



4-3-3 System of play



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History around the 433 system



- **The 4-3-3** system of play was the result of a more defensive shape of the Brazilian 4-2-4 of the 50's. The addition of a center midfielder in the middle of the field, guaranteed more defensive cover without compromising the offensive characteristics of the team





- Since the 50's, many teams have adopted this system, such as:
 - ✓ Brazil in the 1962 World Cup coached by Mr. Moreira
 - ✓ Ajax of Cruyff in the era of Total Soccer 1971-74
 - ✓ Chelsea and Inter FC of José Mourinho
 - ✓ Barcelona of Guardiola (Champions League 2011)

All the above 4 teams however have interpreted the system of 433 in a way different from each other.



Total soccer

It is the year 1974 when the Dutch National team becomes known to the World: an exceptional team that will revolutionize the way to play the game.

The principle of total soccer (followed by Cruyff and his teammates with the most dedication) are simple but at the same time extremely revolutionary:

- 1) Pressing every where on the field
- 2) Interchange of positions
- 3) Zonal defending every where on the field (off-side trap always applied)
- 4) The shape of the team is compact and short to favor offensive penetrations and defensive recovery runs
- 5) Goalkeeper plays like a sweeper
- 6) Frequent penetrating runs of the center-midfielders and defenders in the offensive play



The main consequence of the Dutch model was the disappearance of the player super specialized, favoring a quick and strong player, capable of moving rapidly in the various zones of the field and adapt to the various roles.





Cruyff will be the best example of a player born for this system of total soccer, given his mastery of all the fundamentals.





Total Soccer was important because it started a new soccer era: the players that before were forced to develop only certain type of plays or movements with respect to their position, from now on they will start to interchange and improve the characteristics of unpredictability a fundamental element in soccer and a characteristic of the 4-4-3 system



Barcelona 2010/11 – the strongest team of all times

Barcelona of Pepe Guardiola is considered the strongest team of all times by many soccer critics. The disarming easiness of the result both at the National level (we remember the 5-0 win over Real Madrid of Cristiano Ronaldo) and the international level (win in Champions League 3-1 against Manchester United) has made the team earn a spot in the Olympus of world soccer.



Build up from the keeper



Guardiola plays with the 4-3-3. In goal the immovable Victor Valdes. With the defense in emergency for the absences of Maxwell, Milito and Adriano, Daniel Alves, Mascherano, Piquè and Abidal are deployed. Three man midfield with Xavi, Iniesta and Sergio Busquets. Ahead is the duo Pedro-Messi supporting David Villa.



Barcelona 2010/11 – Main characteristics:

- Great ball possession. Statistics indicate an average possession of 67%
- It is the result of a high number of passes, way higher than the average of the whole Champions League, most of the passes are on the ground, of a medium-short range
- Development of offensive play where all the players participate. The full backs are indeed two offensive outside players and Mascherano, the center back beside Piquet, is basically the deep play maker of the team. In the midfield all the play goes through the feet of Xavi and Iniesta while the offensive players, Villa, Messi and Pedro are close together in the central zone, interchanging position constantly. The objective of the team is to get into the penalty box with a series of many short and quick passes.

Barcelona 2010/11 – Main characteristics:

- Crosses, a characteristic of the classic 4-3-3 system are not utilized by the team, mainly because the height of the 3 forwards is below the average height of the opponent defenses. Crosses therefore are mainly on the ground.
- great effort to collaborative solutions with more players, like the “give and go” “dummies”, “overlapping runs”, interchange of positions.
- Barcelona demonstrates great ball control, the result of a great work at the youth level, the “Cantera” where most of the players of this team have come from.



Description of the 4-3-3 system



➤ **Definition of system of play:** position of the players on the field on a static situation, players occupy the defensive zone the midfield and attacking zones.

➤ **Definition of module of play:** dynamic realization of the system; roles and responsibilities the players is subject to.

4-3-3 system of play DESCRIPTION AND GENERAL ANALYSIS

The 4-3-3 comprise of 3 lines and 3 chains:

- 3 lines: defensive line – midfield line – forward line



- 3 chains: the right chain – the left chain and the central chain



The understanding of the chains is fundamental for the development of offensive play because ball possession will pass through all this.

FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES OF GROUP TACTICS AND 4-3-3

- The offensive spacing is guaranteed by the natural position of the players on the field. Spacing means the deployment of players on more lines of the field in order to avoid players being in a flat position to each other, but to allow the forming of a series of triangles, the triangle is a fundamental shape in soccer, which allows the player with the ball to have more options available to pass and to receive support from more directions.
- Penetration (the ability to gain depth through verticalization) is guaranteed by the 3 forwards and by their movements which create space for penetrating runs of the midfielders and full backs. Movements of the outside forward players and the interchange of position of the 3 offensive players guarantee a great mobility to the system (ability to move off the ball in synch and respecting time and space).



FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES OF GROUP TACTICS AND 4-3-3 page II

- Width (the team ability to use the whole width of the field to stretch the defense) is guaranteed by the two outside forwards and by their movements to cut inside the field to create space for the runs of the two center-midfielders and full backs.
- Improvisation (the team ability to be unpredictable) is an element of the 4-3-3 system considering all the various solutions of penetrations from different players.



DISADVANTAGES OF 4-3-3

- 4-3-3 is a system where penetrating runs are key. The distances to cover are much bigger therefore if a youth team is not physically prepared, we run the risk the system becomes flat.
- Comparing the 4-3-3 to the 4-4-2 or 4-2-3-1, in the 4-3-3 the phase of non possession of the ball is more complex. If all the players do not apply the proper movements we risk situations of numerical disadvantage in the midfield and on the flanks.





The ideal player's characteristics

4-3-3 – THE IDEAL PLAYERS

- Goalkeeper: it is preferable to have a goalkeeper who is good technically to utilize him as a second sweeper of the central chain, to develop ball possession when for example the opponent applies high pressure.
- Central defender: Must have good physical structure, good headers of the ball, good in 1vs1 duels and must have good technique to guarantee build up from the back. They must be good at recovery runs and reading game situations.
- Outside defenders: they have a crucial role in the 4-3-3 system. They must be good defenders and attackers. Speed and endurance are fundamental requisites for this position. They must be good at dribbling, crossing and timing of the runs.



4-3-3 – THE IDEAL PLAYERS

- inside midfielders: they are fundamental for the system. They must develop a high volume of play both from a quality and quantity point of view. They must be complete in all the technical fundamentals in the applied tactics , they must be good on and off the ball and must have a good level of endurance and they must be quick and fast.
- Central midfielder: (Play maker)Very often this is the player that starts the play, he must have great technical skills and great tactical sense. He must also be a universal player, because he must be involved in the defensive play and very often he is called to get in the defensive line to guarantee numerical advantage.
- Central striker: Generally this player is physically strong, good in the air and in shielding the ball. He must be good at attacking the near post and in finishing.
- Outside forwards: they are very fast, they have good control of the ball. They are very good in 1vs1 and tactically they must be good at making penetrating runs. Based on their characteristics they can play on the side of the field that favor their dominant foot or on the opposite side



Development of play with 433

DEVELOPMENT OF PLAY IN 4-3-3

The offensive play in 4-3-3 can start from 2 players:

- the outside defender
- The playmaker



DEVELOPMENT OF PLAY IN 4-3-3

Many times the opposing teams mark the playmaker very tight and sometime also the central defender may be called to start the build up



DEVELOPMENT OF PLAY IN 4-3-3 – OUTSIDE DEFENDER

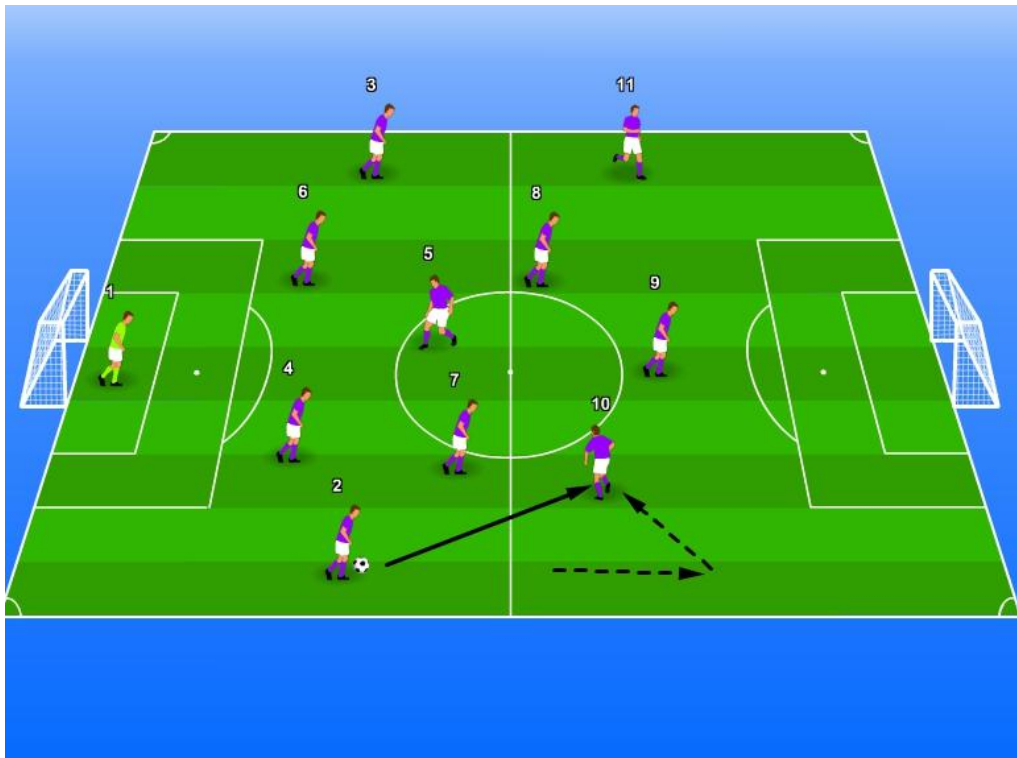
- the development of play from the outside defender is based on 3 solutions from which will derive other subsequent combinations of passing:



A: outside defender #3 and the outside forward #10 move on the same channel

DEVELOPMENT OF PLAY IN 4-3-3 – OUTSIDE DEFENDER

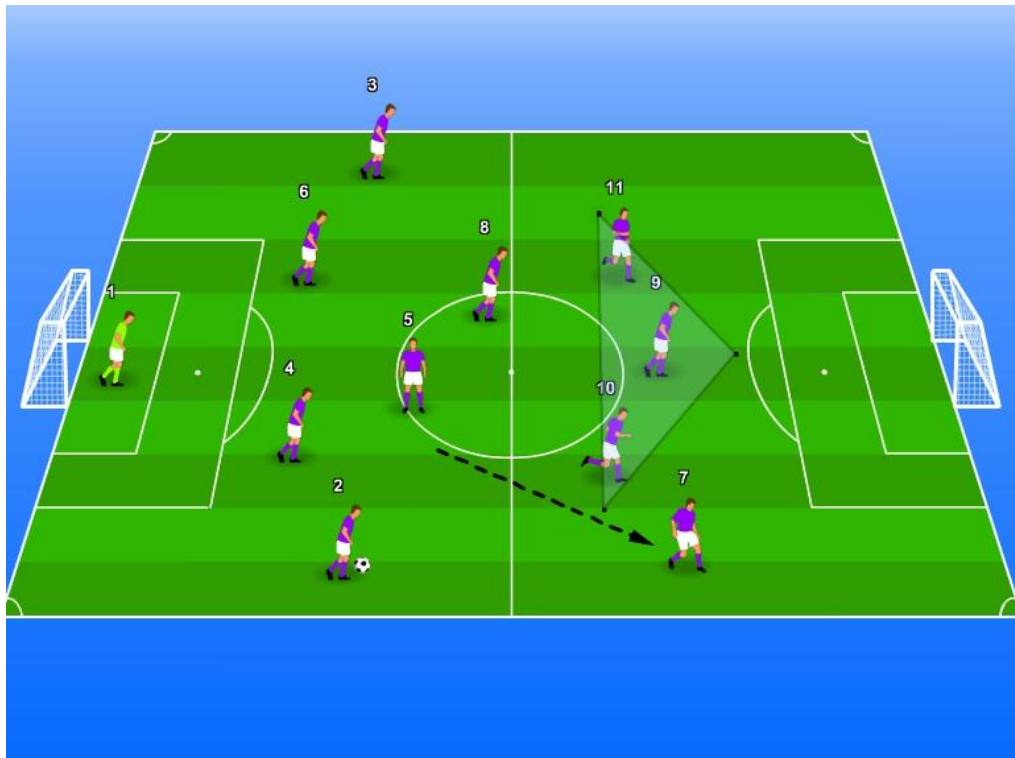
- the development of play from the outside defender is based on 3 solutions from which will derive other subsequent combinations of passing:



B: the outside defender #3 and the outside forward #10 are staggered. #10 is more inside the field and #3 is wider.

DEVELOPMENT OF PLAY IN 4-3-3 – OUTSIDE DEFENDER

- the development of play from the outside defender is based on 3 solutions from which will derive other subsequent combinations of passing:



C: the inside midfielder runs outside on the flank attacking the space made available by the outside forward when he converged in the middle



DEVELOPMENT OF PLAY IN 4-3-3 – OUTSIDE DEFENDER (I)

- **PLAY 1 (A):** Outside defender – outside forward + switch of play and overlapping

- **PLAY 2:** variation of #1, this time #11 converges inside and interchange with #9

- **PLAY 3:** one more variation of 1, this time #11 uses the movement of #9 to dribble the ball towards the center and pass to the other forward #10





DEVELOPMENT OF PLAY IN 4-3-3 – OUTSIDE DEFENDER (II)

- **PLAY 4 (B):** outside defender to outside forward but this time #10 moves inside the field. The play continues with a switch to the weak side.

- **PLAY 5:** variation to play 4, this time the attack is developed without switching the play but with #2 overlapping.

- **PLAY 6 :** variation of 4, this time the inside midfielder #8 penetrates after the switch of play on the weak side, using the wide movement of #11





DEVELOPMENT OF PLAY IN 4-3-3 – OUTSIDE DEFENDER (III)

- **PLAY 7:** variation to play 4, this time #10 is able to find space with the movement inside the field so he can turn and look to get in the penalty box.

- **PLAY 8:** variation of play 4, this time the central striker provides depth after the movement of #10 to come inside the field.

- **PLAY 9 (C):** the inside midfielder moves on the flank, this is a good movement if we want to keep the 3 forwards close to each other. In this play, #7 uses the space to attack the flank.





DEVELOPMENT OF PLAY IN 4-3-3 – OUTSIDE DEFENDER (IV)

- **PLAY 10:** variation of play 9, this time the play is finished with a penetrating run of #8

DEVELOPMENT OF PLAY IN 4-3-3 – PLAYMAKER

- the play starting from the playmaker is based on the movement of this player behind the line of the ball, for example when the ball is to an outside player the playmaker finds himself always behind the ball to start the play. This movement allows the playmaker to be unmarked most of the times.





DEVELOPMENT OF PLAY IN 4-3-3 – PLAYMAKER (1)

- **PLAY 11:** this play uses the central chain of players, the playmaker plays to the central striker who can flick the ball for the penetrating runs of the two outside forwards.

- **PLAY 12:** variation of play 11, this time the central striker is played the ball on the ground.



DEVELOPMENT OF PLAY IN 4-3-3- CENTRAL DEFENDER





DEVELOPMENT OF PLAY IN 4-3-3- CENTRAL DEFENDER (1)

- **PLAY 13:** Central defender moved up the field and plays for the inside midfielder on the weak side and #3 overlaps

- **PLAY 14:** Central defender plays for the central striker who has made a run in the field “short”



