TO PLAY THROUGH AND PASS VERTICALLY.
- PLAYING VERTICALLY THROUGH THE OPPOSITION PRESS CAN CREATE A 2V2 SITUATION HIGH UP THE PITCH WITH THE CF'S OCCUPYING THE OPPOSITION CB'S.
- IN THE SET-UP CB'S SHOULD DROP TO RECEIVE OFF OF THE GK, ATTRACTING THE INITIAL PRESS FROM THE CF/WINGER.
- IN THIS INSTANCE, IF THE CF PRESSES THE FIRST PASS, THE MIDFIELD SIX CAN SHIFT LATERALLY TO RECEIVE, THUS BEATING THE INITIAL LINE OF ENGAGEMENT.
- THIS SET-UP PROMOTES A SYSTEM OF PASSING ANGLES (TRIANGLES) THAT CAN SHIFT THE OPPOSITION OUT OF POSITION AND CREATE AREAS TO EXPLOIT. EVERY PLAYER SHOULD HAVE AT LEAST TWO PASSING OPTIONS WHEN IN THE BUILD PHASE.
- THE OUTSIDE CM'S IN THE DIAMOND OPERATE IN THE HALF-SPACE TO RECEIVE, THIS CAN DRAW THE OPPOSITION CM'S WIDER, LEAVING SPACE CENTRALLY FOR THE NUMBER TEN TO DROP INTO.
- THE FULL-BACKS OFFER THE WIDTH AND SHOULD BE AVAILABLE FOR A SWITCH.
- THE TWO FORWARDS SHOULD BE LOOKING TO CREATE COMBOS, ESPECIALLY IN A 2V2 SITUATION, WHERE ONE CAN DROP DEEPER, AND THE OTHER RUN INTO THE SPACE BEHIND THAT IS CREATED BY THIS.

DEFENDING IN A 4-1-2-1-2 (4-4-2 DIAMOND)

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PRINCIPLES OF THE 4-1-2-1-2 FORMATION WHEN OUT OF POSSESSION

PLAYER POSITIONS WHEN DEFENDING FROM THE FRONT



KEY FACTORS:

- SHAPE CHANGES TO MORE OF A 4-3-3 WITH THE TWO CENTRE FORWARDS SHIFTING WIDER TO COVER FOR THE NARROWNESS OF THE DIAMOND MIDFIELD.
- AS A RESULT OF THE CF'S SHUFFLING WIDER, THE NUMBER 10 PUSHES UP TO BE THE FURTHEST FORWARD DEFENDER, AND CAN TRACK THE PIVOT PLAYER FOR THE OPPOSITION.
- THE CF'S TRACKING THE FB'S AND POSITIONING WIDER ALSO ENSURES THAT THE FB'S ARE NOT EXPOSED AND ISOLATED 2V1.
- TO PLAY TO THE 4-1-2-1-2'S STRENGTHS, THE SET-UP IS WIDER AND MORE EXPANSIVE THAN USUALLY EXPECTED FROM A DEFENSIVE SET-UP. THIS IS AIMED AT ENCOURAGING PLAY INTO CENTRAL AREAS WHERE WE HAVE A 4V3 OVERLOAD AS DEMONSTRATED IN THE BOX IN CENTRAL MIDFIELD.
- THE NUMBER SIX, WHEN PLAYING AGAINST A 4-3-3 CAN SOMETIMES BE LEFT FREE, AS A RESULT THEY CAN ZONALLY MARK THE SPACE IN FRONT OF THE DEFENCE, OR THEY CAN SLOT INTO THE DEFENCE AND TRACK THE OPPOSITION CENTRE FORWARD.
- THE OVERALL AIM WHEN DEFENDING IN THIS SYSTEM IS TO BE A LITTLE MORE OPEN AND DEFENDING WIDER TO FORCE THE PLAY INTO CENTRAL MIDFIELD WHERE A PRESS CAN BE INITIATED TO WIN THE BALL BACK.

4-2-2-2

STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES OF THE 4-2-2-2 FORMATION

THE 4-2-2-2 HAS GROWN IN POPULARITY IN RECENT TIMES. A VARIANT OF THE 4-4-2, THE 4-2-2-2 SHARES SIMILARITIES WITH THE STANDARD 4-4-2, YET THE BIGGEST AND MOST IMPORTANT DIFFERENCE IS THAT THE WINGERS OPERATE IN MORE CENTRAL POSITIONS AS TWO NUMBER 10'S. RALF RANGNICK INITIALLY MADE THE SYSTEM POPULAR, AND COACHES UNDER HIS TUTORSHIP HAVE SINCE ADAPTED THE SYSTEM TO FIT THEIR PHILOSOPHIES, COACHES SUCH AS RALPH HASENHÜTTL, ROGER SCHMIDT AND JESSE MARSCH.

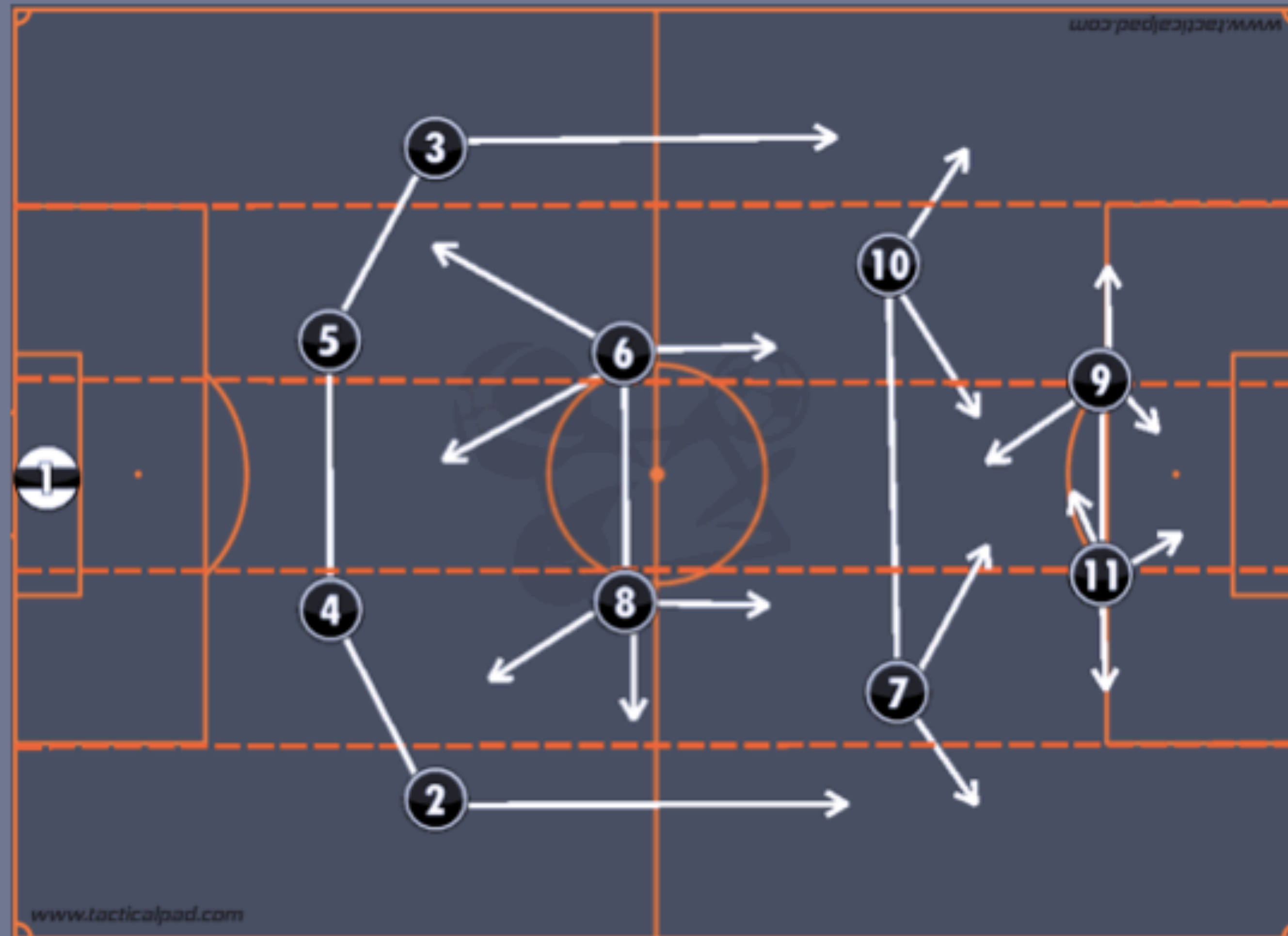
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INITIAL SET-UP

NATURAL STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

STRENGTHS

WEAKNESSES



- THE SYSTEM PROMOTES CENTRAL OVERLOADS IN THE ATTACKING PHASE.
- THE SYSTEM CAN BE EFFECTIVE WHEN BUILDING THE ATTACK FROM DEEP. THE TWO CM'S CAN ACT AS A DOUBLE PIVOT TO FACILITATE THIS.
- THE TWO NUMBER 10'S CAN BE EXTREMELY EFFECTIVE IN ROAMING FROM THEIR POSITION TO FIND SPACE BETWEEN THE OPPOSITIONS DEFENSIVE LINES.
- TWO CF'S CAN MATCH UP 1V1 WITH OPPOSITION CB'S.
- THE SYSTEM IN ITSELF CAN BE FLUID AND CHANGE SHAPE TO RESEMBLE A 4-2-3-1 WITH A CF DROPPING DEEP TO RECEIVE.
- DEFENSIVELY, THE SYSTEM CAN BE EFFECTIVE IN PRESSING HIGH IN A MAN-ORIENTED ACTION. WHILST BEING ABLE TO REVERT TO A STANDARD 4-4-2 WHEN DEFENDING IN A MID/LOW BLOCK.

- THE SYSTEM WHEN ATTACKING CAN BE EXTREMELY OFFENSIVE WITH THE FB'S PUSHING ON AND CM'S PROVIDING SUPPORT. IT CAN LEAD TO TEAMS BEING VULNERABLE WHEN IN TRANSITION.
 - THE TWO CM'S CAN BECOME OUTNUMBERED WHEN PLAYING AGAINST A THREE MAN MIDFIELD.
 - IF THE 10'S TAKE UP EXTREME INVERTED POSITIONS, IT CAN BCOME HARD TO PENETRATE IN WIDER AREAS.
 - THE 10'S IN THIS SYSTEM NEED TO BE TACTICALLY EXCELLENT AS WELL AS TECHNICALLY ADEPT. PLAYERS IN THIS ROLE, IN THIS SYSTEM HAVE TAKEN A WHILE TO ADAPT TO PLAYING THE ROLE.
- WHEN PRESSING HIGH AND AGGRESSIVELY IN THIS SYSTEM, WINNING THE BALL HIGH UP THE PITCH IS VITAL. IF THE OPPOSITION PLAY THROUGH THE PRESS, IT CAN CREATE OVERLOADS IN DANGEROUS AREAS OF THE PITCH.

MAN ORIENTED HIGH-PRESS IN A 4-2-2-2

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KEY FACTORS:

4-2-2-2 REVERTS TO MORE A 4-4-2 SHAPE.

THE SHAPE LOOKS TO REMAIN NARROW TO FORCE NATURAL PRESSING TRIGGERS IN WIDE AREAS, USING THE TOUCHLINE AS AN EXTRA DEFENDER.

THE ULTIMATE AIM IS TO WIN THE BALL AS CLOSE TO THE OPPOSITION'S GOAL AS POSSIBLE TO FORCE AN ATTACKING TRANSITION, INCREASING THE PROBABILITY OF SCORING.

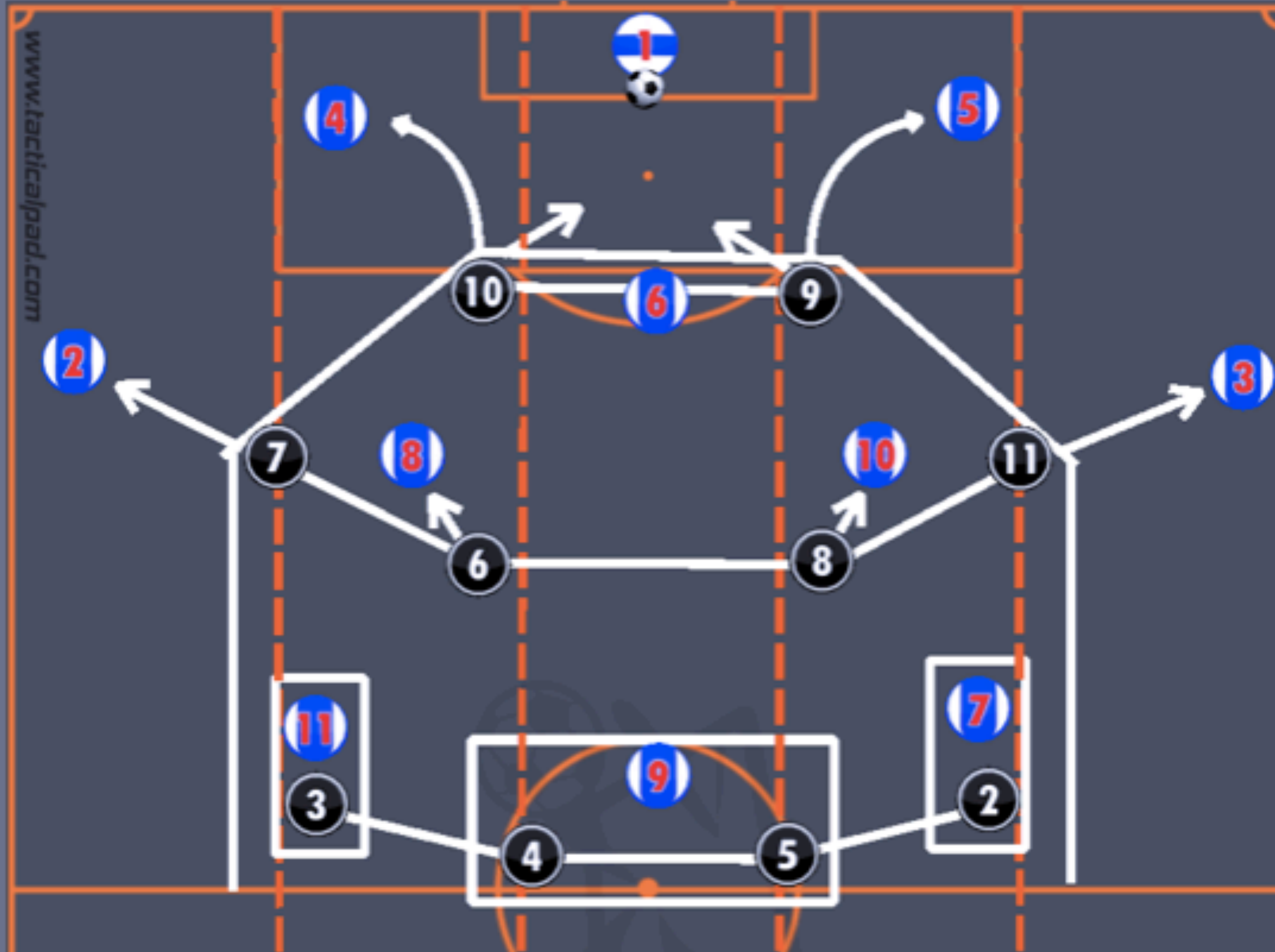
CF'S ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR INITIATING THE PRESS BY FORCING THE CB TO PLAY INTO THE FB. CF'S ALSO HAVE TO ACT AS A CENTRAL SCREEN TO PREVENT THE BALL GOING INTO THE OPPOSITION PIVOT PLAYER.

THE TWO NUMBER 10'S START A LITTLE WIDER TO ENSURE THAT THEY ARE DISTANCED WELL ENOUGH TO APPLY PRESSURE TO THE OPPOSITION FB'S WHEN THEY RECEIVE FROM THE CB'S.

THE TWO CM'S ARE EACH RESPONSIBLE FOR A MORE ADVANCED OPPOSITION CM.

THE TWO FB'S TRACK THE OPPOSITION WIDE PLAYERS, AND CAN ADJUST THEIR STARTING POSITION ACCORDINGLY.

THE TWO CB'S CAN CREATE A 2V1 SITUATION AND ISOLATE THE OPPOSITION CF.



KEY FACTORS



4-4-2

STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES OF THE 4-4-2

THE 4-4-2 BECAME SYNONYMOUS WITH ENGLISH FOOTBALL IN THE 90S/00S SINCE THE SIMPLICITY OF THE SYSTEM AND HOW TO UTILISE IT HAS MADE IT STILL A POPULAR SYSTEM TO THIS DAY. ARGUABLY, THE BEST LOW-BLOCK FORMATION, THE 4-4-2 CAN STILL BE EFFECTIVE WHEN ATTACKING, AND IN ALL PHASES OF THE GAME.

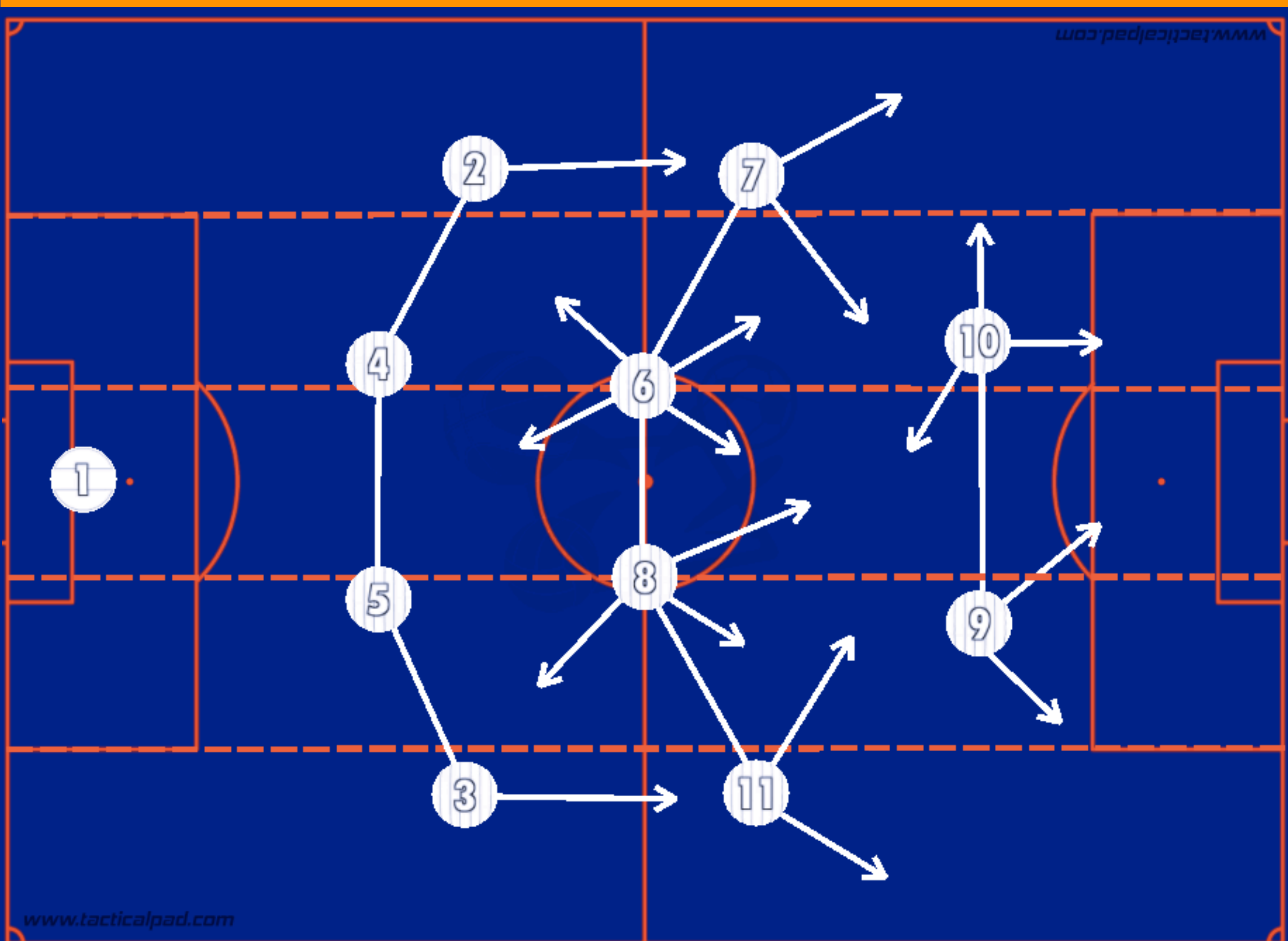
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NATURAL STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

INITIAL SET-UP

STRENGTHS

WEAKNESSES



- IT'S A VERY SIMPLISTIC SYSTEM THAT IS EASY TO IMPLEMENT AND COACH.
- DEFENSIVELY, THE SYSTEM PROVIDES GOOD COVERAGE WITH TWO DEFENSIVE LINES OF FOUR.
- TWO WIDE PLAYERS CAN COMBINE TO PENETRATE THE OPPOSITION IN WIDER AREAS.
- TWO CENTRE FORWARDS CAN OCCUPY AND PLAY 1V1 AGAINST OPPOSITION CENTRE-BACKS.
- THE SYSTEM SUITS A MAN-ORIENTED HIGH PRESS WITH THE FOUR PLAYERS (CF'S AND WIDE MIDFIELDERS) ABLE TO MATCH UP WITH THE OPPOSITION CB'S AND FB'S.
- WHEN IN A LOW BLOCK, THE 4-4-2 CAN NATURALLY MAINTAIN GOOD VERTICAL COMPACTNESS AND FORCE THE OPPOSITION AWAY FROM CENTRAL PENETRATIVE AREAS.

- CONSIDERED A RIGID AND STRUCTURED FORMATION WHICH CAN AFFECT PLAYER ROTATIONS AND MOVEMENTS.
- CENTRAL MIDFIELD CAN BECOME OUTNUMBERED WHEN PLAYING AGAINST THREE CM'S.
- THERE IS A NATURAL ABSENCE OF A MIDFIELD SIX WHICH CAN HINDER A TEAMS ATTACKING STRATEGY, RISKING OVER COMMITMENT.
- NO 'NUMBER TEN' SUGGESTS A LACK OF MOVEMENT IN AND AROUND ZONE 14. ESPECIALLY IF ONE OF THE CF'S DOESN'T DROP DEEPER.
- WHEN BUILDING THE ATTACK FROM DEEP, THERE CAN BE LESS PASSING OPTIONS THAT PLAYING IN A 4-3-3 FOR EXAMPLE.

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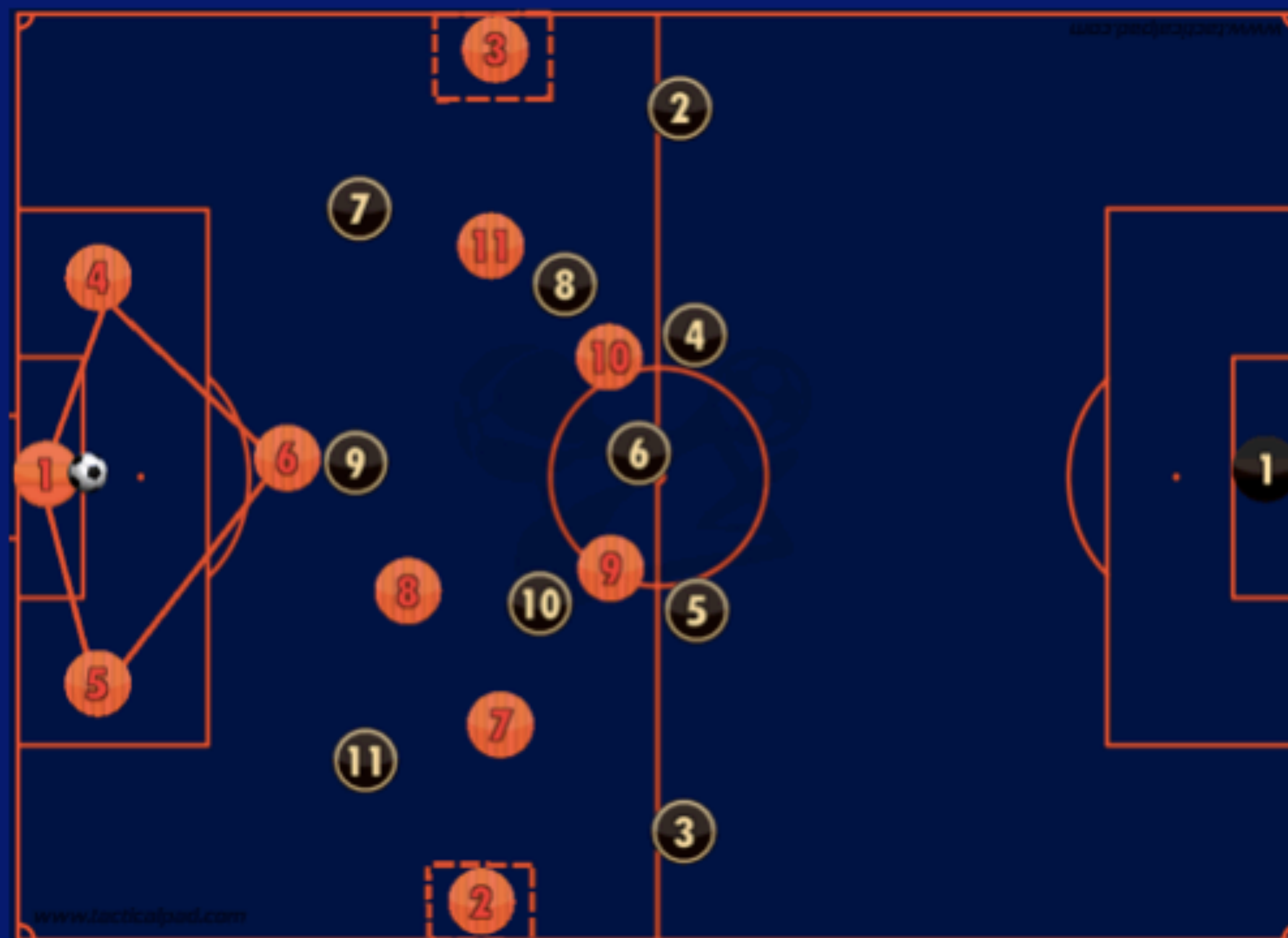
- MATCH SITUATION
- THE TIME WITHIN A GAME
- WHEN WINNING, LOSING, OR DRAWING
- COACH PHILOSOPHY
- PLAYER ABILITY
- THE OPPOSITION

FROM A GOAL-KICK SITUATION

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KEY POINTS:

- CB'S RECEIVING IN 18- YARD BOX
- FULL-BACKS HIGH AND WIDE
- PIVOT PLAYER DROPPING TO CREATE A DIAMOND



FROM A GOAL-KICK SITUATION

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DRAWING IN TO PENETRATE



THE AIM IS TO DRAW THE OPPONENT IN TO BE ABLE TO PLAY THROUGH. THE KEY IN THIS PATTERN IS INDIVIDUAL MOVEMENTS: BOTH CM'S SUPPORT (1 THROUGH A PIVOT AND THE OTHER TO POSITION TO RECEIVE OFF THE SECOND PASS I.E CB-CB-CM(8). THIS CREATES A RHOMBUS WHICH CAN CREATE AN OVERLOAD EITHER 4V1 OR 4V3 . SIMILAR TO THE PLOY USED BY LILLE.

THE WM'S CAN INVERT CENTRALLY AKIN TO SALZBURG/PSV/SOUTHAMPTON TO RECEIVE A MORE DIRECT PASS FROM THE CB'S.

A LONGER PASS CAN BE OFFERED BY A DIAGONAL PASS TO THE FB'S OR IF ABSOLUTELY NECESSARY, THE CB CAN PASS INTO THE CHANNELS FOR THE CF

FROM CB'S IN THE BUILDING PHASE

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INDIVIDUAL ROLES IN BUILD UP

GK- SUPPORT AND OFFER A PASS ANGLE BY SHUTTLING TO BALL SIDE.

CB'S- POSITIVE TOUCH WITH INSTEP LOOK TO BUILD BY CARRYING BALL AND DRAWING IN OPPOSITION CF. OTHER CB MUST ALWAYS BE AVAILABLE FOR A SQUARE PASS TO RETAIN AND UNLOCK OTHER SIDE

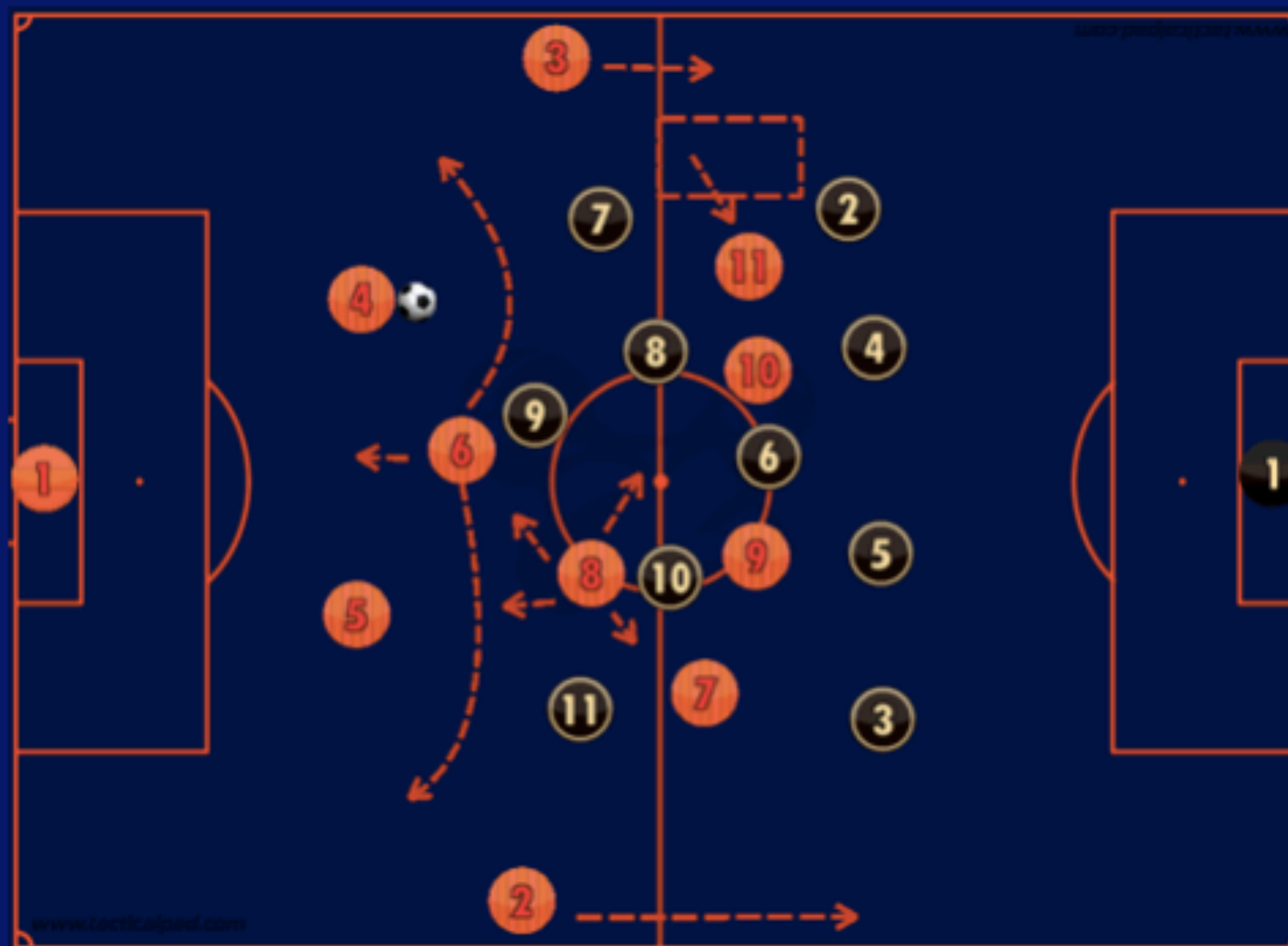
FB'S- OPPOSITE SIDE FB OPERATE HIGH AND WIDE FOR A DIAGONAL PASS OPTION FB ON BALL SIDE CAN DROP NARROW TO RECEIVE BALL OFF OF CB.

THE 6- BE THE PIVOT AND ALWAYS AVAILABLE MAKE A MOVE AWAY FROM CONGESTED MIDFIELD EITHER BETWEEN THE CB'S OR OUTSIDE TO CREATE A BACK THREE IN THE BUILD UP.

THE 8- REACT OFF THE MOVEMENTS OF THE SIX AND THE OPPOSITION TO FIND POCKETS OF SPACE TO RECEIVE A PASS. USE AS A DECOY TO DRAW OUT AN OPPOSITION MIDFIELDER.

11&7- WM'S SHUTTLE INTO THE HALF-SPACES FOR A SNAPPY DIRECT LINE BREAKING PASS FROM THE CB. I.E THE CB(4) TO WM(11)

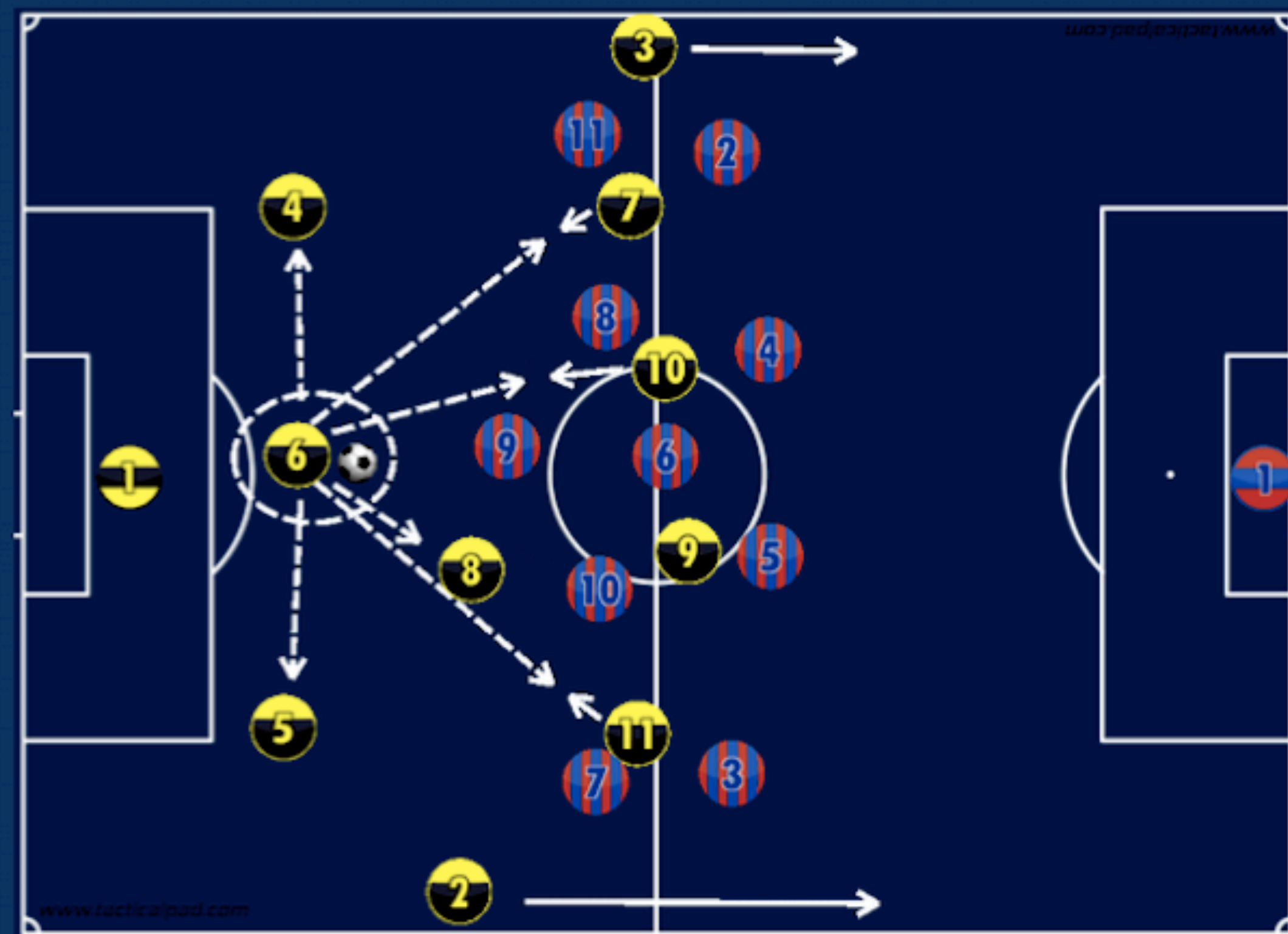
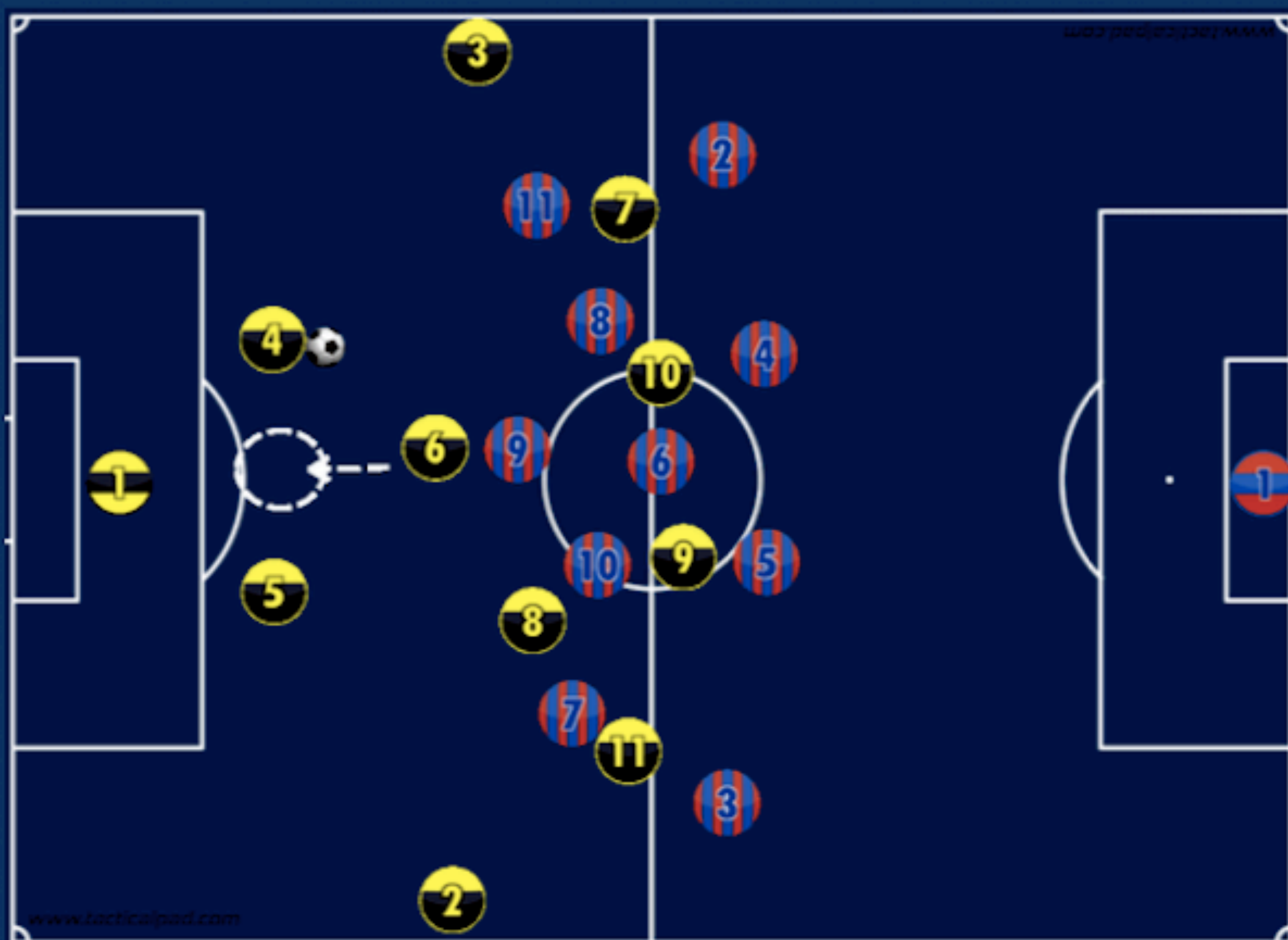
THE CF'S- BE PROACTIVE ONE COMES SHORT INTO THE SPACE WHILST THE OTHER PINS THE OPPOSITION CB, BE READY FOR A LONGER PASS



4-4-2 IN THE BUILD PHASE: Movements of the midfield pivot player

'In between'

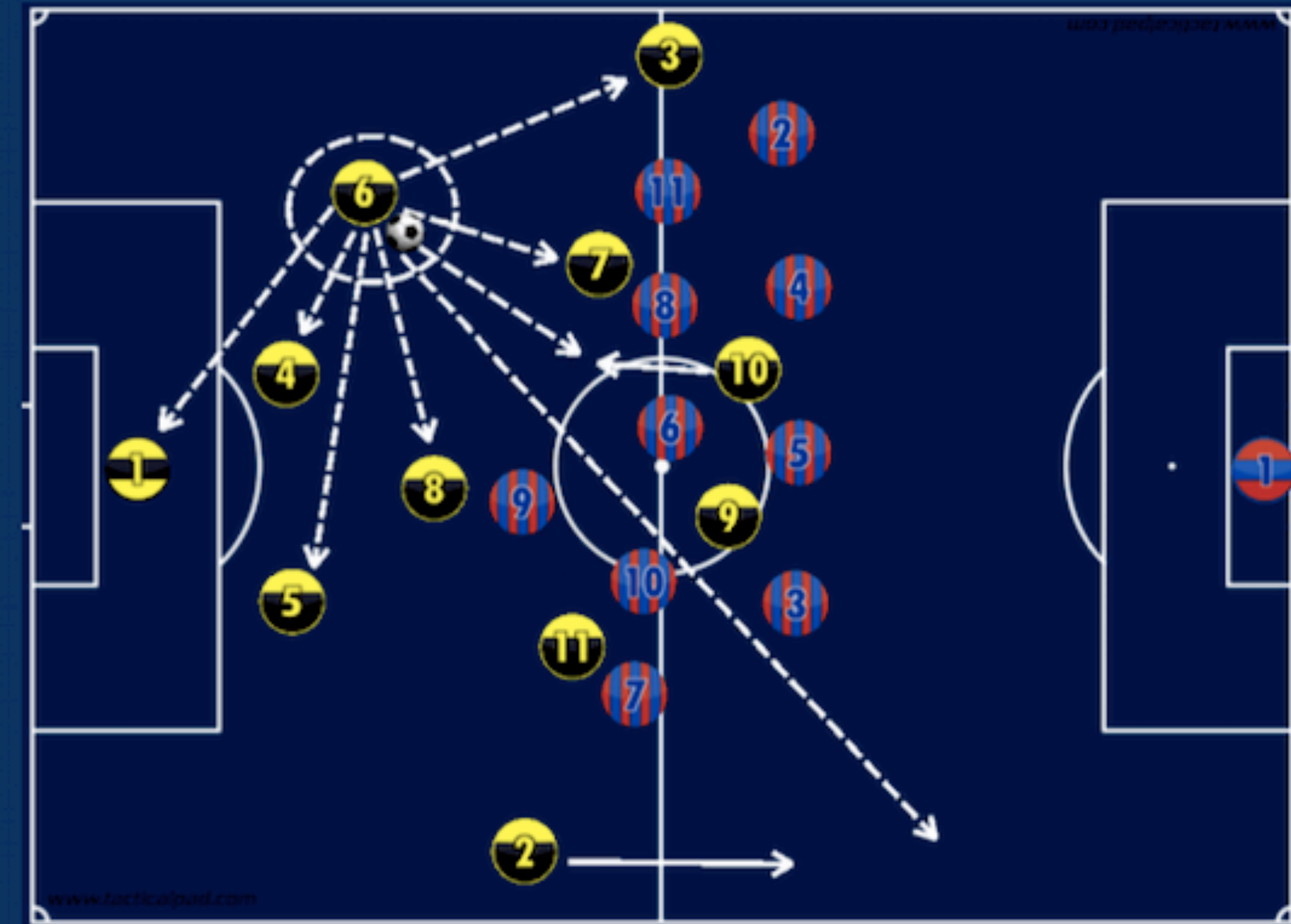
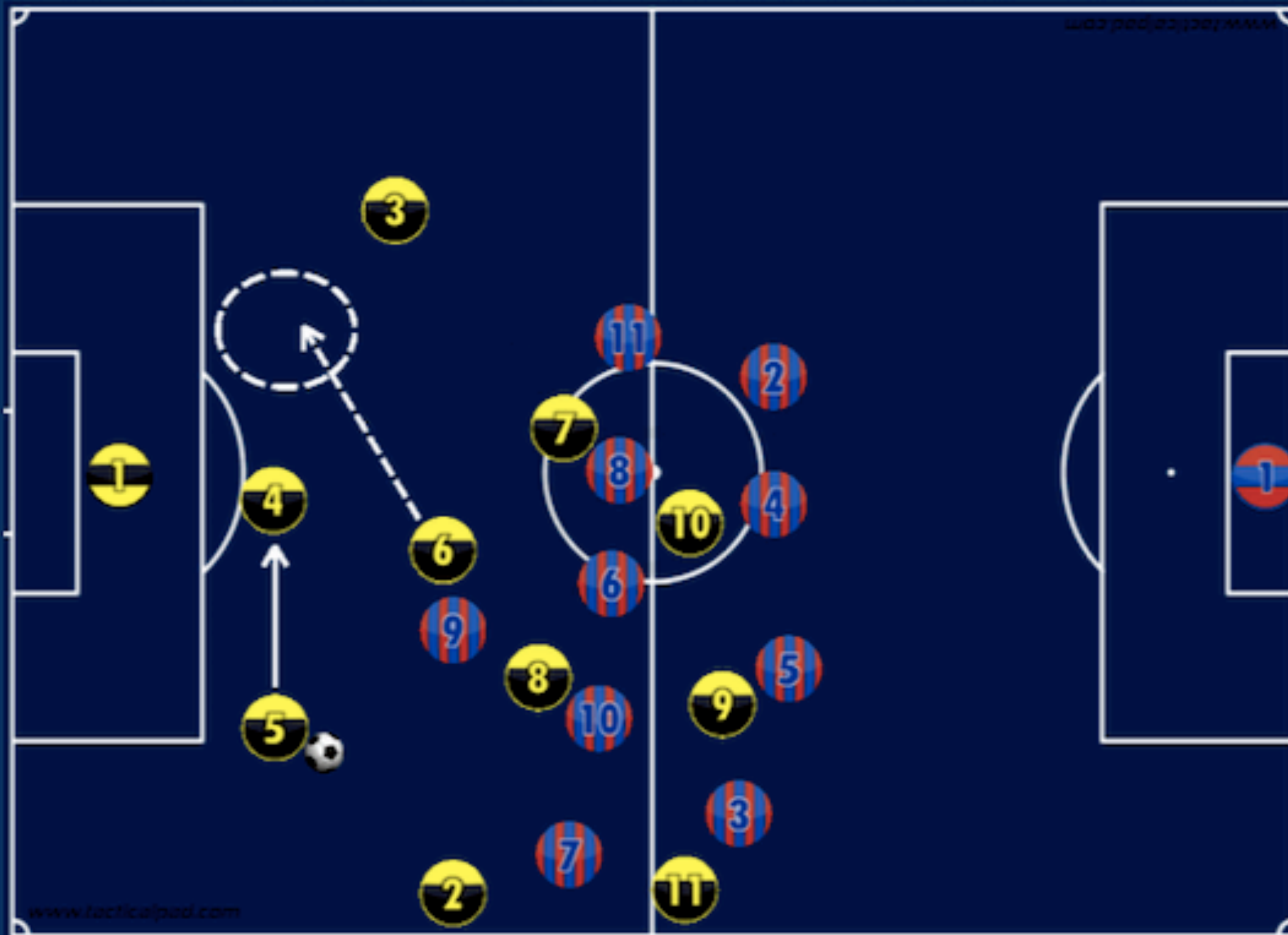
One movement the pivot player in a 4-4-2 can make is to move in between the two centre-backs to create a passing angle. This is particularly important to find space against a three-man midfield applying little pressure on the two centre-backs, congesting the middle third. This movement can present more passing options when the pivot receives the ball in these areas.



4-4-2 IN THE BUILD PHASE: Movements of the midfield pivot player

'OUTSIDE'

Another movement is to move to a position outside the centre-back. This is common when one centre-back has the ball in a wider area and has to play a square pass to the other centre-back who has been dragged across. This movement is aimed at unlocking the opposition on the opposite side of the pitch to where the ball is. As a result of this movement, the Full-back is given more license to venture further forward.



ATLETICO MADRID DEFENSIVE PRINCIPLES

DIEGO SIMEONE'S DEFENSIVE 4-4-2



ATLETICO MADRID DEFENSIVE SHAPE



MID-BLOCK



When in a mid-block, Atletico Madrid operate in a 4-4-1-1 formation with Joao Felix usually the one to drop deeper, when the opposition defence has the ball in the half-space. Joao Felix's positioning stops the pass to the oppositions deeper pivot player, again aiming to stop passes into the central portion of the pitch. One CF (Suarez/Correa) also shuts off the ball back towards the GK or the other CB, instead dictating the ball wide.



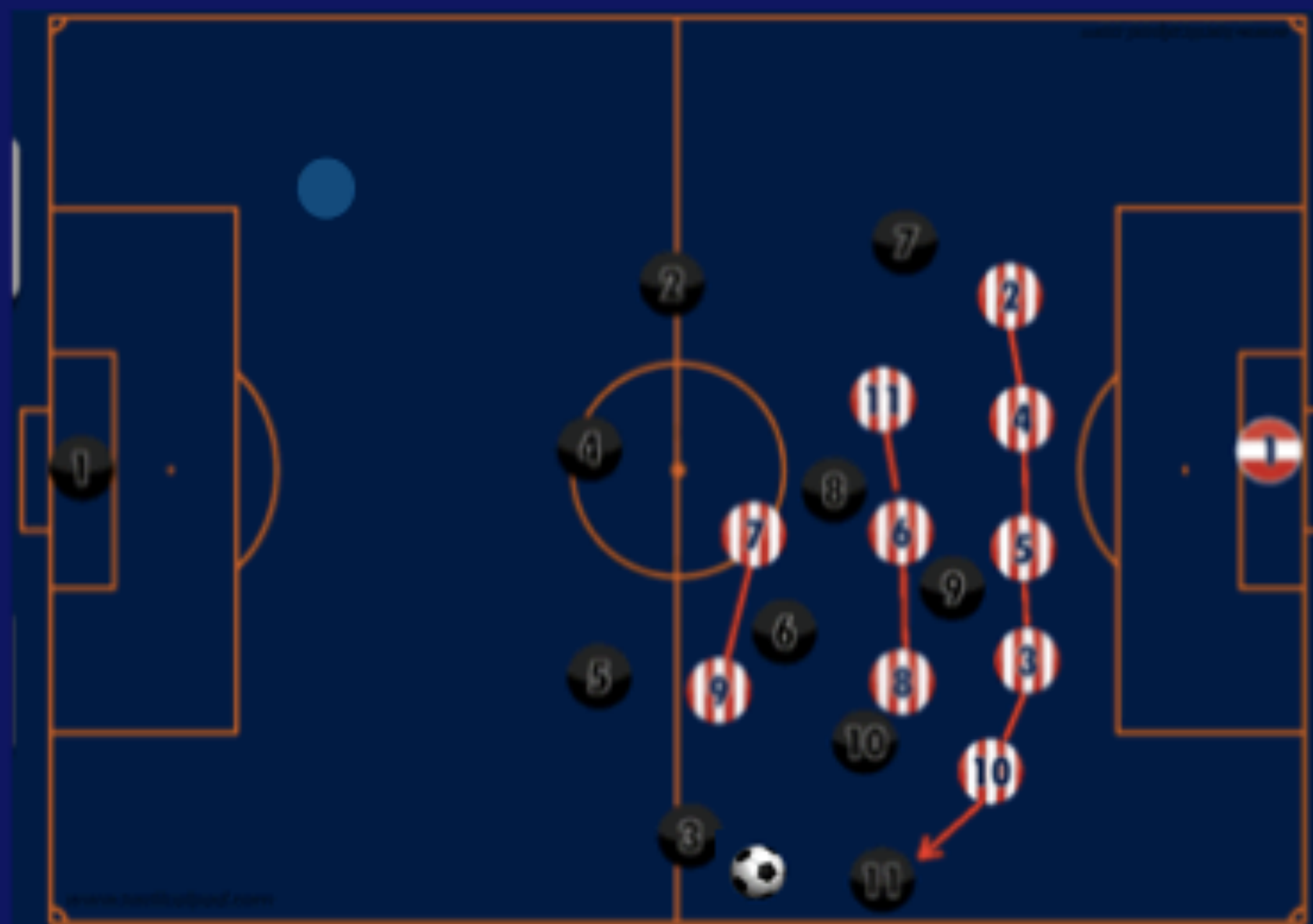


ATLETICO MADRID DEFENSIVE SHAPE



DEFENDING DEEP

When defending deep, Atletico shift to 5-3-2 formation with one of the wide midfielders (Usually Carrasco) on the left shifting alongside the Full-back (Usually Hermoso) to counter the threat down a specific side. Atletico Madrid also look to overload the ball-side to make it hard for opposition to penetrate and break through their defensive lines.



4-3-2-1



STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES OF THE 4-3-2-1 FORMATION

THE 4-3-2-1 OTHERWISE KNOWN AS THE 'CHRISTMAS TREE' FORMATION BECAME SYNONYMOUS WITH CARLO ANCELOTTI'S AC MILAN TEAM THAT WON THE CHAMPIONS LEAGUE IN 2007. THE FORMATION WAS AN EVOLUTION OF THE 4-1-2-1-2 WITH THE ACQUISITION OF NEW PLAYERS TO FIT THE 'CHRISTMAS TREE' SYSTEM. THE SYSTEM RELIED ON CENTRAL DOMINANCE ALONGSIDE MARAUDING FULL-BACKS TO PROVIDE WIDTH IN THE ATTACKING PHASE.

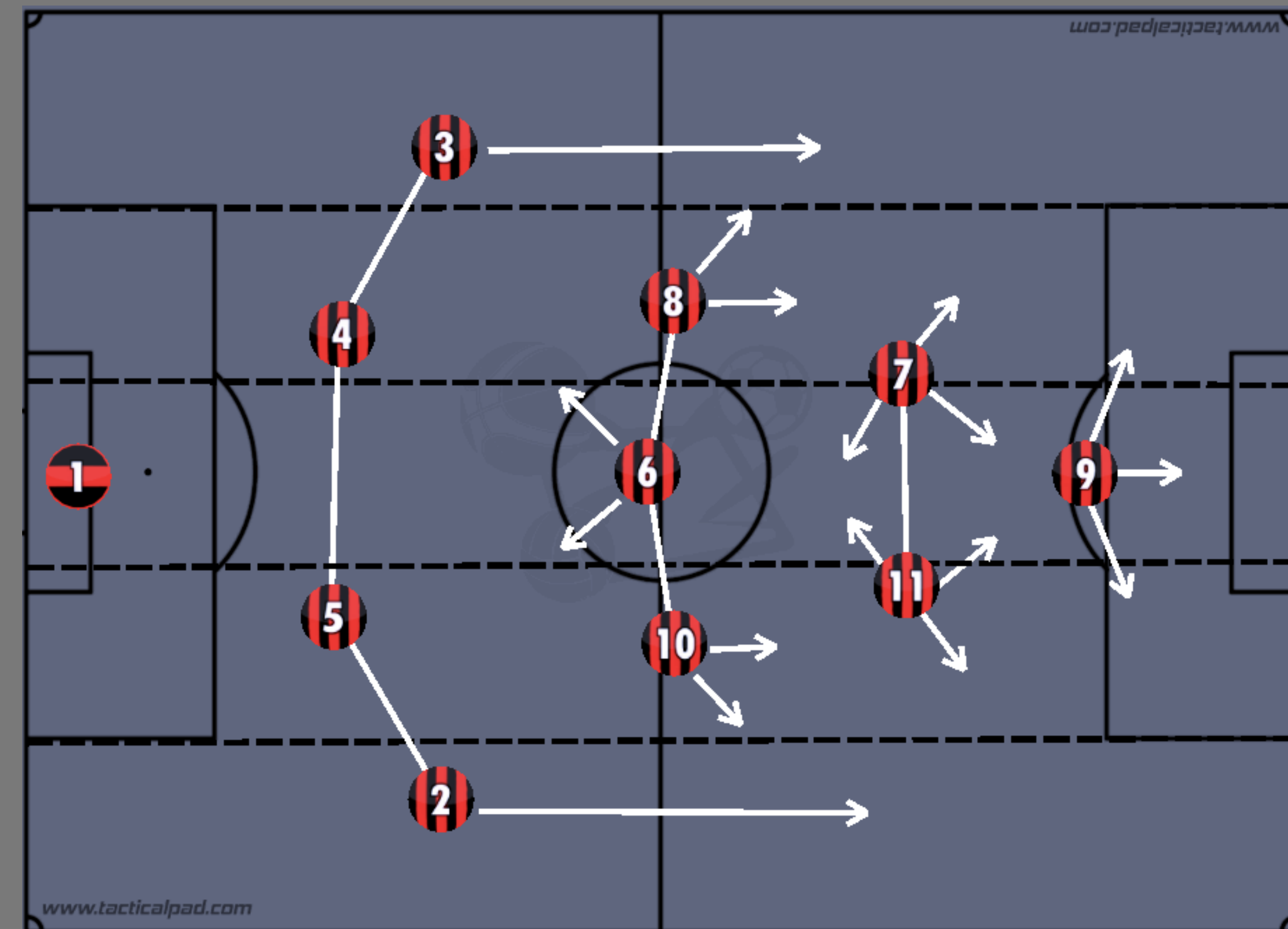
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NATURAL STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

INITIAL SET-UP

STRENGTHS

WEAKNESSES



- CENTRAL MIDFIELD SUPERIORITY IS OFFERED BY THE NUMBERS IN MIDFIELD.
- THE CENTRAL MIDFIELDERS, IN THE DEFENSIVE PHASE, PROVIDE GOOD COVERAGE, ABLE TO ZONAL MARK THE THREE CENTRAL VERTICAL ZONES.
- THE TWO ADVANCED MIDFIELDERS ARE ABLE TO OPERATE CLOSE TO THE CF, PROVIDING A NATURAL LINK TO THE LONE STRIKER.
- THE NATURAL POSITIONING OF THE TWO ADVANCED MIDFIELDERS ENCOURAGE THEM TO OPERATE IN AND AROUND ZONE 14, AND IN BETWEEN THE DEFENSIVE LINES.
- THE CF IS SUPPORTED BY THE TWO ADVANCED CM'S ALONGSIDE THE FB'S PROVIDING PENETRATION FROM WIDER AREAS.

- IN THIS SYSTEM, THERE IS A NATURAL LACK OF WIDTH.
- THE WIDTH AND THE OPPORTUNITY TO PENETRATE IN WIDER AREAS IS MADE HARDER IF THE FB'S CAN'T FIT THE DEMANDING ROLE.
- THE SYSTEM OPERATES WITHOUT A NATURAL ANCHORING MIDFIELDER, THIS CAN LEAVE THE TEAM VULNERABLE IN THE DEFENSIVE AND DEFENSIVE TRANSITION PHASES.
- THE FB'S CAN BE ISOLATED AND OVERLOADED IF NOT SUPPORTED EFFECTIVELY.
- IF A CM SHUFFLES WIDER TO ASSIST THE FB IN WIDER AREAS, POCKETS OF SPACE CAN OPEN UP IN CENTRAL MIDFIELD, ESPECIALLY IF THE OTHER CM'S ARE SLOW TO REACT OFF OF THIS INDIVIDUAL MOVEMENT.

3-4-3

STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES OF THE 3-4-3

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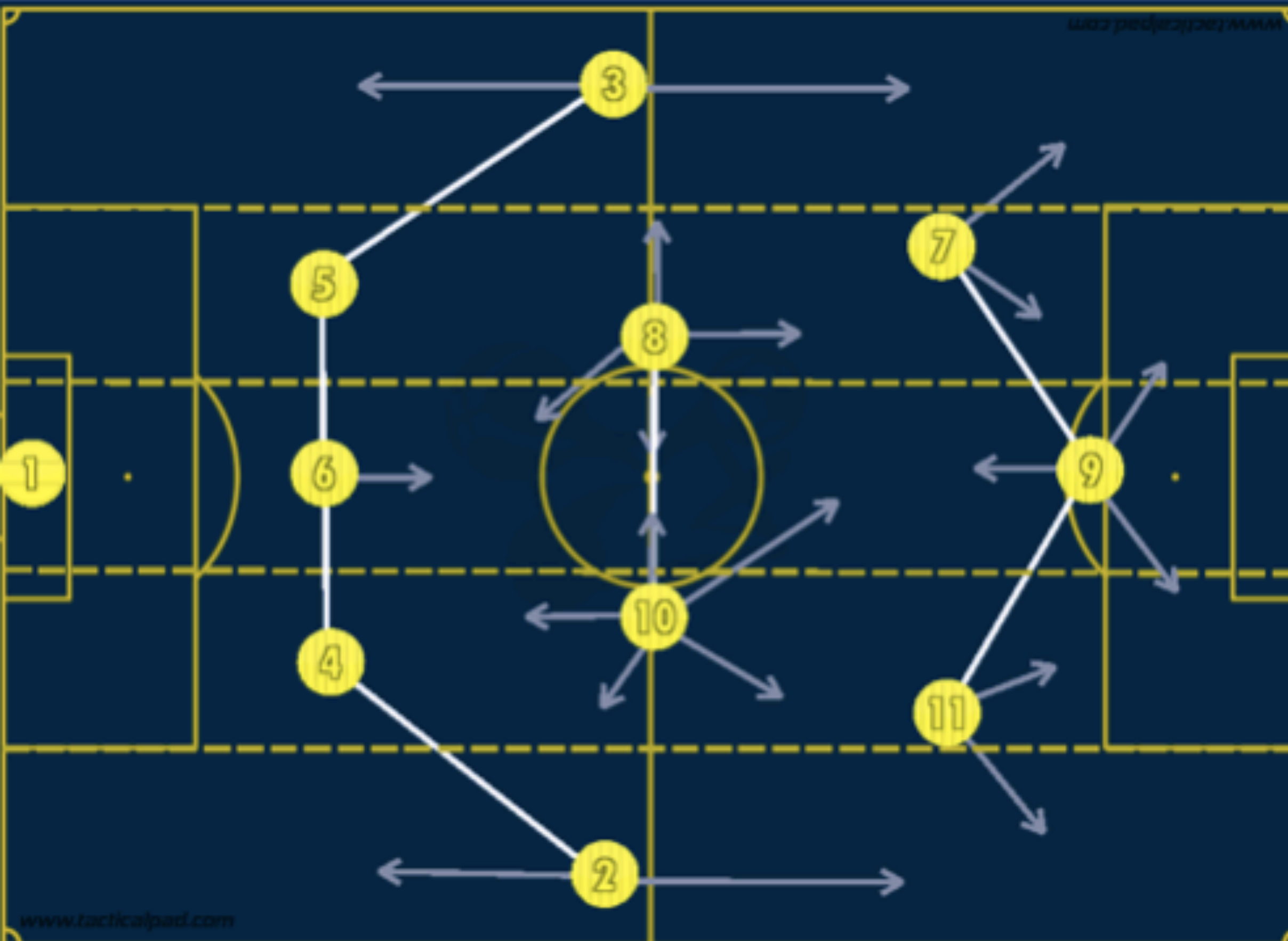
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DESPITE A THREE OR FIVE AT THE BACK SOMETIMES BEING ASSOCIATED WITH BEING A RIGID STRUCTURE, THE 3-4-3 CAN BE A FLUID SET-UP, ABLE TO NATURALLY ADAPT ITS SHAPE IN SPECIFIC MATCH SITUATIONS. WHEN IN A LOW BLOCK, THE 3-4-3 CAN SHIFT TO A 5-4-1 FOR DEFENSIVE SOLIDITY. WHEN ATTACKING THE 3-4-3 CAN SHIFT TO A SHAPE RESEMBLING A 3-2-5, WITH THE WING-BACKS OPERATING IN MORE ADVANCED POSITIONS

NATURAL STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

INITIAL SET-UP



STRENGTHS

- THE 3-4-3 ALLOWS FOR FULL ZONAL DEFENSIVE COVERAGE, ESPECIALLY WHEN DEFENDING WITH FIVE AT THE BACK.
- THE SHIFT TO A 5-4-1 WHEN IN A LOW/MID BLOCK CAN MAKE IT HARD FOR THE OPPOSITION TO PENETRATE.
- WITH TWO WIDE PLAYERS, THE SYSTEM CAN PROTECT AGAINST OPPOSITION OVERLOADS IN THESE AREAS. ALTERNATIVELY, THE SYSTEM PROMOTES ATTACKING WING BACKS WHICH CAN OVERLOAD THE OPPOSITION 2V1 IF THEIR FULL BACK IS CAUGHT HIGH UP THE PITCH.
- THE 3-4-3 NATURALLY CREATES A NUMBER OF PASSING ANGLES WHEN BUILDING THE ATTACK FROM DEEP.
- THE SYSTEM PROMOTES OVERLOADS IN THE FINAL THIRD WHEN ATTACKING. THE WIDTH COMES FROM WING-BACKS, WITH THE WIDE MIDFIELDERS INVERTING INTO THE HALF-SPACES. IT CAN CREATE A 5V4 OVERLOAD WHEN PLAYING AGAINST A TEAM PLAYING WITH A BACK FOUR.

WEAKNESSES

- WHEN DEFENDING AS PART OF A BACK THREE/FIVE COMMUNICATION IS KEY WHEN DEFENDING ZONALLY, AS A RESULT IT CAN TAKE A PERIOD OF TIME TO PERFECT
- WIDE AREAS CAN BE WEAK POINT WHEN ENTERING A DEFENSIVE TRANSITION, ESPECIALLY IF THE WING-BACKS ARE IN ADVANCED WIDE POSITIONS.
- THE MIDFIELD AREA CAN BECOME OVERLOADED 3V2 AGAINST A TEAM PLAYING A 4-3-3 OR 4-2-3-1.
- THE WIDE MIDFIELDERS NEED TO BE DISCIPLINED TO ENSURE THAT THE WING-BACKS ARE NOT OVERLOADED 2V1.
- IN THE SYSTEM, THERE IS A NATURAL ABSENCE OF A NUMBER 10 OPERATING IN AND AROUND ZONE 14, LINKING MIDFIELD TO ATTACK.
- THE CENTRE FORWARD CAN BECOME ISOLATED WHEN THE SHAPE SHIFTS INTO A LOW/MID BLOCK.

PASSING OPTIONS AND ATTACKING STRUCTURE IN A 3-4-3

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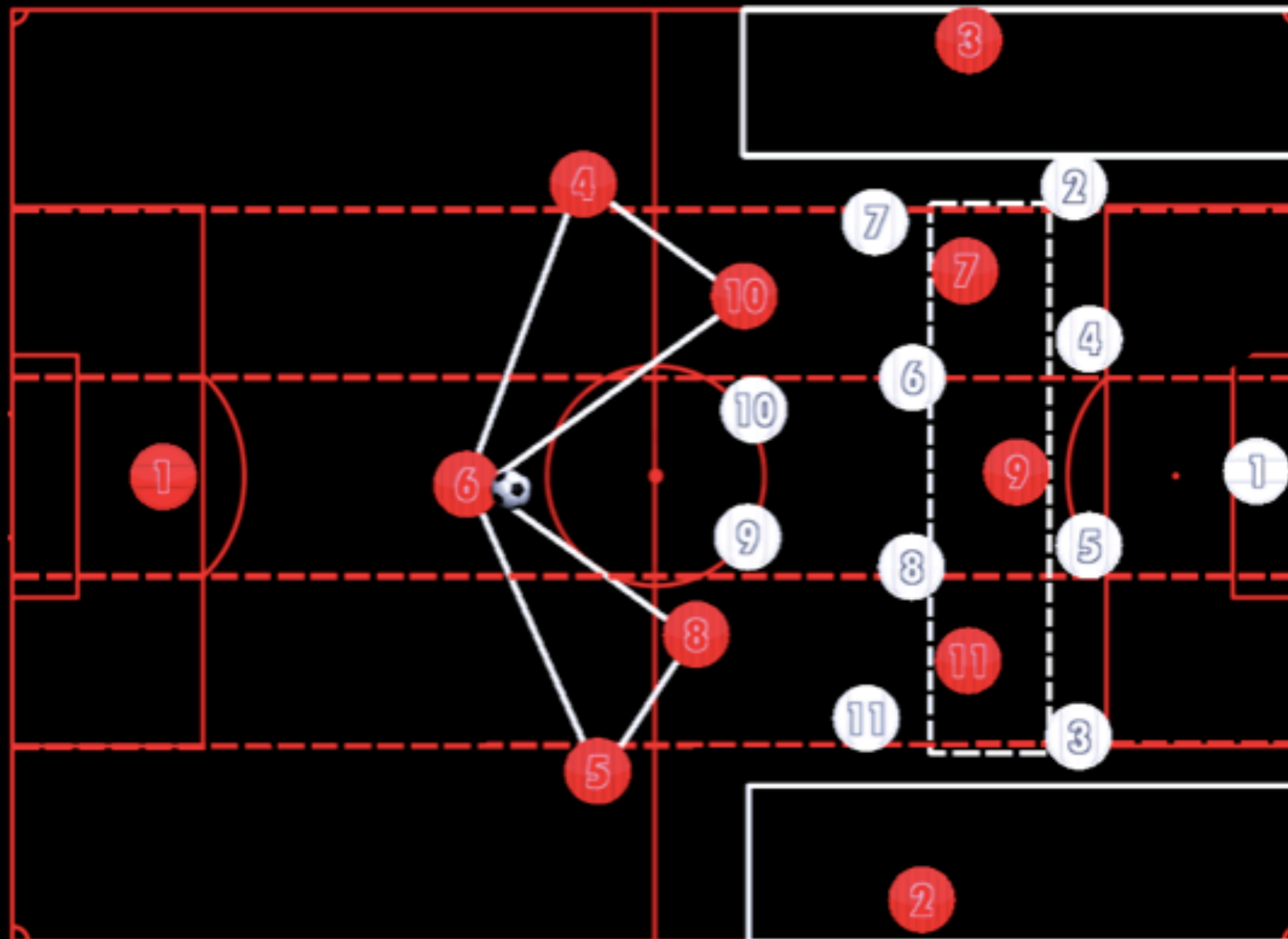
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THE 3-4-3 PROVIDES GOOD COVERAGE OF THE PITCH IN THE ATTACKING PHASE, THE SYSTEM ENCOURAGES QUICK PENETRATION BUT ALSO CAN ALSO BE A GOOD SYSTEM TO RETAIN THE BALL TO UNLOCK THE OPPOSITION IN A MORE PATIENT MANNER.

STRUCTURE

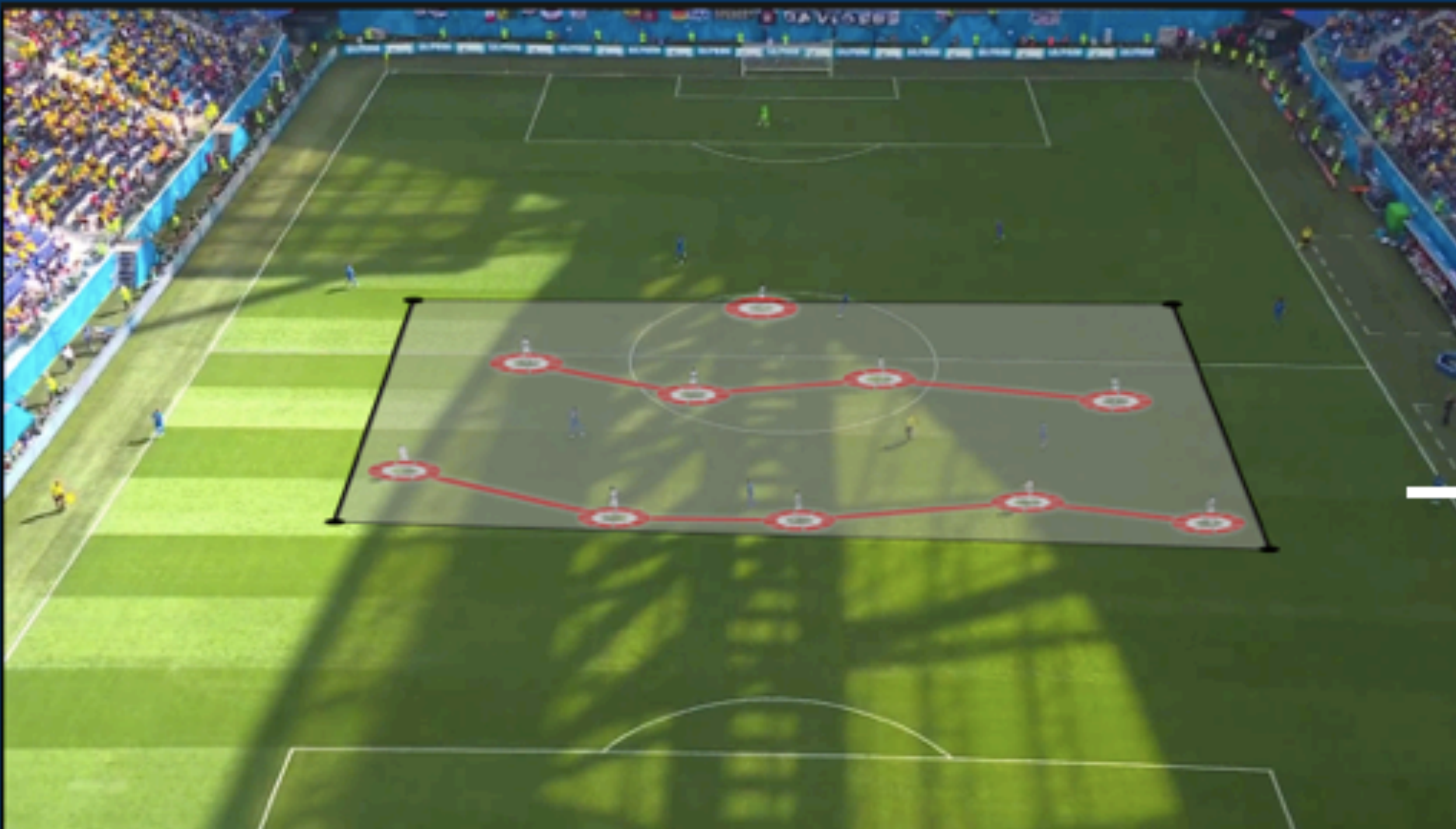


KEY FACTORS

- WHEN BUILDING FROM THE CENTRE BACKS, THE PLAYER IN POSSESSION CAN HAVE FOUR PASSING OPTIONS, CREATING TRIANGLES WITH THE OTHER CB'S AND DEEPER CM'S.
- THE OUTSIDE CB'S SHOULD OPERATE WITH SOME WIDTH TO RECEIVE IN SPACE, AND AREAS THAT THEY CAN PROGRESS THE ATTACK. I.E THE 4 RECEIVES AND PLAYS THE 3 OR THE 10, OR EVEN THE 7 IF THEY'VE FOUND SPACE.
- THE CM'S SHOULD RETAIN SOME DEPTH TO BE ABLE TO SUPPORT THE BUILD UP PLAY. THEY CAN RECEIVE ON THE HALF TURN AND LOOK TO PENETRATE EARLY, OR CAN RETAIN POSSESSION BY PASSING TO A WIDER CB OR WB TO TRY AND UNLOCK.
- THE WB'S OPERATE IN A HIGH AND WIDE POSITION OUTSIDE OF THE OPPOSITION BLOCK TO RECEIVE A DIAGONAL SWITCH BALL. THIS IS AIMED AT TRYING TO DISJOINT THE OPPOSITION BLOCK.
- THE ADVANTAGE WITH THIS SYSTEM IN THE ATTACKING PHASE IS THAT IT ENCOURAGES PLAYERS OPERATING BETWEEN THE DEFENSIVE LINES, AS DEMONSTRATED BY THE 7, 9 AND 11.
- IN PARTICULAR, THE 7&11 SHOULD LOOK TO DROP DEEPER TO RECEIVE THE BALL IF NECESSARY, RECEIVING ON THE HALF-TURN TO LOOK TO PENETRATE VIA A DRIBBLE OR PASS TO THE 9 OR IN THE SPACE BEHIND THE DEFENCE FOR THE 9 TO RUN INTO.

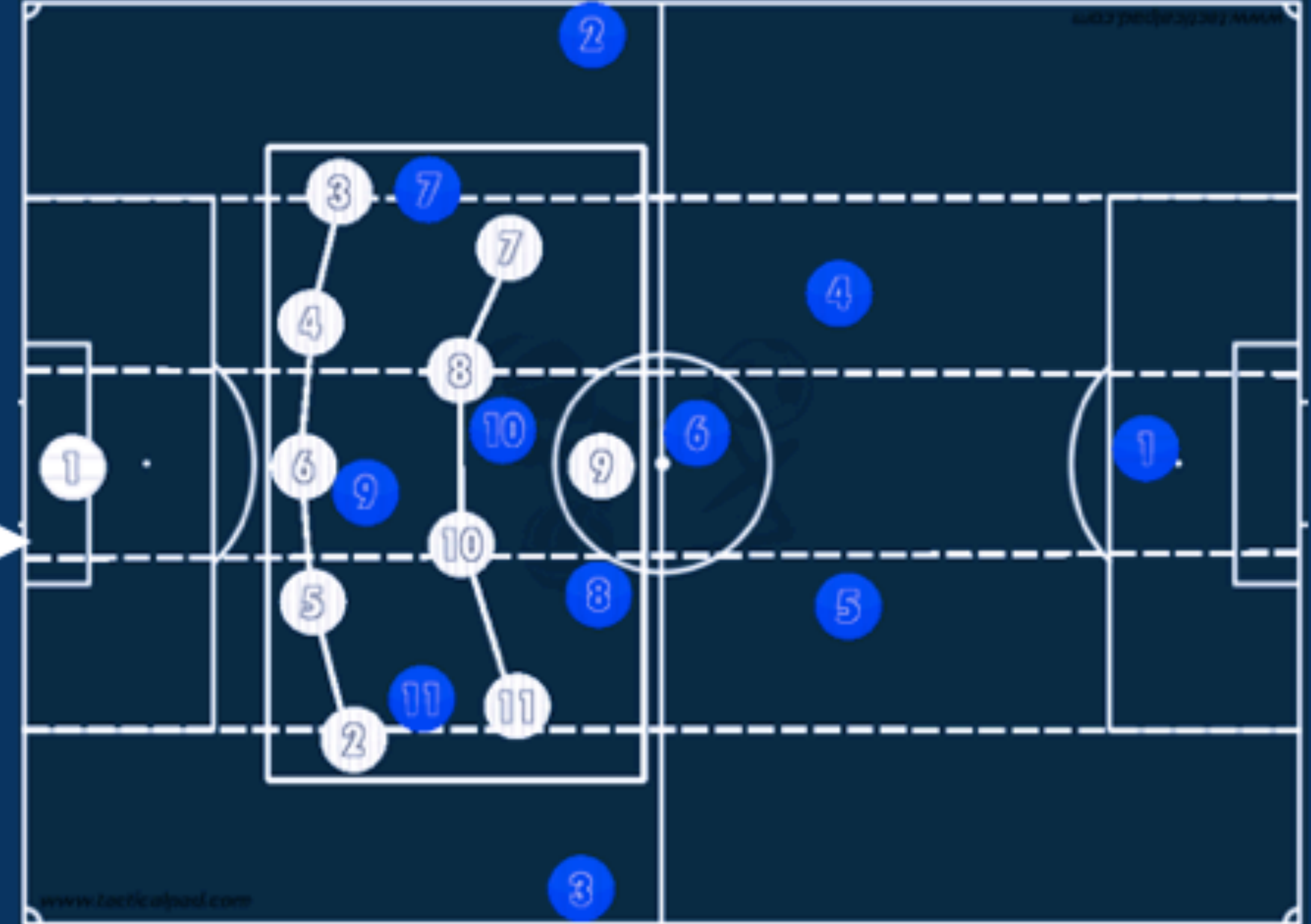
3-4-3: OUT OF POSSESSION

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PLAYER ROLES:

- CF TO GUIDE PLAY INTO WIDER AREAS, PREVENTING A CENTRAL BALL.
- TWO WIDE MIDFIELDERS READY TO INITIATE A PRESS WHEN BALL IS PLAYED INTO WIDER AREAS.
- TWO CM'S LOOK TO SCREEN, AND PREVENT A BALL FROM THE OPPOSITION CB'S TO THEIR FORWARDS.
- FB'S REMAIN NARROW, THEN SUPPORT THE PRESS IN WIDE AREAS WHILST THE BALL IS TRAVELLING.
- CB'S NEED TO COMMUNICATE EFFECTIVELY IN A ZONAL MARKING SYSTEM, TO BE ABLE TO 'PASS ON' OPPOSITION FORWARDS, LOOKING TO EFFICIENTLY MARK THEIR DEFENSIVE ZONES.
- GK SHOULD TAKE UP A POSITIVE STARTING POSITION, LOOKING TO SWEEP ANY THROUGH BALLS OR LONG BALLS OVER THE DEFENCE.



THE 3-4-3 CAN ALSO BE AN EXCELLENT SYSTEM FOR DEFENSIVE COVERAGE. THE 3-4-3 SHIFTS TO A 5-4-1 AND PROVIDES GOOD ZONAL COVERAGE WHEN IN A MID/LOW BLOCK, WITH EACH VERTICAL ZONE ACCOUNTED FOR. WHEN IN A COMPACT AND NARROW SHAPE AS SHOWN ABOVE, IT MAKES IT HARD FOR THE OPPOSITION TO PENETRATE THROUGH A BANK OF FIVE AND A BANK OF FOUR. THE NARROWING OF THE SYSTEM WHEN DEFENDING, PROVIDES NATURAL PRESSING TRIGGERS IN THE WIDE AREAS, WHERE THE 3-4-3/5-4-1 CAN INITIATE A PRESS USING THE TOUCHLINE AS AN EXTRA DEFENDER.

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3-4-3 DIAMOND



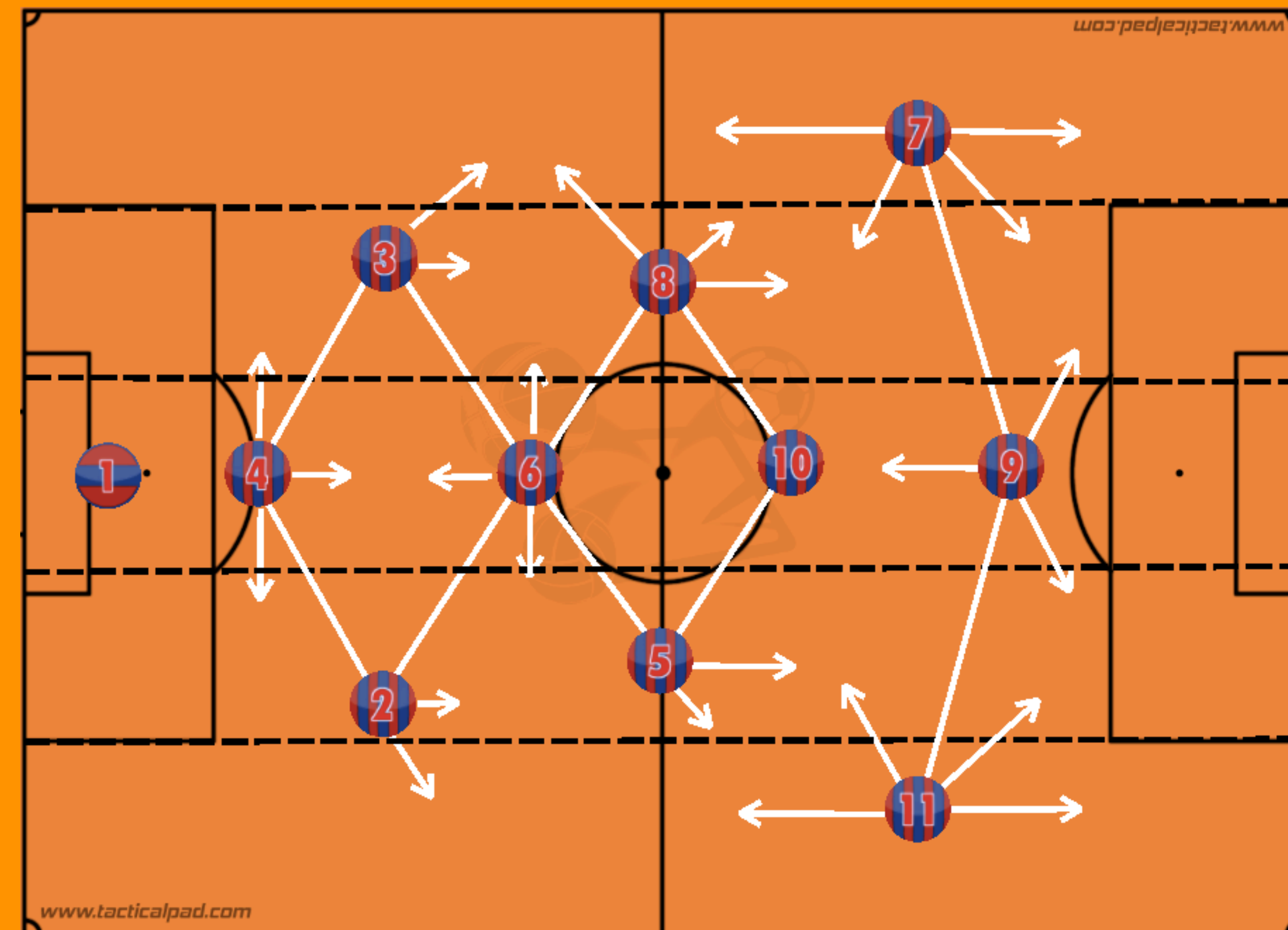
JOHAN CRUYFF'S 3-4-3 DIAMOND

JOHAN CRUYFF'S 3-4-3 DIAMOND RELIED ON CREATING SUPERIOR PASSING ANGLES UTILISING BOTH TRIANGLES AND DIAMONDS TO BE ABLE TO SHIFT THE BALL QUICKLY AND EFFECTIVELY. THE SYSTEM ALSO RELIED ON A HIGH NUMBER OF MOVEMENTS/ROTATIONS TO CREATE OVERLOADS AND BE ABLE TO PENETRATE THE OPPOSITION.

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INITIAL SET-UP

KEY FACTORS



- EMPHASIS ON CREATING DIAMONDS FOR SUPERIOR PASSING ANGLES AROUND THE OPPOSITION.
- THE DEFENCE AND MIDFIELD COMBINE TO CREATE TWO DIAMONDS.
- MIDDLE CB IS STAGGERED IN A 'LIBERO' ROLE TO RECEIVE FROM GK AND BE A PLAYMAKING OUTLET. RONALD KOEMAN WAS AN EXCELLENT PASSER AND DRIBBLER AND SUITED THIS ROLE EXCELLENTLY.
- THE OUTSIDE CB'S TENDED TO BE NATURAL FB'S AND HAD TO BE COMFORTABLE SHUTTLING OUT TO WIDE AREAS.
- THE PIVOT MIDFIELDER AS THE ENGINE AND MAINTAINED STRUCTURE AS THE SYSTEM ROTATED AROUND HIM.
- THE CM'S WERE GIVEN LICENSE TO JOIN THE ATTACK, AS PER THE FLUIDITY OF THE SYSTEM.
- THE WIDER PLAYERS IN THE SYSTEM ALSO ROTATED AND INTERCHANGED POSITIONALLY WITH THE OTHER FORWARD PLAYERS.
- THE CENTRE FORWARD PLAYED AS A 'FALSE NINE' OFTEN MOVING TO BE APART OF THE BUILDUP PLAY.

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3-5-2

ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES OF A 3-5-2

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IN POSSESSION

WHEN IN POSSESSION THE 3-5-2 CAN SHIFT TO A 3-4-1-2 WITH A CENTRAL MIDFIELDER ADVANCING TO LINK THE MIDFIELD TO THE FORWARDS



3-5-2 KEY FACTORS WHEN IN POSSESSION:

WIDER CB'S SHIFT INTO HALF SPACES TO CREATE ANGLES TO: 1) RECEIVE BALL. 2) POSITION IN BETTER SPACES TO PROGRESS THE BALL.

TWO CM'S CAN PROVIDE DEPTH AND CREATE A PIVOT TO RECEIVE FROM GK OR CB'S.

ONE CM OPERATES HIGHER UP THE PITCH TO LINK THE PLAY BETWEEN MIDFIELD AND ATTACK. ENSURING A CREATIVE LINK IN AND AROUND ZONE 14.

THE WING-BACKS PROVIDE WIDTH AND OPERATE HIGH.

TWO CF'S CREATE COMBINATIONS WITH EACH OTHER, WING-BACKS AND ATTACKING MIDFIELDER. ONE DROPS DEEPER WHILST ANOTHER LOOKS FOR RUNS OFF THE BACK OF A DEFENDER

NATURAL ADVS:

- 3 CB'S OFFER MORE PASSING OPTIONS WHEN PLAYING THROUGH THE THIRDS.
- 3 CM'S CAN CREATE OVERLOADS IN MIDDLE WITH SUPPORT FROM A CF DROPPING DEEPER.
- TWO CF'S CAN PIN OPPOSITION CB'S.

NATURAL DISADVS:

- 3 CB'S = ATTACK WITH ONE LESS ATTACKER COMPARED TO 2 CB'S.
- WB'S CAN BE OUTNUMBERED 2V1 OUT WIDE WHEN ATTACKING.
- THE 10 CAN BECOME OUTNUMBERED IF PLAYING AGAINST A DOUBLE 6 (4-2-3-1)

ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES OF A 3-5-2

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OUT OF POSSESSION



3-5-2 KEY FACTORS WHEN OUT OF POSSESSION:

CB'S MARK ZONALLY COVERING CENTRAL AND HALF-SPACES. COMMUNICATION IS KEY WHEN PASSING PLAYERS ON.

WB'S TUCK IN TO CREATE A FIVE-MAN BACK LINE.

THREE CM'S PROVIDE CENTRAL COVER FOR THE DEFENCE, FORCING OPPOSITION INTO WIDER AREAS.

WHEN THE BALL IS PLAYED OUT WIDE, THE OUTSIDE CM ON THAT SIDE SHUFFLES OUT TO SUPPORT THE WB ON THAT SIDE TO ENSURE THEY ARE NOT OUTNUMBERED 2V1.

THE TWO CF'S WORK TOGETHER TO EITHER INITIATE A PRESS IN CERTAIN AREAS. I.E IF THE OPPOSITION FB HAS THE BALL OR ACT AS A FUNNEL AND PREVENT CENTRAL PENETRATION

NATURAL ADVS:

- 5 DEFENDERS PROVIDE EXTRA DEFENSIVE SOLIDITY.
- EXCELLENT ZONAL COVERAGE WHEN DEFENDING WITH CENTRAL, HALF-SPACE AND WIDE AREAS ACCOUNTED FOR.
- SUITED TO PLAYING NARROW TO AVOID CENTRAL PENETRATION.

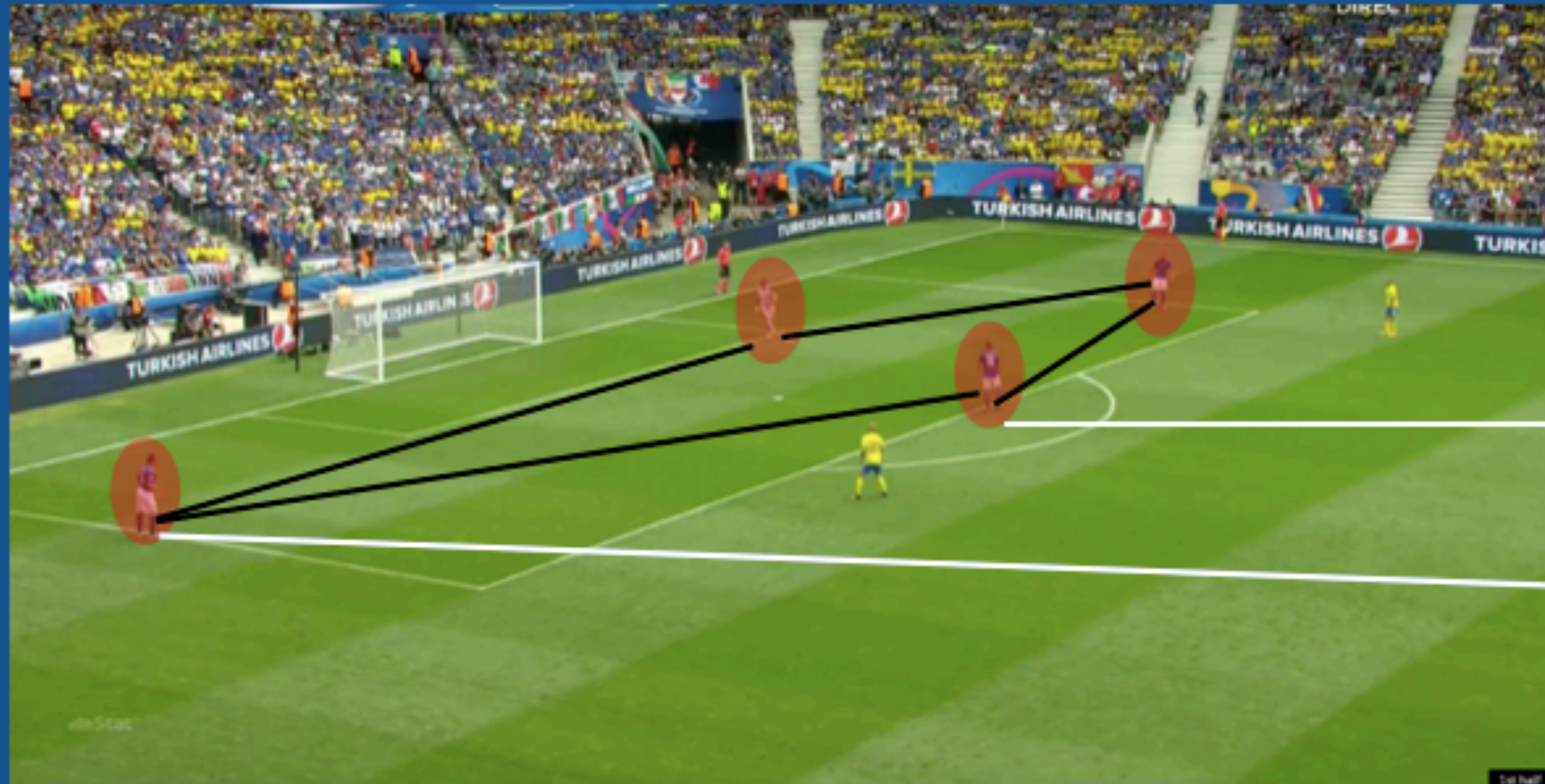
NATURAL DISADVS:

- WB'S CAN BECOME OVERLOADED 2V1 WITHOUT SUPPORT.
- GAPS CAN APPEAR BETWEEN CB AND WB IF WB'S ARE RECOVERING.
- CM'S SHUFFLING WIDE TO SUPPORT WB'S CAN LEAVE SPACE THROUGH THE MIDDLE.

BUILDING THE ATTACK FROM DEEP IN A 3-5-2 VS A 4-4-2

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FROM A GOAL-KICK



A 3-5-2 IS A BENEFICIAL SET-UP WHEN BUILDING THE PLAY FROM DEEP, AIMING TO PLAY THROUGH THE THIRDS. THREE CENTRAL DEFENDERS OFFER A GOOD RANGE OF PASSING OPTIONS.

THE 3-5-2, WHEN BUILDING THE ATTACK RESEMBLES THE SET-UP USED BY TEAMS OPERATING IN A FOUR MAN DEFENCE, USUALLY. THE MIDDLE OF THE THREE CB'S WILL OPERATE IN THE SPACE THAT THE PIVOT PLAYER PLAYS IN.

KEY FACTORS:

- THE SET-UP CREATES A DIAMOND (GK AND 3 CB'S) AND OFFERS THE GK THREE PASSING OPTIONS.
- MIDDLE CB OPERATES WHERE A MIDFIELD PIVOT PLAYER WOULD POSITION WHEN BUILDING UP IN A 4-3-3 FOR EXAMPLE.
- TWO CB'S OFFER WIDTH, OPERATING IN THE HALF-SPACE, ABLE TO RECEIVE ON THE INSTEP AND BE ABLE TO PROGRESS THE PLAY THROUGH A DRIBBLE OR PASS INTO MIDFIELD.
- IN THIS INSTANCE, PLAYING AGAINST A 4-4-2, THIS SET-UP OUTNUMBERS THE OPPOSITION 4V2.
- THE PIVOT MIDFIELDER (OUT OF SHOT) SHOULD OPERATE IN THE SPACE BETWEEN THE CB'S AND TWO OTHER CM'S, SHOWING FOR THE BALL WHEN PLAYED SHORT, OR DROPPING DEEPER TO PICK UP SECOND BALLS IN THE CASE OF A LONG GOAL KICK.

BUILDING THE ATTACK FROM DEEP IN A 3-5-2 VS A 4-4-2

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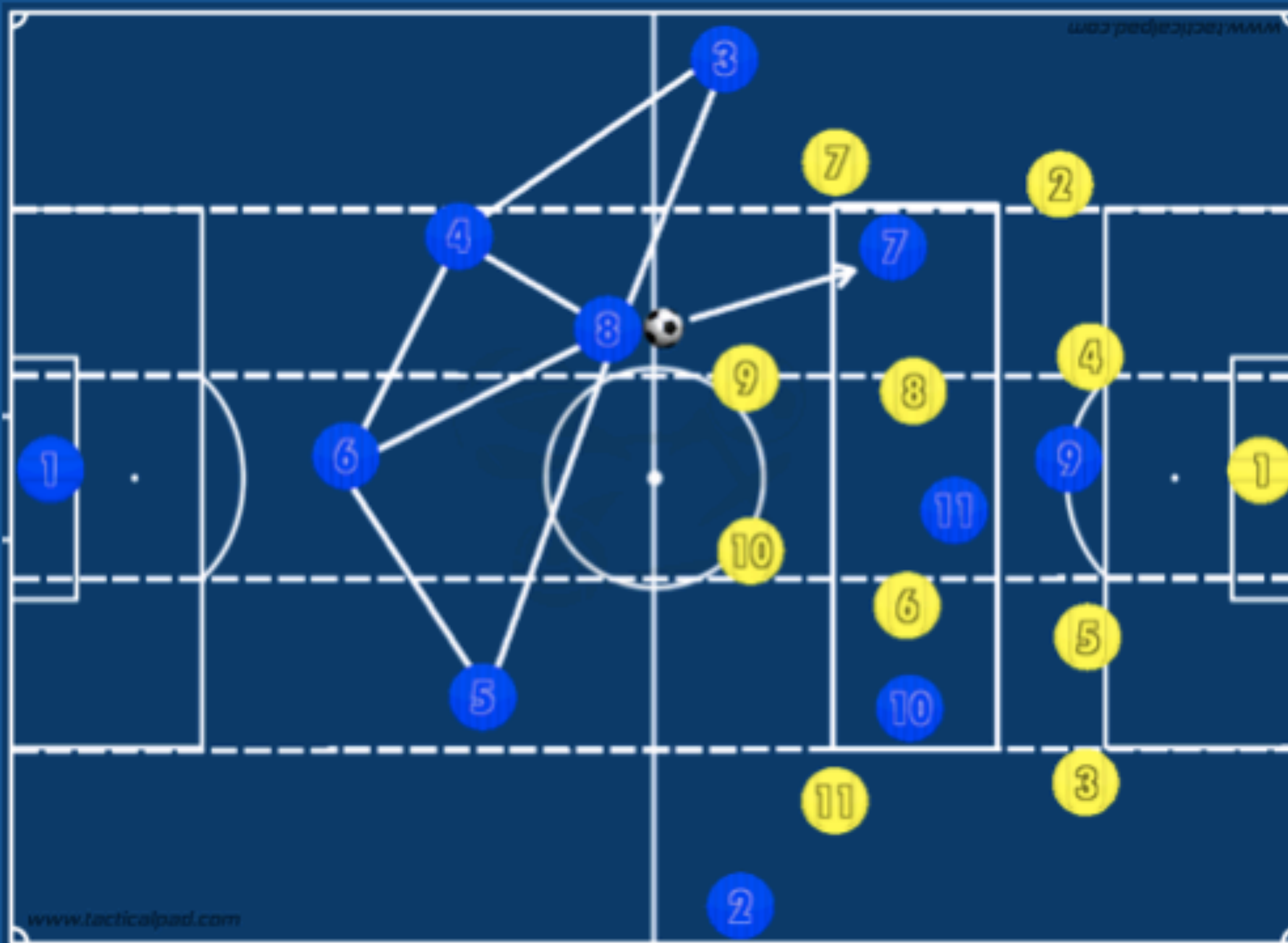
MIDDLE-THIRD SET-UP

THE 3-5-2 CAN BE AN EFFICIENT ATTACKING SYSTEM, ESPECIALLY AGAINST A LOW-BLOCK 4-4-2.

NATURALLY, WHEN BUILDING THE ATTACK, THE 3-5-2 HAS NUMERICAL SUPERIORITIES ACROSS THE PITCH, FOR EXAMPLE, THERE IS 3 CB'S BUILDING THE ATTACK AGAINST 2 FORWARDS (3V2) ALSO THERE IS ANOTHER 3V2 SITUATION IN THE CENTRAL AREA OF THE PITCH.

KEY FACTORS:

- PIVOT PLAYER DROPS DEEP TO COLLECT BALL FROM ONE OF THE 3 CB'S.
- THE PIVOT PLAYER MUST STAY CONNECTED WITH THE DEFENCE, CREATING TRIANGLES FOR A BACKWARD PASS TO RETAIN POSSESSION IF PUT UNDER PRESSURE.
- THE TWO OUTSIDE CB'S OPERATE IN THE HALF-SPACE TO CREATE VERTICAL PASSING LANES INTO THE MORE ADVANCED CM'S.
- THE ADVANCED CM'S NEED TO PLAY IN THE HALF-SPACE TO RECEIVE A BALL FROM DEEP.
- THE 7&10 IN THE GRAPHIC PICKING UP THESE POSITIONS CAUSE PROBLEMS FOR THE OPPOSITION. THEY ARE IN POCKETS OF SPACE TO RECEIVE ON THE HALF TURN AND PENETRATE THROUGH A PASS OR DRIBBLE.
- ALSO, THE POSITIONING OF THE 7&10 MEANS THAT OPPOSITION WM'S NEED TO NARROW TO PROVIDE DEFENSIVE COVERAGE IN THE HALF-SPACE. THIS CREATES A 1V1 SITUATION OUT WIDE (WB VS FB) AS OPPOSED TO BEING OUTNUMBERED 2V1.
- WITH ONE CF DROPPING DEEPER, IT OUTNUMBERS THE OPPOSITION IN MIDFIELD FURTHER 3V2 OR EVEN 4V2 IF THE PIVOT PLAYER ADVANCES.

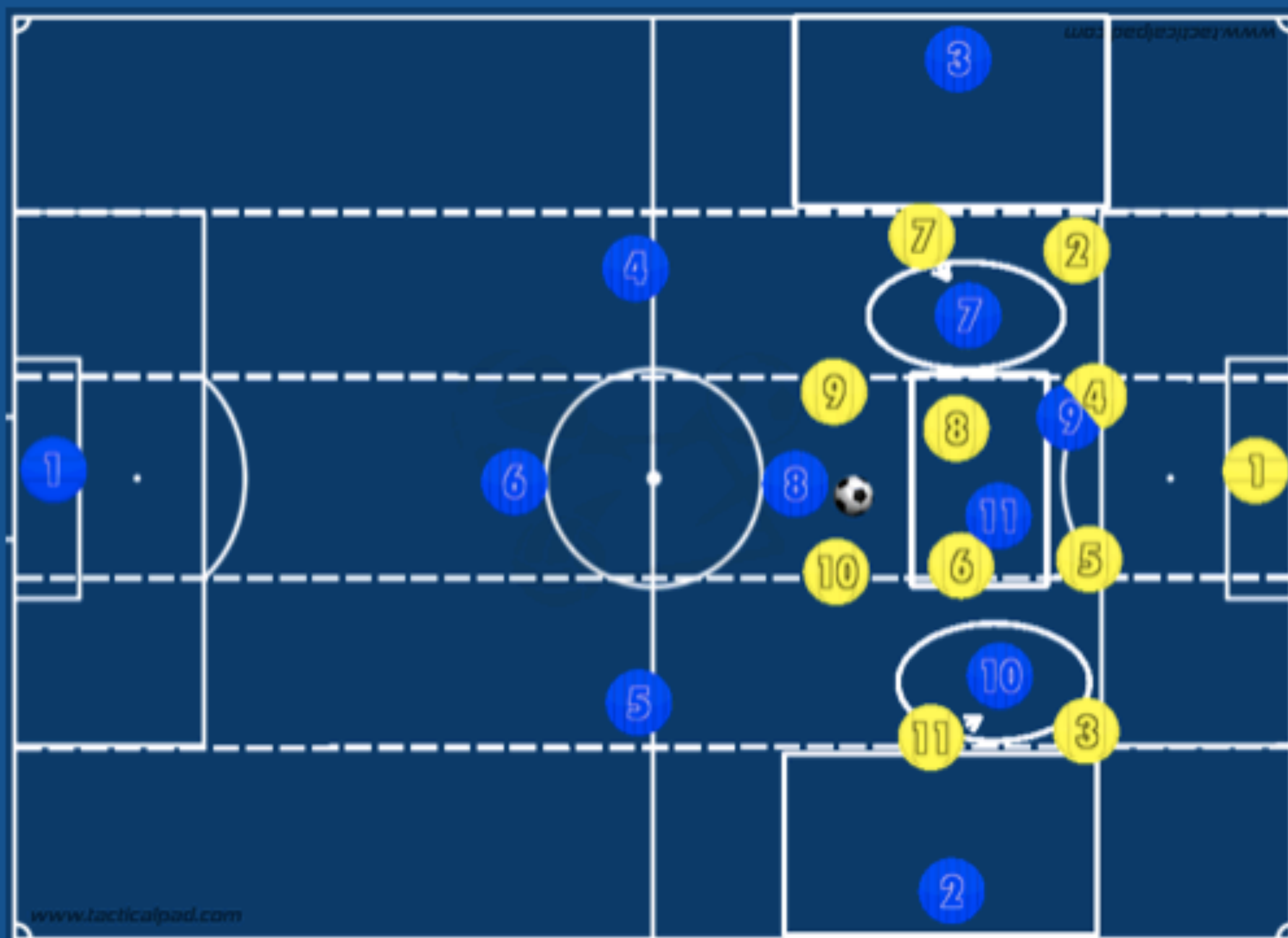


BUILDING THE ATTACK FROM DEEP IN A 3-5-2

VS A 4-4-2

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ENTERING THE FINAL THIRD



THE 3-5-2 NARROWS WHEN ENTERING THE FINAL THIRD. WITH THE THREE CM'S NARROWING TO OPERATE IN THE HALF-SPACE AND IN AND AROUND ZONE 14, THE OPPOSITION BLOCK NARROWS TO COUNTER-ACT THIS. AS A RESULT IT LEAVES SPACES IN WIDER AREAS FOR THE WING-BACKS TO EXPLOIT VIA A DRIBBLE OR CROSS.

KEY FACTORS:

- CB'S POSITIONED IN HALF-SPACE TO PROGRESS THE BALL VERTICALLY INTO ADVANCED CM'S OR PIVOT PLAYER.
- PIVOT PLAYER RETAINS DEEPER POSITION TO LINK DEFENCE TO MIDFIELD, BUT ALSO PICK UP SECOND BALLS.
- WB'S OPERATE HIGH AND WIDE, OUTSIDE OF THE DEFENSIVE BLOCK TO PENETRATE EITHER BY A DRIBBLE AT THE FB OR A CROSS.
- ONE CF (11) DROPS INTO ZONE 14 AND IN BETWEEN THE OPPOSITION MIDFIELD AND DEFENCE TO RECEIVE TO FEET.
- THE OTHER CF (9) RETAINS A HIGH AND CENTRAL POSITION, AIMING TO OCCUPY DEFENDERS WHILST BEING A PRESENCE IN THE BOX FOR CROSSES.

DEFENDING IN A 3-5-2

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**ANTONIO CONTE'S INTER MILAN:
DEFENSIVE PRINCIPLES**

DEFENDING IN A 3-5-2

DEFENDING FROM THE FRONT

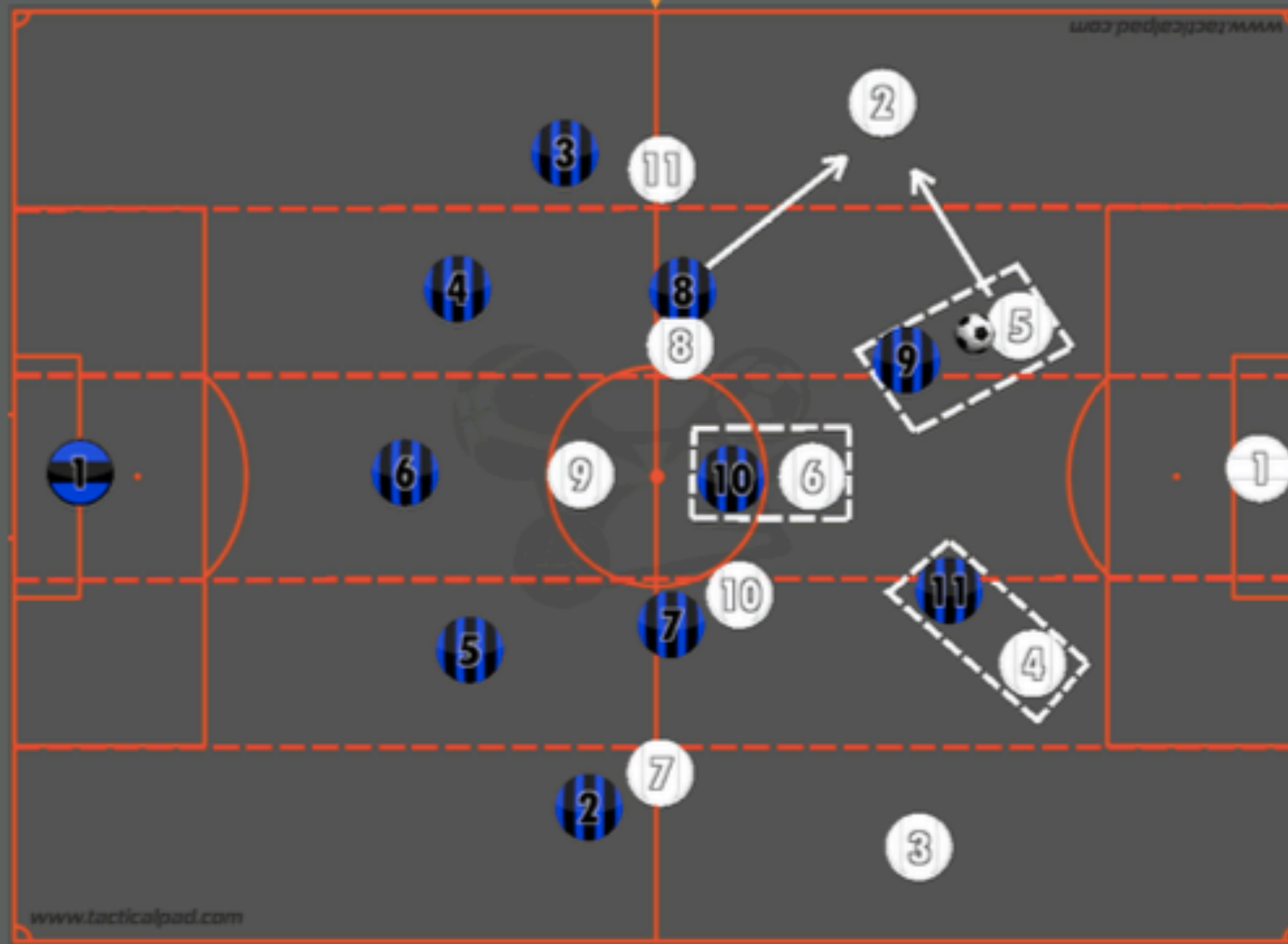
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THE ROLE OF THE FRONT TWO WHEN DEFENDING FROM THE FRONT IS CRITICAL TO ACHIEVING THE DEFENSIVE AIMS, WHETHER THAT BE PRESSING THE OPPOSITION HIGH OR DEFENDING DEEPER IN A MID-BLOCK TO CREATE PRESSING TRAPS.

ANTONIO CONTE HAS BECOME WORLD RENOWNED FOR HIS OUT OF POSSESSION TACTICS WHILST USING THE 3-5-2. WHEN DEFENDING FROM THE FRONT, HIS INTER MILAN SIDE:

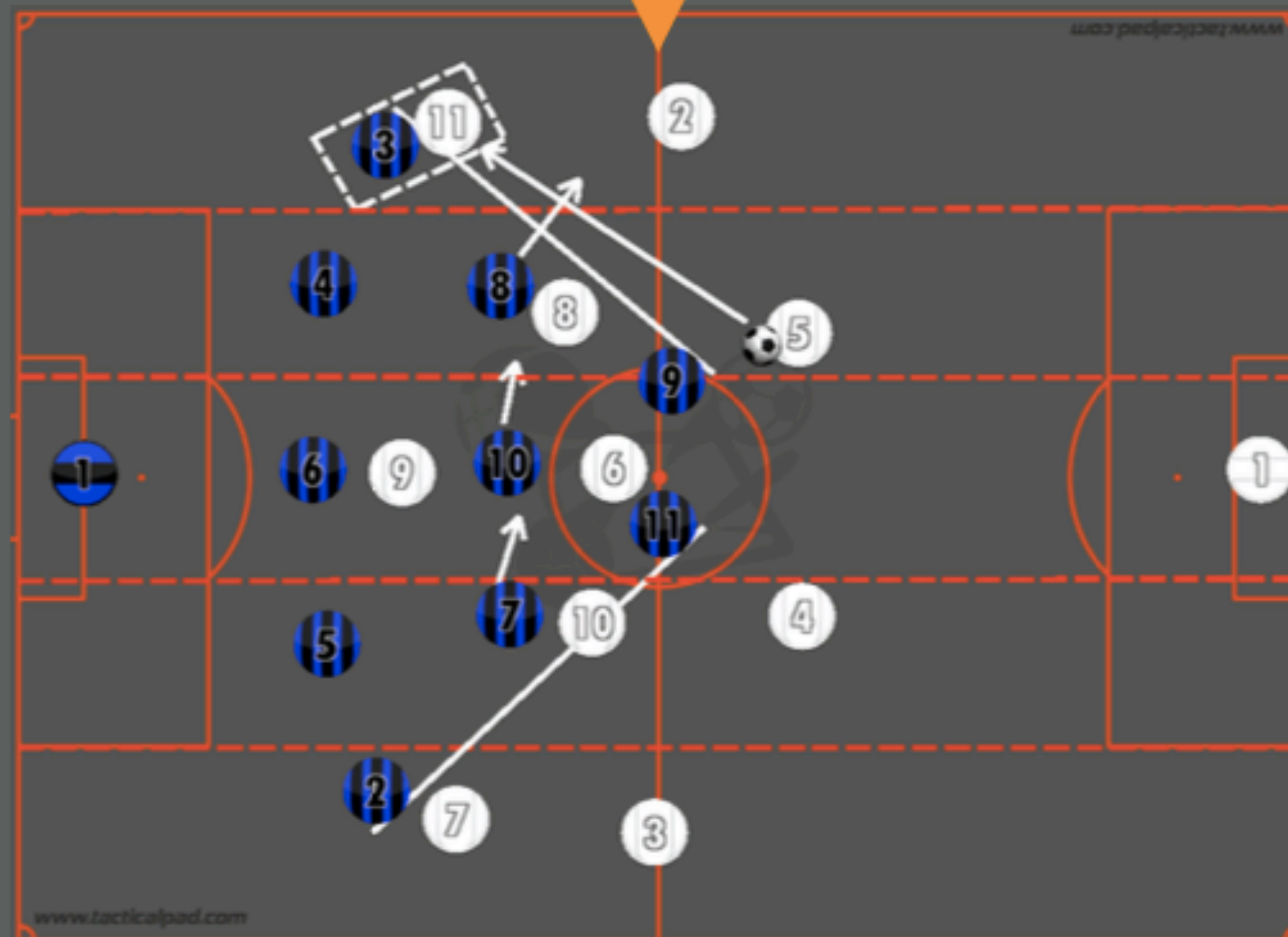
- 1) INTER PRESS HIGH WITH THE 2 CF'S MAN-MARKING AGAINST 2 CB'S EITHER TO PRESS TO WIN THE BALL OR FORCE PLAY INTO WIDER AREAS.
- 2) WHEN THE BALL IS PLAYED INTO WIDER AREAS, SPECIFICALLY TO THE FB (OR A THIRD CB IF PLAYING AGAINST A 3-MAN DEFENCE) THE OUTSIDE CM ON THAT SIDE WILL ENGAGE FORCING THE PLAY BACK INTO THE CENTRE WHERE THE TWO CF'S MAN MARK THE CB'S.
- 3) A MORE ADVANCED CM WILL MAN-MARK THE PIVOT PLAYER TO STOP THEIR INFLUENCE IN THE OPPOSITION BUILDING THEIR ATTACK FROM THE DEEP.



DEFENDING IN A 3-5-2

THE BLOCK

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THE 3-5-2 IS AN EXTREMELY GOOD FORMATION TO DEFEND IN A MID-TO-LOW BLOCK, WITH GOOD COMPACTNESS AND A NARROW MIDFIELD PROVIDING NATURAL PRESSING TRAPS IN WIDER AREAS, WITH PLAYERS AVAILABLE IN MIDFIELD TO SHUFFLE OVER TO WIDER AREAS TO PROTECT THE WING BACKS BECOMING OUT NUMBERED

KEY FACTORS OF A 3-5-2 IN A MID/LOW BLOCK:

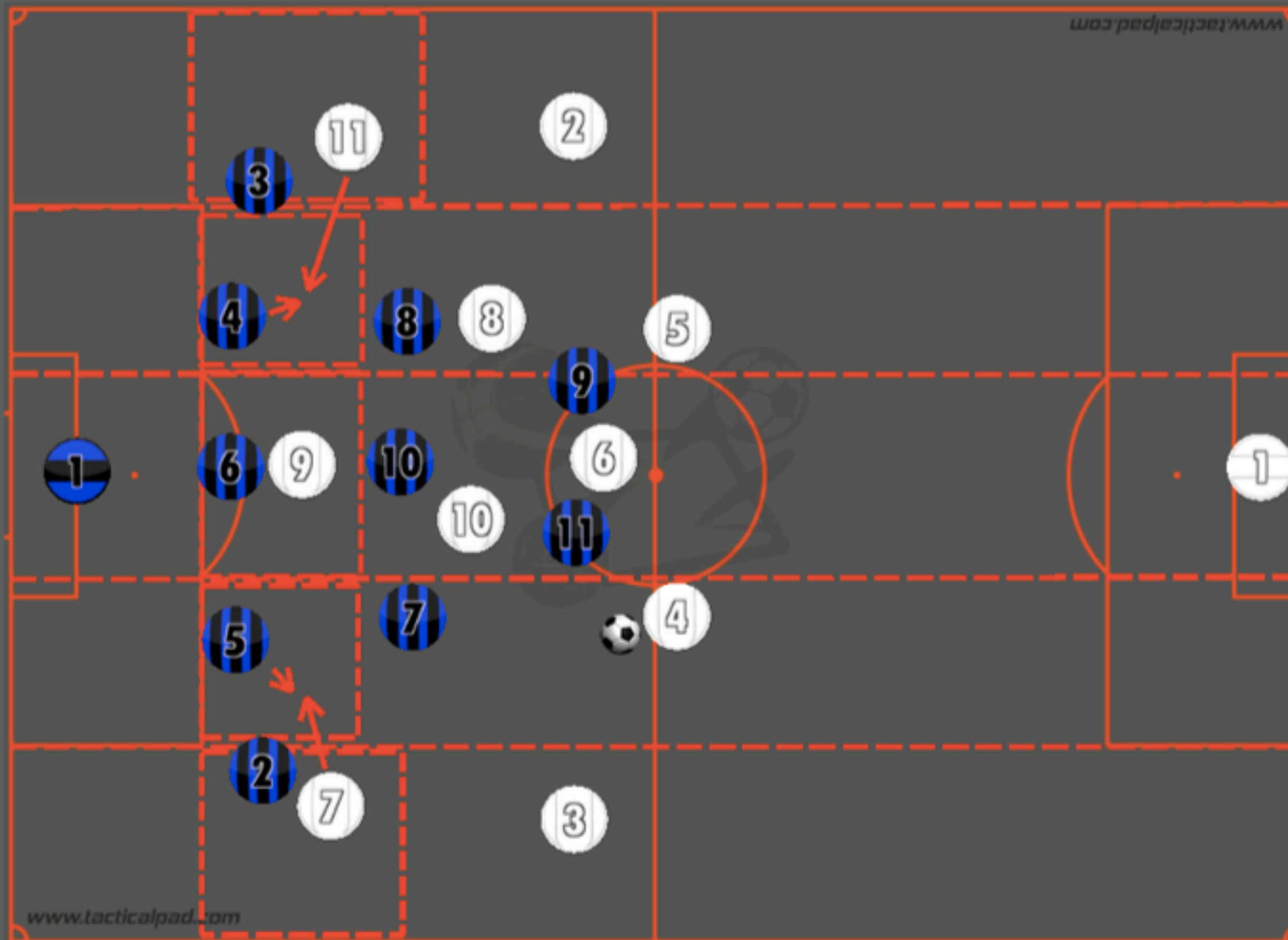
- 1) CF'S GUIDE BALL INTO WIDER AREAS TO INITIATE A PRESS
- 2) WHEN THE BALL IS PLAYED INTO WIDER AREAS, THE WING-BACK AIMS TO PREVENT THE WINGER FROM PENETRATING. THE WING-BACK EITHER AIMS TO GUIDE THE BALL IN-FIELD AROUND THE BLOCK, OR INTERCEPT THE BALL USING THE TOUCHLINE AS AN EXTRA DEFENDER, OR WIN THE BALL TO START A COUNTER ATTACK.
- 3) OUTSIDE CM SHUFFLES OUT WIDE TO PREVENT THE OPPOSITION BECOMING 2V1 AGAINST THE WING-BACK, AND ENGAGES THE OPPOSITION FULL-BACK.



DEFENDING IN A 3-5-2

THE DEFENCE MARKING ZONALLY

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THE 3-5-2 WHICH REVERTS TO A 5-3-2 WHEN DEFENDING IN DEEPER AREAS, PROVIDES EXCELLENT DEFENSIVE COVERAGE WITH CENTRAL, HALF-SPACES AND WIDER AREAS COVERED WHEN ZONAL MARKING.

WHEN DEFENDING, PLAYERS ARE 'PASSED ON' TO ANOTHER DEFENDER WHEN THEY EXIT THE ZONE THEY ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR. FOR EXAMPLE THE MIDDLE CB IN A CENTRAL AREA PASSING ON THE CF TO ANOTHER DEFENDER IN THE HALF-SPACE WHEN THE ATTACKER MOVES OVER.

IN THIS INSTANCE, IF THE OPPOSITION WINGER INVERTS MORE CENTRALLY, THE CB'S IN THE HALF SPACE BECOMES RESPONSIBLE FOR MARKING THEIR MOVEMENTS WITH THE WING-BACK NARROWING TO REDUCE THE SPACE ON THE OUTSIDE OF THE CB.

A COMMON PROBLEM NOTED WITH ZONAL MARKING, MORE SO WITH FIVE DEFENDERS IS THAT THE ZONES PLAYERS ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR MARKING CAN BE VAGUE AND ILL-DEFINED, AND CAN OVERLAP EACH OTHER.

AS SUCH, IT REQUIRES A LOT OF PRACTICE AS A UNIT TO PERFECT IT. CONTE'S ITALY AND JUVENTUS TEAMS WERE SYNONYMOUS WITH PERFECTING THEIR DEFENDING IN A 3-5-2 USING ZONAL MARKING, AS A RESULT OF THE CONTINUITY IN THEIR PERSONNEL.



EXTRA CONTENT

PSV EINDHOVEN TACTICAL ANALYSIS CASE STUDY



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PSV



ROGER SCHMIDT

ABBREVIATIONS

GK- Goalkeeper

FB- Full-Back

CB- Centre-Back

RCB- Right Centre-Back

LCB- Left Centre-Back

CM- Central-Midfielder

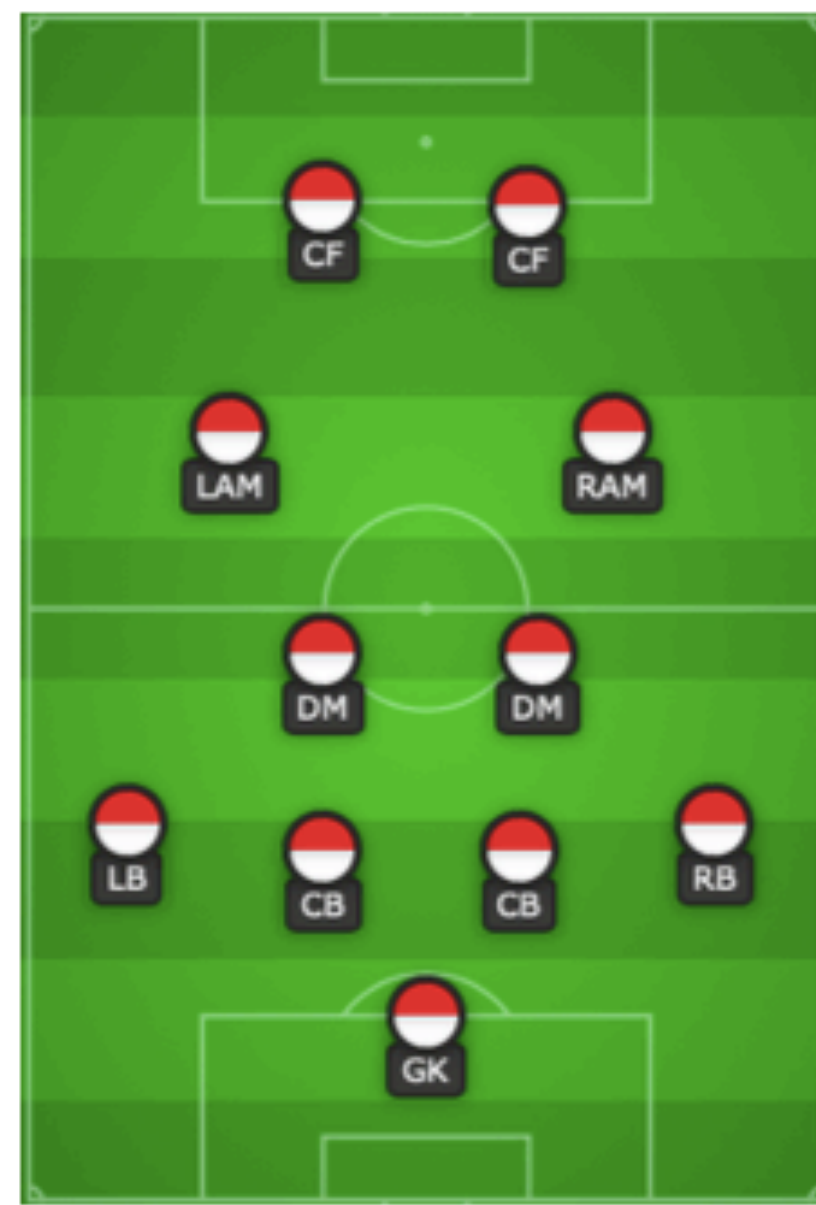
WM- Wide-Midfielder

CF- Centre-Forward

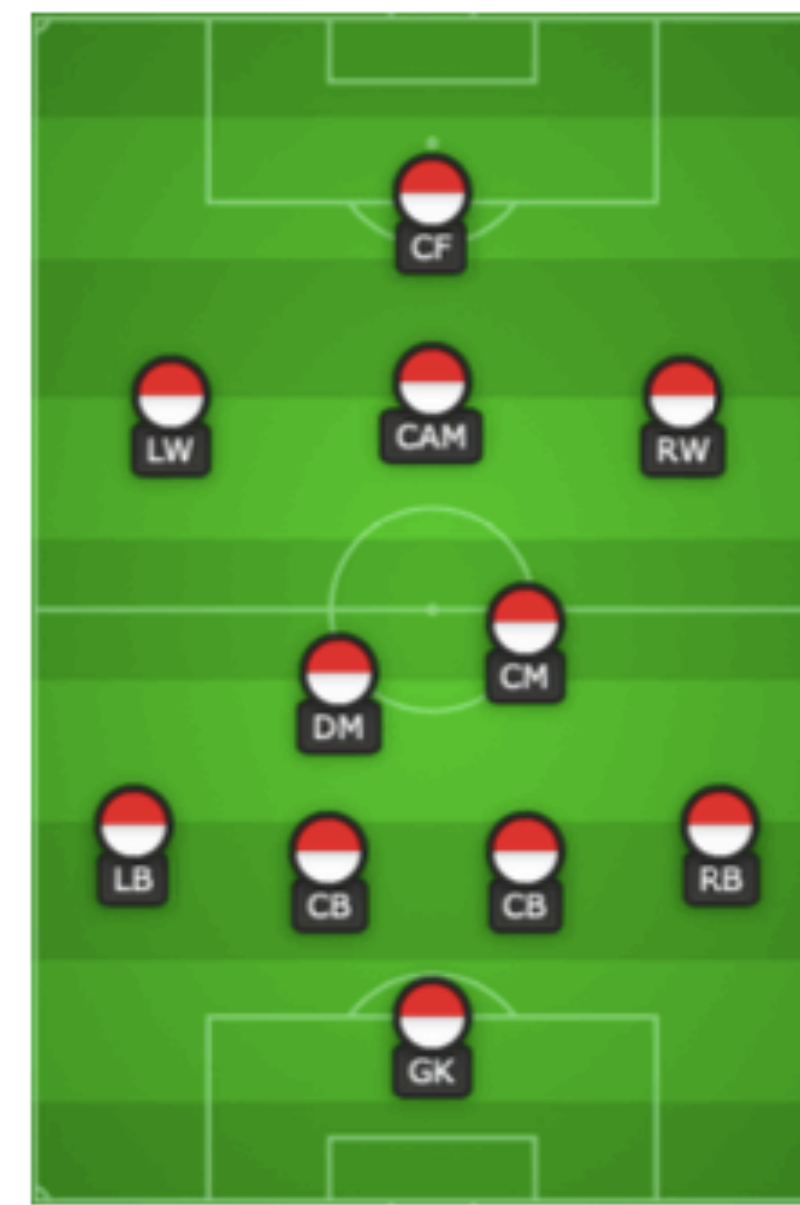
STRATEGIES/FORMATIONS



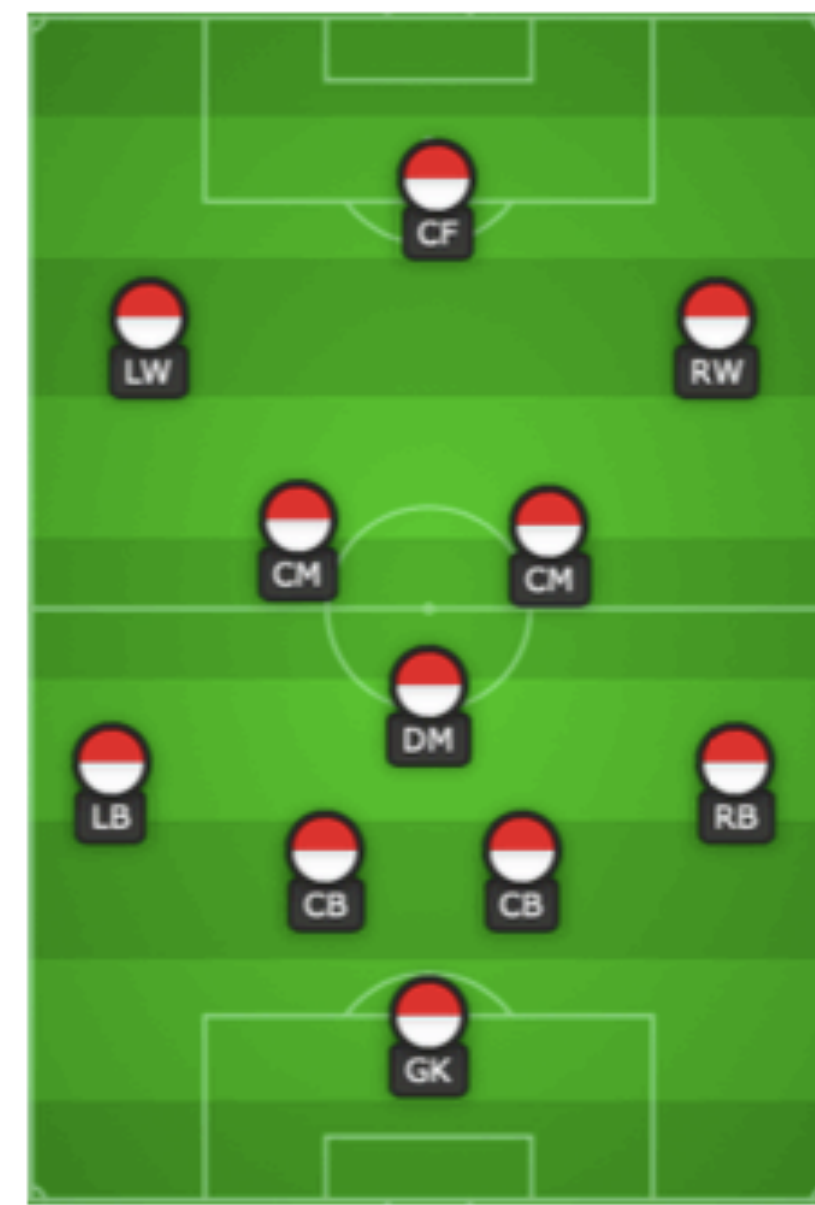
1-4-4-2



1-4-2-2-2



1-4-2-3-1



1-4-3-3

- Schmidt favours the use of his 1-4-4-2 or variant 1-4-2-2-2 depending on opposition and player availability but has adapted to play a 1-4-2-3-1 or a 1-4-3-3 on some occasions.
- Schmidt likes his formations to press as a 1-4-4-2 or a 1-4-2-4 so even when playing a 1-4-2-3-1, the number ten often picks up spaces to press alongside the centre forward in the system.

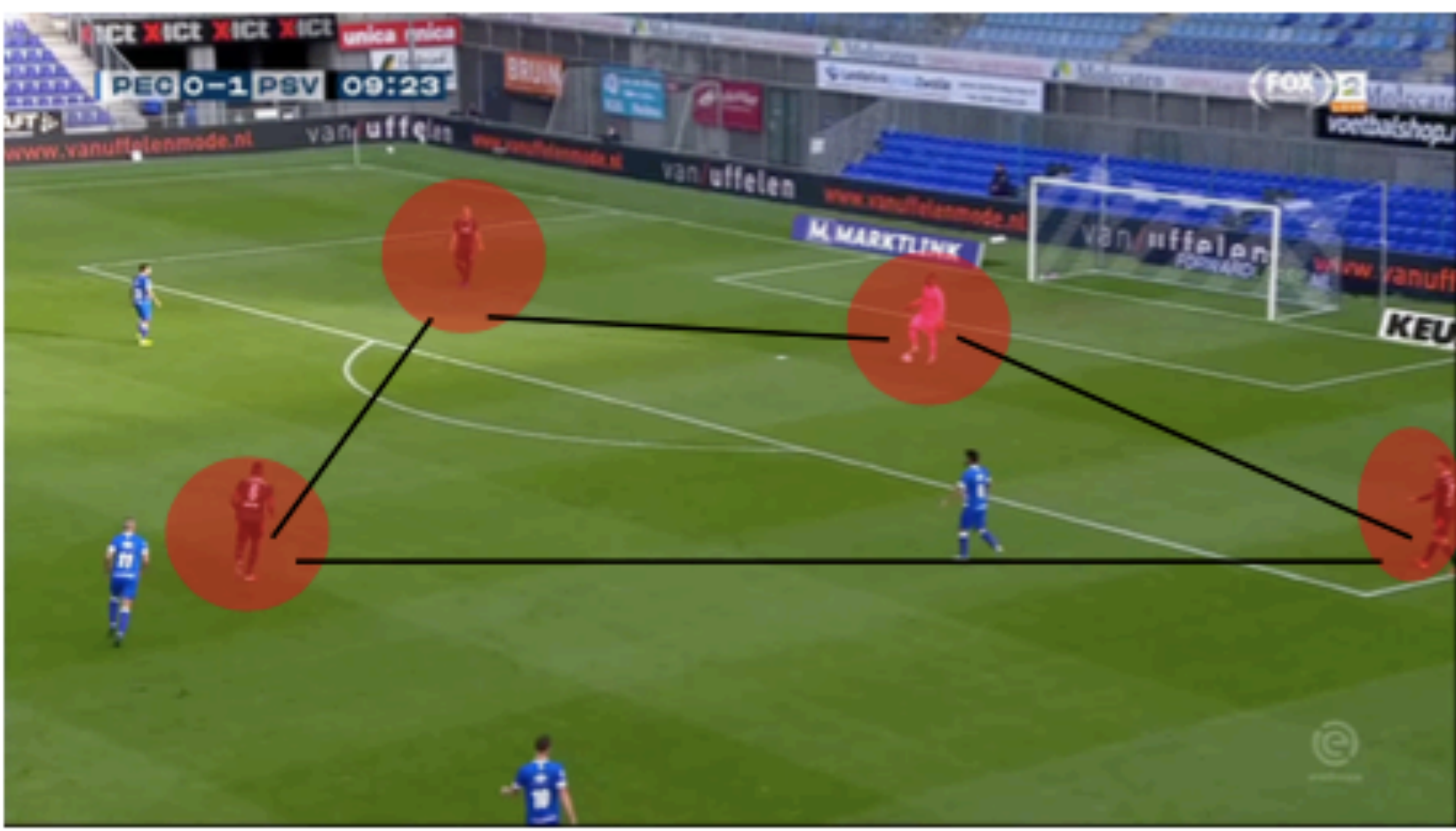


IN POSSESSION

BUILDING THE ATTACK

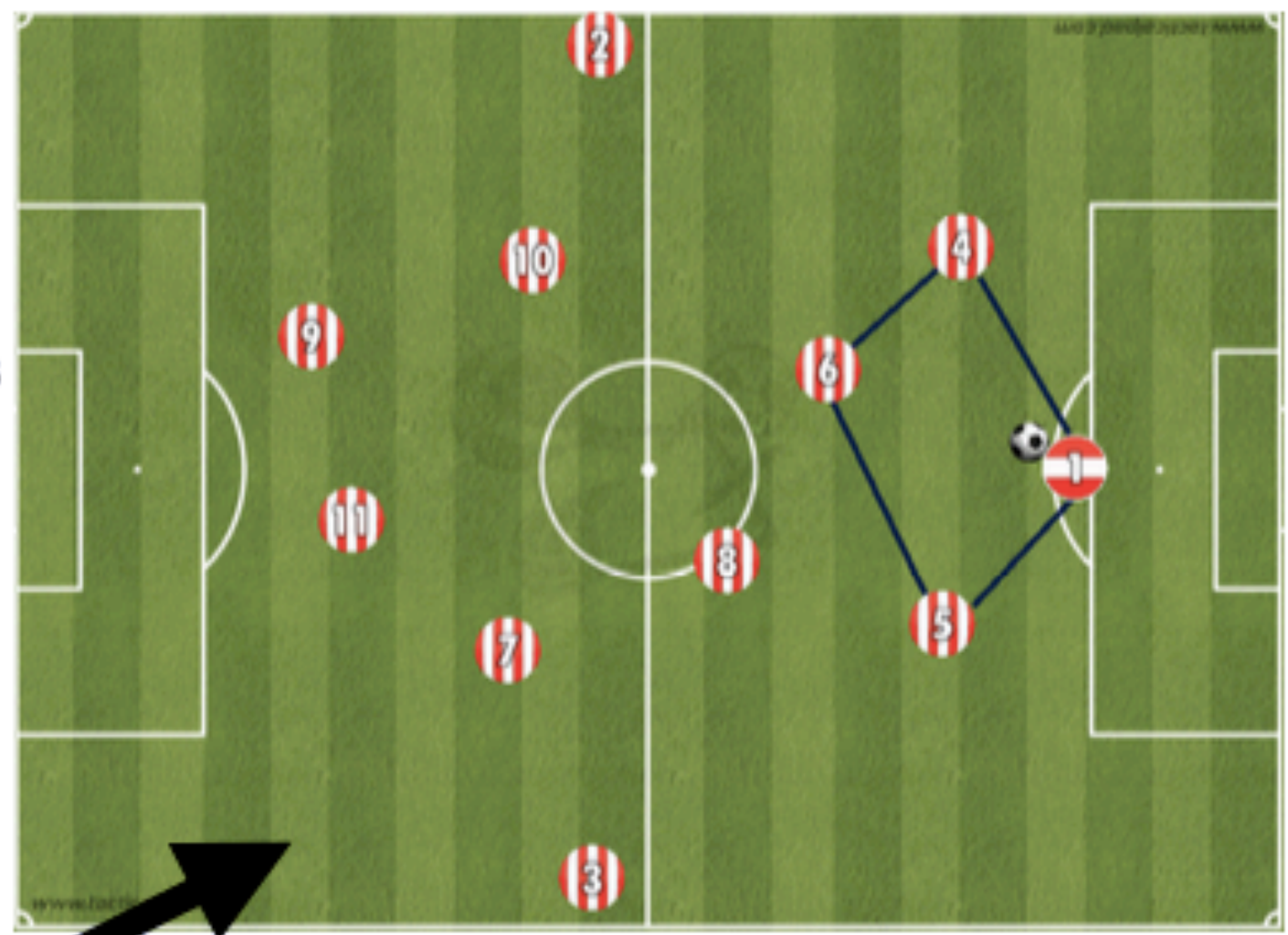
Roger Schmidt prefers his side to retain possession having amassed possession stats of 55% plus in 12 of their 17 games this season in all competitions (FBref.com)

When building the attack PSV start from the back five (Including GK)

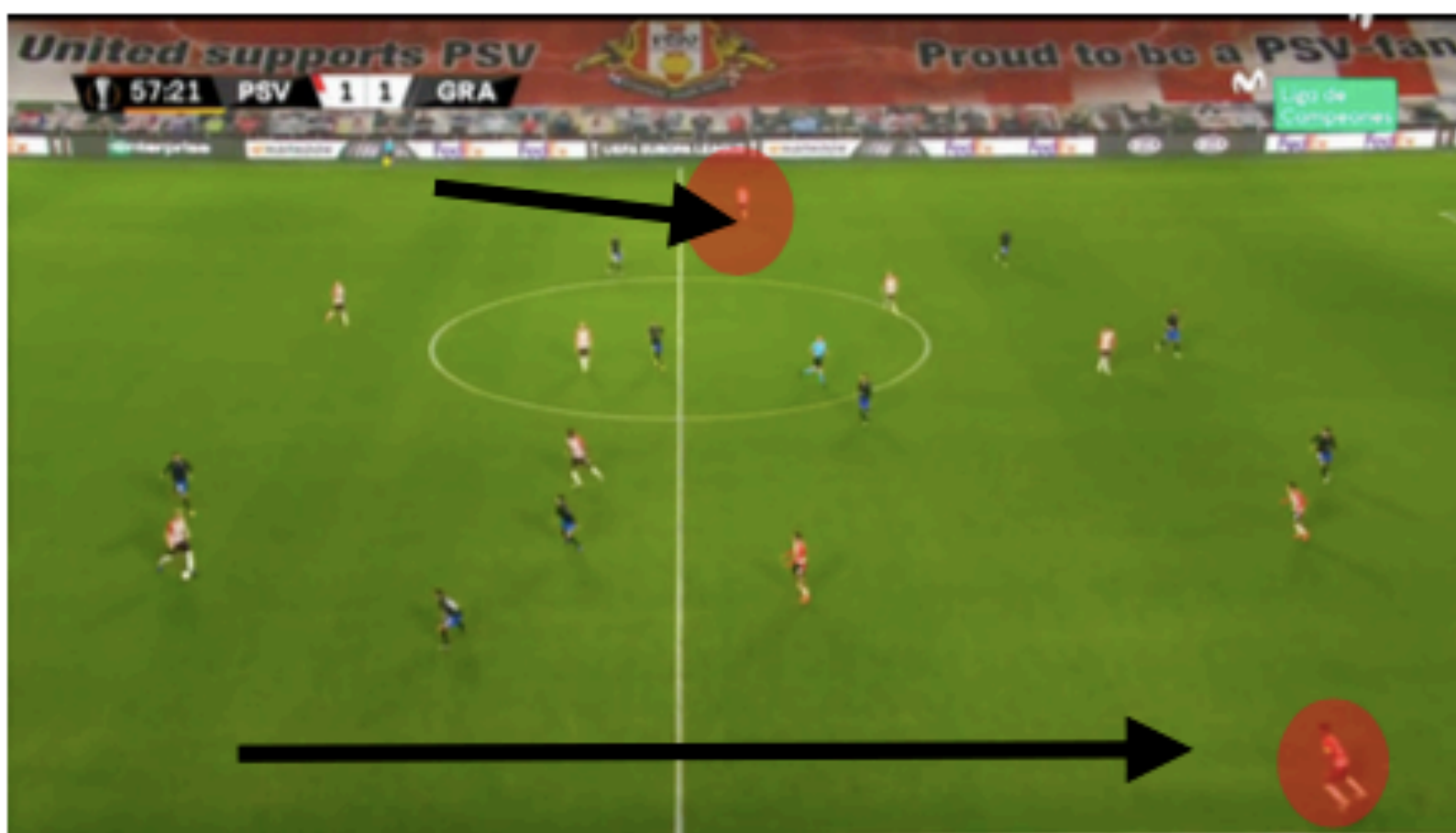


Because of Yvon Mvogo's ability to retain possession he acts as a third centre half when building from defence.

When building the attack from the back line the diamond set up (GK, CB's and CM) allows the FB's to operate further up the pitch and offer a pass on the diagonal from Mvogo. If they are pressed high up the pitch by the opposition



With the GK's ball playing ability PSV adopt a diamond between the two central defenders, GK and the Midfield pivot (usually Sangare)



When teams engage PSV high up the pitch PSV are still happy to retain the ball in the Defensive third, relying on quick combinations to break the initial press



When PSV break the opponents initial line of engagement The CB's usually travel with the ball in there is not a pass on, As a result, the FB's (Dumfries and Max) take up positions High and wide for potential diagonal balls.

BALL RETENTION IN THE MIDDLE THIRD



Generally, PSV are happy to retain the ball in the defensive third with the aim of beating the opponents initial line of engagement. Alternatively, PSV like to penetrate through the middle and final thirds quickly to avoid the opposition retreating back into a low block.



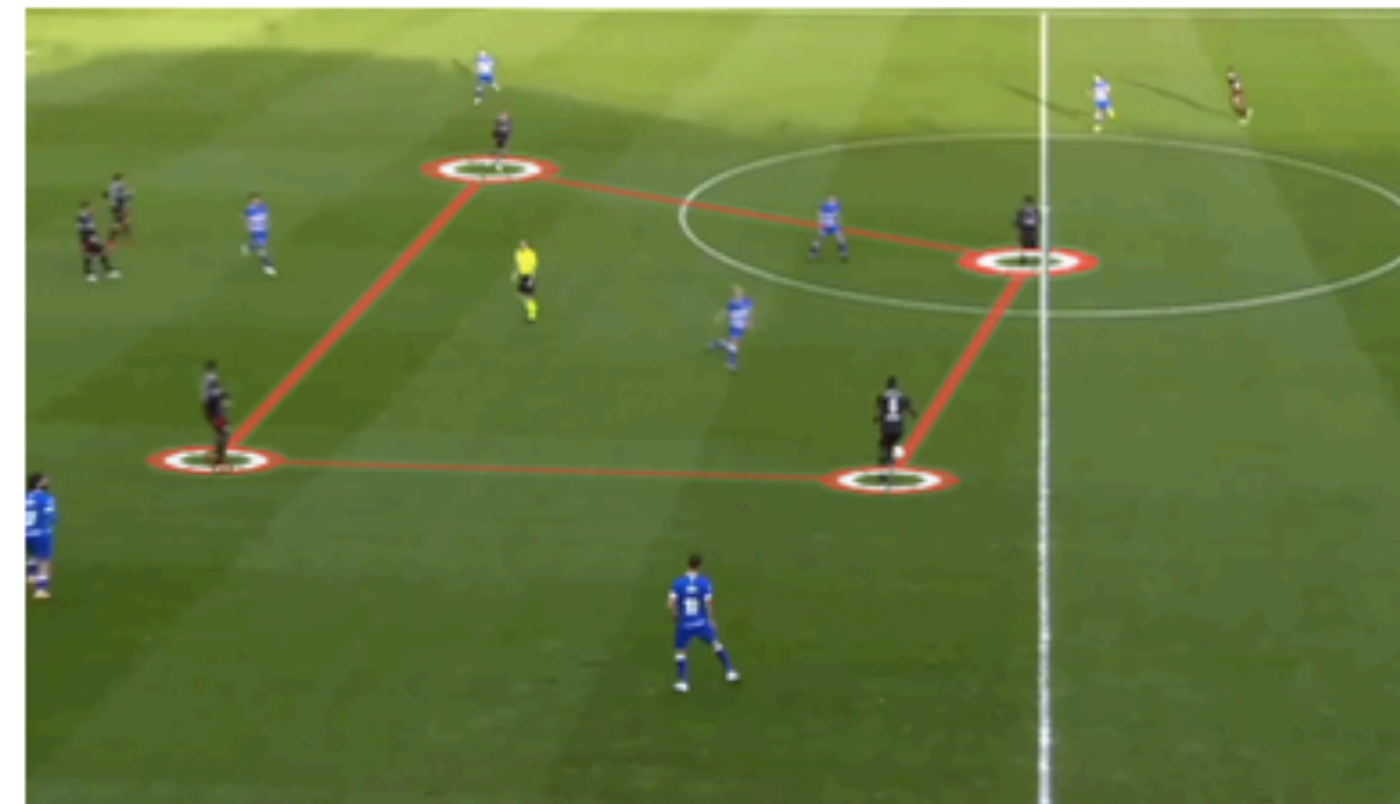
As a consequence of creating a midfield box
It presents a problem for opposition FB's whether or not to mark the man or mark zonally.

If the opposing FB's track PSV's WM it leaves space
In the wider areas for the already high Dumfries and Max to exploit and offer as a passing option if the midfield becomes Too congested.

Often, PSV penetrate into the midfield third through a pass to one of the two CM's
or via a pass to one of the FB's operating in advanced positions. However, when a passing option is blocked, one of the CB's step into the midfield third with the ball and offer another passing option.



To create more angles to receive passes,
When the centre back travels with the ball,
A CM will drop into the space between the two CB's



In order to move the ball quickly, PSV create passing angles as soon as one of the two CM's receive the ball.
Most notably the Wider Midfielders to invert to make a box/rhombus sequence,

As a result it can leave a 4v2 numerical superiority against teams playing With 2 or 3 man midfields.



MOVEMENTS/ROTATIONS



The Wide Midfield players in Schmidt's system are crucial in helping the team when in possession. Their movements allow the team to penetrate from deep, or simply recycle the possession.

It is clear to see from the Analysis of Roger Schmidt's PSV that every player in his system have individual roles that allows the collective to flourish. When in possession PSV players make both minor and major movements and rotations in order to create passing angles in all thirds of the pitch, aiming to retain the ball or unlock opposition blocks.



When the PSV are in possession in central areas the WM's (Highlighted) invert into the half-spaces or extremely central depending on match situation. (Götze is extremely intelligent roaming from wider areas to influence the game centrally.)



As part of retaining possession from deep, one of PSV's CM's will take up positions akin to a FB (In this instance Sangare) To create an option for a pass

Operating in this position makes it possible to retain possession in the initial building phases whilst opening up passing options, not just centrally but also to wider players such as the FB's



The two CF's in Schmidt's system rely on delicate movements and rotations to create space to exploit. usually one of the front two will drop deeper to receive a ball, whilst dragging out a CB and creating space in behind the opposition defence.

PENETRATION INTO THE FINAL THIRD



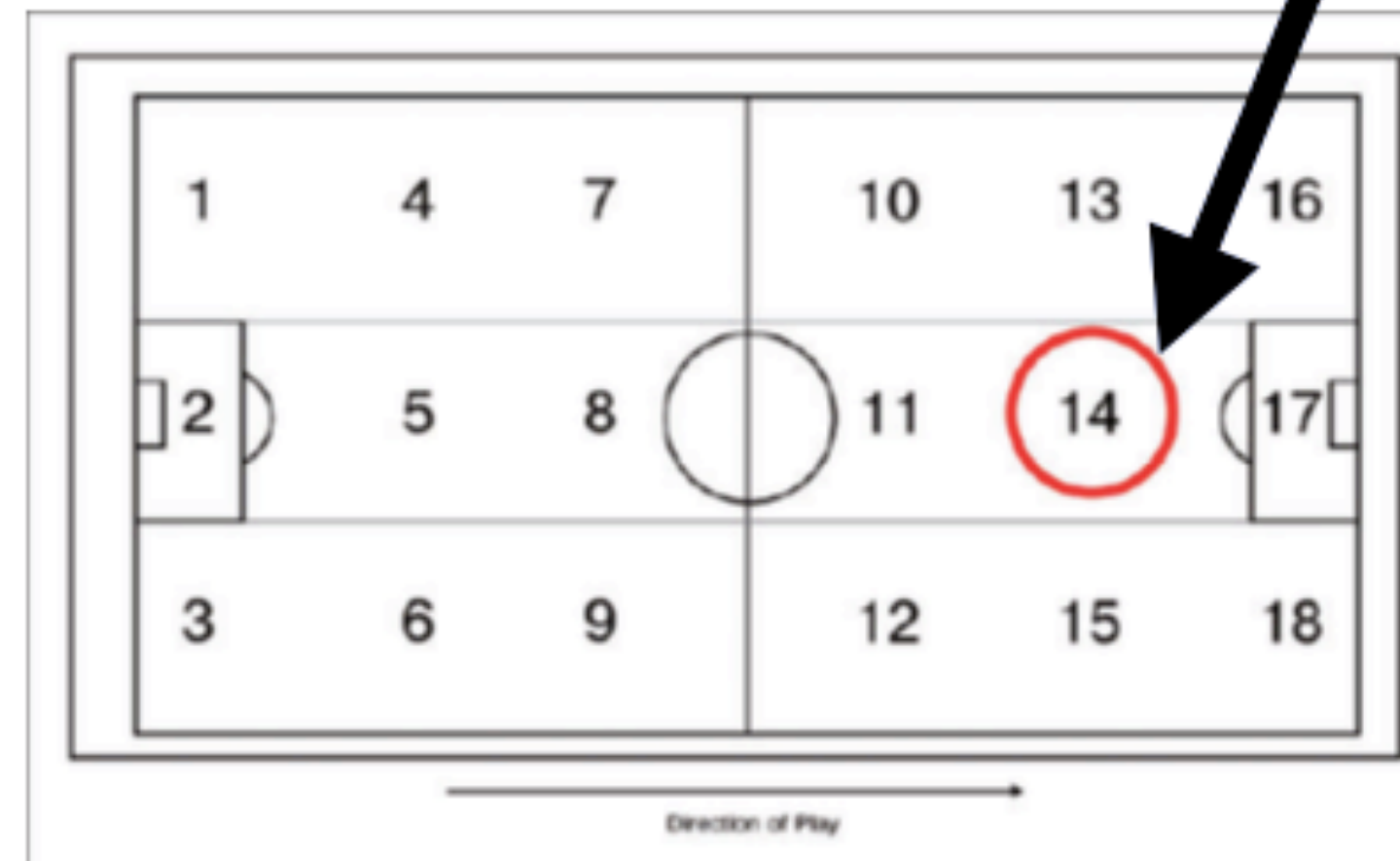
A common feature for Roger Schmidt sides and for PSV is that they aim to penetrate and break the lines as soon as possible only if it is not possible to penetrate will they then look for a sideways pass. PSV have many methods of penetrating into the final third.

As a result of the narrowness of their system PSV like to have players operating in 'Zone 14' where they can create central overloads in Scoring and assist zones. Penetration comes via a dribble or pass from deeper players into the feet of the forward players operating in these areas, or via a cut-back from a FB



PSV also use their technically gifted passers from deep, to penetrate lines and take opposition players out of the game so that advanced players can find space to receive on the half turn.

One theme, again relies on the attacking intelligence of the WM's. PSV can penetrate into the final third via runs from deep from the FB's, as a result of WM's operating more centrally and the opposition FB's tracking their inverted runs.



Herold et al, 2019





IN TRANSITION

ATTACKING TRANSITION

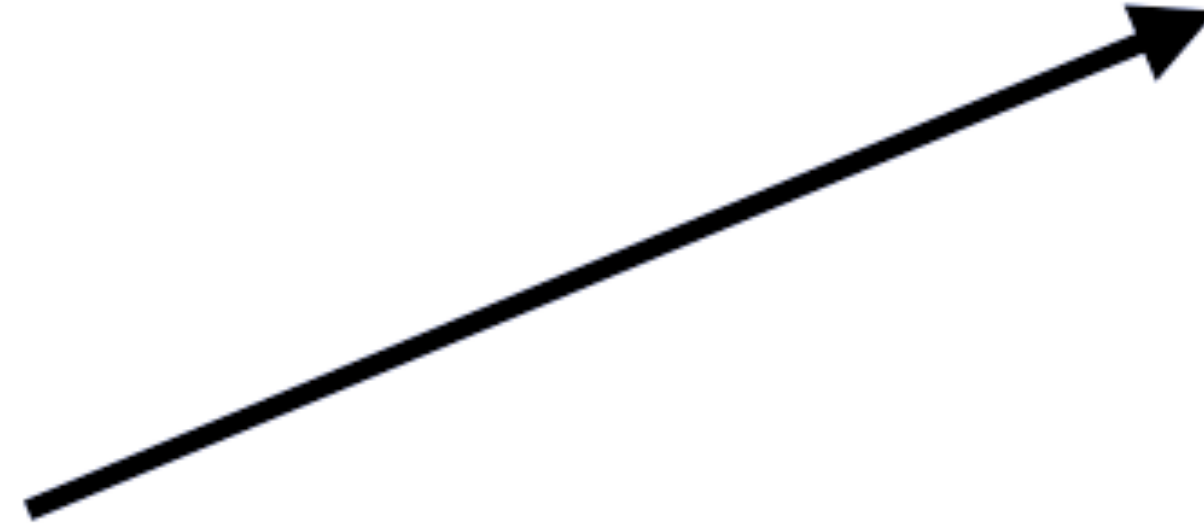


It can be interpreted that Roger Schmidt's time working for the Red Bull football group (RB Salzburg) has influenced his philosophy when in an attacking transition. The blueprint for Red Bull sides is to play quickly, straight away, after winning the ball back, being direct and play vertically towards the opposition goal and to shoot within ten seconds of winning the ball back (Tejwani, 2020)



When attacking the transition, if PSV win the ball back centrally they look to penetrate through the middle and play vertically offering passing angles as well as players making vertical off-the-ball runs.

PSV look to play and attack the transition in the area of the pitch they win the ball back in. This is because of their pressing strategy, it means that they will have numerical superiority in the areas they win the ball back.



When attacking the transition, creating passing options instantly is important to be able to exploit the disjointed opposition. PSV FB's aim to get into positions venture into advanced positions when winning the ball To offer as a diagonal passing option should space be too congested to play in



Regardless of where on the pitch the transition happens, PSV's first thought is to play vertically and try to break lines. Shown above in the defensive third, playing a somewhat risky pass after winning the ball back with the aim of exploiting the space whilst the opposition is disjointed in the transition. Although when winning the ball back in wider areas PSV play wider to avoid another transition in the centre of the pitch, with the potential for them to become exposed.

DEFENSIVE TRANSITION



Similarly to Roger Schmidt's philosophy when attacking the transition, PSV's attitudes to a defensive transition is similar to Schmidt's RB Salzburg side when he was manager there. Tejjwani (2020) writes that the Red Bull Football philosophy

When entering the defensive transition is to "Press aggressively and win the ball back within five seconds". In his PSV side we see similarities to this in the defensive transition.



When losing the ball high up the pitch PSV make a conscious effort to win the ball back immediately. They have the tactical intelligence to recognise that should they win the ball back in the areas shown above, they have a good chance of creating a scoring opportunity.

When reacting to the defensive transition in these areas, the player closest to the ball will apply pressure with the sole aim of winning the ball back. A pressing trigger for the transition is body shape. Here you can see the opposition player turning to face backwards. In this instance, the closest players to the player will pressurise as a group, usually as a two or three, to not leave PSV too exposed in the case of the opposition beating the pressure.



PSV are very good at retaining possession in their own defensive third so not too often is there a transition in areas close to their goal, however when they do lose possession, their attitude is to deflect and deny space for the opposition exploit as a priority over winning the ball back instantly. Deflecting and Denying opposition players away from goal allows PSV players to retreat into their defensive block, which is necessary, considering how expansive their structure is when in possession.

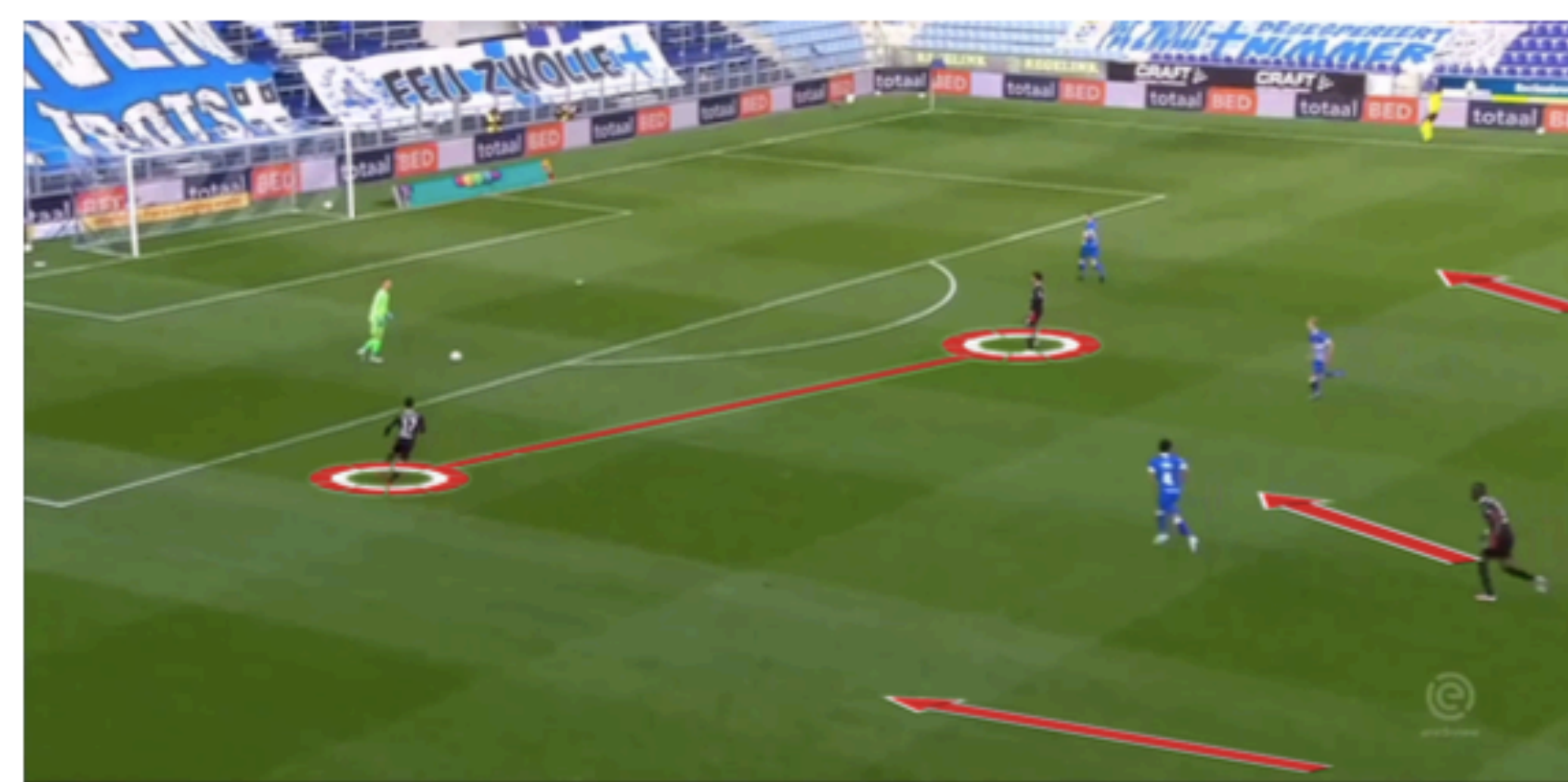


OUT OF POSSESSION

LINE OF ENGAGEMENT



PSV operate a very high line of engagement. PSV's initial pressure comes from the two CF's applying pressure to the two CB's or even the GK. This is to suffocate the space and force a mistake from the opposition high up the pitch that can create a goal-scoring opportunity.

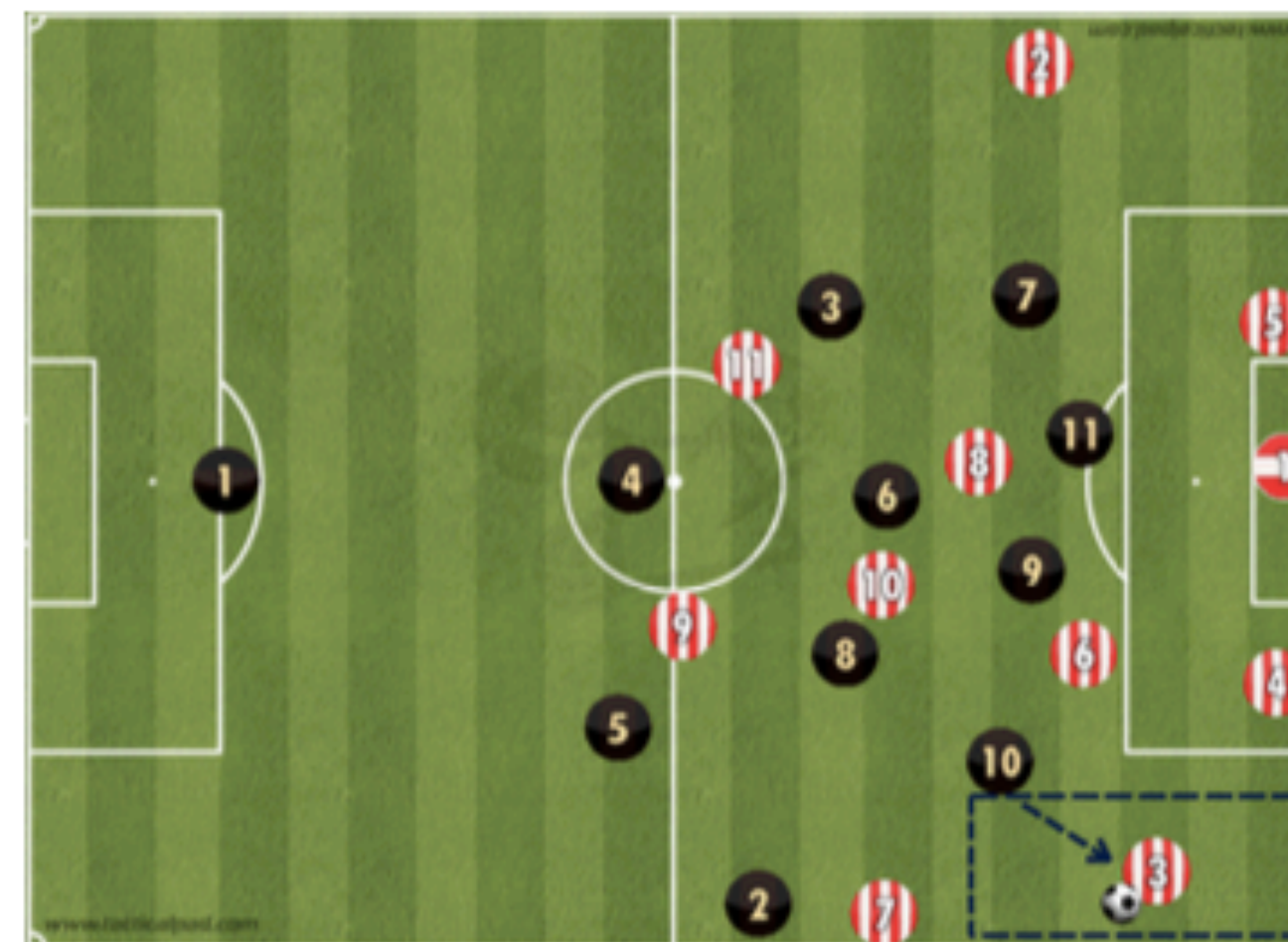


When pressing the opposition GK, the CF's aim to stop the opposition CB's from Receiving the ball.

This tactic is aimed to delay the GK playing the ball to a teammate quickly, as such it allows the rest of the PSV players to advance into their defensive positions high up the pitch to suffocate space between the lines, and cut off passing lanes to the opponent in possession of the ball.



PSV's high line of engagement is epitomised when they engage in wider areas. The first engaging players are the WM's in situations where the opposition team has the ball in wide areas in their own defensive third.



This diagram demonstrates how PSV use wide areas to initiate the line of engagement through their WM's as opposed to just using their CF's.

PRESSING TRIGGERS

Roger Schmidt's PSV use a range of pressing triggers in specific areas with the aim of retaining ball possession as soon and as high up the pitch as possible.

PSV, as per their higher line of engagement will always press the opposition defence if and when they can, including the FB's in wide areas. PSV shut off passing options to funnel the ball into the FB, which allows them to initiate a pressing situation.



One pressing trigger to apply the pressure to an opposition player when they are facing their own goal. With this it means that If PSV can't win the ball back, at least, they are forcing the play backwards and are not being penetrated by the opposition.



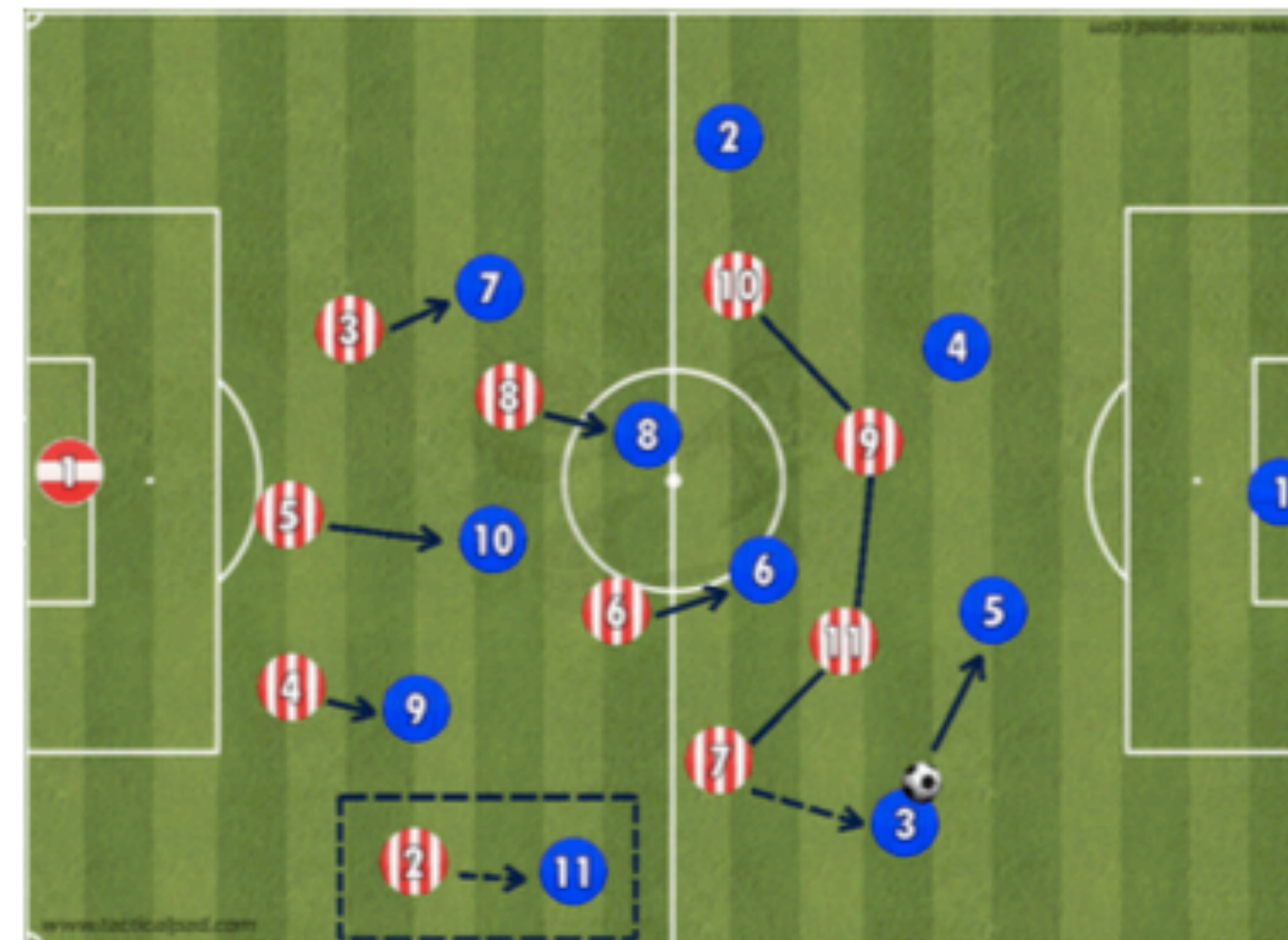
Another trigger to to press the opposition pivot player, especially when the closest player can see the ball and player when it is travelling. PSV also initiate a press when the pivot player plays the pass backwards (In this case to the LCB for Ado Den Haag Who set-up in a 5-3-2.

DEFLECTING AND DENYING THE SPACE



PSV aim to deflect the play and deny the space high up the pitch. A constant theme for this PSV side under Schmidt is to make the play predictable as far away from their own goal as possible.

As a consequence of the making the CB's play wide by shutting off central passing options, it then allows the WM's to fulfil their defensive duties. In this instance they use the touchline as an extra defender to stop forward passes down the flank. As an extra layer of protection, the FB steps up to man-mark the opposition WM.



This diagram demonstrates how PSV tend to defend when they make the opposition shift the ball into wide areas.

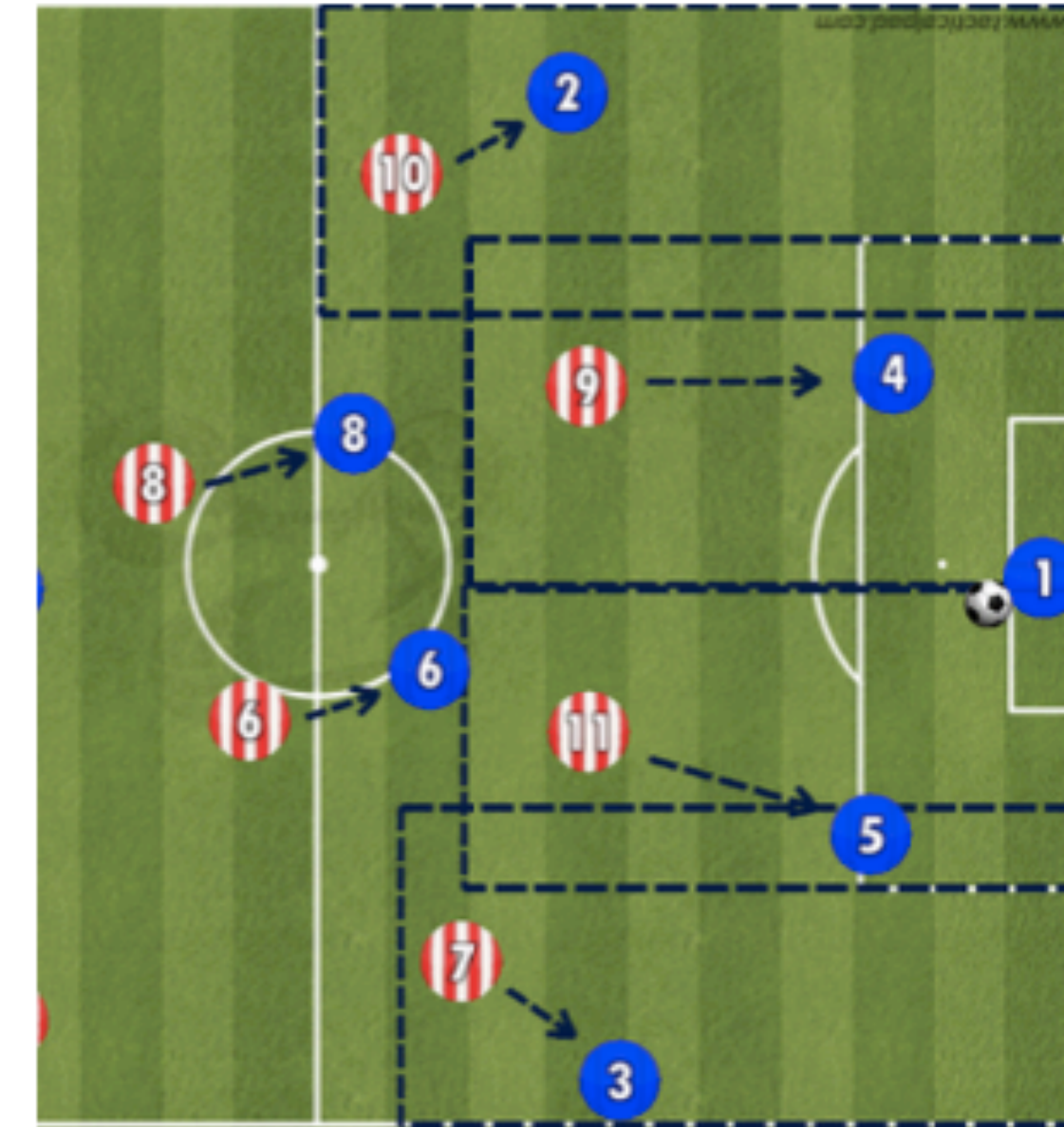
In their 4-2-4 it prevents the forward pass being played in wide areas, due to the 2 CM's marking zonally, and FB become more man orientated in their marking.

With PSV's two CF's they aim to deflect and deny the space in the central midfield third, opting to funnel the ball into wider portions of the pitch, particularly to the opposition FB when the CB's have the ball at feet.

DEFENSIVE SHAPE



In their defensive shape, PSV are aggressive and expansive. Their shape and application of their defensive organisation allows them to either win the ball back quickly and high up the pitch or deny the opposition playing forward and through the lines, leaving the opposition to rely on more direct play through long passes to the CF or via a diagonal pass to wider players.



This diagram shows the front 4's zonal marking responsibilities when initiating a press. Each player is responsible for a portion of the pitch should the play enter that portion; that is their cue to either press aggressively to win the ball back, or aim to dictate the play into a certain area. It also demonstrates that players' zones can overlap dependent on game situation and the area where the ball is on the pitch.

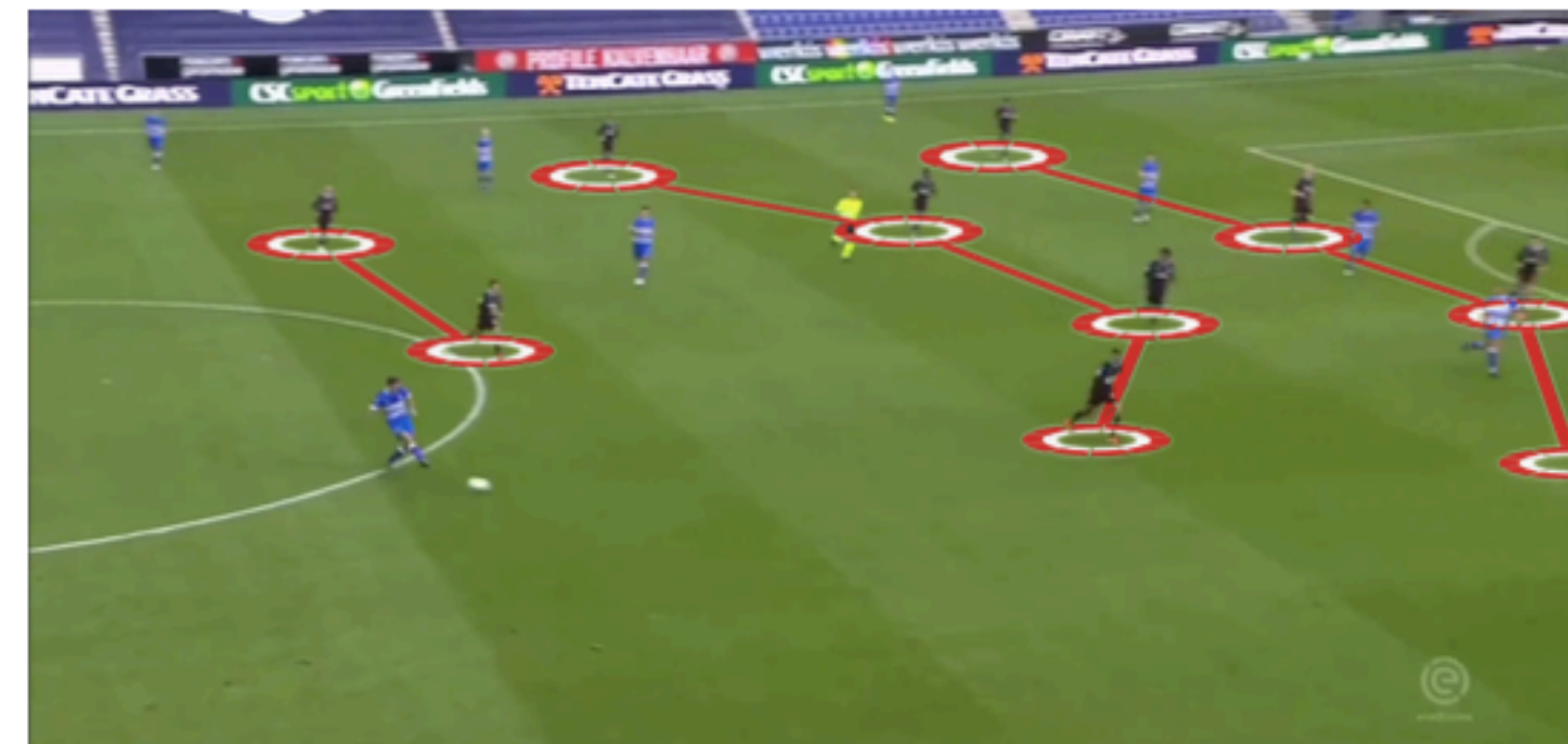
As previously mentioned, PSV organise themselves to defend in a 4-2-4 system.

As such, it allows them to press high up the pitch with good zonal coverage.

The attacking players are very aware of the space that they must mark and will press aggressively should the opposition look to play in these areas.

As a consequence, the rest of the team will react off of this press, but more often than not they will retain the 4-2-4 formation.

Alternatively, if PSV cannot win the ball back high up the pitch, they can resort into a mid-block. In this instance, they will revert to a 4-4-2 with the WMs tucking into a deeper position, aiming to remain narrow, overloading the side with the ball and being compact.



ATTACKING SET-PIECES

PSV have a series of clever attacking set-piece routines to call upon, with the aim of getting their best players aerially a chance to have a shot on goal.

A lot of the set-piece routines in place rely on smart movements from the attacking players to open up pockets of space that can be exploited through a flick on into a more dangerous area.

ATTACKING FREE-KICKS



In this scenario, Granada hold a relatively high line. To combat this, when the free-kick is being played, the attackers in the line fill the box whilst one player runs into the highlighted box to flick the ball on.

This routine allows there to be more space to exploit in the box from the second ball, as opposed to the first, where offside is more in play.

As a side note, PSV have two players waiting to pick up the clearances, allowing them to retain the ball whilst defending against a possible counter attack



ATTACKING CORNERS

PSV, when attacking corners are unpredictable due to the amount of routines they have at their disposal. One note is that against teams that predominantly man-mark, they use routines that bunch PSV players together, before splitting, making it hard for Opposition players to mark them and follow their runs (Shown below)



Other routines include targeting the opposition GK's weaknesses by suffocating the area around him, whilst also leaving a lot of space to exploit in and around the penalty spot.



DEFENDING SET-PIECES



PSV and Schmidt prefer a zonal marking organisation when defending against Set-Pieces. This is to nullify the attacking space, and aim to make it difficult for opposition players to make meaningful attacking headers.

DEFENDING FREE-KICKS



This set-up is common when defending free-kicks in these positions. It relies on a high line, bringing offside in to play. However, it relies also on having a pro-active sweeper keeper that is comfortable coming out for crosses, as per Mvogo's starting position here. PSV also set up with one man in the wall, and another player just off of him to cover mark the two players standing over the free-kick, PSV also position a man in front of the defensive line to sweep up any second balls.

DEFENDING CORNERS



When Defending corners, PSV typically set-up in a fully zonal marking system with two players close to the corner flag to prevent a short corner being played or simply to clear away any poor corner deliveries. Four players are zonally marking the six-yard box, with a player marking the area around the front post. 2 PSV players are placed in front of the six-yard box aiming to disrupt the run of the attacking players, with a player close to the penalty spot. To clear any second balls, or start a counter-attack. PSV defend with eleven players, however this can be dependent on game situation, since they were winning 1-0 at the time of this penalty.

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For reviewing this case study and offering feedback before publishing

RED BULL SALZBURG TACTICAL ANALYSIS CASE STUDY



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JESSE MARSCH

“Being aggressive is better than being passive...and that’s The way I like to live life”

STRATEGIES

PREFERRED SRATEGIES



Whilst Jesse Marsch's philosophy is firmly entrenched, His tactical set-ups can change in a number of instances:

- Opposition Set-Up.
- Reacting to Opposition Changes/Shifts.
- Personnel Available.
- In Game-Situations.
- When Winning, Drawing or Losing.



1-4-2-2-2



1-4-4-2



1-4-2-3-1



1-4-4-1-1



1-4-1-2-1-2

A common strategy for coaches coming through the Red Bull School of Football Management in the adoption of a 1-4-4-2/1-4-2-2-2 variant.

Whilst Marsch says he doesn't have a 'favourite' strategy, instead focussing on the philosophies within the system, Marsch has shown a fondness towards the 1-4-2-2-2



IN POSSESSION



BUILDING THE ATTACK

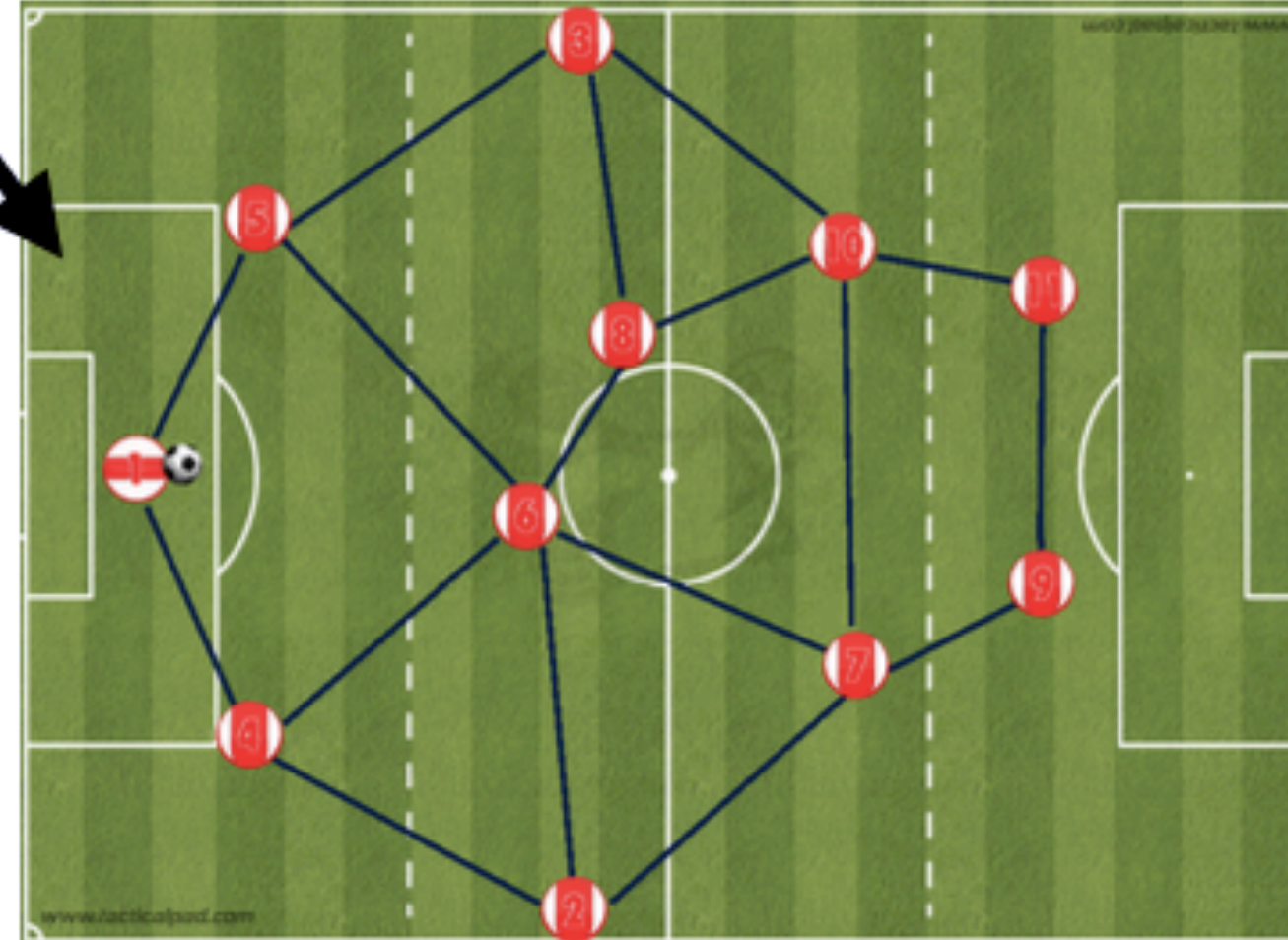
Whilst Salzburg look to play vertically where possible, They have shown to do this by starting the attack from Their own defensive third, utilising the back four (Sometimes the GK), and a single midfield pivot dropping deeper.

Alternatively, if the opponent pressurises the Salzburg CB in possession, the FB on that side will drop deeper to create an angle to receive the pass. This ensures a pass that will retain possession can be made, as opposed to a risky diagonal ball, made more risky by the CB being under pressure



As mentioned, when building from deep (GK or CB) Inside their own 18-yard box. The FB's operate reasonably high up the pitch on the touchline to offer a diagonal passing option. In addition to this one of the CM's will drop to create a pivot, whilst the other CM will operate higher in the middle third. this set-up isolates the opposition attackers And creates a 4v2 situation. Against an opposition 4-4-2 or 4-2-3-1

PASSING ANGLES WHEN BUILDING THE ATTACK



1-4-2-2-2

When looking to build the attack, especially against a team that defends deeper in a mid-to-low block, Salzburg look to create various passing angles. One noticeable rotation when building the attack is that one of the CM's drops into the half-space next to the CB's to receive the ball, away from the congested midfield, or to pull an opposition player away to create a passing angle for CM partner

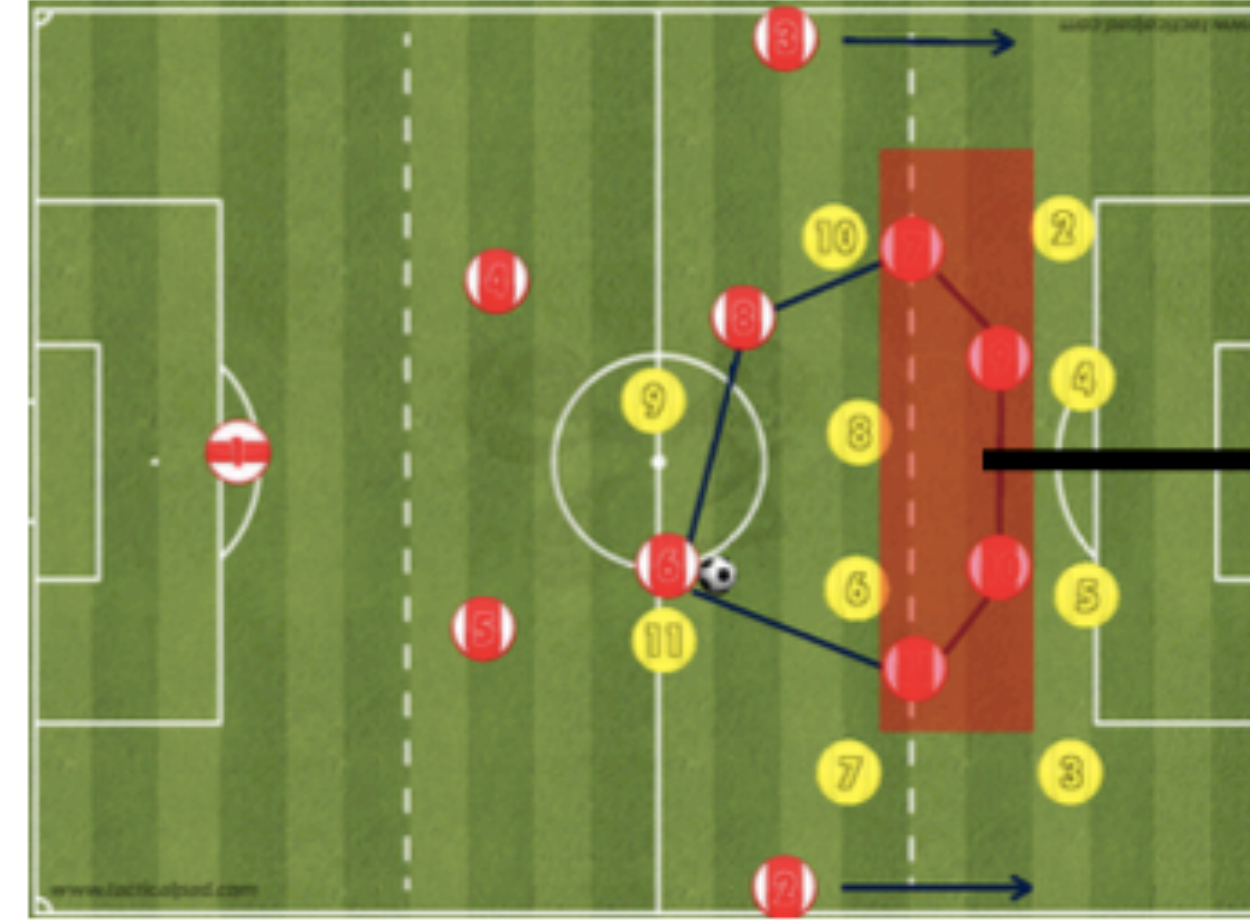
ATTACKING VERTICALLY

Salzburg prefer to play vertically, aiming to score within 10 seconds of gaining possession of the ball. As a result Marsch's Salzburg look to play direct football, sometimes going from back to front quickly. Only if Salzburg can't penetrate early do they look to retain the ball and be patient.



When Attacking vertically, the movements of the more advanced players are critical, the WM's or CF's shuffle into pockets of space to receive the ball, usually in spaces between the opposition lines, shown above. the CB's in Marsch's system must possess excellent passing skills and spacial awareness to be able to execute line-breaking passes

Salzburg look to commit players into The final third, the below graphic demonstrates the shape that Salzburg Can operate in when in the middle third, Looking to attack vertically into the attacking third. As well as the passing angles that are created, when playing in a 4-2-2-2



Often, the front four Will operate in these positions (Zone 14) behind the opposition midfield and in front of the opposition defence. As a result, it makes the opposition defence make a choice between dropping off or applying pressure, potentially creating space in behind.



Creating the angles is vital when attacking vertically. In their 4-2-2-2 formation, Salzburg do this by the WM's Inverting into more central areas, whilst the FB's push high and wide. This is especially relevant when Salzburg break into the middle third, and one of the CM's are in possession of the ball.

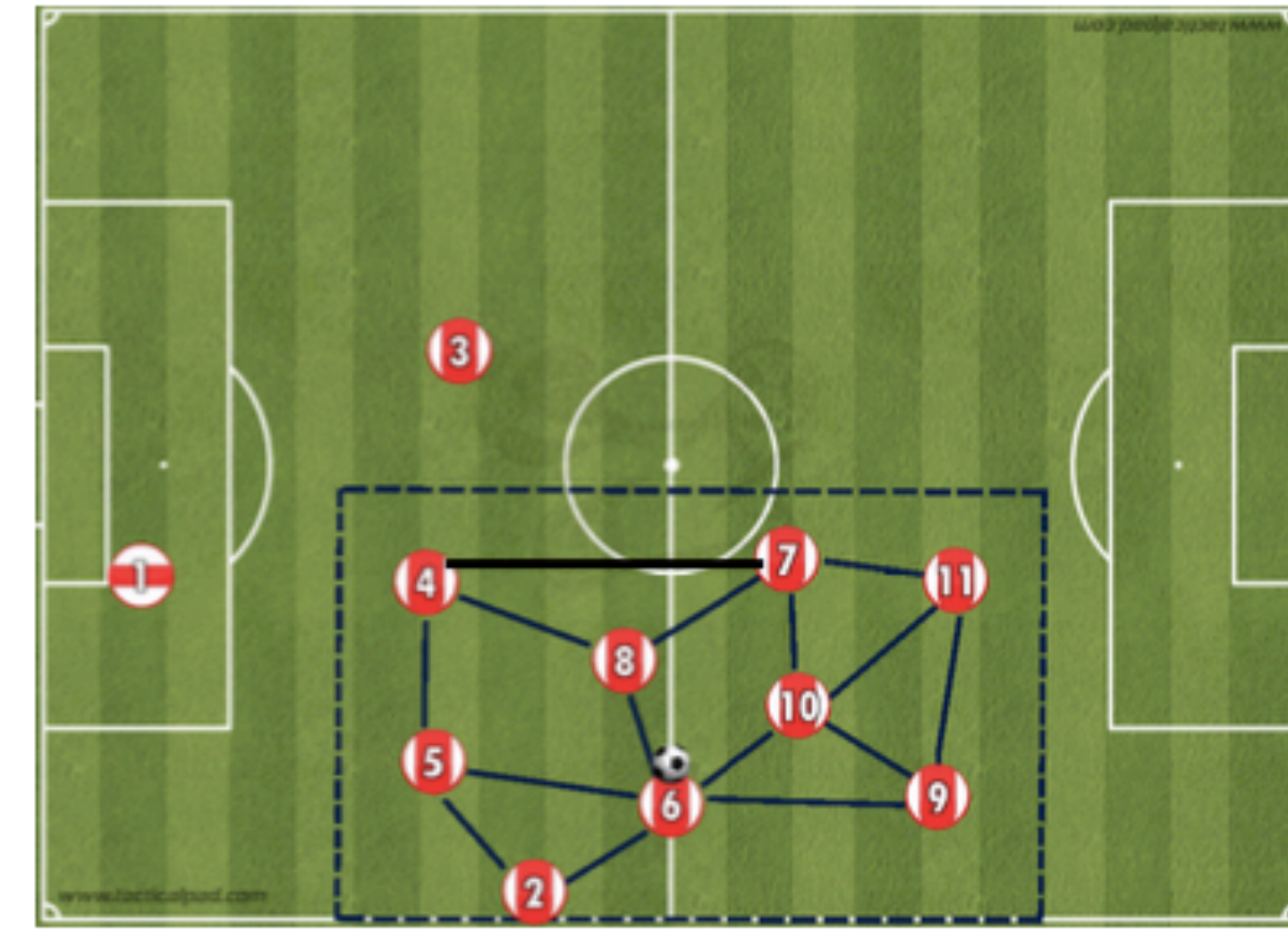


BALL RETENTION

Only when Salzburg cannot penetrate quickly and effectively do they look to recycle possession in the middle and defensive thirds. Whilst doing this, they look to shift the ball to pull opponents out of position to create space to exploit.



Jesse Marsch instructs his players to overload the ball side. His terminology for this is 'ball-orientation' and whilst it is most attached to his pressing philosophy it also transpires into when Salzburg retain the ball. They do this to firstly, play through the pressure and catch the opposition out, but also to be able to quickly react to a possible transition.



The above graphic demonstrates how Salzburg can overload the ball side and entice the opposition to press them. This either leads to Salzburg beating the press or a transition happening, where Salzburg themselves press with purpose and can win the ball back, exploiting the opposition this way.



One theme of Salzburg's ball retention is to go backwards if it means they can unlock defences. Salzburg do this by passing back to the CB, in which the FB will react to this creating an angle for a pass. As this happens, the WM will shuffle into a wider position to be able to receive a forward pass from the FB.

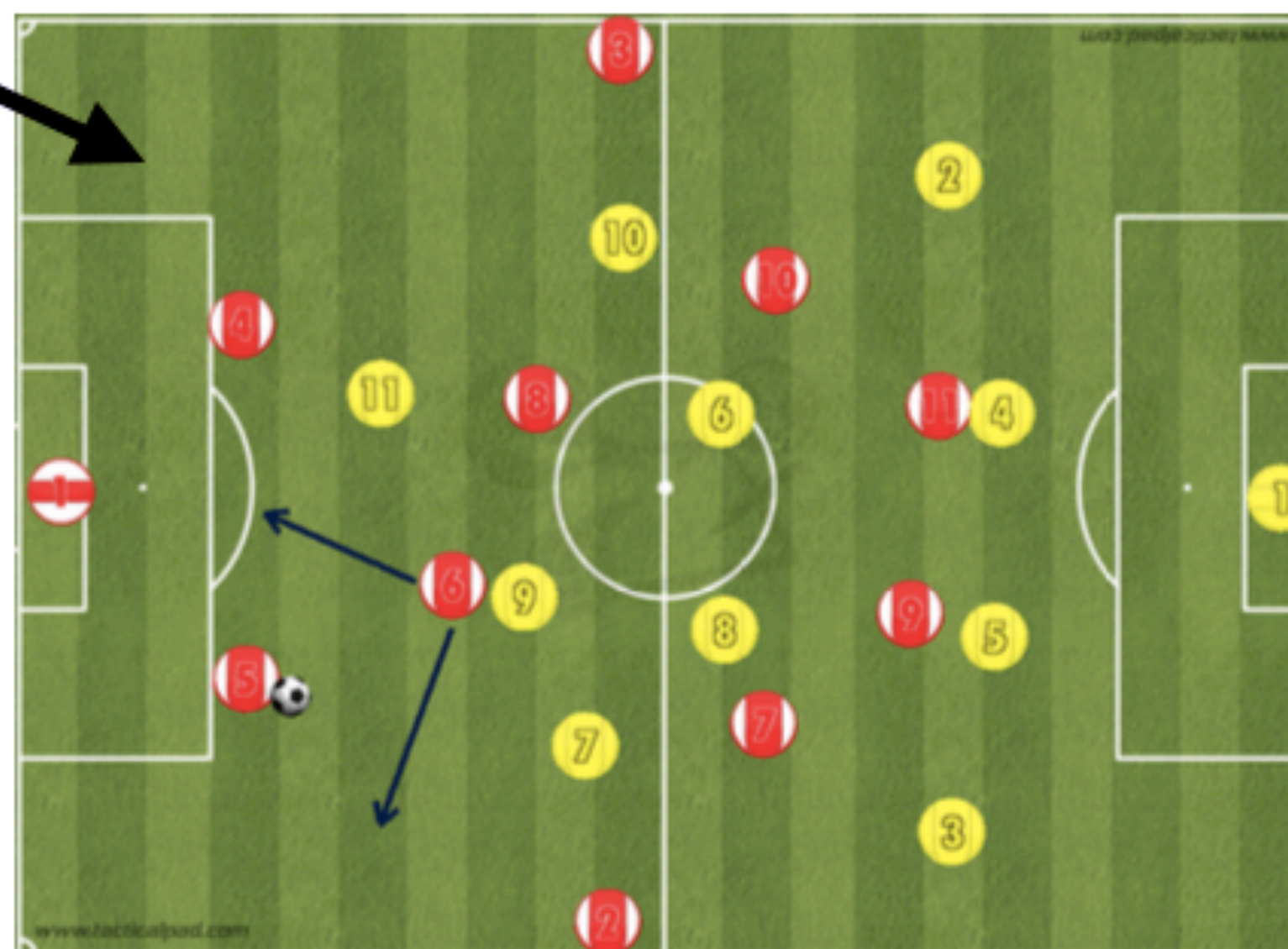
MOVEMENTS/ROTATIONS

Marsch has organised his side well when in possession, each player knows their roles and responsibilities.

Aside from this, Salzburg players have the tactical knowledge to be able to react to situations when in possession, as a result, they make smart and delicate movements to create passing angles and space to exploit.



The movement of the pivot player when building the Attack is crucial to Salzburg being able to retain the ball and progress through the thirds, either through creating the space to penetrate through a dribble or a pass. In the image above, the CM drops in to make a three at the back to create space for a pass.



Above demonstrates the common Movements of the pivot player to Find space to receive the ball

Arguably, the most intriguing movement/rotation is the WM's Inverting into the half-spaces/more centrally when playing in a 4-2-2-2 formation to find gaps between the opposition midfield and defence.

Dominik Szoboszlai does this extremely well.



The movements of the CF's in Marsch's system become intriguing, and usually is common regardless of formation if playing with two up front. One of the CF's will drop deeper to be able to receive a pass or to try to draw out an opposition player, leaving space in behind for his strike partner to exploit.

The same movements happen when Salzburg set up in a 4-2-3-1, with the ten dropping deep



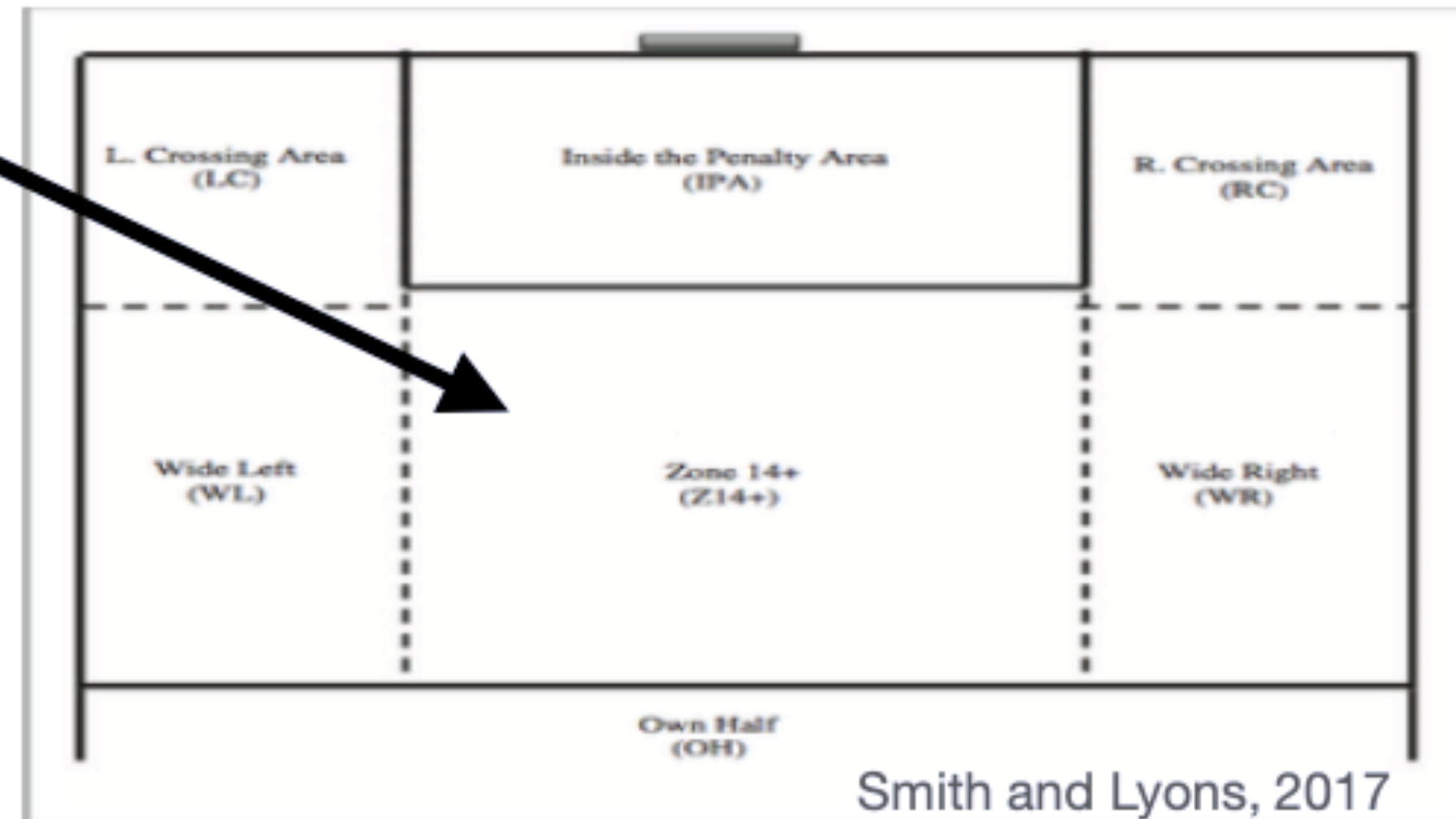
PENETRATION INTO THE FINAL THIRD

Everything Salzburg do is aimed at being quick and at fast pace, be it a pass, dribble or rotations/movements, all with the aim of disrupting the defensive teams organisation. Salzburg have a clear identity when trying to penetrate into the final third, but are also adaptable dependent on what the opposition does.



When looking to penetrate into the final third, Salzburg look to play through the centre, into and through Zone 14+ which encapsulates the centre portion of the opposition half. Salzburg do this as they have most of their attacking players operating narrow in a 4-2-2-2 this can also be as Zone 14 (+) can be considered the scoring And assist zone.

Alternatively, Salzburg can look to penetrate into the final third through the FB's picking up positions in spaces high and wide, spaces left by the WM's inverting centrally. This is especially apparent when trying to unlock a narrow defensive block.



When Salzburg get into these positions, they seek to fill the box for crosses, or the FB can pull the ball back to an on-rushing midfielder. All with the aim of creating a goal-Scoring opportunity, whilst committing players in the final third.

Salzburg, when crossing, prefer to play flat crosses to utilise the speed of an on-rushing player.



IN TRANSITION



ATTACKING TRANSITION (WHEN WINNING THE BALL BACK)



Jesse Marsch says himself that a lot of his principles relate to the transitions that happen during a match. When in an attacking transition, the aim is simple: try to score, and do it within ten seconds of winning the ball back

When Salzburg force a transition and win the ball back, they often look to play sharp and direct vertical passes, in order to exploit the opposition whilst they are out of their defensive shape.



The term Jesse March likes to use called 'Ball-Orientation' Is a critical component of forcing an attacking Transition, it aims to overload the side of the ball with a lot of Salzburg players in the area where the ball is to try and regain possession.

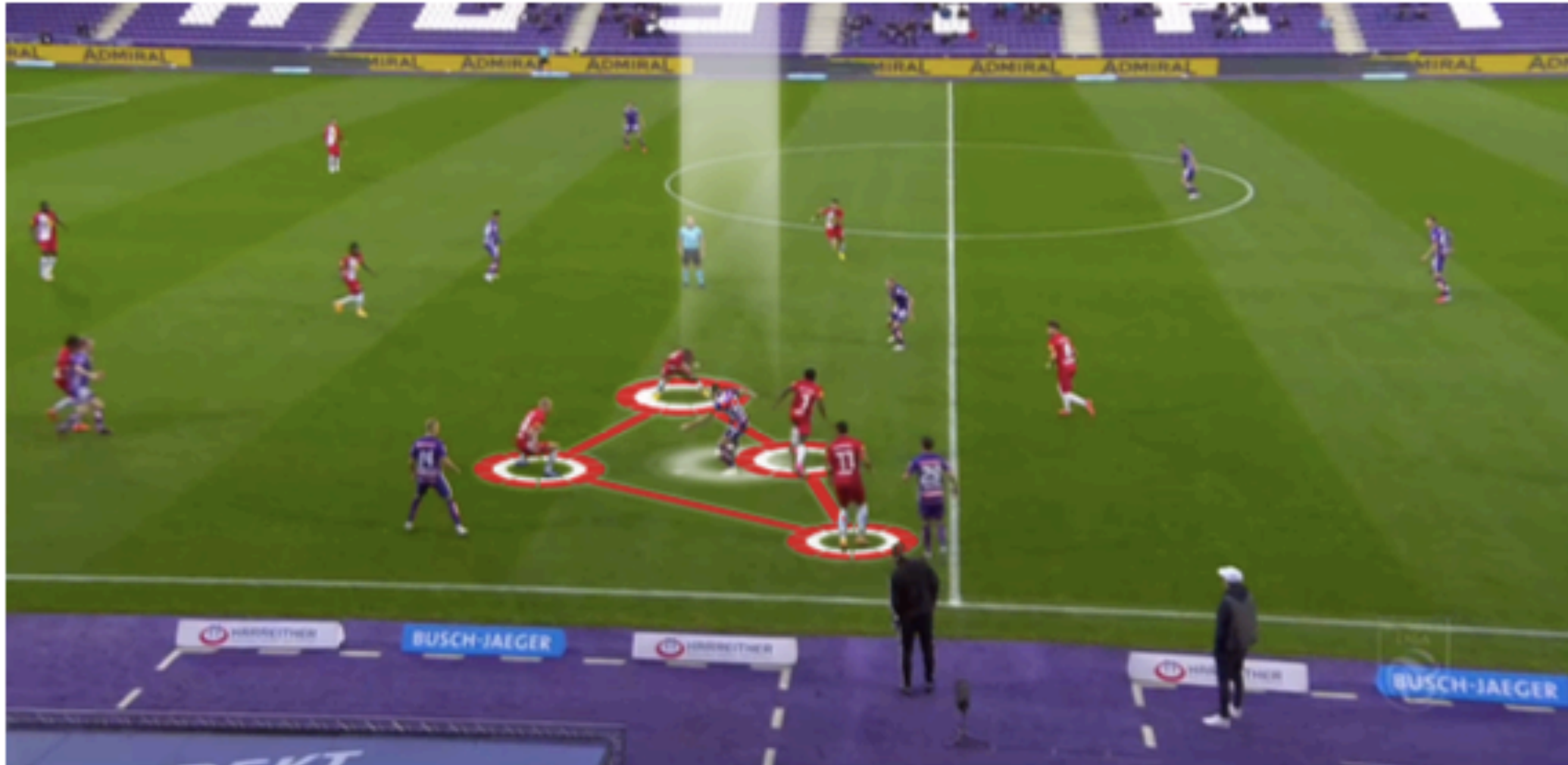
When attacking the transition, Salzburg players make intelligent runs into space instead of creating short passing angles, this enables them to exploit the space and play penetrative passes. Salzburg players are intelligent enough to know where the space is to exploit and when to time their runs efficiently

DEFENSIVE TRANSITION (WHEN LOSING THE BALL)



Jesse Marsch has insinuated that losing the ball is sometimes okay, as they can then unleash, arguable their greatest weapon, A well-tuned counter-press or 'Gegenpress' Salzburg are excellent at reacting to defensive Transitions

Salzburg also set-up to counter-act The opponent beating the initial 'ball-orientation' press with this, they ensure that players not applying pressure to the opponent on the ball, are marking players that Have the potential to receive a pass. With the aim being either stepping in-front of the target player as the ball is travelling, to win the ball back, or to prevent them turning And playing forward towards the goal Salzburg are defending, forcing them wide or backwards.



Again, 'Ball-orientation' becomes important. In order to win the ball back when entering a defensive transition, Salzburg look to press in groups of 2,3 or 4 to win the ball back soon after losing it. This is with the aim of entering an attacking transition, where they can exploit the opposition when they are vulnerable and out of shape.

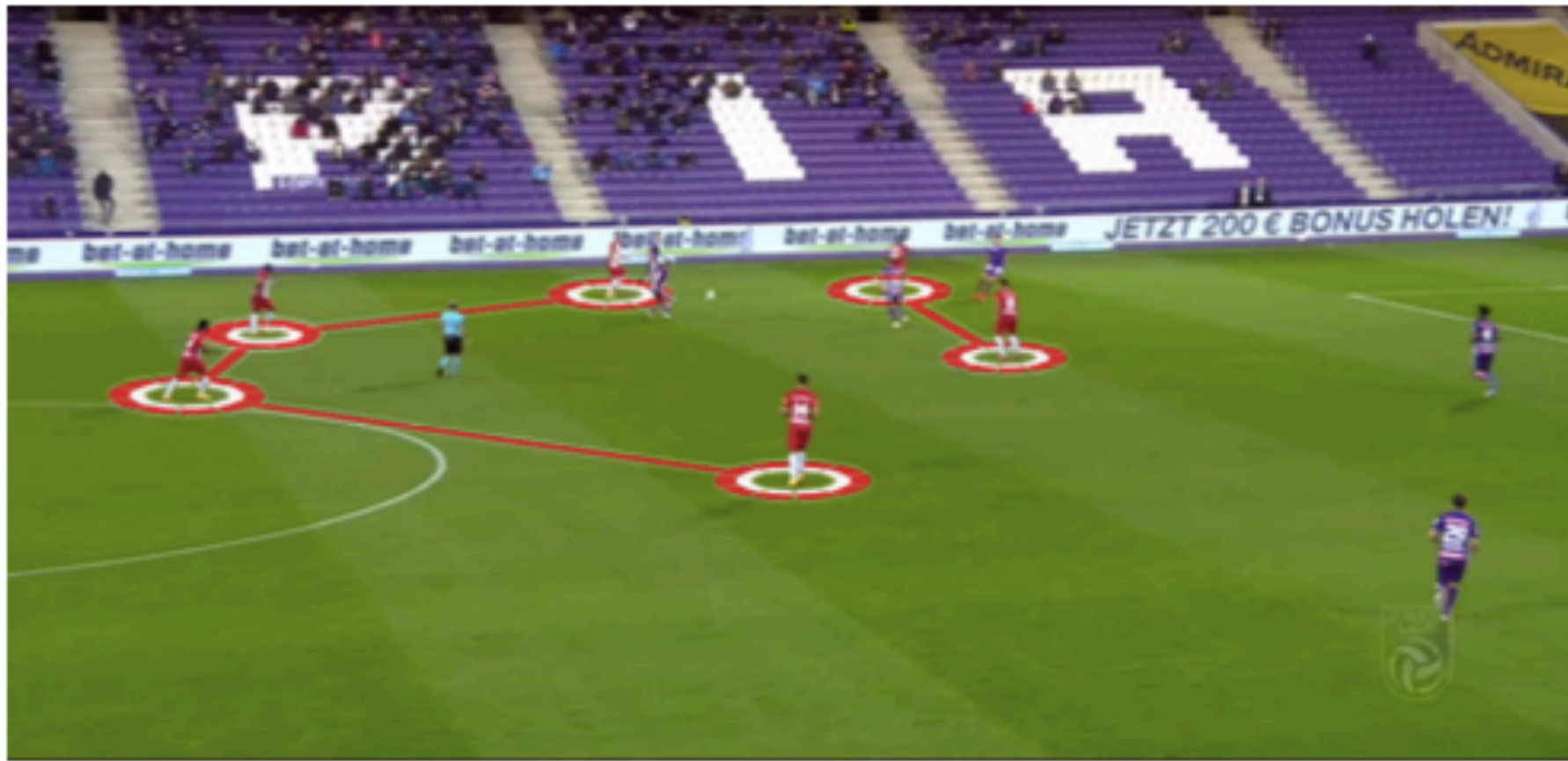




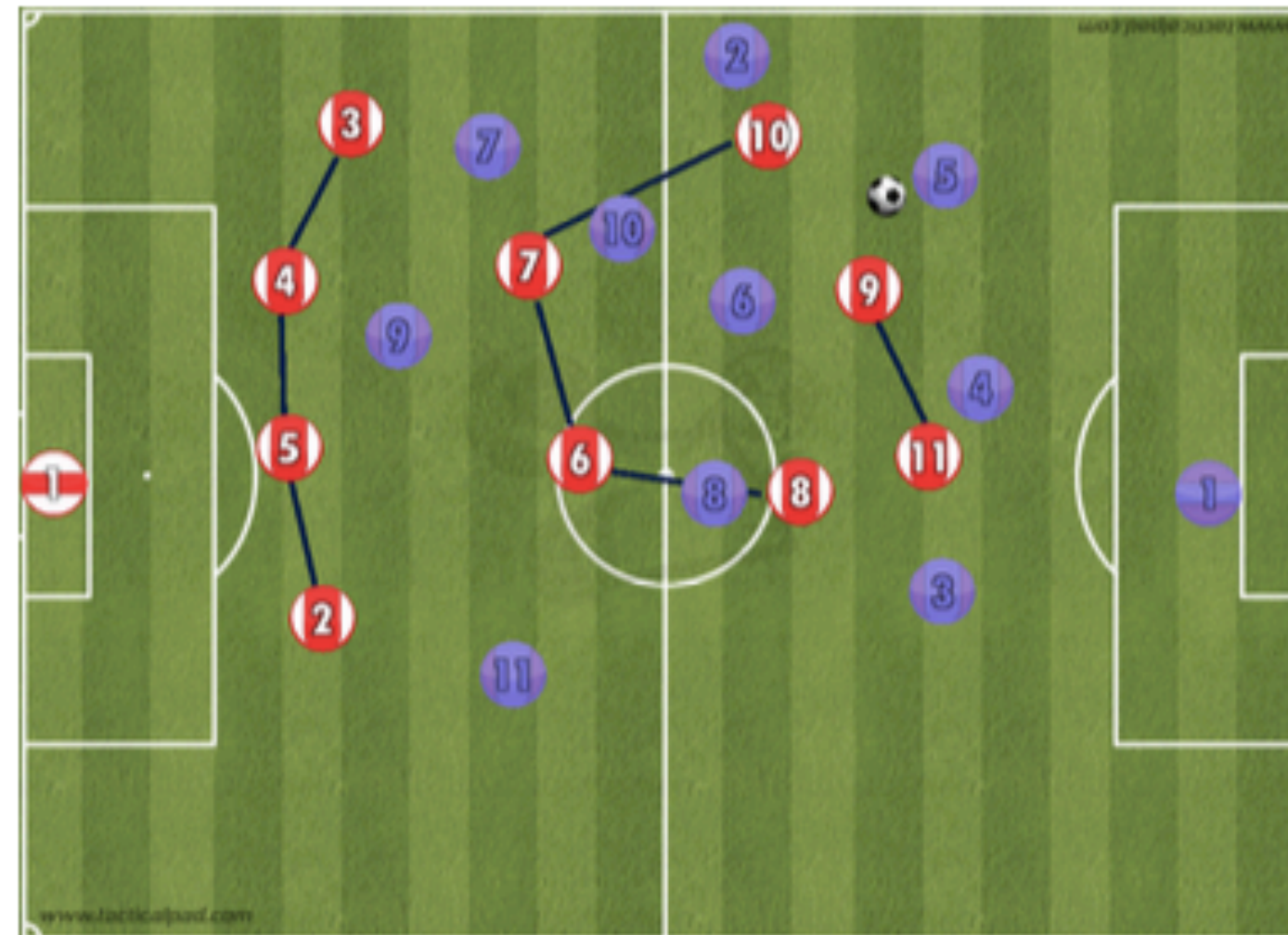
OUT OF POSSESSION

DEFENSIVE SHAPE

When in their defensive shape, unlike a few teams that operate a 4-2-2-2 formation, Salzburg don't revert to a flat 4-4-2, instead they prefer to keep the WM's Inverted into central areas, this is to tempt the opposition into playing the pass into the FB's where Salzburg can then initiate a press.



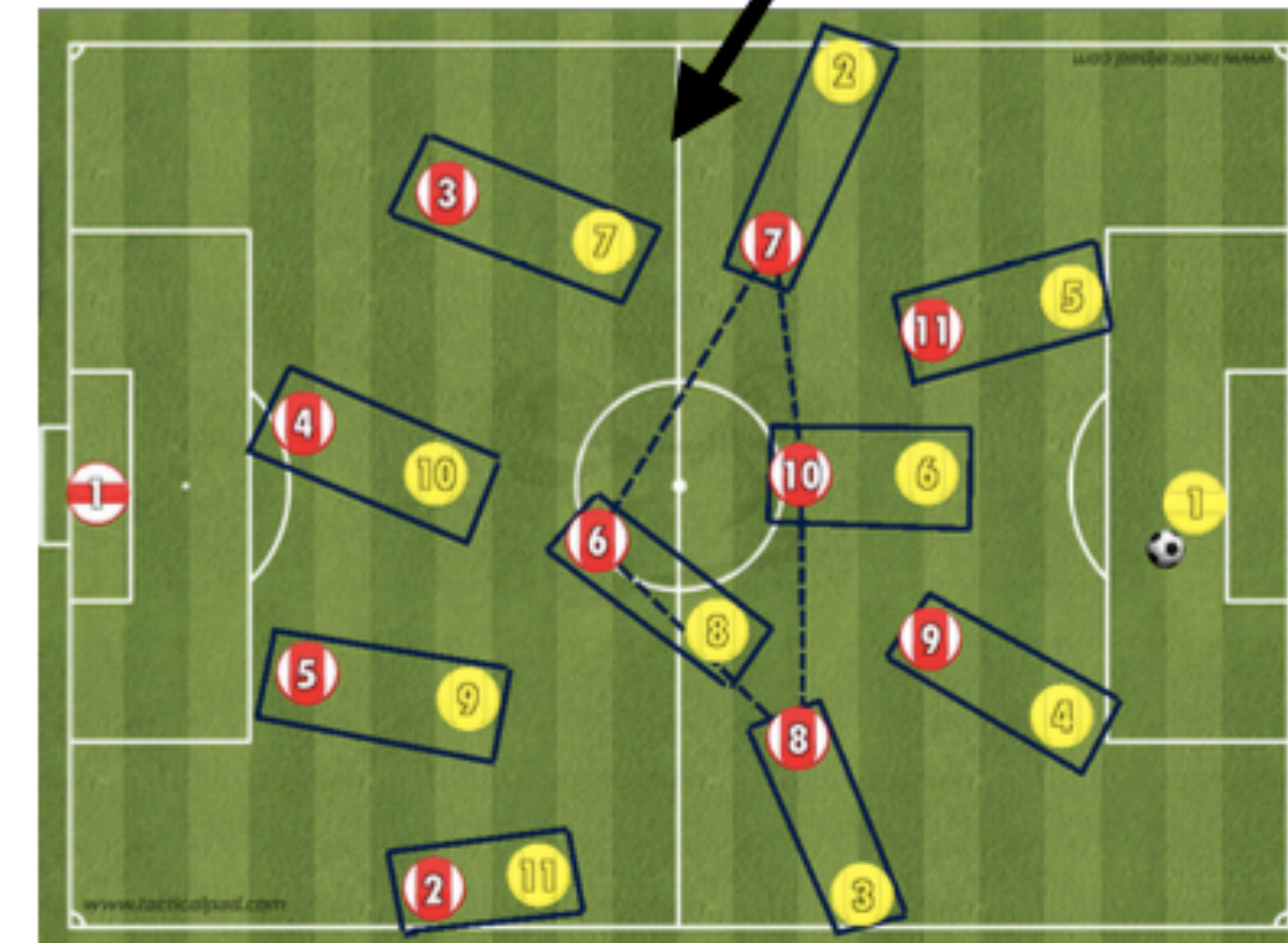
However, when defending deep In a low block, Salzburg can revert into a narrow 4-4-2 with the aim of cutting the oppositions supply through the middle, forcing them out-wide



Alternatively, Salzburg can defend in a 4-1-2-1-2 formation (4-4-2 diamond). This is particularly apparent when the opposition utilise a specific pivot player. As shown below the player playing as a number ten will look to prevent the pass being played into the pivot player, preventing the opposition from building their attacks from deep



In this situation, Salzburg were able to shift their set-up to a 4-1-2-1-2 to match up with The opposition who played 4-4-2 but staggered their midfield when playing from their GK. The wide central midfielders in the diamond were responsible for the opposition FB's



LINE OF ENGAGEMENT

As is so common with managers coming through The Red Bull Football Group, pressing, and pressing High up the pitch is a common theme. Jesse Marsch's RB Salzburg are no exception as they press high In the oppositions defensive third.



Regardless of where the ball is in the opposition third, RB Salzburg press. In the wider areas, they initiate the press either through the CF shuffling over or the WM's applying the initial pressure whilst the CF moves into a position to clock a passing lane or press alongside him to win the ball back

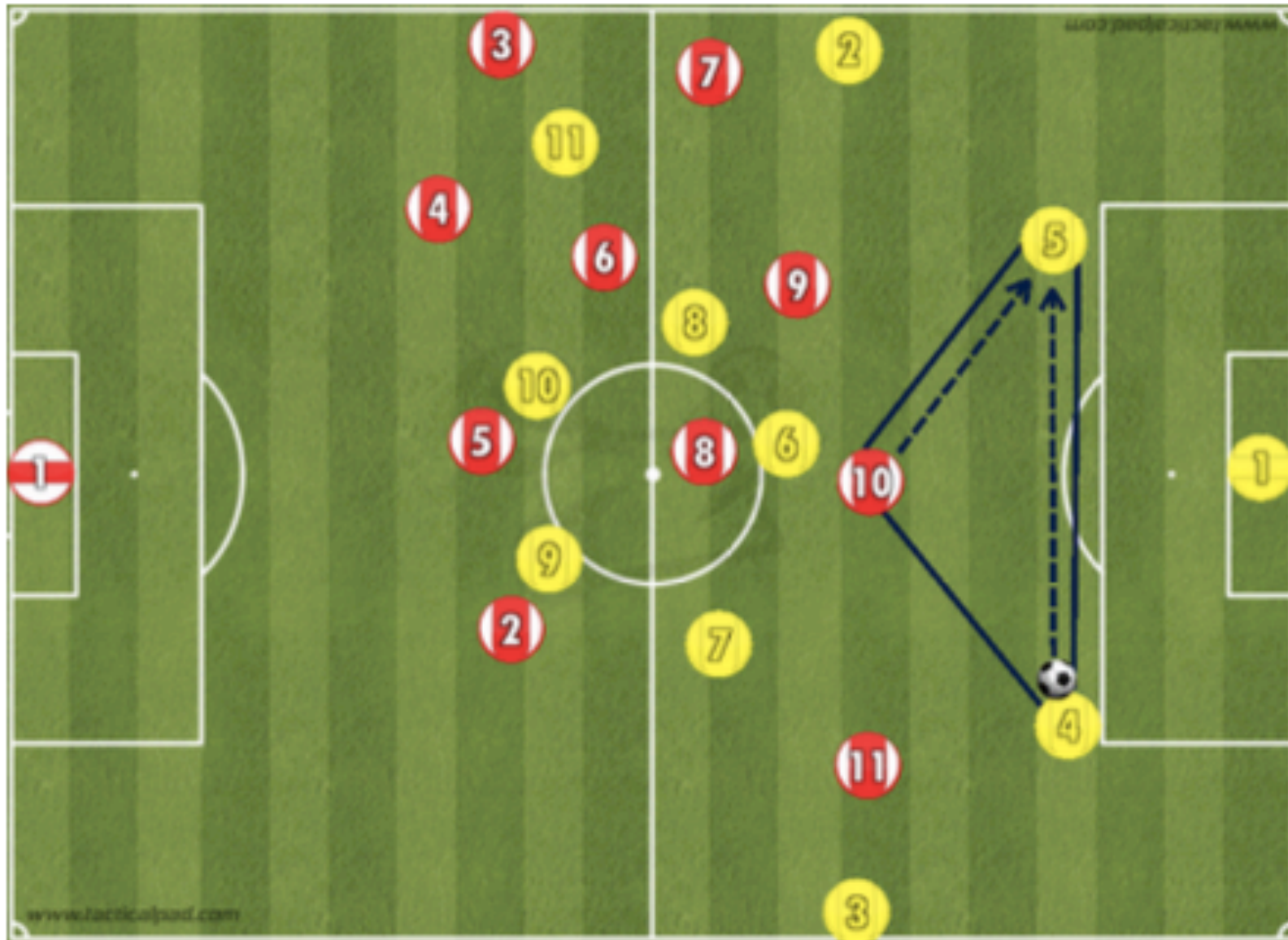


However, dependent on game situation and opposition, Salzburg can alter how high they engage the opposition. For example against Atletico Madrid Salzburg were able to drop a little deeper to cover passing lanes into the deep middle/defensive third, but still applied pressure to the man on the ball when entering the midfield third



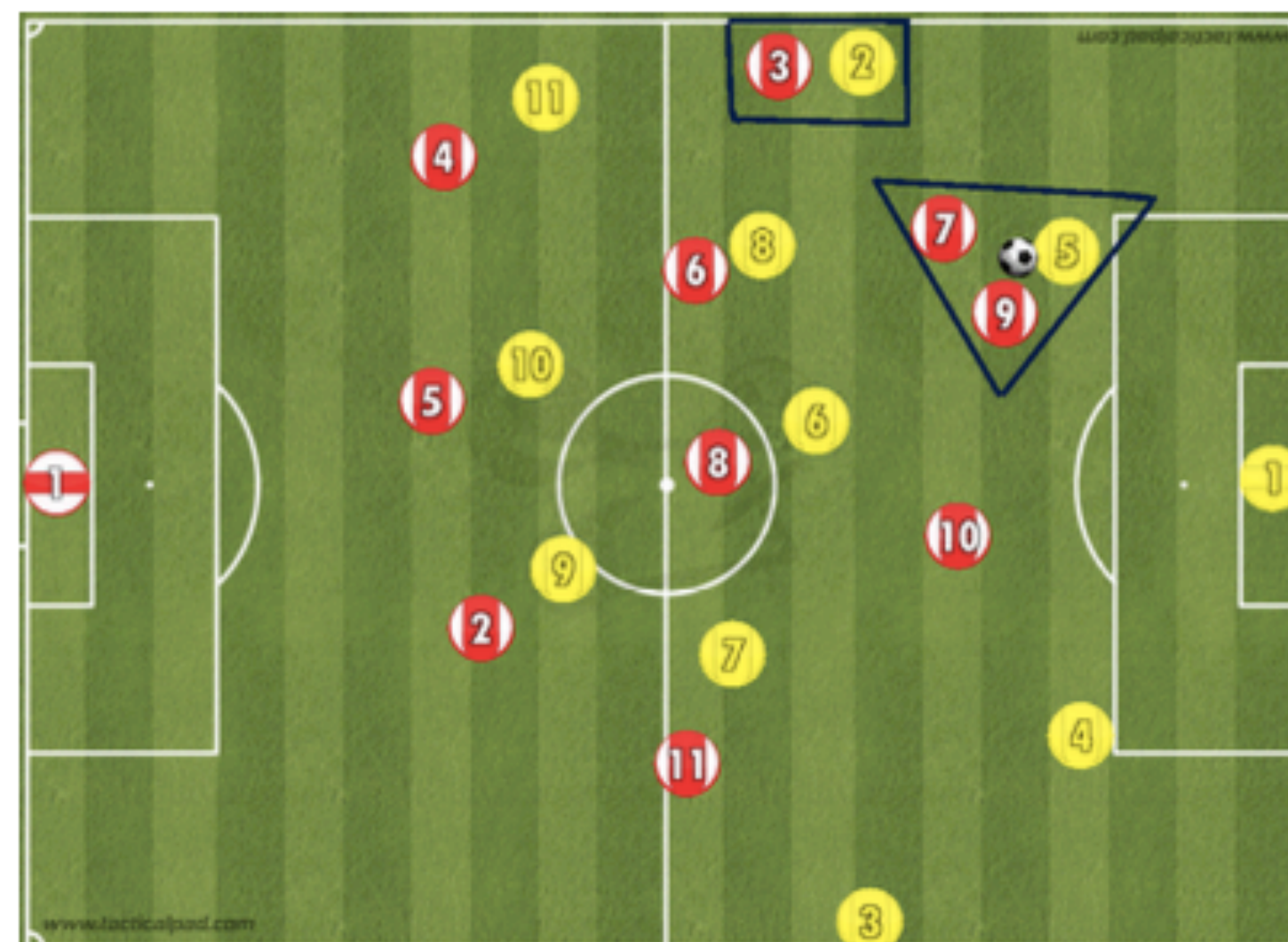
TIMING OF THE PRESS/TRIGGERS

Jesse Marsch plays a lot of emphasis on when to press, he suggests that its not necessarily a pressing trigger when they engage the opposition, but rather the timing. This suggests that Salzburg want to press high, irrelevant of whose on the ball or where they are positioned.



Of course, however, there are pressing triggers that the forwards work off of, when deciding when to engage the opposition. One of these is when the opposition CB plays a square ball to the CB partner. In this, the positioning of the CF for Salzburg allows them to press. Marsch says that the player pressing Needs to be half the distance to the receiving player that the pass travels to, in distance.

Again, 'Ball-orientation' comes into Salzburg's philosophy When pressing. With 'Ball-orientation' as previously stated, it allows Salzburg to overload the portion of pitch where the opposition player has the ball, as a result when this happens, it is a pressing trigger to pressure aggressively to win the ball back as opposed to being slightly passive and just shutting off the passing lanes



Another noticeable feature of Salzburg's pressing, is that they like to press extremely aggressively with two players applying pressure to the player on the ball As opposed to just one. One situation is that when the opposition CB has the ball, the CF will press alongside the WM, as opposed to the WM cutting the pass to the opposition FB, as a result the Salzburg FB pushes extremely high to shut off that pass

BALL ORIENTATION/CONTROLLING THE SPACE

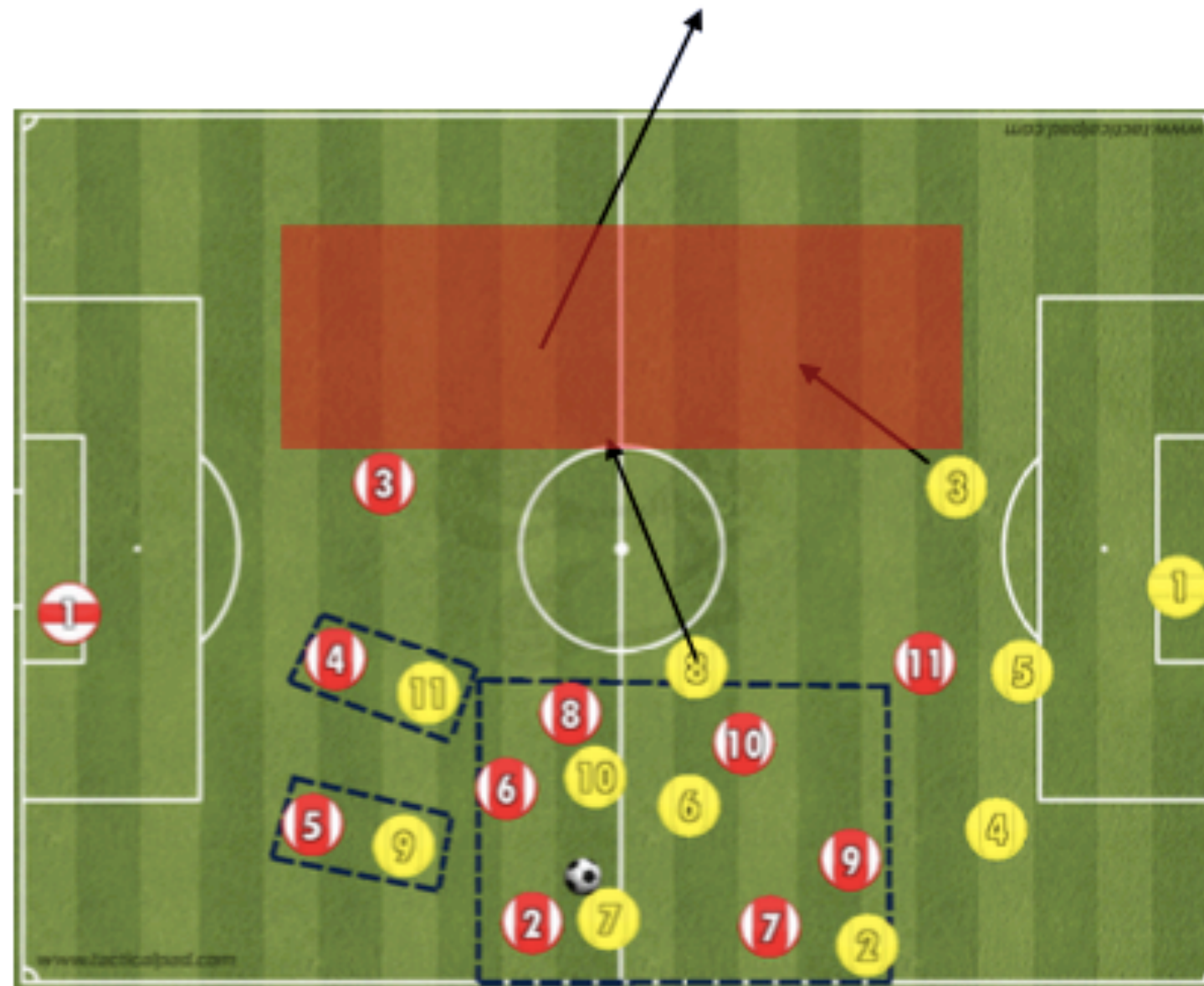


'Ball-orientation' has already been mentioned a lot
In this study, this is because it constitutes a high importance in Marsch and Salzburg's out of possession play.



Salzburg initiate their 'ball-orientation' strategy typically in the wider areas of the pitch, this is to use the touchline as another defender. In these areas Salzburg try to outnumber opposition players, or at least match up with them.

Salzburg avoid committing so many players into A 'ball-orientation' in the central areas of the pitch, This is to avoid the opposition potentially switching The ball into wider areas to exploit the space left
By Salzburg



The players involved in the 'Ball-orientation' typically set out to be aggressive and win the ball back, instead of stopping passes within the overloaded area of the pitch.

When in these situations, Salzburg commit a lot of players to pressing in a group, however, they have makes sure that opposition players in an advanced area are marked. As a result, goal-side Salzburg players are required to mark the opposition players

ATTACKING SET-PIECES



Red Bull Salzburg have shown that they have a number of interesting set-piece routines, especially their attacking corners. They have a large number of routines, aimed at keeping variety in their play and not becoming too predictable and easy to defend against.

The aim of this routine is to exploit the opposition's set up. When man-marking it can be difficult to stick with your opposite number when the attacking side set-up like seen in this routine, examples can be drawn to the England 2018 World Cup side with their corner routines.



One of the more interesting corner routines That Red Bull Salzburg use is pictured above.



In this routine, three of the players break away causing confusion in the defence, as a result It leaves the space for the player highlighted. The position he finds himself in, gives him three options to try and penetrate. Firstly, a pass back to the corner taker who will have a better angle with pace on the ball from the pass. Secondly, he is able to open his body to take a shot himself, or pull back to one of the players on the edge of the box.

Salzburg have shown that they aim to exploit the opposition at set-pieces through clever routines like shown above, aiming to create space in and around the box for a meaningful pass or a shooting opportunity

DEFENDING SET-PIECES

When defending against wide free-kicks (shown below) Salzburg look to suffocate the space by marking zonally and aggressively, high up. This means there is a reliance on keeping a disciplined line and not dropping too deep, which Salzburg do well.

On the other hand, it also shows a reliance on the GK to be pro-active and act as a sweeper to cover for balls delivered into the box.



When defending corners, Salzburg usually defend in a mixed marking approach, using elements of both zonal and man marking. RB Salzburg usually have their best headers of the ball marking zonally so they can attack the ball when trying to clear. Whilst the man-markers try to disrupt the runs of the attackers.



In this set-up, Salzburg have four zonal markers close to the 6-yard box line. Interestingly, Salzburg use two players to mark the space close to the front post to counter-act attacking runs to this space. In this set-up, two man-mark with another doubling up on one of the attacking players. Finally, a player marks the player outside the box, that's available for a pull back.

CREDITS



- KEYFRAME SPORTS (<https://keyframesports.app/referral/?affiliate-id=a334a458-3e4a-46ba-91f0-2cdae8ce1911>)
- TACTICAL PAD



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A THEORETICAL ANALYSIS OF THE 4-4-2



HISTORY OF THE 4-4-2

The 4-4-2 is arguably the most renowned formation because of its prominence across the globe in decades gone by. The 4-4-2 was vastly popular in the English game during the 1990's right through to the 2000s and still holds a large influence in the English game. The English 4-4-2 was a big part in the footballing culture of Scandinavia particularly Sweden, where the 4-4-2 is still the 'go to' formation for the mens National Team. Other countries such as Uruguay and Iceland still use the 4-4-2 as their main system, amongst others.

The Italian 4-4-2 was also a famous system used in particular by Arrigo Sacchi's high-octane AC Milan side. Using zonal marking as opposed to a man-marking system that was in vogue in Italy at the time, Sacchi's 4-4-2 was high-energy and very expansive the opposite to 'Catenaccio', another philosophy widely accepted in Italy at the time.

Over time, the 4-2-2 has been adapted to fit the current technical and tactical requirements of the game. Adaptions of the 4-4-2 can be seen being used by teams across the globe. Teams utilising the 4-4-2 or a variant of the system include; Atletico Madrid, Southampton, PSV, Red Bull Salzburg to name but a few.

Another renowned adaption to the 4-4-2 comes in the form of a diamond midfield, or a 4-1-2-1-2 used by coaches as notably as Johan Cruyff shifting to a 3-4-3 diamond. Another example is Carlo Ancelotti using the 4-4-2 diamond during AC Milan's powerhouse years in the mid-naughties.

VARIANTS OF THE 4-4-2



STANDARD 4-4-2



4-4-1-1



4-2-3-1



4-2-2-2



4-1-2-1-2/DIAMOND

VARIANTS OF THE 4-4-2

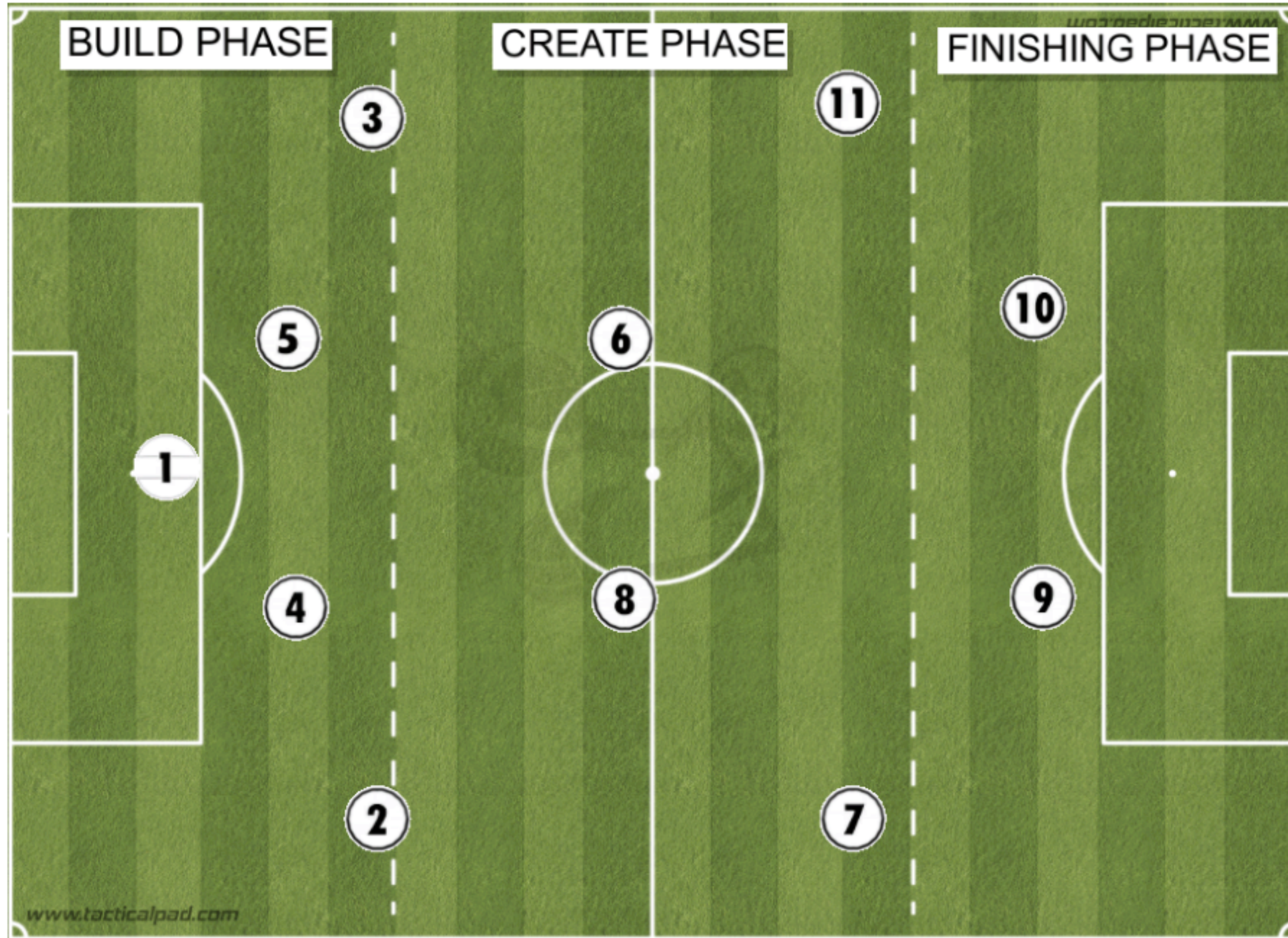
THIS THEORETICAL ANALYSIS WILL
DEMONSTRATE THE 4-4-2 AND HOW TO BEST UTILISE THE FORMATION
AND HOW THE SYSTEM CAN ALTER AND BEHAVE IN CERTAIN GAME SITUATIONS.

- IN POSSESSION
- OUT OF POSSESSION
- TRANSITION (DEFENCE TO ATTACK)
- TRANSITION (ATTACK TO DEFENCE)

IN POSSESSION

IN POSSESSION

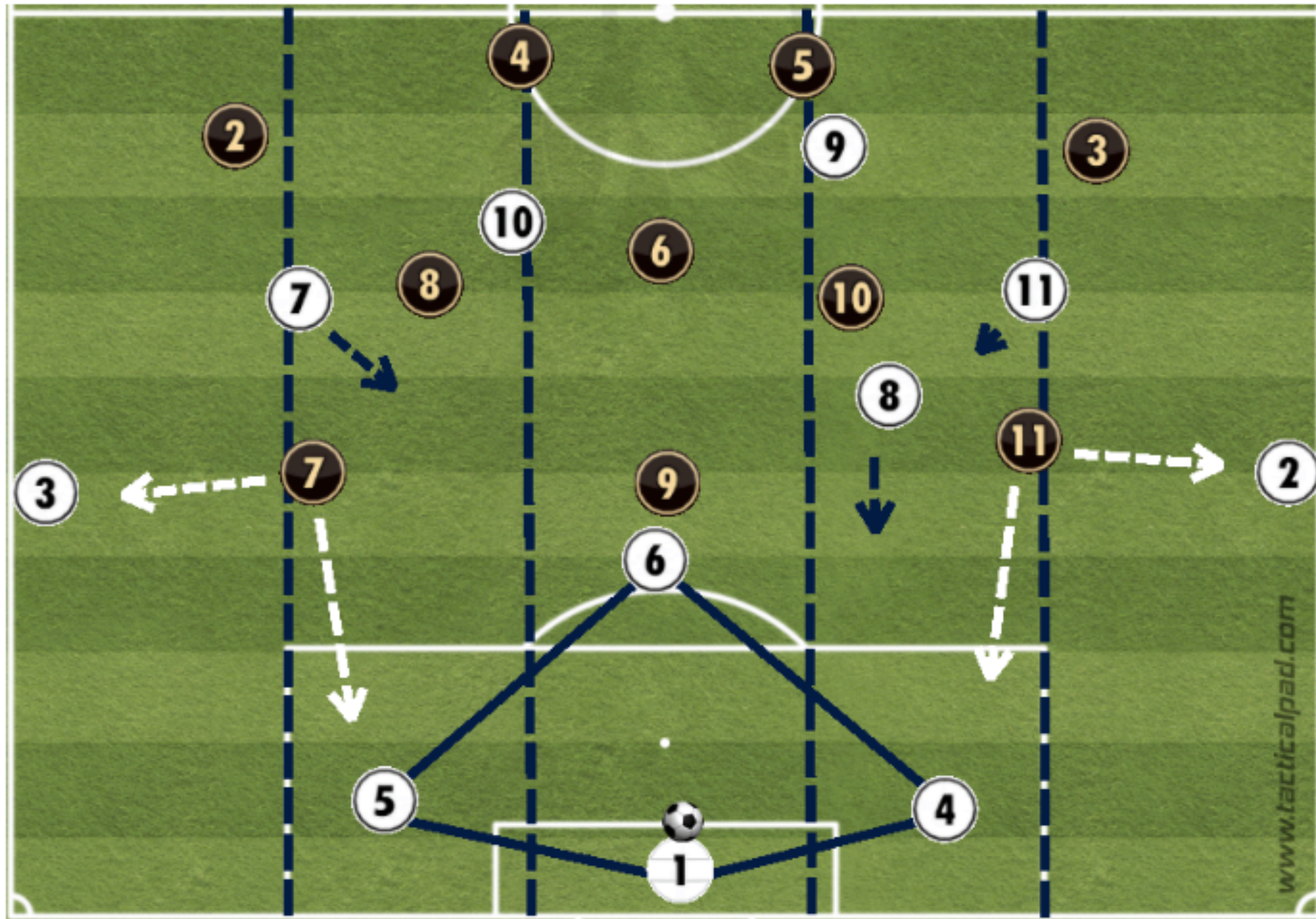
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BUILD PHASE

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FROM A GOAL-KICK



IN A 4-4-2 WHEN BUILDING FROM DEEP, INDIVIDUAL MOVEMENTS TO FIND SPACE TO RECEIVE A PASS IS EXTREMELY IMPORTANT WHEN PLAYING AGAINST A THREE-MAN MIDFIELD. THE NUMERICAL OVERLOAD IN THE MIDDLE THIRD CAN BE COMBATED IN A NUMBER OF WAYS.

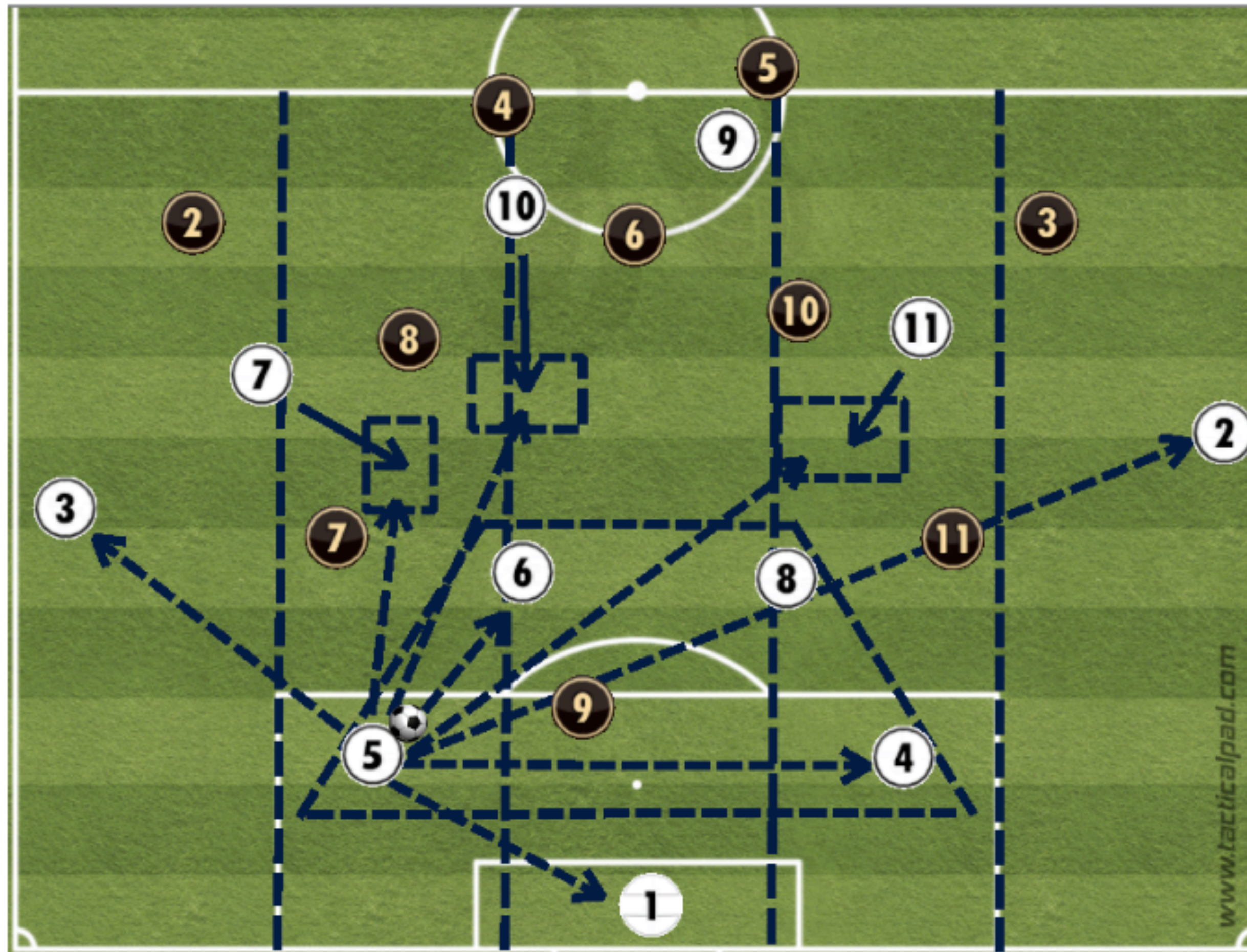
KEY MOVEMENTS:

- THE NUMBER 6 (PIVOT) DROPS DEEPER TO CREATE A DIAMOND BETWEEN THE GK AND TWO CB'S TO EITHER RECEIVE OR DECEIVE THE OPPOSITION CF. THE NATURE OF THIS MOVEMENT IS THAT THE CF IS NOW RESPONSIBLE FOR THE PIVOT ON TOP OF THE TWO CB'S
- WITH THE FB'S POSITIONING, IT ASKS QUESTION ON WHETHER THE OPPOSITION WINGERS MARK THE CB'S OR TRACK THE MOVEMENTS OF THE FB'S.
- THE WIDER-MIDFIELDERS IN THIS SET UP INVERT INTO THE HALF-SPACES TO COMBAT BEING OUTNUMBERED CENTRALLY THESE MOVEMENTS (LIKENED TO SOUTHAMPTON AND PSV EINDHOVEN) ALLOW FOR A PASSING OPTION IN THE CENTRAL AREAS OF THE PITCH. WHILST GIVING THE OPPOSITION FB'S A CHOICE TO VACATE THEIR ZONE TO TRACK THEIR RUNS OR NOT. IF THEY DO TRACK THE WM'S RUNS, IT CAN FREE UP SPACE OUT WIDE FOR THE FB'S OR THE CF PEELING OFF FROM CENTRE.

BUILD PHASE

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PLAYING FROM CB'S



KEY MOVEMENTS:

- WHEN THE BALL IS TRAVELLING TO THE CB THE TWO CM'S MUST REACT OFF OF THIS AND MOVE CLOSER TO CREATE A PASSING ANGLE. IN THIS, THEY CREATE A RHOMBUS SHAPE THAT CAN ISOLATE THE OPPOSITION CF 4V1. EVEN IF THE OPPOSITION WINGERS APPLY PRESSURE, THERE IS STILL A 4V3 SUPERIORITY.
- BOTH WM'S (7 & 11) IN THIS INSTANCE OPERATE IN THE HALF-SPACES TO GIVE THE OPTION TO RECEIVE ON THE HALF-TURN AND DRIVE FORWARD (LIKE JESSE MARSCH'S RB SALZBURG)
- ONE CF NEEDS TO DROP DEEPER TO RECEIVE A MORE DIRECT BALL WHILST THE OTHER RETAINS THEIR POSITION HIGH UP THE PITCH AIMING TO OCCUPY AT LEAST ONE CB.
- THE FULL-BACK (3) ON THE BALL SIDE NEEDS TO RETAIN A DEEPER POSITION TO OFFER A PASSING OPTION, SHOULD THE OPPOSITION 9 AND 7 DICTATE THIS. ALTERNATIVELY, THE OTHER FULL-BACK (2) OPERATES HIGH AND WIDE FOR A DIAGONAL PASS.

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The diagram illustrates a football pitch with player positions and movement. The pitch is divided into three vertical zones by dashed blue lines. A central circle of players is highlighted with a dashed blue circle and labeled 'IN-BETWEEN'. An arrow points from this circle to a dashed blue circle on the left labeled 'OUTSIDE'. A vertical arrow on the far left points upwards. The players are numbered 1 through 11, with some numbers appearing in multiple positions. The goal is at the bottom center.

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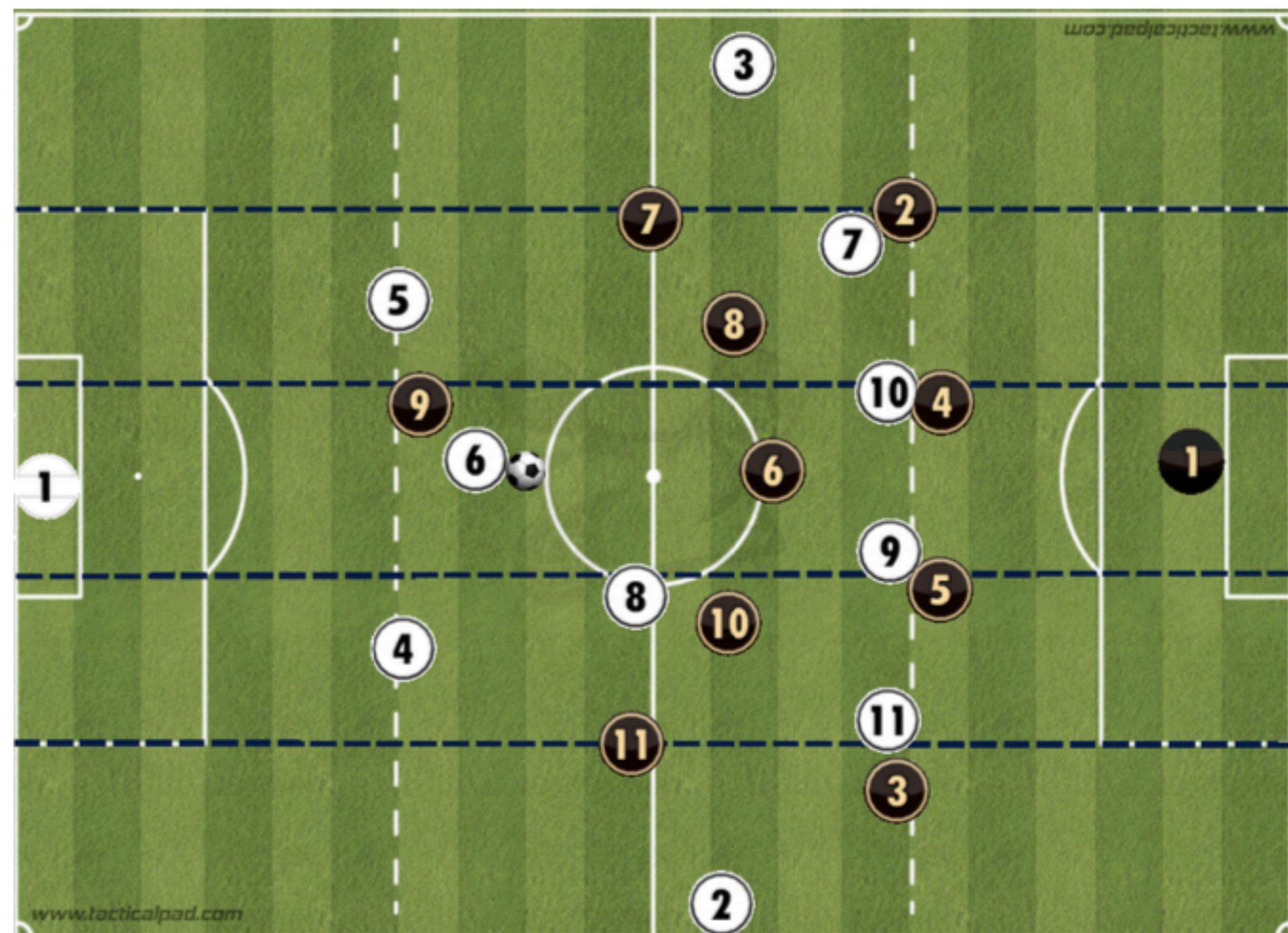
ONE MOVEMENT THE PIVOT PLAYER CAN MAKE IS TO MOVE IN BETWEEN THE TWO CENTRE-BACKS TO CREATE A PASSING ANGLE. THIS IS PARTICULARLY IMPORTANT TO FIND SPACE AGAINST A THREE-MAN MIDFIELD, MOVING AWAY FROM THE CONGESTED MIDDLE THIRD. THIS MOVEMENT CAN PRESENT MORE PASSING OPTIONS WHEN THE THE PIVOT RECEIVES THE BALL IN THESE AREAS.

ANOTHER MOVEMENTS THE PIVOT CAN MAKE IS TO MOVE OUTSIDE OF THE CENTRE-BACKS. THIS CAN BE MADE WHEN THE CENTRE-BACK HAS THE BALL AND HAS TO PLAY SQUARE TO THE OTHER CENTRE-BACK. WHO IS DRAGGED ACROSS, AIMING TO UNLOCK THE OTHER SIDE OF THE PITCH AND DRAG THE OPPOSITION ACROSS. ALTERNATIVELY, THIS POSITION CAN BE TAKEN UP WHEN THE FULL-BACK ON THAT SIDE ADVANCES UP THE PITCH, CREATING SPACE FOR THE PIVOT TO RECEIVE THE BALL.

CREATE PHASE

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SHAPE WHEN ENTERING CREATE PHASE



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. HOWEVER IN THIS INSTANCE, WE WILL ASSUME THAT THE OPPONENT IS IN THEIR 4-3-3 MID BLOCK.

KEY FACTORS:

2-4-4 SHAPE WHEN LITTLE RISK OF TURNOVER WHEN PLAYING FROM DEEP (AKIN TO PSV SHAPE WHEN PIVOT PLAYER, USUALLY SANGARÉ RECEIVES BALL FROM CB)

FULL-BACKS HIGH AND WIDE FOR A DIAGONAL PASS OR TO FORCE OPPOSITION WINGERS TO DROP OFF.

MIDFIELD 8 ALWAYS SHOWS IN SPACE TO RECEIVE A SHORT PASS.

WIDER MIDFIELDERS, AGAIN, INVERT TO PIN THE FULL-BACKS, AND CAN PICK UP SMART SPACES IN THE HALF-SPACE TO RECEIVE ON THE HALF-TURN. (THEO WALCOTT AND MARIO GÖTZE HAVE PROVEN TO BE EXCELLENT IN THESE ROLES FOR SOUTHAMPTON AND PSV RESPECTIVELY)

THE CF'S MUST REACT TO GAME SITUATION, ONE CAN DROP AND ONE CAN OFFER A RUN INTO THE CHANNEL VACATED BY THE OPPOSITION FB IF THEY TRACK THE RUN OF THE WM'S INTO CENTRAL AREAS.

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The diagram illustrates a soccer tactical setup on a field. A red vertical rectangle highlights the defensive half. Player 5 is in possession of the ball in the defensive half. Blue dashed arrows show potential passes from player 5 to players 3, 4, 6, 8, and 11. Red dashed arrows show player 7's movement from the defensive half towards the attacking half. Blue solid arrows indicate other player movements. Dashed boxes highlight specific tactical areas on the field.

OPERATE IN THE ZONE BETWEEN
DEFENCE AND MIDFIELD (RED ZONE HIGHLIGHTED)

THE CB ON THE BALL MUST POSSESS EXCELLENT DISTRIBUTION SKILLS TO EITHER PASS DIRECT INTO PLAYERS IN THE 'RED ZONE' OR PLAY A DIAGONAL BALL TO THE OPPOSITE SIDE FB (2)

THE WM (7) HAS TO REACT OFF THE FB (3) SHOWING SHORT
THIS MEANS THAT THEY CAN EITHER RETAIN POSITIONS IN
THE HALF-SPACE TO RECEIVE WHICH IS PREFERABLE
AS THEY ARE IN THE 'RED ZONE' OR SPIN AND LOOK
TO CREATE A 1V1 IN A WIDE AREA AGAINST THE OPPOSITION FB.

SOUTHAMPTON ARE ARGUABLY THE BEST TEAM IN A 4-4-2/4-2-2-2 TO GET LARGE NUMBERS OF PLAYERS IN WHAT HASENHÜTTL CALLS THE 'RED-ZONE' IN HIS E-BOOK, OR OTHERWISE KNOWN AS 'THE HOLE' OR 'ZONE 14'

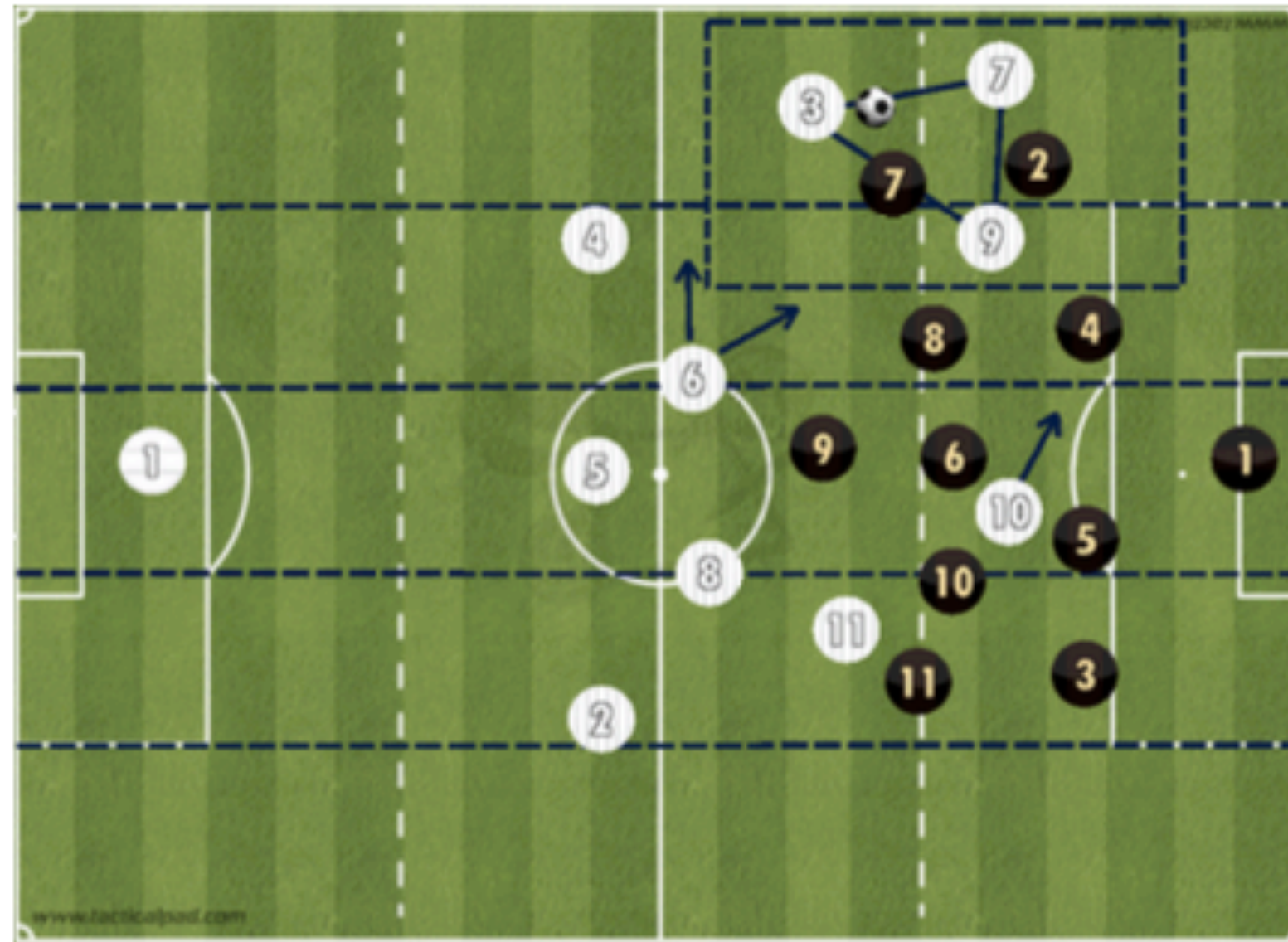
ONE CF IN THIS INSTANCE THE (10) LOOKS TO RECEIVE DEEPER AIMING TO DRAW OUT THE OPPOSITION CB WHICH CAN LEAVE THE ONE CB AGAINST AN INVERTED WM AND THE OTHER CF.

CREATE PHASE/FINISHING PHASE

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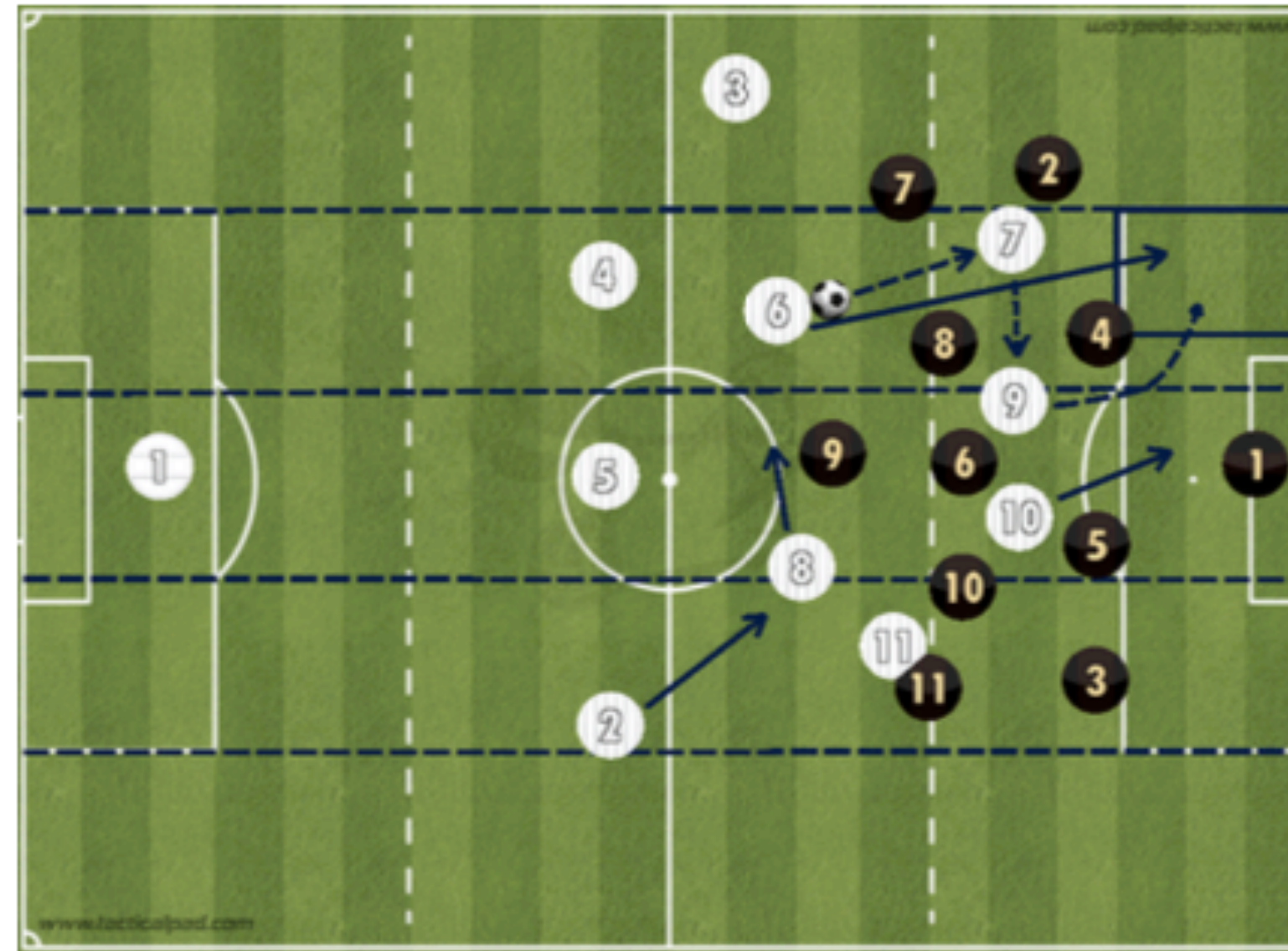
PENETRATING A LOW BLOCK

CREATE OVERLOADS (WIDE TRIANGLES)



THE AIM OF CREATING WIDE-TRIANGLES IS TO CREATE A 3V2 OVERLOAD IN WIDE AREAS/HALF-SPACE AND PIN FB AND CB.

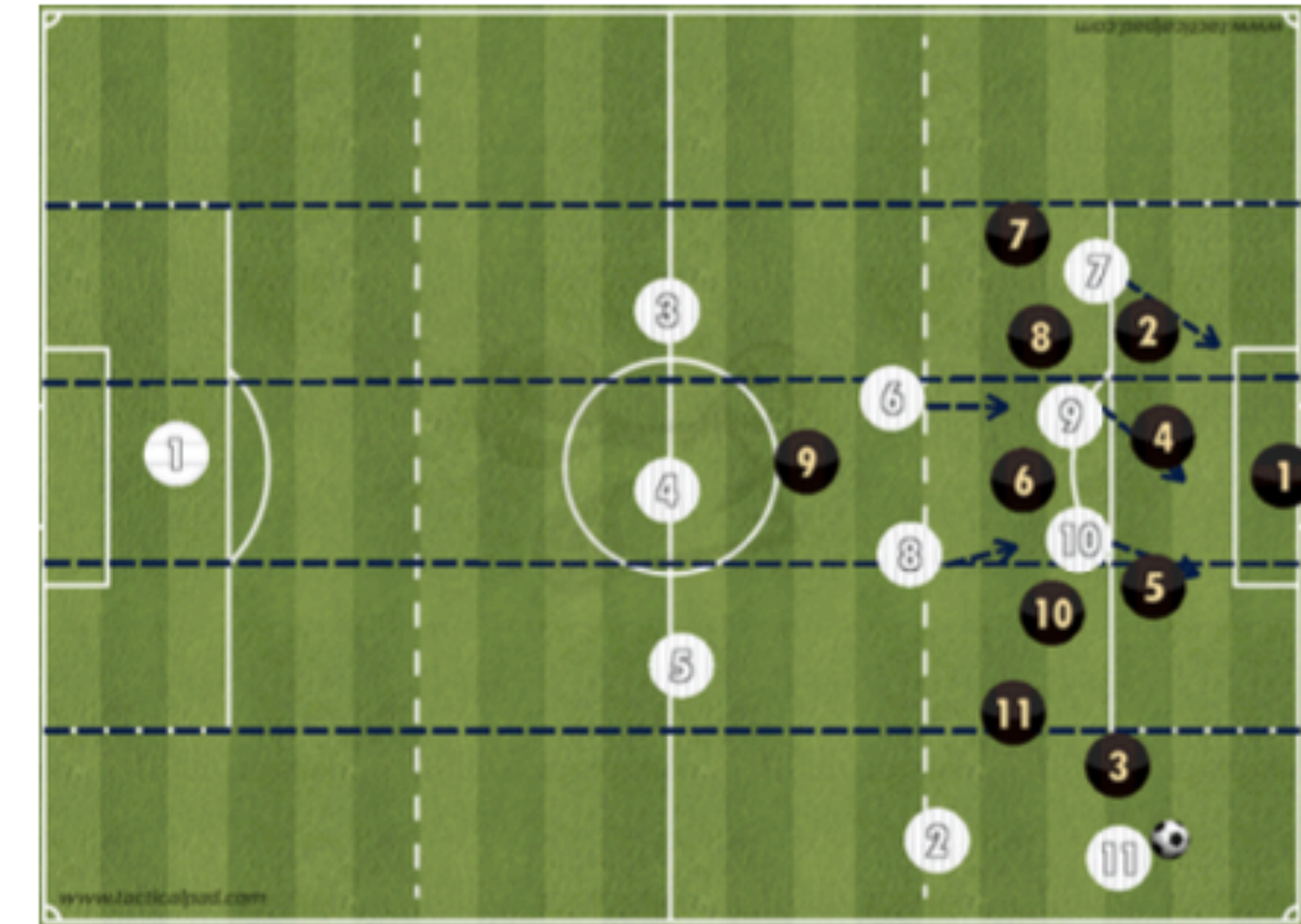
THIRD-MAN RUNS FROM CM'S



THIRD MAN RUNS FROM DEEP. THE CM PUNCHES THROUGH A BALL INTO EITHER WM OR CF, WHERE A COMBINATION CAN HAPPEN. THE CM CAN THEN PENETRATE THROUGH A THIRD MAN RUN FROM DEEP.

TO COUNTER-ACT THE SPACE LEFT BY THE CM AND ENSURE THERE IS NOT A 3V1 SITUATION LEFT BY THIS. THE FB ON THE OPPOSITE SIDE CAN FILL INTO MORE CENTRAL POSITIONS TO STOP ANY POTENTIAL COUNTER ATTACKS, UNTIL THE CM CAN REGAIN THEIR POSITION.

CROSSES FROM WIDE AREAS



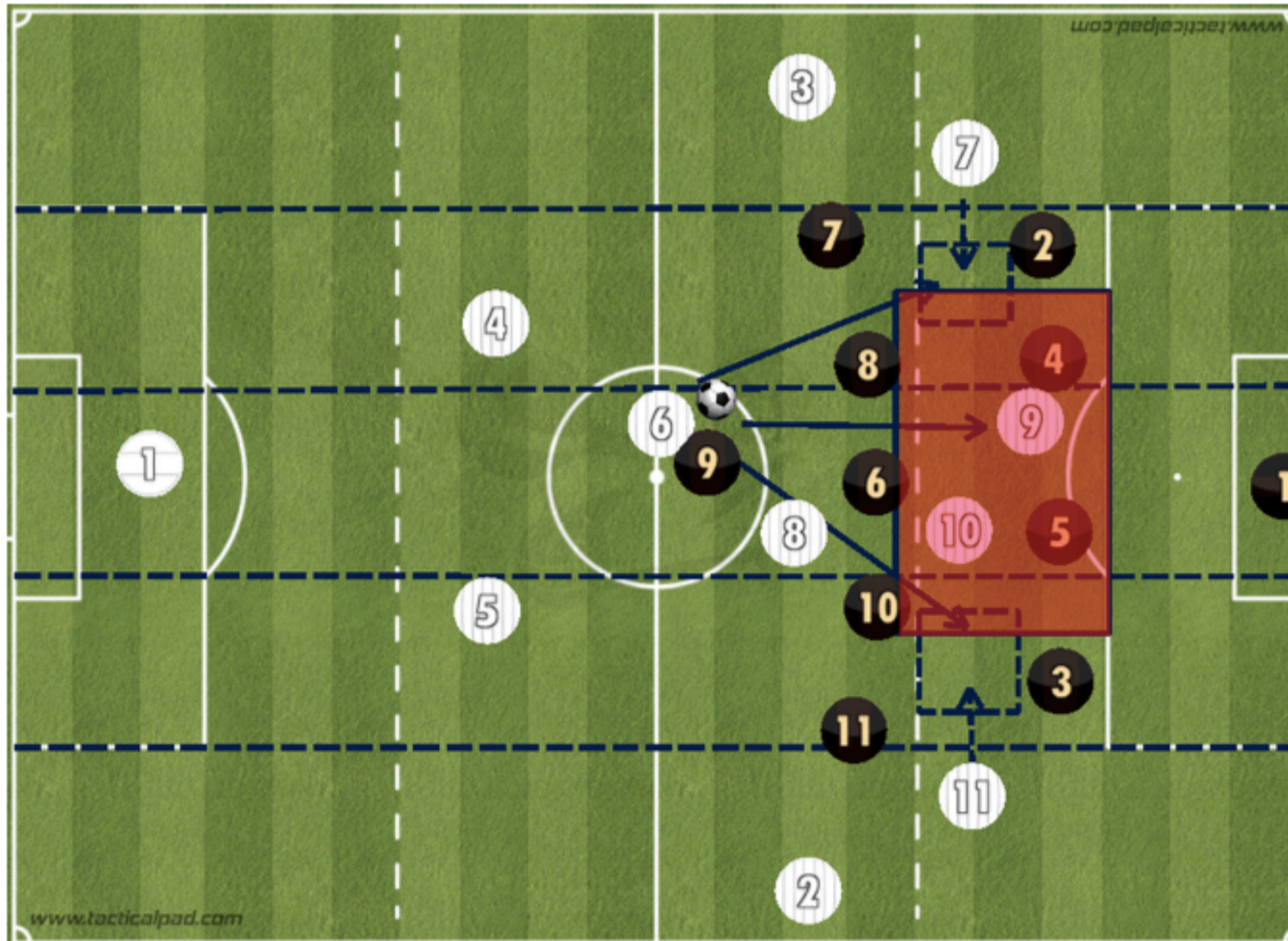
PLAYING WITH TWO CF'S ALLOWS FOR MORE BODIES TO OPERATE IN THE BOX. HIGH-RISK, HIGH-REWARD STRATEGIES SUCH AS CROSSING CAN BE A VIABLE OPTION TO BREAK DOWN A TEAM MARKING ZONALLY IN A LOW-BLOCK.

GOOD AERIAL ABILITY AND SMART MOVEMENTS CAN MAKE IT HARD TO DEFEND CROSSES WITH QUALITY, AND DUE TO THE NATURE OF THE 4-4-2, THERE ARE BODIES AROUND THE BOX THAT CAN PICK UP SECOND BALLS AND RETAIN POSSESSION.

FINISHING PHASE

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STRUCTURE



WHEN IN THE FINISHING PHASE. ITS IMPORTANT TO TRY AND GET SHOT AWAY AS QUICK AS POSSIBLE, ESPECIALLY IF ENTRY INTO THIS PHASE HAS COME AS A RESULT OF A COUNTER-ATTACK.

JESSE MARSCH'S PHILOSOPHY IS TO SCORE WITHIN TEN SECONDS OF WINNING THE BALL BACK. QUICK VERTICAL PLAY IS IMPORTANT TO DISRUPT THE OPPOSITION AND STOP THEM FROM RETREATING INTO THEIR BLOCK.

THE STRUCTURE WHEN ENTERING THE FINISHING PHASE CAN BE QUITE NARROW, AND FOCUSED AROUND ENTRY INTO ZONE 14+ (HIGHLIGHTED)

WHEN IN THE CREATE PHASE, WE WANT TO CREATE WIDE OVERLOADS TO UNLOCK, HOWEVER NOW WE WANT TO CREATE CENTRAL OVERLOADS IN ZONE 14 WITH THE WM'S INVERTING INTO THESE AREAS, WITH THE FB'S SUPPORTING FROM WIDER AREAS.

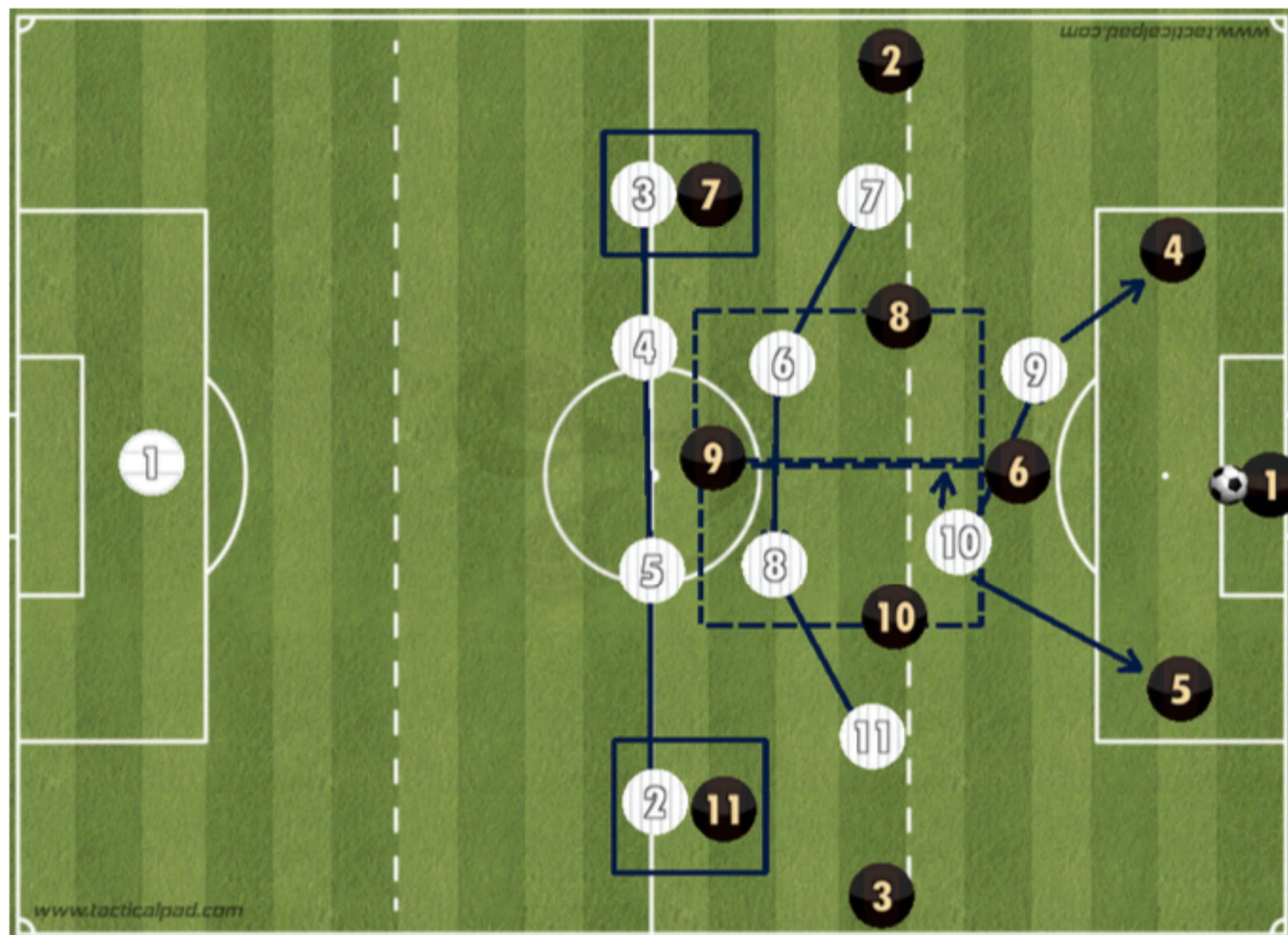
THE TWO CM'S RETAIN DEPTH TO REACT TO A TRANSITION.

OUT OF POSSESSION

DEFENDING FROM THE FRONT

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HIGH BLOCK



THE TWO CF'S SET THE TONE AND ACT AS THE FIRST DEFENDERS, IN THIS SYSTEM, THE CF'S MUST BE INTELLIGENT TO KNOW WHEN TO PRESS AND WHEN TO GUIDE AND DICTATE PLAY INTO SPECIFIC AREAS. MOST TEAMS WHO SET UP IN A 4-2-3-1 PUSH THEIR ADVANCED MIDFIELDER ALONGSIDE THE CF TO DEFEND IN A 4-4-2.

KEY FACTORS:

ENGAGE HIGH UP THE PITCH, PREVENTING SHORT GK DISTRIBUTION. WHEN CB HAS BALL DICTATE PLAY INTO THEIR FB WHERE PRESSURE CAN BE APPLIED USING TOUCHLINE AS AN EXTRA DEFENDER.

ONE CF PICKS UP THE PIVOT PLAYER TO STOP THEM FROM DICTATING THE PLAY.

TWO CM'S MARK ZONALLY IN THE CENTRAL PORTION OF THE PITCH.

FB'S MARK OPPOSITION WINGERS.

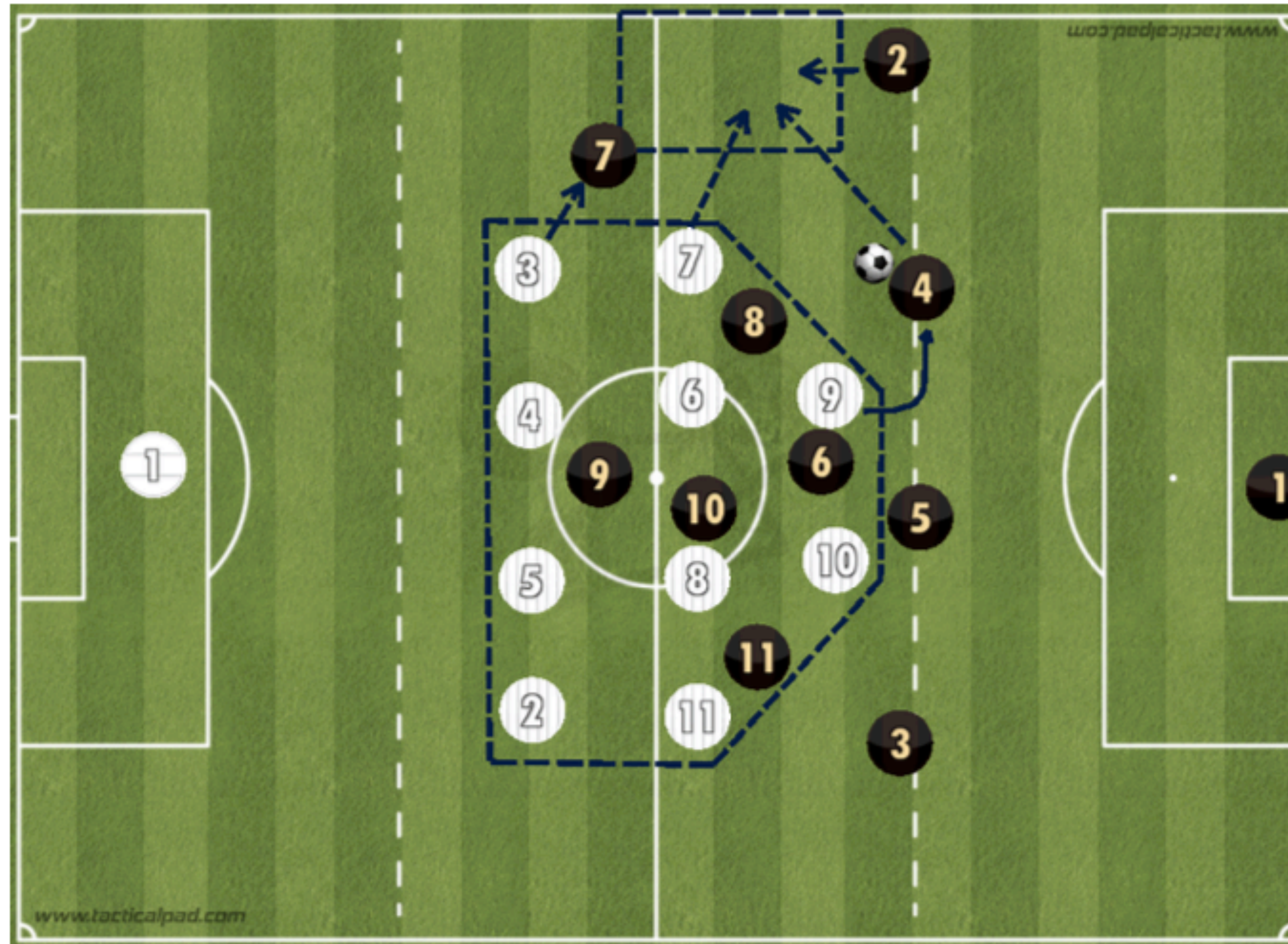
WM'S RESPONSIBLE FOR TRACKING OPPOSITION FB'S

CB'S ENSURE A HIGH LINE TO SUFFOCATE THE OPPOSITION AND CAN DROP DEEPER WHEN NECESSARY.

DEFLECT AND DENY

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GUIDING THE PLAY



WHEN PLAYING A 4-4-2 AGAINST A 4-3-3
IT IS IMPORTANT TO ACKNOWLEDGE
THE WEAKNESSES OF THE FORMATION WHEN
DEFENDING, AND WHERE THE OPPOSITION COULD
POTENTIALLY EXPLOIT THOSE WEAKNESSES. WHEN
DEFENDING IN THE 4-4-2 IT IS IMPORTANT TO FORCE THE PLAY
INTO WIDER AREAS, SO THAT THE OPPOSITION FIND IT HARD
TO PENETRATE THE BLOCK, AND PLAY CENTRALLY WHERE
THE 4-4-2 CAN BE OUTNUMBERED 3V2.

IN ORDER FOR THIS TO WORK EFFECTIVELY, THE 4-4-2 MUST
NATURALLY BECOME NARROW TO SHOW A FUNNEL TOWARDS
THE WIDER AREAS. THIS STRATEGY WORKS BEST WHEN IN A HIGH
AND MID BLOCK.

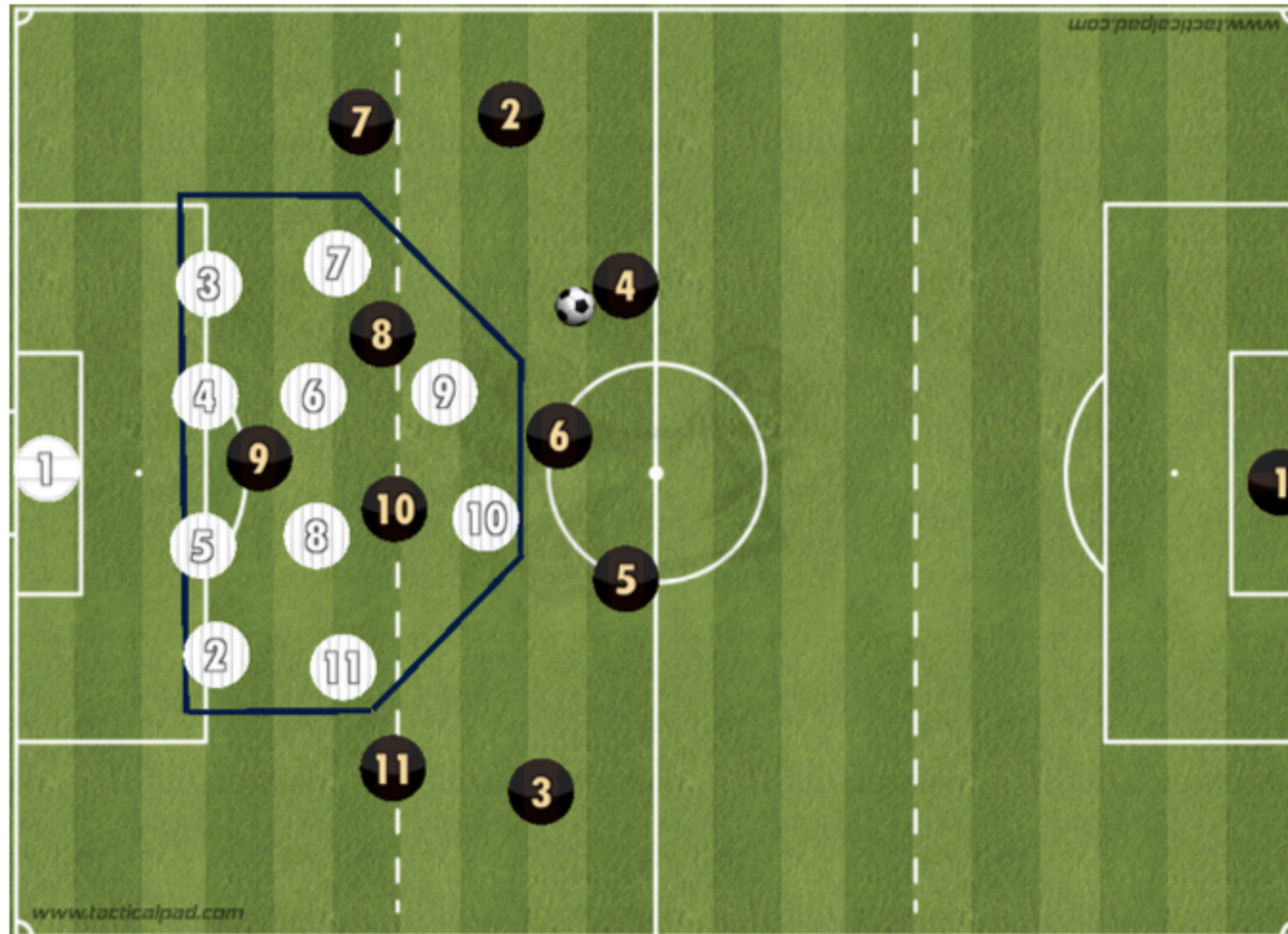
THE CF'S ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR GUIDING THE PLAY INTO THE WIDER
AREAS. TO DO THIS, THEY NEED TO CURVE THEIR RUN TO SHUT
OFF PASSING OPTIONS CENTRALLY, OR TO THE OTHER CENTRE
BACK.

WHEN THE BALL IS PLAYED INTO THE WIDE AREAS, PRESSURE ON THE
PLAYER WITH THE BALL IS NECESSARY TO EITHER CREATE A TURNOVER
OR FORCE THE PLAYER/PASS OUT OF PLAY TO RETAIN SHAPE. IT IS
ALSO IMPORTANT TO STILL BE LOOKING TO SHUT OFF CENTRAL
PASSING OPTIONS. THE WM'S AND FB'S MUST REACT QUICKLY
TO THE BALL PLAYED INTO THE WIDER AREAS.

DEFENDING DEEP

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LOW BLOCK



WHEN INITIAL PRESSURE DOESN'T SUCCEED IN WINNING THE BALL BACK HIGH UP THE PITCH, AND THE OPPONENT HAS PENETRATED THROUGH THE INITIAL HIGH BLOCK, THE 4-4-2 FORMATION BECOMES AN EXCELLENT SET-UP TO DEFEND IN A LOW BLOCK, WITH EXCELLENT COVERAGE OF THE PITCH.

KEY FEATURES OF LOW-BLOCK:

EVERY PLAYER MARKING ZONALLY TO AVOID BEING DRAGGED OUT OF POSITION BY OPPOSITION PLAYERS.

STILL HOLD AN EMPHASIS ON DICTATING THE OPPOSITION INTO WIDER AREAS, PREVENTING THEIR CREATIVE PLAYERS OPERATING IN ZONE 14.

WM'S FILLING IN TO DOUBLE UP ON OPPOSITION WINGERS, REDUCING RISK OF DEFENDING OF OPPOSITION OVERLOADING FB 2V1.

GOOD ORGANISATIONAL SKILLS FROM CB'S TO ORGANISE TEAM TO SHUFFLE ACROSS OR STEP UP.

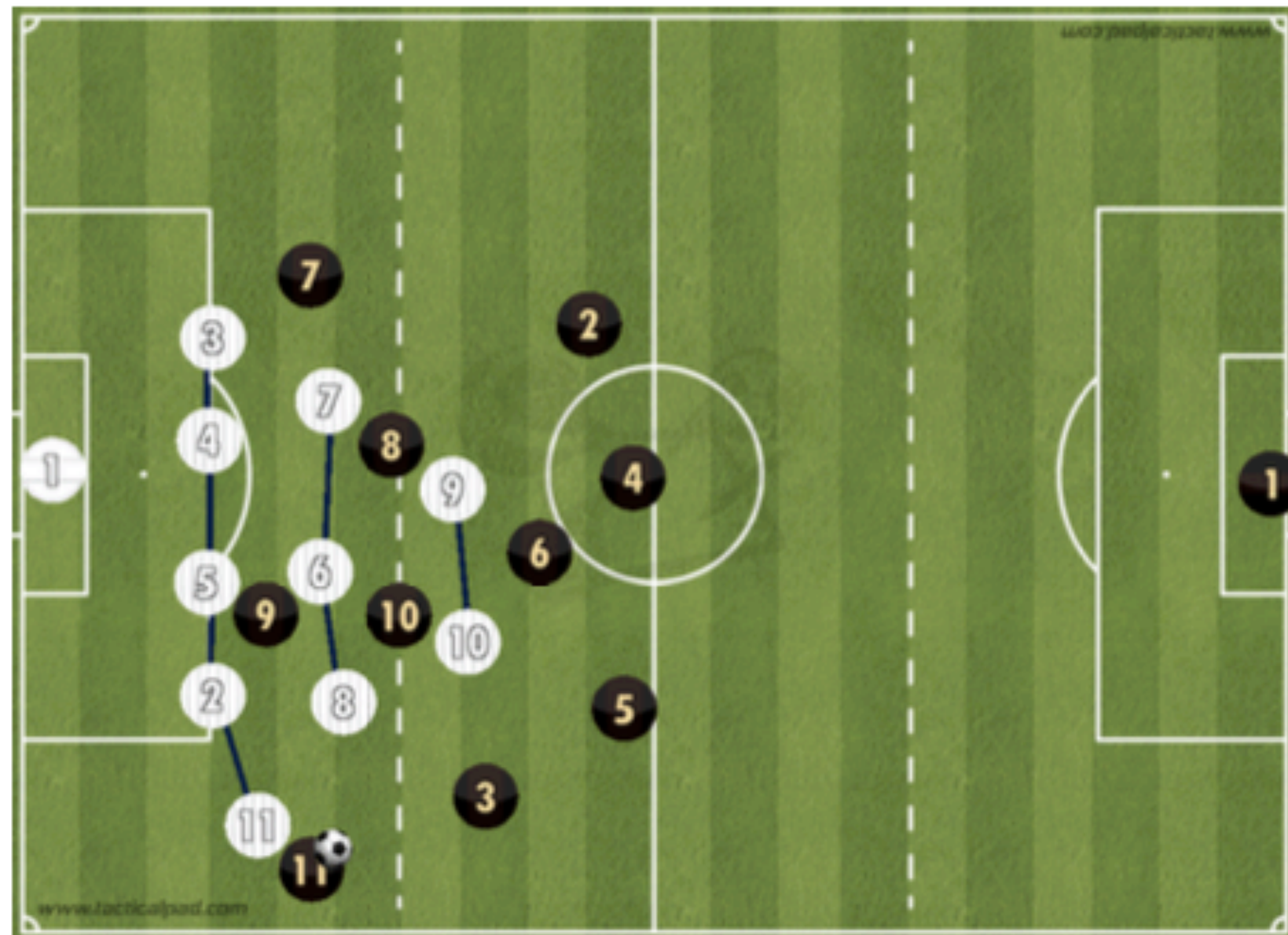
PRESS WHEN THERE IS A TRIGGER TO DO SO, I.E OPPONENT HAS BALL ON TOUCHLINE, A POOR TOUCH OR OPPONENT RECEIVING BALL WITH BACK TO DEFENCE AND GOAL.

DEFENDING DEEP

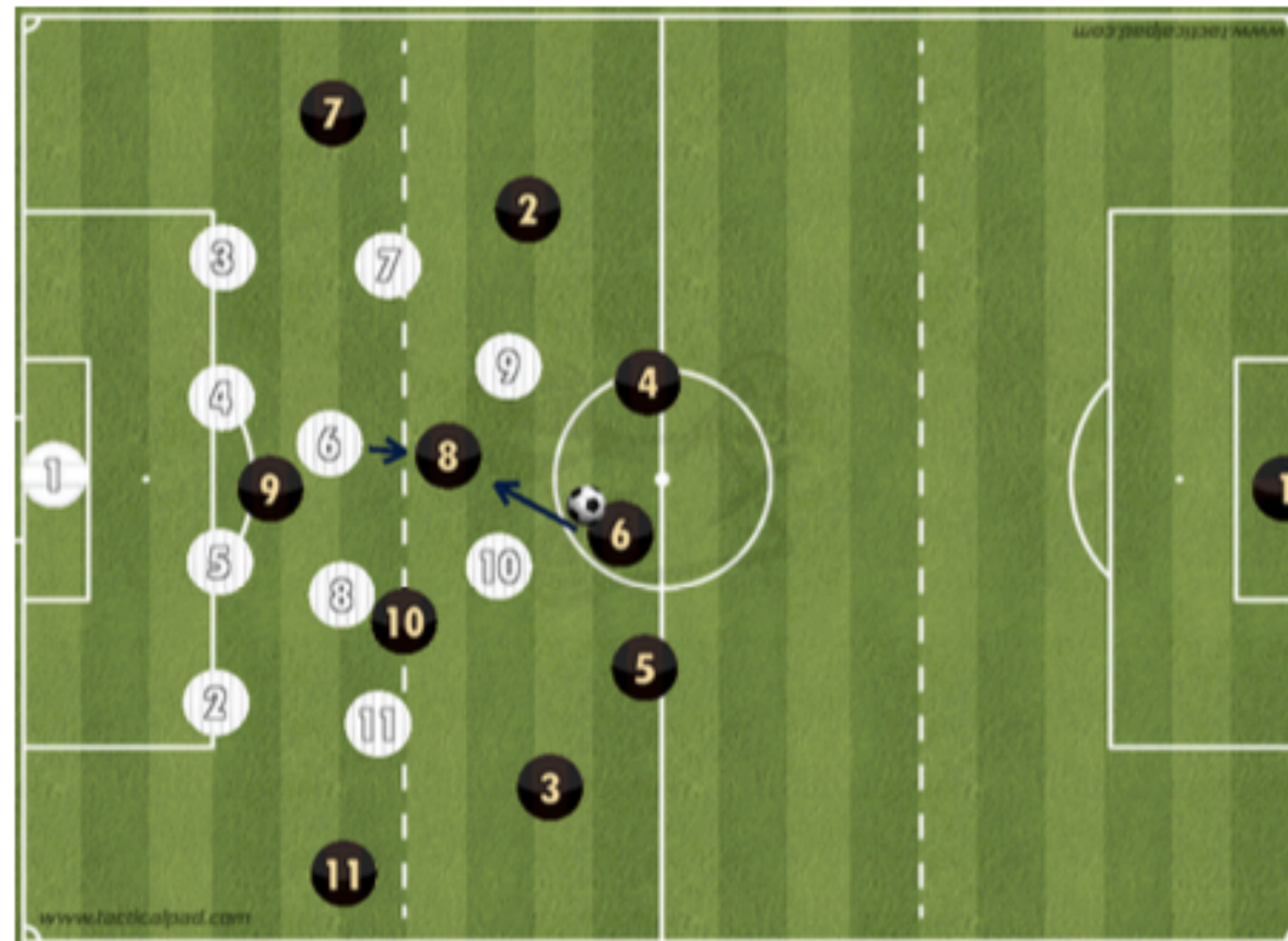
LOW BLOCK- MOVING AS A UNIT

THESE DEFENSIVE PATTERNS AND MOVEMENTS MADE AS A UNIT ARE A REPLICATION ON ATLETICO MADRID'S DEFENSIVE STRATEGY

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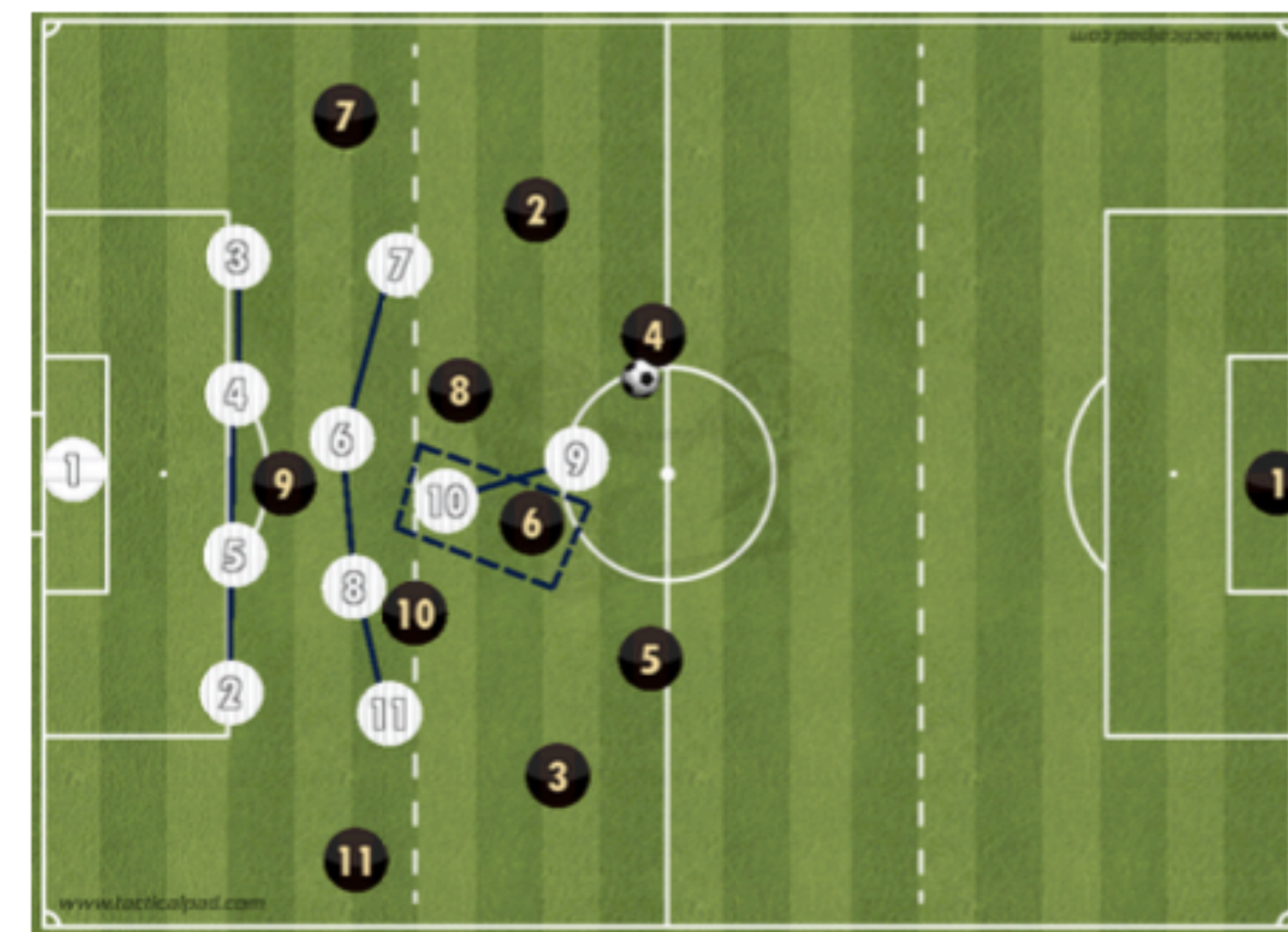


WHEN ENGAGING THE OPPOSITION IN WIDER AREAS, WITH THE WM'S FILLING TO TRACK THE OPPOSITION WINGER, THE SHAPE CAN RESEMBLE A 5-3-2 FORMATION.



PRESSURE CAN BE APPLIED TO THE BALL RECEIVER WHEN THEY HAVE THEIR BACK TO DEFENCE AND GOAL IN THE INSTANCE SHOWN ABOVE. THIS IS TO PREVENT THEM RECEIVING ON THE HALF TURN AND PREVENT THEM PENETRATING THE BLOCK.

THIS CAN ALSO BE USED AS A METHOD OF FORCING A TURNOVER



THE 4-4-2 CAN ALSO SHIFT INTO A 4-4-1-1 IN A LOW-BLOCK, THIS CAN BE TO COUNTER-ACT THE TECHNICAL ABILITY OF A PARTICULAR MIDFIELDER OR THE PIVOT PLAYER.

THE TRANSITIONS

DEFENCE TO ATTACK

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MAINTAINING A LOW-BLOCK, AND BEING COMPACT WHEN OUT OF POSSESSION CAN HELP TO CREATE PROBLEMS FOR THE OPPOSITION WHEN THE BALL IS IN TRANSITION

COUNTER-ATTACK STRATEGY

KEY FACTORS:

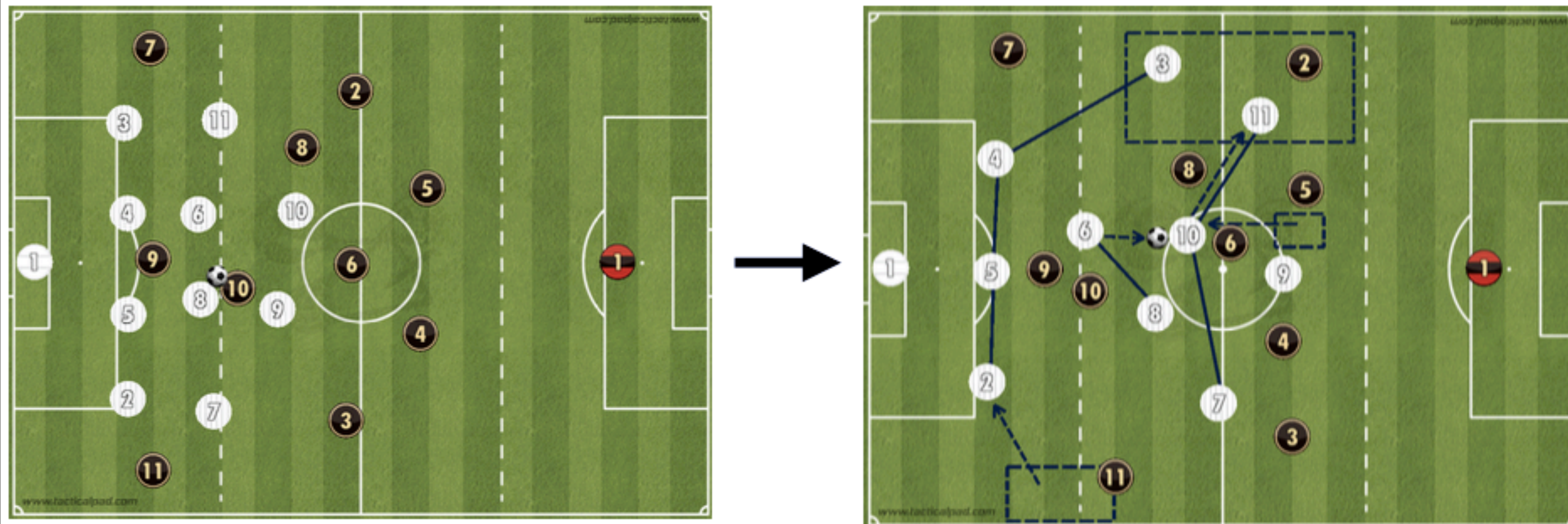
DRAW OPPONENT IN WHEN OPERATING A LOW BLOCK LEAVING SPACES IN BEHIND TO ATTACK WHEN IN TRANSITION.

TRY TO EXPLOIT WIDER AREAS WHEN COUNT-ATTACKING WITH THE AIM OF CATCHING OPPONENT WINGER HIGH UP THE PITCH (CREATES A 2V1 VS OPPOSITION) ATLETICO MADRID LOOK TO EXPLOIT THE WIDE AREAS IN THE ATTACKING TRANSITION.

WHEN ENTERING THE ATTACKING TRANSITION A CF DROPS DEEPER TO OFFER A PASSING OPTION TO TRIGGER A COUNTER ATTACK (ATTACK IN A 4-2-3-1) SIMILAR ALSO TO ATLETICO MADRID.

ONE CM ADVANCES WITH ANOTHER SITTING DEEP TO PROTECT AGAINST AN OPPOSITION COUNTER ATTACK.

TO FURTHER PROTECT AGAINST AN OPPOSITION COUNTER WHEN IN THE ATTACKING TRANSITION, THE OPPOSITE FB TO THE SIDE WHERE THE BALL IS CAN TUCK IN TO CREATE A THREE MAN DEFENCE.

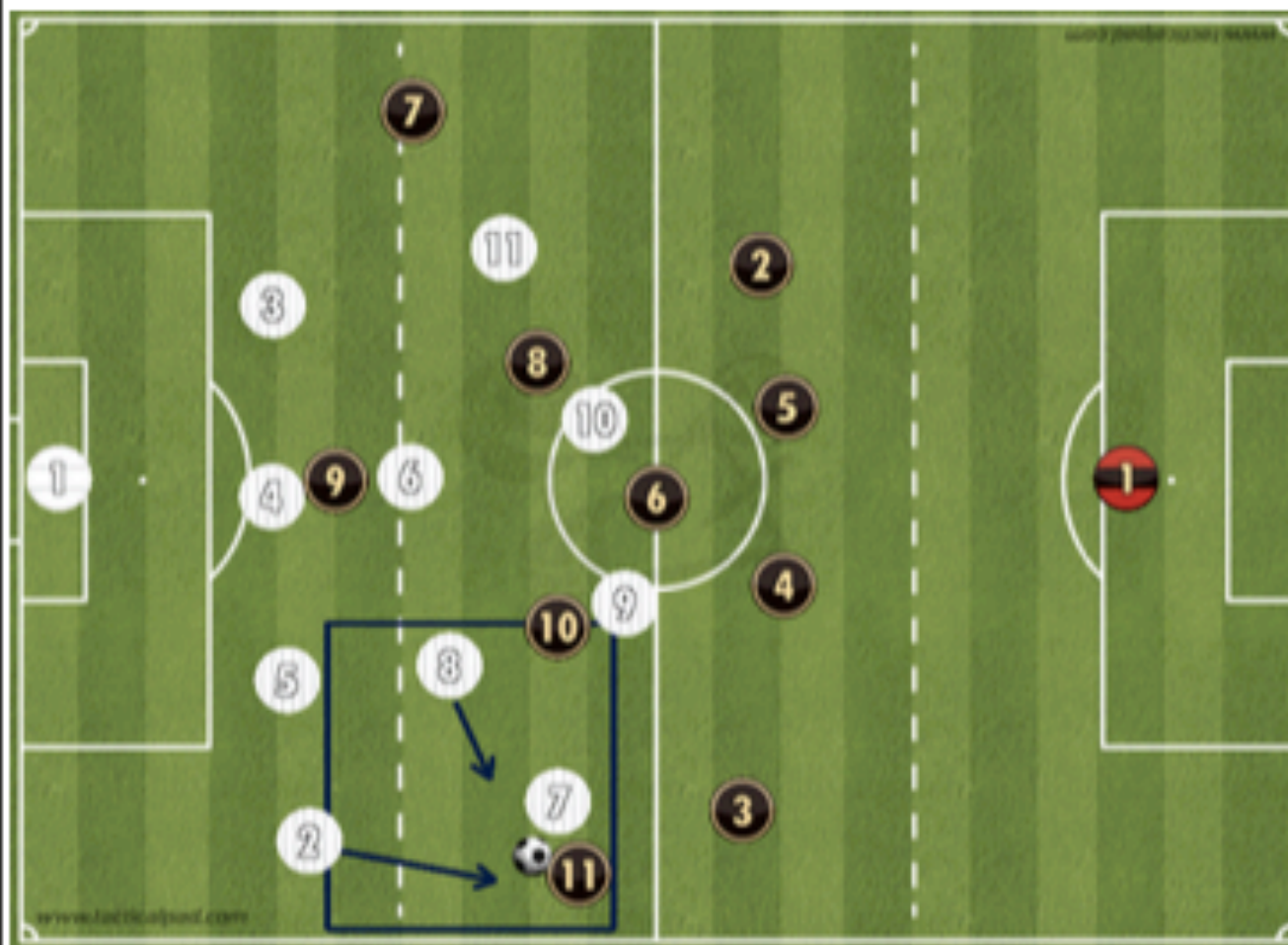


ATTACK TO DEFENCE

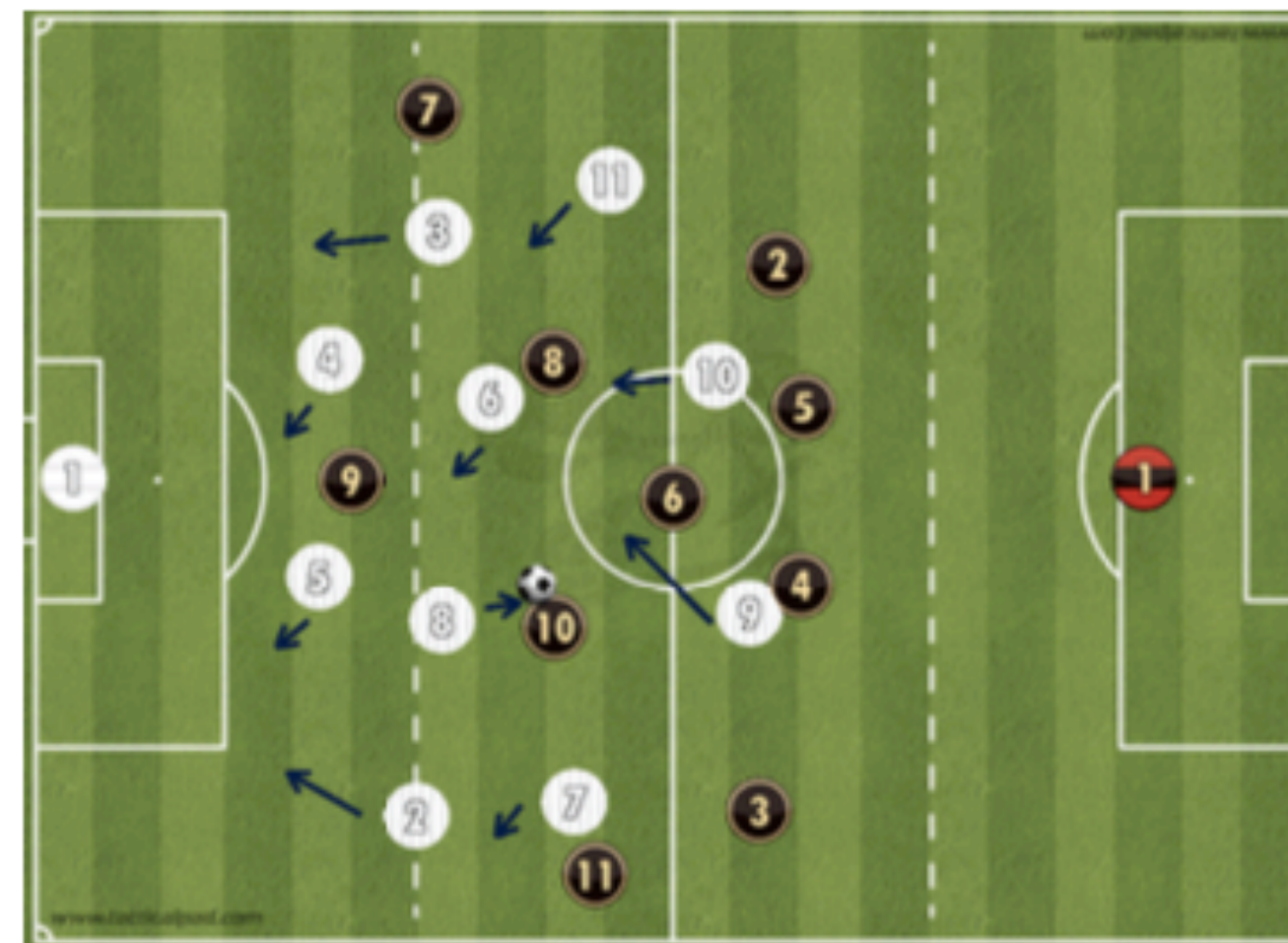
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REACTING TO A DEFENSIVE TRANSITION

IN WIDE AREAS



CENTRALLY



WHEN ENTERING A DEFENSIVE TRANSITION IT IS IMPORTANT TO TRY AND REGAIN THE BALL SOON AFTER LOSING IT TO PREVENT THE OPPOSITION FROM PENETRATING WHILST OUT OF SHAPE.

A TERM USED BY JESSE MARSCH AT RED BULL SALZBURG IS 'BALL ORIENTATION' WHICH FOCUSES ON THE TWO OR THREE CLOSEST PLAYERS PRESSURISING THE OPPONENT ON THE BALL AIMING TO FORCE AN INSTANT TURNOVER.

KEY POINTS:

'BALL-ORIENTATION' IS MOST EFFECTIVE IN WIDER AREAS WHERE THE TOUCHLINE CAN BE USED AS AN EXTRA DEFENDER.

IF THE BALL IS LOST IN THE CENTRAL PORTION OF THE PITCH, IT SHOULD BE A PRIORITY TO REGAIN A COMPACT SHAPE IN A MID-TO-LOW BLOCK IF THE BALL IS LOST IN THE MIDDLE OR DEFENSIVE THIRD. THE CLOSEST PLAYER TO THE BALL SHOULD APPLY PRESSURE AND DENY SPACE AND DICTATE THE PLAY TO ALLOW THE TEAM TO REGAIN THEIR SHAPE.