

NGS 11v11 Formation



The **1-4-4-2 Formation** offers a balanced spread of players over the field with numerous triangles and diamond shapes which creates good opportunities for:

- Effective positioning play
- Playing out from the Back
- Combination passing and Possession style soccer
- Creative and varied attacking play using the width of the field
- Early disturbing and pressuring after losing possession

TEAM DEFENDING PRINCIPLES

If a mistake is made on attack an opportunity is lost. If a mistake is made on defense a game may be lost. Therefore it is critical solid defense will be a key to your success. In order to understand team defending, meaning all players are working together to defend.

1) PRESSURE the ball. The first step is to always apply immediate pressure on the ball. This does not mean diving in but closing down the players space on the ball.

2) COVER off the ball. The defense must move as one, providing support and coverage for one another. The primary thing to remember here is to have a good shape, being **BALANCED**. The main principle here is to not ball watch, cover dangerous space and keep an eye on your opponent while adjusting.

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3) COMPACT in the center of the field. When the team closes down the center of the field and has no gaps between players it is very difficult for opponents to penetrate and attack the dangerous space.

4) DELAY the attack. You don't always have to immediately win the ball. After attacking the space, to keep opponents from moving forward sometimes it is best to stall their progress and wait for your team to get into defensive shape. When your team has an attack delayed in a one-on-one situation another team member should move in as a second defender to attack the ball.

5) EACH PLAYER MARKED every defender should know where every attacking player is at all times. The primary thing to make this happen is constant communication.

6) FALL BACK every player is a defender when the opposition has the ball. If players are tired after an attack first sprint back to goal-side of opposition to rest; they shouldn't allow attackers to win the ball in front of them. When one defender steps up to play the ball other defenders should not remain square but, should immediately drop to support. This is also known as **DEPTH** in the defense.

TEAM ATTACKING PRINCIPLES

To make all components of the attack work your team needs know what to do depending on where in the field they are. Though every situation will require different needs, it is helpful to think of the field in three parts.

DEFENSIVE THIRD (from the goal defending to about 20 yards beyond the penalty box)

When your team has the ball in your defensive end the main focus is **DISTRIBUTION**. Remembering that defensive mistakes lose games you want to get the ball out of the back quickly. As a team you want to avoid one-on-one dribbling out of the back, avoid passes to the center of the field.

CENTRAL THIRD (about 20 yards on both sides of the midline)

In this third you want to focus on **PENETRATION**. However you need to decide when to **Penetrate** V's when to **Possess** the ball. Deciding when to force the play when it is not on, but when you do have space in front of you, you want to penetrate forward. Good decision making on whether to penetrate or possess will help you be more effective. Open up the defense and create the space for penetrating runs and passes.

ATTACKING THIRD (from 20 yards beyond the midfield to the goal line we are attacking)

In this area we want to focus on **CREATING OPPORTUNITIES TO FINISH**.

The four **"S"** WILL HELP CREATE OPPORTUNITIES TO FINISH

1) SPEED - On the ball the weight of the pass has to be good so it cannot be intercepted. Forward diagonal passes are key, to put the opponent on the back foot. Square passes slow the flow down and can be intercepted easily. When running with the ball this has to be at speed to suck a defender/s in to create the space for a pass to a team mate or create space for a team mates run. Movement off the ball is vital to speed the play up. Diagonal runs, overlapping runs, will help isolate defenders and create numbers up situations.

2) SPACE – To create space players be constantly on the move. Every time a player moves they create another space for another team mate. When in possession the space should be created with spreading the field with width and depth. This will allow movement to happen and good supporting angles and distances.

3) SUPPORT – When the ball is played it is important that players support the play. Good angles and distance of support is vital to allow space and time to play the next pass, dribble, cross or finish.

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4) SURPRISE – It is important that players *do not* become *predictable*. Robotic players can become very easy to break down. Being creative in the attacking third can always create opportunities to goal. If this means dribbling 1v1, striking from distance, playing a free kick or corner quickly to create a goal scoring opportunity.

PLAYER ROLES

THE GOALKEEPER #1

DEFENSE

- 1) Be vocal in organizing the defense. The goalkeeper must see the full field and direct players where to go.
- 2) Make quick and confident decisions to come off the line for balls; come out strong for balls in the air and in one-on-one situations.
- 3) Agile feet and sure hands for shot stopping.

ATTACK

- 1) Accurate distribution – Diagonal distribution
- 2) Support defenders for balls back.
- 3) First thought to play short. If not possible play long and wide.

DEFENDERS – FULL BACKS #2 and #3

DEFENSE

- 1) Immediate pressure on the ball when outside forwards are in possession of ball.
- 2) Strong and confident tackles; no diving in.
- 3) Be compact to support central defenders and close down dangerous space.
- 4) Provide depth and balance on opposite side of attack; cover for others mistakes.
- 5) Scan the field to make certain all players are marked; no ball watching!

ATTACK

- 1) Provide outlet support for goalkeeper and central defenders.
- 2) Quick and accurate distribution to target forwards.
- 3) Think like an outside midfielder to provide width and option for switching attack.
- 4) Push up on offensive restart opportunities.

CENTRAL DEFENDERS #4 and #5

DEFENSE

- 1) Must be in constant communication with one another; play as one.
- 2) Delay central attack; strong and decisive tackles when appropriate.
- 3) Immediate pressure on ball with the other in supportive
- 5) Cover for outside defenders if they are beat.
- 6) Be strong in the air to clear balls sent in high.

ATTACK

- 1) Quick and accurate distribution to outside defenders or target forwards.
- 2) Provide depth support for midfield.
- 3) Attempt to switch attacking sides of play when ball is played to the center.

DEFENSIVE MIDFIELDERS #6

DEFENSE

- 1) Deny the attack from entering center of the field.
- 2) Become a second defender supporting outside back delaying Forward.
- 3) Screening the forwards feet and denying penetrating passes in behind the defense.
- 4) Winning aerial balls in midfield and starting the attack from restarts

ATTACK

- 1) Dictating the speed of the game
- 2) The link from defense thru midfield to forwards
- 3) Covering for full backs when they join in the attack.

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4) Staying connected to the other midfielders to create scoring opportunities.

ATTACKING MIDFIELD #8

DEFENSE

- 1) Immediate marking of opposing central midfield players.
- 2) Move in as second defender to assist central defenders delaying attack.
- 3) Mark area at top of the box for any outside shots or drops.
- 4) Win balls in the air to clear of dangerous space.

ATTACK

- 1) Provide immediate support from targets to transition to attack quickly.
- 2) Use combination play (give-and-go passes,
- 4) Take shots from outside of the box

CENTRAL FORWARD #9 and #10

DEFENSE

- 1) 2nd defender pressure with other forwards.
- 2) Cover the "hole", roughly halfway between penalty box and midfield, to win balls cleared by teams defense or dropped by opposite attack.
- 3) Communicate and organize defense from the attacking side.
- 4) Drop back to defend against restarts.

ATTACK

- 1) Play deep, off-shoulder to check back and receive as primary target.
- 2) Look to spin and get in behind.
- 3) Look for through runs past wing forwards for balls into space; look for quick switches to far-side wings.
- 4) Take outside shots to high corners to catch keeper off their line.
- 5) Go strong to the box to finish crosses and through balls.

WINGERS / FORWARDS #7 and #11

DEFENSE

- 1) When you lose the ball get 'goal side, ball-side' immediately
- 2) Apply immediate pressure on opposing defenders with the ball.
- 3) Front defenders to deny passes into the midfielders or forwards.

ATTACK

- 1) Near side support and runs off target player; far side runs for quick switches.
- 2) Provide outlet support to full backs.
- 3) Look to switch to far-side forward.
- 4) Take space on through runs, overlaps, and corner runs; avoid running in straight lines
- 5) Attack in the box to finish crosses and follow-up opportunities

4-4-2 Flat back, Flat midfield (as shown on page 1)

One of the major advantages to this system is that you have a perfect balance of players on both the right and left side of the pitch. It is an excellent system for the overlapping outside back. Many teams that play this system have one of the forwards serve as a "target player" while the other striker sits "in the hole" between the target forward and midfield. This can be viewed as a 1-4-4-1-1 system. To play this system successfully, it's important to have wide midfielders that have enough pace to get up and down the line and deliver accurate crosses. The vast majority of your goals will come from your two forwards. If they are struggling to finish, you may need to alter the system.

4-4-2 Flat back, Diamond midfield

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When you play in a 4-4-2 with a flat back four and a diamond midfield, you could have your midfield cover the full width of the field (not pictured) or remain a bit more central (pictured). It is my preference to keep a tighter midfield that allows the outside backs to attack the open space in front of them. This 4-4-2 system has designated attacking and defensive central midfielders. The diamond midfield system can be a bit more predictable than the flat midfield, but it does allow the coach to define players' roles more clearly. By playing the midfield in a more compact manner you may sacrifice a bit of flank play in an effort to control the spine of the field. In this 4-4-2 system your outside backs need to possess a great work rate and ability to provide service. Your midfield should be technically strong in tight spaces and have the mobility to move as a unit to press the ball. The "attacking" midfielder should be instrumental in either scoring goals or making the final pass that leads to the goal.

4-4-2 Diamond back, Diamond Midfield



If you watched youth soccer games 15 years ago this would be the way 90% of teams lined up to play, but when the restriction on passing back to the goalkeeper (keeper can no longer use his hands) came into effect the game changed. The keeper began to assume many of the roles that the sweeper formerly was to be responsible for and defenses became "flatter" or more zonal.

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This system has many weaknesses. If you look at the distance from the top of the team to the back of the team, it is too much ground to cover vertically. This will make it difficult to prevent gaps from opening up between the different lines (Fwd/Mid/Def) in the team. Also, by playing a stopper/sweeper system, the outside backs need to pinch a bit more central to deny penetrating passes. This in turn, limits the outside backs ability to assist in the build-up phase when on the attack. Teams that generally choose to play in this fashion will have a tendency to “mark” players and not trade people off when they come into a particular zone. This can be problematic in that you spend a great deal chasing players and when you gain possession the shape of the team can be disjointed.

If your preference is to play in the 4-4-2 system, I would recommend not having both your midfield and backline in a diamond formation. Some teams may feel more comfortable with a sweeper at the back, this is understandable, but I would encourage these teams to choose to align the midfield in a manner that they can cover the entire width of the field. When you play with a “stopper” at the back you may not need to have one designated “holding/defensive” midfielder. This should allow the midfield to flatten out and provide a better overall team shape.