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23-03-2011 15:22 #1

SFraser

Semi Pro

Join Date: 19th September 2008
Posts: 2,664

Analysing the 4-2-3-1: Why Your Playmaker Should Be Upfront.

My save is progressing nicely, and a goal I just scored in the European Cup Semi Final neatly shows a tactical concept I have been talking about for a while on these forums. It's about time for a tactical thread from me anyway I think.

It's a simple tactical concept and it logically follows from tactical concepts that have re-emerged over the past few years in both real life and in FM and it's community.

The 4-2-3-1

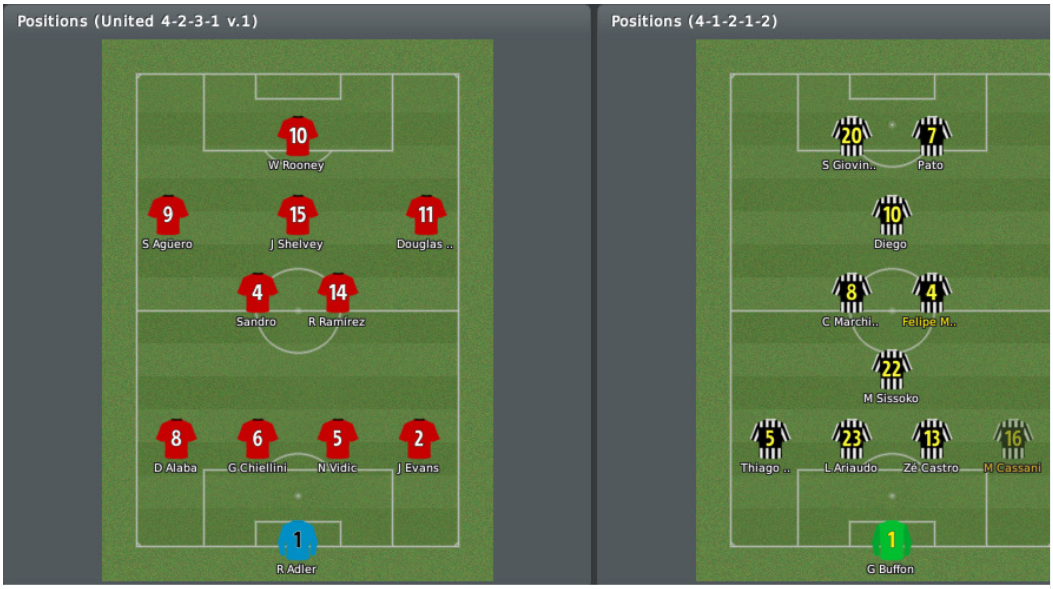
Tactics are very fluid in FM due to being very player dependant. Without altering instructions or making one role different from another it is possible to radically change the playstyle and function of your team through sheer virtue of how X player chooses to go about his game. Tactical tweaking for me is about establishing a basic system for how I want my team to play in general and then altering it by using shouts and by player selection. Occasionally I will delve into the guts of my team and tinker but this is usually experimental to see if I can make the overall unit play better, or when I come up against an opponent with a particularly mean angle of attack.

Now the way I have set up my team means that the shouts that affect things like Try Through Balls or Run From Deep or Longshots etc. wont work. All the shouts do for my players is alter Mentality, Closing Down, Tackling, Marking, Tempo, Timewasting and Directness of Passing. In short the shouts enable me to control my unit as a unit without disrupting all my carefully balanced and set up roles.

Those carefully balanced and set up roles are however predominately "everything set to mixed". I have RFD Often for my Fullbacks, TTB Often for my CM's and a whole bunch of rares for my Centrebacks, but that's about it. The football my team plays is not based on my instructions but their abilities and intelligence. What I control is the shape they play in, who plays where, and how aggressively I want my team to attack or defend as a unit.

It is one of the most simple overall tactical philosophies you are likely to find on these forums but it has one significant advantage. I don't have to set up XYZ role, all I need to do is find a player that looks like XYZ role and play him to get the desired effect. If I play an outright winger on the wing he will play like a winger because nothing is stopping him from doing so and that is what he does. If I play an Inside Forward he plays like an Inside Forward for the same reason. The key is getting players that actually prefer to play in a certain way, in knowing how a player likes to play and then putting him in the right place with the right people around him.

My system is immensely flexible tactically precisely because I don't go into role detail. With a whole bunch of generic playing instructions the role performed is entireally up to the player I start.



I choose to play the 4-2-3-1 because it is a defensively strong shape. With sufficient quality upfront I can play two Holding Midfielders and protect the Centrebacks very well. It is also the shape that enables the greatest amount of modern day tactical flexibility in my opinion. It is the shape upon which was based the Spanish Striker and Playmaker "wingers" at the World Cup and in many ways I am attempting to emulate the Spanish side but with my own personal touches to it.

In this match I was prevented from playing my defensively strongest back line due to injuries. I also had other tactical issues to consider given the unusual shape of the Juventus team. I was tempted to alter my formation but I am loathe to let the AI disrupt an excellent formula and always prefer to force the AI to play against my system.

To keep my current shape while being able to effectively deal with the immense threat through the middle I opted for an AMC with immense Strength and Workrate, as well as relatively high Positioning and Tackling attributes. While his Composure, Movement and Creativity are immense he is not my most outright "theoretically" lethal AMC. He is more like a really strong MCa playmaker.

Due to the reduction in threat coming through the middle, and by reduction in threat I mean Shelvey's lack of range of threat such as Dribbling or outrageous Creativity or immense Flair and Longshots or high Teamwork, I had to plan a line of attacking threat coming from elsewhere. As much as the Juventus formation is very strong in one dimension, it is also obviously weak in another. So my attacking plan was to employ dual Inside Forwards with high Off The Ball Movement, Acceleration, Flair and Determination. Their movement would give my somewhat slow and robust midfield plenty of targets to hit with their excellent Vision and Passing.

However that is just my basic tactical plan that is implimented through player selection rather than role tweaking, and is not what this thread is about. What this thread is about is my own personal "evolution" to the rapidly evolving 4-2-3-1 in world football.

Playmaker Up Front

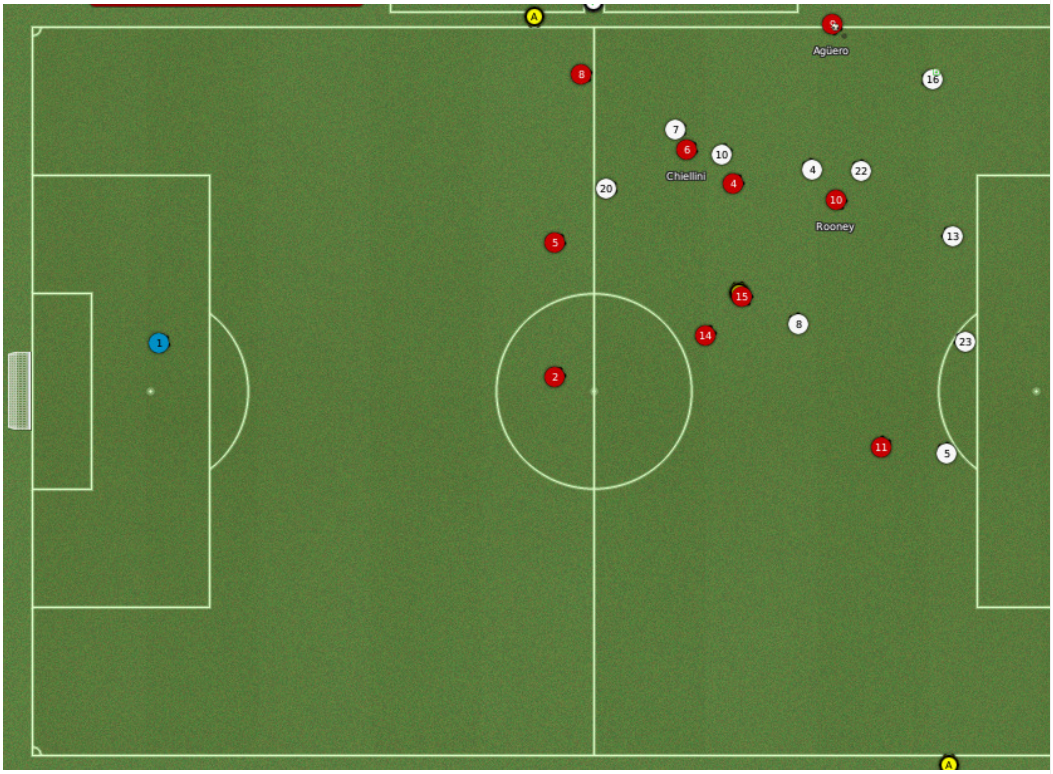
The Juventus back 6 of Goalkeeper, four defenders and brutal Holding Midfielder is a common sight in modern football. Indeed I said that I use two Holding Midfielders, albeit in the CM slots. While Inside Forwards exploiting the reduced defensive cover of the flanks is nothing new and is very tactically sound, it is my view that playing a pure Striker upfront is not tactically sound.

Look at that defence and then look at the Passing/Creativity of your own Inside Forwards. Most Inside Forwards are not the ultimate playmakers of world football although they are lethal, and there is no way that a striker in the lone striker position in my 4-2-3-1 is going to get alot of supply coming directly through the middle. Having a player that is looking to peel off defenders and get into goalscoring positions here is a waste of a player. The centre is too immensely defender and the wide players are simply not going to carve open defences with epic throughballs very often.

Ofcourse you can always play Playmakers on your flanks, and sometimes I do just that, but I wanted more movement from my wide players as my CM's need options, and the average wide playmaker is not going to destroy fullbacks with speed and movement.

Indeed with the Wide Players in modern football becoming ever more like Pure Strikers in terms of actual function, it makes sense that you want a playmaker centrally to feed them into goalscoring positions. A playmaker is one of the few types of players that is going to be able to get any change out of the heart of defences like the Juventus system.

The squad numbers in my formation tell the entire story. My number 9, my striker, plays left wing and my number 10, my playmaker, plays upfront on his own. That's my tactical theory, that's my tactical development, that's my tactical evolution. Now does it actually work?

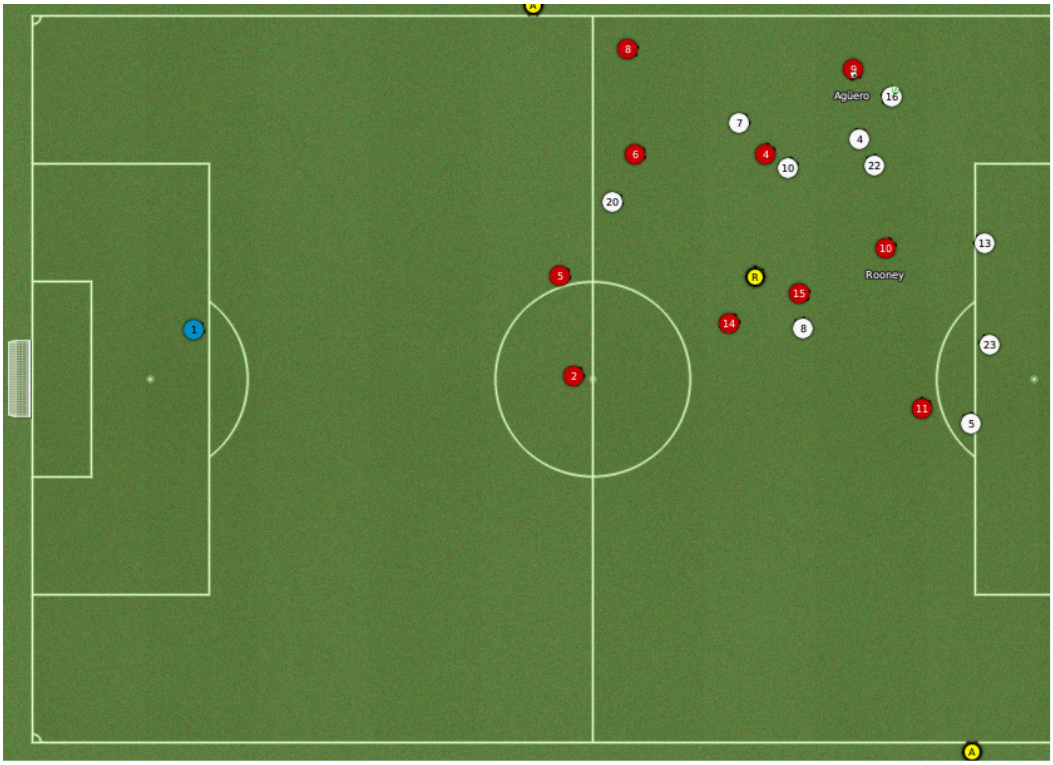


In the above image we see the state of play after Juventus have taken a throw-in and Chiellini has powered through and nodded the ball to Aguero.

My midfield is very deep and very narrow, producing a nice shield shape ahead of the defence that should force play wide should Juventus get the ball. It doesn't look very threatening at the minute however.

Douglas Costa the No. 11 is wide Right, looking to attack the space he is enjoying down that flank. He has the PPM "Moves into Channels".

Rooney here has the PPM "Comes deep to Collect Ball" and has a very high rating for Free Role as shown by being called a "Forward" and not "Striker". He has roaming ticked and so is not looking to attack the back four with a run, he is looking to drop into space and behave like a playmaker.



As the Right Footed Aguero naturally dribbles infield so the move develops.

Alaba at leftback marches over the half way line while Chiellini sprints back into position.

Sandro moves towards the ball to support Aguero (but it's too tight for him to be of use over there) while Ramirez number 14 holds his position.

The remaining three advanced player are interesting. First Douglas Costa starts moving into a threatening position and is looking for gaps to exploit from the right flank. Second Shelvey with his high Off The Ball and Work Rate has started making an attacking run forward.

Rooney however has still not bombed forward. He could have looked to split the Juventus 22 and 13 at any point in this move but A: it is not his instructions and B: it is not his playstyle. What Rooney has done instead is plant himself firmly in the middle of an ocean of space infront of the Juventus defence.



With a lovely struck pass between the Juventus 4 and 16 Aguero finds Rooney. Rooney lets the ball roll across his body and turns onto his right foot. Aguero has found the playmaker and the damage is done.

Rooney is on to his strongest foot 20 yards from goal with players making runs ahead of him into the gap that has appeared in the Juventus centre. Douglas Costas movement has taken him right across the back line and he is running at speed into the gap. Shelvey has continued forward and although the Juventus 8 has tracked his run he is behind Shelvey and will not be able to prevent him getting the ball.

When the playmaker lets the ball roll across his body he finds two players pouring into the centre of the Juventus defence. So what does the playmaker do?

He sticks the ball in the top corner... My playmaker is Wayne Rooney after all.

Reply | **Reply With Quote**

23-03-2011 15:53 #2

Cleon

Moderator
Join Date: 22nd February 2003
Posts: 20,487

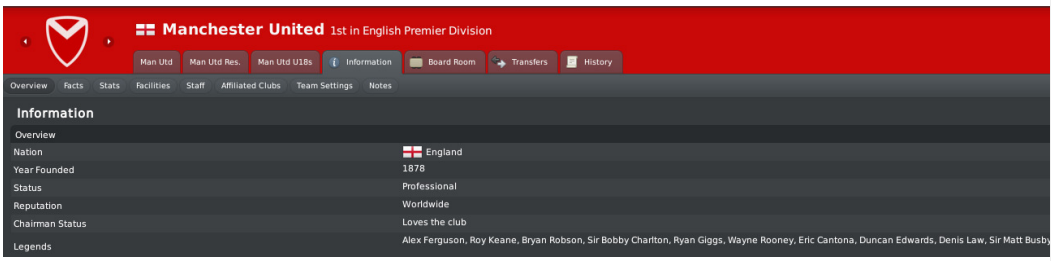
> *I didn't reserve any posts underneath my OP for updates, which in hindsight was a bad idea because I have something completely relevant to this thread that I thought would be highly interesting to anyone that has read it. Anyway...*

So I'm posting this on behalf of SFraser. This post has nothing to do with me and is all his work

Analysing the 4-2-3-1: Why Your Playmaker Should Be Upfront: Update

A highly impressive 4-1 defeat of Juventus in Turin with the same overall shape and gameplan but a few minor tweaks to personell (my alternative right winger played well in the matches beforehand and won himself a start) paved the way for a highly satisfying end to the season.

The 31st of May ends a month of intense contests, prize money, glorious success and enthusiastic press conferences from the manager. It ends a season that was tougher, more enjoyable, more micro-managed, more studiously poured over and more successful than the last. A season that saw me, finally, achieve this:



My name is listed in the club I love dearly alongside those individuals that I have most worshipped in the sport that is my passion since I was born. I am listed alongside Cantona, Giggs, Keano!, but most of all and by a margin that is immeasurable, Alex Ferguson. A fellow Scotsman, untamable Lord of the Game, the man that is to Football Manager what God is to Peter Molyneux's "Black and White".

It's only a game, but still...

Alas, however, the end of another season marks the end of another year in the cruelly short careers of truly great players. For me it marks the end of the season that is the 29th year in the life of my club captain, my leader, my constant top goalscorer, my tactical *tour de force*, my inspiration and image of myself on the pitch. Wayne Rooney. For seasons now I have watched the digits on his timer click unstoppably upwards. Nothing I can do in this game can prevent the player that has been at the heart of my team since day one from getting older. It's a constant irritation that has slowly grown into a wail of impending doom, for I know Rooney can't go on forever.

Even I, the man that brought you the "triangle of development" and the "training notch theory" and the knowledge of the vital importance of Stamina and the actual relevance of Intense Physical Training in Pre-Season and every single other thing I have contributed to these forums and to others in my time actively writing about FM, knows that at best Rooney has a maximum of two years left at his peak, fates providing an easy path and manager providing every element of his FM knowledge. While Rooney's carrer could theoretically continue untill he is near 40, his current level of overall performance in my team has two years left at it's absolute maximum.

Armed with this knowledge I have already been training him to play in a deeper role that requires much less of his Pace and Acceleration, the "meaty attributes" I am willing to sacrifice wholesale to maintain his overall level of performance in other areas as long as it is physically possible to do so. I have for Rooney mapped out a path of Striker turn AMC turn MC turn DMC, but I ofcourse do value the team above all else, but no one wants to lose the heartbeat of a team if he can perform a heartbeating job elsewhere.

As the season ends, the 31st of May is met and the players go on holiday, the manager is left with hoardes of free time. And the managers mind automatically turns to what to spend next seasons transfer budget on.

Do I want a Goalkeeper? I have a 41 year old perfectionist backup, an 18 year old Rotation I have been developing since age 15, a 29 year old First Teamer who can lose all his physical attributes and only get better as a goalkeeper, and I have 3 under-18 players that my ass man rates highly.

Do I want a defender? I have already dealt with the age related defensive crisis at Manchester United

through youth and purchases and retraining and if anything I have over-compensated in defence. I am not sure I can develop all my awesome young defenders to their full potential because I don't have enough mentors. An ironic error, but still one that can be learned from. As all good errors are.

Do I want a central midfielder? In truth yes, but one that is 15. My first team is awash with plenty of players that are excellent in CM and my three genuine CM's get plenty of games, but I lack any real, genuine, superb youth options in CM.

Do I want an attacking midfielder? No, if anything I have too many and only being brutally harsh with low performance ratings (i.e dropping players) has staved off any "too much competition" problems, ironicly.

Do I want a pure Striker? I already have a "God-in-waiting" for Rooney's role you may have met him before, Jaume. And I will still have Rooney at his peak for about two seasons, then Rooney below his peak for a few more. I still have Berbatov, and a few brash and exciting youngsters that don't have the greatest of potential but still seem excitable enough to score goals when I play them.

So what do I want?

Building For The Future

What I want is a replacement for Rooney, but there are none. I have checked. In depth. As much as I possibly could. Unsurprisingly my FM world is not awash with a multitude of "Rooney's in the making".

But what I really want is an effective team. And I believe my tactical premise is fundamentally lethal. If I cannot find another Rooney to continue what I currently have then I want to find players that will join my team, reshuffle it a bit in terms of personell, but then produce an even more potent whole. I want to improve my team as a unit so that it is even more potent along the tactical lines I think work profoundly well.

I would dearly love for any change I make to get the best out of the players I play. I want my changes to enhance my team.

And this leads me back to Rooney. For I have trained Rooney to play deeper but when I play Rooney deeper and Jaume upfront my team is not significantly better. My team plays worse. My previous plan of dropping Rooney deep and playing Jaume upfront so far seems to show that it is not going to be as good as my current system. This is bad.

I also want to get the best or get better out of my current under-performers. Players that look like they should be awesome but when I play them are distinctly underwhelming. An addition or change to a team should benefit a team. Should enhance the performances of players like this:



Ozil looks amazing but when I play him left wing he looks isolated and when I play him through the middle he looks uninterested and weak. I know he is a great player, I have seen him do things no one else can do, I am battling my guts out to raise his Determination, but still he wont fulfill his ability. What else can I do?

Ozil a genius but when I play him in midfield his underwhelms. My next management decision I hope is one capable of getting the best out of Ozil. He seems unable to play where he is supposed to be good at playing. No height, strength, workerate for the middle and far too flamboyant for the wing. He should be a footballing good, but he is about third choice at the minute,

But likewise I have the issue of Rooney and Jaume to contend with. The plan to drop the battleaxe,

creative and flamboyant Rooney into midfield behind the potent and lethal Jaume makes sense, but on the field it completely sucks. Rooneys strengths cancel out Jaumes weaknesses and Jaumes strengths cancel out Rooneys weaknesses for a pretty average combination. Sure I am a wall of fanatical purpose in defence when you get the ball beyond my striker, but if I have any intention in FM it is quite simply not to be Rafa's Liverpool. I will willingly take on the principles of Liverpools defensive strength in the Champions League several years ago, but first and foremost my ambition is to slice teams apart.

It's not an ambition to be fair, at the level I play at slicing teams apart is a fundamental necessity.

So the question remained, in thie coming season how do I improve my team?

Playmaker Upfront



Yes that's right, I intend to retrain Mesut Ozil to play as a lone striker. The guy is a horrible striker and a terrific playmaker, so I am training him to play upfront.

Yup, only me. You saw it here first.

Does he differ all that much from Rooney? In terms of being a striker, not heaps. His Off the Ball is a fraction lower, overall pace is probably higher, anticipation equal, composure about 3 points lower and the same for Finishing. He isn't a striker, but we kinda gathered that from this whole topic. What he is, is a rediculously good playmaker with bags of pace, teamwork, dribbling skills and movement.

Ozil behind Rooney didnt work for the simple reason Ozil wasnt a good AMC in terms of involvement and action and effort. Rooney is an awesome AMC in terms of involvement and action and effort but his accuracy lets him down. But in this system the playmaker is not the AMC. The playmaker is the CF. The "strikers" come from players running onto his passes and can you think of a system better than Wayne Rooney running from AMC and Aguero running from AML onto the passes from the CF Ozil?

I will be honest, this sounds like it could be the cleverest thing I have ever done FM. I havn't done it yet but the brainwave excited me so much I wanted to stick it in this thread.

Now let's see if it fails.

Not sure what to do in the off-season? That's when all good managers should be redesigning their teams.

Last edited by Cleon; 27-03-2011 at 04:06.

Reply | **Reply With Quote**

23-03-2011 15:56 #3

TBell95

Amateur

Join Date: 25th May 2010

Posts: 6

> Originally Posted by **Cleon**

> *If you look at his screenshots you can see he is far from been light at the back. He has players positioned perfectly to deal with a quick breaking counter attack.*

Is this down to players decisions and positioning attributes then? And would Rooney be on Attack duty or Support?

Reply | **Reply With Quote**

23-03-2011 15:56 #4

Romanista1994
Amateur
Join Date: 18th October 2008
Posts: 709

> Originally Posted by **TBell95**
> *This is really good stuff SFraser. I am currently playing as Man U with the very same formation, but i am having difficulties in creating CCC's, and therefore scoring goals. This thread has been very useful in helping me try and find a way for Rooney to create space by dropping deep like this. What mentality do both your CM's have, because it seems like Sandro is more advanced than Ramirez, and therefore with Alaba bombing forward it must leave you a bit light at the back?*

From an older thread I remember his CM's having the same mentality (as did the rest of the team bar the CB's) and I think it still applies here. Indeed if you look at first two screenshots you can see Sandro going towards the man with the ball and in the third, where the action has moved to the front, he has dropped back in a line with Ramirez.
I also don't think his back line is light. You must consider the players he has staying back: a RB who would play centrally for any other team in the world and Vidic and Chiellini, who really don't need an introduction.

I'm not SFraser, though, and he can certainly answer your questions better.

As to the thread itself, a great read. 👍

Reply | **Reply With Quote**

23-03-2011 16:01 #5

TBell95
Amateur
Join Date: 25th May 2010
Posts: 6

> Originally Posted by **Romanista1994**
> *From an older thread I remember his CM's having the same mentality (as did the rest of the team bar the CB's) and I think it still applies here. Indeed if you look at first two screenshots you can see Sandro going towards the man with the ball and in the third, where the action has moved to the front, he has dropped back in a line with Ramirez.*
> *I also don't think his back line is light. You must consider the players he has staying back: a RB who would play centrally for any other team in the world and Vidic and Chiellini, who really don't need an introduction.*
>
> *I'm not SFraser, though, and he can certainly answer your questions better.*
>
> *As to the thread itself, a great read.* 👍

I realise that now thanks, i was just speaking from experience, because i play the same formation but still get caught out on the counter. this may be down to my lack of tactical knowledge, or just that my backline isnt as good?

Reply | **Reply With Quote**

23-03-2011 16:02 #6

mikewalker
Amateur
Join Date: 26th January 2010
Posts: 33

Wonderful stuff, there's been some brilliant posts in this vein of late.

Reply | **Reply With Quote**

23-03-2011 16:03 #7

Cleon
Moderator

Join Date: 22nd February 2003
Posts: 20,487

> Originally Posted by **TBell95**
> *I realise that now thanks, i was just speaking from experience, because i play the same formation but still get caught out on the counter. this may be down to my lack of tactical knowledge, or just that my backline isnt as good?*

Or it could be due to things like closing down settings to high, run from deep, PPM's etc. I've no doubt that SFraser as accounted for all that.

Reply | **Reply With Quote**

23-03-2011 16:06 #8

TBell95
Amateur
Join Date: 25th May 2010
Posts: 6

> Originally Posted by **Cleon**
> *Or it could be due to things like closing down settings to high, run from deep, PPM's etc. I've no doubt that SFraser as accounted for all that.*

Ah right, well due to my lack of tactical knowledge i try not to alter the player instructions too much. I do use high pressing though which may be a factor, thanks for pointing this out

Reply | **Reply With Quote**

23-03-2011 17:39 #9

mdbussen
Youth Team
Join Date: 6th June 2007
Location: WI, USA
Posts: 4,148

I'm really glad to see you posting so much SFraser as it is always interesting reading for me. Another insightful thread, as always!

If you have the time and inclination, could you take a second to speak about how you set up your defensive tactics for this match? I only ask because I struggle setting up my team defensively and I can see an obvious weakness in the 4-2-3-1 when coming up against a 4-1-2-1-2 - namely, how do you deal with Diego playing in the AMC position?

Also, Pato playing for Juventus?!?? :O

Reply | **Reply With Quote**

23-03-2011 17:43 #10

Arianyr
Amateur
Join Date: 27th June 2008
Posts: 44

Another great read. This is currently also my favorite setup (4 2 3 1 with 2 inside forwards). But I employ more passing ability in the deeplying forward role; players like Kaka. In the situation you described I personally would have preferred to have seen a pass to your #11.

I also make sure that I can 'shift' my 3 central midfielders from MC MC AMC to DMC MC MC. or DMC DMC MC. I find that can make a world of difference in some matches. For example I would have used the DMC MC MC in the match you showed here because now Diego appears to have a lot of freedom.

What are your team settings? I play rigid with more creativity and roaming.

Reply | **Reply With Quote**

23-03-2011 18:49 #11

SFraser
Semi Pro



Join Date: 19th September 2008
Posts: 2,664

> Originally Posted by **mdbussen**
> *I'm really glad to see you posting so much SFraser as it is always interesting reading for me. Another insightful thread, as always!*
>
> *If you have the time and inclination, could you take a second to speak about how you set up your defensive tactics for this match? I only ask because I struggle setting up my team defensively and I can see an obvious weakness in the 4-2-3-1 when coming up against a 4-1-2-1-2 - namely, how do you deal with Diego playing in the AMC position?*

Well it may seem like a daft answer but the way to deal with Diego and Juventus is to win the ball. By having high Workrate throughout my team I was able to press high up the pitch knowing full well that my midfielders would quickly drop back into their midfield positions. Shelvey was key to my excellent start by pushing up next to Rooney and harrassing the deep players along with Aguero and Costa. The high workrate of Rooney and Shelvey, 19 and 18 respectively, meant that I continually harrassed Juiventus through the middle, they had no easy outballs to the flanks because of my wingers, and their distribution was poor. My deeper players, barring Alaba, are all Positionally excellent, excellent in the air and have high Anticipation. It was actually pretty easy for me to get the ball back off Juventus and indeed my first goal came from Rooney tackling a Centreback and slamming a shot past Buffon.

On the rare occasions Juventus got hold of the ball my high workrate midfield would drop into a triangle shape ahead of my defence and chase players around the midfield. Diego is not actually a smart player under intense pressure. His movement, composure, teamwork and anticipation are all quite low, nor is he particularly strong or hard working. So while he does have some awesome dribbling skills and high creativity, in a crowded centre full of hardworking midfielders he isn't really up to much.

While Shelvey was a crucial tactical choice, the player that actually got to grips with the game and dominated the pitch was Sandro. In this midfield battle his immense awareness and powerful physique dominated. When you have a player with 17 Strength, 17 Jumping, 17 Agility and 19 Anticipation you really notice him dominating the intense midfield battle. He was all over the place like a spring chicken, even once surging clean past three Juventus players straight into the box.

In short the tremendous workrate of my midfield trio made up for being numerically disadvantaged, as I had hoped. While the Juventus midfield was not to be sniffed at they were ultimately outfought and played like a team that was missing several men. Not only was my midfield a match for theirs due to workrate, but I had players on the flanks capable of doing a devestating attacking job. They didn't. My players had options other than through the no-mans-land of midfield, theirs didn't.

Unfortunately Sandro took a heavy knock and from then on the match turned. Juventus scored twice in the dying stages of the game as my midfield devoid of Sandro was noticably weakened and tired as the game progressed. A 2-2 draw at Old Trafford, not ideal. However I have the luxury of being able to rest all my players between now and the return leg, and I will have all my players available. Juventus will be missing a key player and cannot afford to rest their entire team. Warfare will resume and hopefully I will have a significant condition advantage. Plus I will know what to watch out for as the game ticks deep into the second half. Better hope I have scored all the goals I need to by the 70th minute mark.

Last edited by SFraser; 23-03-2011 at 18:58.

Reply | **Reply With Quote**

23-03-2011 20:47 #12

Kawee

Part-Timer
Join Date: 29th October 2006
Location: Right Behind You
Posts: 874

Great thread as ever SFraser.

I've been using the same theory since FM10 as well, except I use it in a 4-5-1.

However, I don't set my striker as the playmaker. I set him as targetman and play the ball to his feet. Playing as a deep-lying forward, he becomes a playmaking False Nine. Highest assists in the team as he pass the ball to my wingers to finish off the moves.

This free up my playmaker slot for my DMC, which allows him to dictate the tempo from midfield.

Reply | **Reply With Quote**

23-03-2011 20:47 #13

Frank327

Amateur
Join Date: 27th October 2010
Posts: 72

A few comments.

First of all, from your example, you'd think Aguero is the playmaker as he attempted the trickiest pass, and really made things happen. Rooney laying it off to either of the two running players or scoring with a long shot is nothing special.

Secondly, I wouldn't call it "analysing the 4-2-3-1", but something like "using wide players". Most 4-2-3-1 formations focus on getting the most out of an AMC, either as a playmaker or as a goalscorer. In this example, the AMC is barely involved.

I have been thinking about using a 4-2-3-1 like this though. One where the AMC is a hardworking midfielder capable of playing the second striker role instead of being a creative player. But it's difficult to find good creative forwards, and it's difficult to find good hardworking AMC's with good finishing. Aside

that, if the opponent uses zonal marking and using a DMC, then the striker has no use for dropping deep because he'll just wander into the area of another good defensive player. Really, if any of your players get any space in front of the penalty area, then it doesn't matter too much what kind of player they are, they're probably gonna score anyways. Like you said, Rooney will just score a goal from a long shot, but a dribbler will have enough space to dribble and score, and a target man will lay it off to someone who can finish it off.

Reply **Reply With Quote**

23-03-2011 21:47 #14

SFraser

Semi Pro



Join Date: 19th September 2008
Posts: 2,664

> Originally Posted by **Kawee**
>
> *However, I don't set my striker as the playmaker. I set him as targetman and play the ball to his feet. Playing as a deep-lying forward, he becomes a playmaking False Nine. Highest assists in the team as he pass the ball to my wingers to finish off the moves.*
>
> *This free up my playmaker slot for my DMC, which allows him to dictate the tempo from midfield.*

I don't set anyone as playmaker, it imposes artificial "choice weights" that have nothing to do with the actual on-pitch context.

Rooney IS a playmaker naturally due to his appreciation of space, his movement, his creativity, flair, technique and his teamwork. All that is missing from his "playmaker" handbook of attributes is epic anticipation, composure and passing.

> Originally Posted by **Frank327**
>
> *First of all, from your example, you'd think Aguero is the playmaker as he attempted the trickiest pass*

You would think Aguero had excellent technique because he hit an obvious but difficult pass perfectly. The pass requiring the most Creativity (the defining attribute for a playmaker) was the pass to Douglas Costa who was making a run.

Rooney wasn't making a run, he only moved a couple of yards in this whole move. That's the whole point of this thread. It wasn't Aguero's intelligence, it wasn't Costa's movement, it was Rooney's understanding and appreciation of space against a diamond midfield that made this goal.

A subtle issue maybe, but one I have shown actually exists in FM, which is by far the greatest football game around. If you don't like my tactics, don't like my thread, you can still marvel at my proof that players in FM *appreciate and understand space*.

> Originally Posted by **Frank327**
>
> *Rooney laying it off to either of the two running players or scoring with a long shot is nothing special.*

100% correct. None of that is special, that's why I didn't show any screenshots of the goal.

What was special was how my Lone Striker played the perfect "Number 10" role. He occupied the space infront of the Juventus defence and had runners ahead of him but scored with a long range shot. Getting a lone striker to perfectly play the No. 10 role *is* pretty special.

But it is also highly logical given how tactics have evolved in the last few years. That is what this thread is about.

> Originally Posted by **Frank327**
>
> *Secondly, I wouldn't call it "analysing the 4-2-3-1", but something like "using wide players". Most 4-2-3-1 formations focus on getting the most out of an AMC, either as a playmaker or as a goalscorer. In this example, the AMC is barely involved.*

That's because my AMC was used to beat a 4 man midfield with three men.

However he is still making a run 5 yards away from two Centrebacks that are marking other players. I wouldn't call that "uninvolved". I would call that game, set and match.

> Originally Posted by **Frank327**
>
> *I have been thinking about using a 4-2-3-1 like this though. One where the AMC is a hardworking midfielder capable of playing the second striker role instead of being a creative player. But it's difficult to*

> *find good creative forwards, and it's difficult to find good hardworking AMC's with good finishing. Aside that, if the opponent uses zonal marking and using a DMC, then the striker has no use for dropping deep because he'll just wander into the area of another good defensive player.*

Maybe you skipped the part where I wrote about *player selection = tactics* in my system. 90% of games Shelvey is a rubbish AMC, infact have a screenshot:



Why play him at AMC for a Champions League Semi Final if he played 33 matches for me at MC this season?

Tactics. And pretty obvious tactics if he played 33 games for me at MC and I am playing him at AMC against a diamond...

I am not the best, but I am atleast decent.

I know my players and I can make a lot of different teams out of my players without once having to touch their tactical instructions. It would be great to have Cleon's knowledge of the tactical instructions, but I don't. That doesn't mean I am a tactical fool. I know how to build teams with a decent quantity of tactical instruction knowledge, but a significant quantity of individual player tactical knowledge.

A hardworking AMC doesn't make a good tactic an awesome tactic, it makes a great squad tactically flexible.

There is a fundamental difference here.

> Originally Posted by **Frank327**
>
> *Really, if any of your players get any space in front of the penalty area, then it doesn't matter too much what kind of player they are, they're probably gonna score anyways*

100% absolutely, utterly, completely correct.

How do you get into any space infront of the penalty area against a diamond midfield?

Rooney was in so much space it made Stephen Hawking re-evaluate quantum mechanics. And it provoked me to write a thread about it. I do start a lot of threads though.

Last edited by SFraser; 23-03-2011 at 22:01.

Reply | **Reply With Quote**

23-03-2011 22:32 #15

Cleon

Moderator
Join Date: 22nd February 2003
Posts: 20,487

> *A subtle issue maybe, but one I have shown actually exists in FM, which is by far the greatest football game around. If you don't like my tactics, don't like my thread, you can still marvel at my proof that players in FM appreciate and understand space.*

Being a massive attribute fan as I am, I think I enjoy this move more than most people. It's the little details like this that make you appreciate the importance of an intelligent player.

> *What was special was how my Lone Striker played the perfect "Number 10" role. He occupied the space infront of the Juventus defence and had runners ahead of him but scored with a long range shot. Getting a lone striker to perfectly play the No. 10 role is pretty special.*
>
> *But it is also highly logical given how tactics have evolved in the last few years. That is what this thread is about.*

It's very hard to get a player to act as a proper number 10. Like you've already pointed out, the goal itself wasn't special but the build up play was. Which is a shame because some don't seem to understand that.

> *I know my players and I can make a lot of different teams out of my players without once having to touch their tactical instructions. It would be great to have Cleon's knowledge of the tactical instructions, but I don't*

You're selling yourself short there. You understand the instructions as well as I do. Our play styles are very similar and we both understand the importance of mental attributes above everything else.

> *Rooney was in so much space it made Stephen Hawking re-evaluate quantum mechanics. And it provoked me to write a thread about it. I do start a lot of threads though*

I'm glad you did do the thread. I love reading thread's done by people who know the game well. For me that makes a refreshing change because in all honesty there isn't a lot of thread's that make me stop and take notice or what can hold my concentration for long. But your thread's actually make me think about my own approach slightly different sometimes. So cheers for that

Reply | **Reply With Quote**

23-03-2011 23:40 #16

Mike_Cardinal

Amateur
Join Date: 4th November 2007
Posts: 713

Interesting as always, I have a couple of questions though, which may not be seen as being directly related to the topic. If Rooney is a playmaker from the front, dropping deep to collect the ball, what does this mean for the rest of your central midfielders? Clearly, your central midfielders are very important to your side defensively, and so I'm curious how you have them set up - are they holding their position so well because of their attributes, or do they have a particular mix of instructions (low RFD/Mentality /Closing Down, perhaps, though I imagine they close down quite high up the pitch)? I'm quite impressed with your comment that Sandro also surged forward at one point, and intrigued as to whether this is mentality-driven. However, even if they are ostensibly sitting players, where does this leave your attacking midfielder? Is he less of a creative presence than your striker, instead designed to make runs off Rooney and score goals, as Shelvey attempted to do here? I can see the logic there - Rooney is certainly freer in general from the clutches of a DM and so better able, perhaps, to dictate the play in the final third, but it seems to me like this would be too much like having two players doing the same thing, where they both creating chances, as I imagine your AM still would be, and surging into the box to score goals, as Rooney undoubtedly does. Do you, for example, set either of them to roam from flank to flank in order to support play as it develops out wide, and to what extent can your holding players support these moves?

Inside Forwards and overlapping full backs are all well and good, and, as has been well documented, are lethal weapons in many circumstances, but I cannot deny that I think the midfield battle is the most important part of a football game, and a beautifully functioning unit or pivoting system there is the most interesting discussion point to me, for attaining the perfect balance in that area of the pitch is, arguably, to attain a perfectly working side, as all of the other cogs in your team can and will whirl around them as soon as you've got it right, being far easier to set up correctly.

Reply | Reply With Quote

23-03-2011 23:46 #17

Frank327

Amateur
Join Date: 27th October 2010
Posts: 72

> Originally Posted by **SFraser**
>
> *How do you get into any space infront of the penalty area against a diamond midfield?*
>
> *Rooney was in so much space it made Stephen Hawking re-evaluate quantum mechanics. And it provoked me to write a thread about it. I do start a lot of threads though.*

The reason there was so much space there was because the holding midfielder (number 22) was completely out of position, probably because he took the throw-in. There wasn't any reason for him to move so much to the right, as Aguero was already being pressed by two men. I don't see how the 4-2-3-1 shape had anything to do with it. If anything, this same move would've been more effective in a 4-3-3.

Reply | Reply With Quote

24-03-2011 00:26 #18

Flohrinho

Amateur
Join Date: 16th March 2010
Posts: 292

Actually SFrasers tactical approach pretty much reminds of what Sir Alex does at Manchester United.

How often did I read somewhere that Sir Alex Ferguson isn't a tactical mastermind and he always plays 4-4-2 against the weaker teams and 4-5-1 counter attacking football against the strong teams.

Then the question might rise how come that Manchester United is still competing in so many competitions for the highest places usually in 3 competitions even though they arguably lost two of their key players over the last two season?

I'd say it's squad variety and depth.

There is no other squad in world football that has such an incredible variety of players in it that can all decide a game on a good day and picking the right players for the right games has been the main reason why Manchester United despite the quality loss can still compete on the highest level of football.

Now choosing someone like Rooney as your striker (if you want to have striker that drops deep and pulls defenders with him) is vital to actually pull that tactical concept off since he has the PPM "Comes Deep To Get Ball" playing a striker like David Villa instead who has PPMs like "Likes To Try To Beat Offside Trap" would be useless, I watched him over an entire game and tried different settings for but he still spend the most of his time sitting at the shoulder of a striker trying to beat the offside trap.

So yes choosing the right players for your tactical concepts is key imo and will get you far more out of your tactic then tweaking every last bit in your tactic which then might just be overwritten by the wrong PPMs of a player.

Sure you could take away all creative freedom from a player to have him perform exactly what you want him to but that would also make the tactic very predictable and easy to counter for other teams or the AI that's why a squad of very diverse players is imo the key to tactical diversity.

Reply | Reply With Quote

24-03-2011 03:32 #19

Cleon

Moderator
Join Date: 22nd February 2003
Posts: 20,487

> Originally Posted by **Frank327**
>
> *The reason there was so much space there was because the holding midfielder (number 22) was completely out of position, probably because he took the throw-in. There wasn't any reason for him to move so much to the right, as Aguero was already being pressed by two men. I don't see how the 4-2-3-1 shape had anything to do with it.* ***If anything, this same move would've been more effective in a 4-3-3****.*

From what you can see on the screenshot the holding player was providing extra cover for Rooney, but Rooney managed to 'lose' him. He moved right because Rooney was the immediate threat. There was no need for the holding player to stay central as he wouldn't have been involved whatsoever.

As for the bit in bold, if you are going to be objective then atleast give reasons as to how you think something. Rather than just making a sweeping statement. SFraser has put a lot of effort into this thread and whether you agree or not he deserves a better response as to why you think it will be better in a 4-3-3.

Reply | Reply With Quote

24-03-2011 06:20 #20

footballmanager84

Amateur
Join Date: 17th February 2011
Posts: 88

Thank you for taking the time to post something most people would miss completely. It's a great little insight into the different ways of approaching a match.

I understand what you've shown here so I'm going to ask something not directly related to the topic. Why have you gone for 2 MC instead of the usual 2 DMC of the 4 2 3 1 deep?

Reply | Reply With Quote

24-03-2011 09:48 #21

James9

Amateur
Join Date: 19th November 2004
Posts: 200

Great post Sfraser. I am trying to set up a 4231 formation with Arsenal but I seem to get lost with the midfield settings -could you give some advice on this area I have Song as a ball winning midfielder support, wilshere as box to box midfielder support and fabregas as advacnce playmaker support. all their mentalities are set to normal, creative freedom st to much with fabregas having the highest setting because he is the playmaker. RFD mixed for Song and Wilshere and RWB rarely on all 3 midfielders. I ideally want Song and Wilshere to be my two holding midfielders that will protect my back four because I am playing with wingbacks.

Could you offer me any advice in this area

Reply | Reply With Quote

24-03-2011 11:27 #22

Frank327

Amateur
Join Date: 27th October 2010
Posts: 72

> Originally Posted by **Cleon**
>
> *From what you can see on the screenshot the holding player was providing extra cover for Rooney, but Rooney managed to 'lose' him. He moved right because Rooney was the immediate threat. There was no need for the holding player to stay central as he wouldn't have been involved whatsoever.*
>
> *As for the bit in bold, if you are going to be objective then atleast give reasons as to how you think something. Rather than just making a sweeping statement. SFraser has put a lot of effort into this thread and whether you agree or not he deserves a better response as to why you think it will be better in a 4-3-3.*

The reason I think the move would be more effective in a 4-3-3 is because it would be more likely to draw the holding midfielder out of position. Against a 4-2-3-1 the holding midfielder can sit in the hole to pick up the AMC, so he'll often be in the way for Rooney to drop deep. But against a 4-3-3 the midfielders are deeper, so they've got a 3v1 situation at the back (DC's and DMC against one STC), which can overload the other midfielders as they have to deal with both your 3 CM's and any fullbacks going forward. The solution to this is to have the holding midfielder help out the MCR and MCL more, which creates space in the hole.

In the tactical theorems (I thought it was the tactical visions PDF) there's actually an example of this, with a 4-5-1 (or 4-3-3) against a 4-4-2 diamond formation. It shows how the diamond's MCL and MCR have to deal with a double threat because the deep lying striker (#10) is up against 3 players. This would naturally force the holding midfielder to step out of the hole to help out his teammates.

I do like these threads though. A lot of insight from SFraser. Especially about letting the players do their own thing instead of using too many tactical instructions. In real life you could say this is the Harry Redknapp approach to tactics, and it's very successful.

Reply | Reply With Quote

24-03-2011 14:04 #23

mikewalker

Amateur

Join Date: 26th January 2010
Posts: 33

For what its worth, in my humble experience I've found that pulling my wingers/inside forwards down to a winger/wide midfielder starting position works well against the 4-4-2 diamond.
You can keep the instructions for the players as you prefer, but just putting their base position that bit deeper and inline with the centre mids causes a nice problem for the opponent. Either their fullback pushes high to press your wide player when on the ball or a centre mid is dragged out wide, evening things up in the centre for you.
If left in their base position as you've shown in the Man Utd vs Juventus screenshot then I often find the fullback stays at home in his zone so the threat of space on the flank is minimal and the centre remains busy with their diamond intact.

Reply | **Reply With Quote**

24-03-2011 14:30 #24

mdbussen

Youth Team
Join Date: 6th June 2007
Location: WI, USA
Posts: 4,148

> Originally Posted by **Frank327**
> *The reason there was so much space there was because the holding midfielder (number 22) was completely out of position, probably because he took the throw-in.*

I would agree with this though I'm not sure its related to the throw-in. From what I know of the player, I would guess that Sissoko is physically talented but probably not as positionally aware which is why he was caught in the wrong place in the build-up play.

Reply | **Reply With Quote**

24-03-2011 17:34 #25

SFraser

Semi Pro



Join Date: 19th September 2008
Posts: 2,664

> Originally Posted by **Frank327**
> *The reason I think the move would be more effective in a 4-3-3 is because it would be more likely to draw the holding midfielder out of position. Against a 4-2-3-1 the holding midfielder can sit in the hole to pick up the AMC, so he'll often be in the way for Rooney to drop deep. But against a 4-3-3 the midfielders are deeper, so they've got a 3v1 situation at the back (DC's and DMC against one STC), which can overload the other midfielders as they have to deal with both your 3 CM's and any fullbacks going forward. The solution to this is to have the holding midfielder help out the MCR and MCL more, which creates space in the hole.*
>
> *In the tactical theorems (I thought it was the tactical visions PDF) there's actually an example of this, with a 4-5-1 (or 4-3-3) against a 4-4-2 diamond formation. It shows how the diamond's MCL and MCR have to deal with a double threat because the deep lying striker (#10) is up against 3 players. This would naturally force the holding midfielder to step out of the hole to help out his teammates.*
>
> *I do like these threads though. A lot of insight from SFraser. Especially about letting the players do their own thing instead of using too many tactical instructions. In real life you could say this is the Harry Redknapp approach to tactics, and it's very successful.*

While that is certainly true there is a reason why the 4-2-3-1 was the formation of choice at the last World Cup and that is because it is significantly defensively defensively stronger than the 4-5-1 (4-3-3) and the 4-1-2-3 against both counter attacks and sustained build-up pressure while itself being excellent on the counter-attack. It also enables significantly greater *local* numbers in attack rather than the *symmetrical* but spread out numbers of the other formations.

My screenshots illustrate this point perfectly.

The first screenshot shows a narrow three man midfield no more than 20 yards apart if even that, that is *shaped* in such a way to push attacks away from the middle and down the flanks. The 4-3-3 would simply have these three midfielders in a line while the 4-1-2-3 would be shaped to channel attacks *in to the centre* from the wide areas.

From the flank position any attacker would be staring at an echeloned line of Fullback, DM/CM, AMC and FC barring his path towards the centre in any direction. A ball to a Forward, AM, CM, DM or even CB would be a risk. Further more the echeloned line of my spine defending the flank is protecting a further "triangle" of my remaining Holding Midfielder and two Centrebacks. The attacker only has two low-risk options while he is being harrassed by my Winger and that is a ball to his Fullback or a crossfield pass to his opposite number on the other flank.

I have written extensively about the signficant defensive strength of the 4-2-3-1 and the evolutionary approach it takes to controlling and defending space on the football pitch so I wont go into much greater detail here. You can look up my other threads for more information on my thinking on this subject.

In attack the Final screenshot shows that planted firmly in the centre of the pitch I have 3 "Centrebacks" and holding midfielder "in the hole". If the opponent at any time got hold of the ball and either cleared it or attempted a counter-attack I would already have a player positioned in each key area of the pitch. To even get hold of the ball the opponent is going to have to directly contest in a physical challenge with one of my three centrebacks or my holding midfielder. In short his counter-attacking strategy is against me is nul and void, he has none. His only option is to play through my "pyramid" defence with pass-and-move football.

In screenshot two you will see that when Aguero has the ball I have Alaba moving to support him from Fullback and Aguero has Sandro, Shelvey and Rooney making supporting runs to offer pass options into the centre while Costa is making an attacking run in from a wide position to the centre. In a 4-3-3 or 4-1-2-3 one of these players would be the CM on the *opposite side of the pitch* and I would have less *local numerical superiority* to construct an attack. Aguero has no less than *five passing options* arranged in his line of sight that are *ahead of my holding midfielder* from his point of view. From Aguero's point of view he has a line of *five attacking pass options* and then further away from Aguero are my *four holding/defensive players*. While the end result of the move in a 4-2-3-1, 4-3-3 and 4-1-2-3 may be the same as screenshot three, these other two formations have *less local passing options to achieve that result*. Players would have to contend with working a space while having fewer options in the immediate vicinity. This is a major factor in why 4-2-3-1 was the formation of choice at the World Cup, it enhances passing football while remaining strong defensively against both sustained build-up and counter-attacking football. An ideal modern formation for the type of football played and the tactics met at the highest level.

Mourinho famously said that his Inter team gave the ball away on purpose to Barcelona. This is obviously hubris but it does make a fundamental point, the 4-1-2-3 of Barcelona is much more vulnerable on the counter-attack and the symmetry of the formation had a tendency to focus play down the flanks when meeting a 4-2-3-1. Barcelona were experimenting with Messi through the middle and the wideplay from Barcelona against Inter was abysmal.

In the grand scheme of things what the 4-2-3-1 does is it effectively swaps a spare attacking fullback on the other side of the pitch for a central attacking threat. It looks shorter on attacking numbers through the centre when compared to a 4-1-2-3 or 4-3-3 but this is superficial because it is a fundamentally different tactical premise. It's not a mere familly member of the 4-5-1 varients, it is an evolutionary step forward from the 4-5-1 varients both offensively and defensively. And it continues to be the hotbed of tactical evolution in the modern game.

Last edited by SFraser; 24-03-2011 at 19:03.

Reply | **Reply With Quote**

24-03-2011 20:06 #26

likeabawss

Part-Timer
Join Date: 2nd December 2009
Location: meow
Posts: 1,381

great thread, but i have a question: where is rooney, or really any striker, described as a forward? i can't seem to find that anywhere, and i would like to know that information for my own team.

Reply | **Reply With Quote**

24-03-2011 20:58 #27

Jenko_EFC

Amateur
Join Date: 4th January 2010
Posts: 593

Awesome read SFraser, always take a lot from your threads.

Looking at something similar to your Tactics Setup myself, not many Instructions but change based on who I play kind of thing. Still very much a WIP but you'll probably see me post around about it. Best example being my Midfield: Fellaini/Rodwell tend to stay back and make forward runs when they're on whereas Cahill would be looking around for Space because if his high Off The Ball, Teamwork and Anticipation. My "Playmaker" is Saha although I have Baxter being trained to fill that once developed. I don't have a "Striker" on the wing but a bit of Training and Scouting around should find someone suitable!

I love the setup of your Midfield, Shelvey and Sandro are immense and I'd like to see a screenshot of how you've developed them and Ramirez, I like the way they actually get to choose if they run forward/hold their position and whatnot. One thing I'd like to disucss is Footedness, how do you think it works? Mental attribute of how confident he is with the ball on that foot? A Technical attribute of how well he can Dribble/Pass/Shoot with it? Be interesting to see your reply.

Reply | **Reply With Quote**

24-03-2011 21:25 #28

mdbussen

Youth Team
Join Date: 6th June 2007
Location: WI, USA
Posts: 4,148

> Originally Posted by **likeabawss**
> *great thread, but i have a question: where is rooney, or really any striker, described as a forward? i can't seem to find that anywhere, and i would like to know that information for my own team.*

Their position will be listed as F C or AM/F C rather than S.

Reply | Reply With Quote

24-03-2011 22:17 #29

likeabawss

Part-Timer
Join Date: 2nd December 2009
Location: meow
Posts: 1,381

yeah, that doesn't appear on my game. perhaps it's the skin or i'm not looking in the right place...

Reply | Reply With Quote

24-03-2011 22:49 #30

vasilli07

Part-Timer
Join Date: 10th November 2004
Location: Singapore
Posts: 1,643

Hi, just to ask, are your holding midfielders on a defend duty?

Reply | Reply With Quote

25-03-2011 00:12 #31

shwayne

Amateur
Join Date: 15th March 2009
Posts: 42

> Originally Posted by **likeabawss**
> *yeah, that doesn't appear on my game. perhaps it's the skin or i'm not looking in the right place...*

Forwards are simply strikers with a high 'free role' rating. However, on FM11 SI seemed to have decided not to distinguish between strikers and forwards so irrespective of free role rating all attackers are listed as strikers.

That said, I wouldn't be surprised if someone had made a skin that did flag up the distinction that existed on earlier versions of the game, although I haven't seen one as of yet (not that I seek them out).

Reply | Reply With Quote

25-03-2011 18:23 #32

lam

Part-Timer
Join Date: 1st June 2007
Location: London
Posts: 1,915

As always..... outstanding contribution to the forums.

As you know, I'm a fan of your work.

I beleive that you are still playing with FM10, but can I ask if the tactics have changed much beyond what we PM'd about some time ago?

I have a very successfull SPurs team currently that is playing a 442 (AML/R) and playing some outstanding football, however I really realyl want to play a solo striker, but I can never set the things up. From our previous chats, I highly enjoyed playing your tactics with Man U, but I will try and replicate them with Spurs, though, I do not have the players like you do..... my midfield is probably more specific than 'generally' good like yours is and my strikers are Koumo (not sure if that is correct) and Dzeko, neither of which I think would be Rooneyish enough for this.

Though, please advise if your tactics have changed much since last time around?

Regards

LAM

Reply | Reply With Quote

25-03-2011 18:37 #33

cragswfc

Part-Timer
Join Date: 25th November 2008
Location: rotherham, england
Sheffield Wednesday
Posts: 1,744

Another quality thread by SFraser .a very good read aswell

Reply | Reply With Quote

26-03-2011 22:47 #34

SFraser

Semi Pro

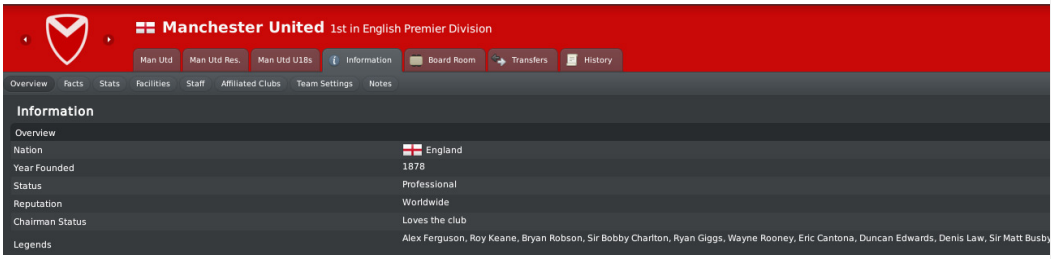
Join Date: 19th September 2008
Posts: 2,664

I didn't reserve any posts underneath my OP for updates, which in hindsight was a bad idea because I have something completely relevant to this thread that I thought would be highly interesting to anyone that has read it. Anyway...

Analysing the 4-2-3-1: Why Your Playmaker Should Be Upfront: Update

A highly impressive 4-1 defeat of Juventus in Turin with the same overall shape and gameplan but a few minor tweaks to personell (my alternative right winger played well in the matches beforehand and won himself a start) paved the way for a highly satisfying end to the season.

The 31st of May ends a month of intense contests, prize money, glorious success and enthusiastic press conferences from the manager. It ends a season that was tougher, more enjoyable, more micro-managed, more studiously poured over and more successful than the last. A season that saw me, finally, achieve this:



My name is listed in the club I love dearly alongside those individuals that I have most worshipped in the sport that is my passion since I was born. I am listed alongside Cantona, Giggs, Keano!, but most of all and by a margin that is immeasurable, Alex Ferguson. A fellow Scotsman, untamable Lord of the Game, the man that is to Football Manager what God is to Peter Molyneux's "Black and White".

It's only a game, but still...

Alas, however, the end of another season marks the end of another year in the cruelly short careers of truly great players. For me it marks the end of the season that is the 29th year in the life of my club captain, my leader, my constant top goalscorer, my tactical *tour de force*, my inspiration and image of myself on the pitch. Wayne Rooney. For seasons now I have watched the digits on his timer click unstoppably upwards. Nothing I can do in this game can prevent the player that has been at the heart of my team since day one from getting older. It's a constant irritation that has slowly grown into a wail of impending doom, for I know Rooney can't go on forever.

Even I, the man that brought you the "triangle of development" and the "training notch theory" and the knowledge of the vital importance of Stamina and the actual relevance of Intense Physical Training in Pre-Season and every single other thing I have contributed to these forums and to others in my time actively writing about FM, knows that at best Rooney has a maximum of two years left at his peak, fates providing an easy path and manager providing every element of his FM knowledge. While Rooney's carrer could theoretically continue untill he is near 40, his current level of overall performance in my team has two years left at it's absolute maximum.

Armed with this knowledge I have already been training him to play in a deeper role that requires much

less of his Pace and Acceleration, the "meaty attributes" I am willing to sacrifice wholesale to maintain his overall level of performance in other areas as long as it is physically possible to do so. I have for Rooney mapped out a path of Striker turn AMC turn MC turn DMC, but I ofcourse do value the team above all else, but no one wants to lose the heartbeat of a team if he can perform a heartbeating job elsewhere.

As the season ends, the 31st of May is met and the players go on holiday, the manager is left with hoardes of free time. And the managers mind automatically turns to what to spend next seasons transfer budget on.

Do I want a Goalkeeper? I have a 41 year old perfectionist backup, an 18 year old Rotation I have been developing since age 15, a 29 year old First Teamer who can lose all his physical attributes and only get better as a goalkeeper, and I have 3 under-18 players that my ass man rates highly.

Do I want a defender? I have already dealt with the age related defensive crisis at Manchester United through youth and purchases and retraining and if anything I have over-compensated in defence. I am not sure I can develop all my awesome young defenders to their full potential because I don't have enough mentors. An ironic error, but still one that can be learned from. As all good errors are.

Do I want a central midfielder? In truth yes, but one that is 15. My first team is awash with plenty of players that are excellent in CM and my three genuine CM's get plenty of games, but I lack any real, genuine, superb youth options in CM.

Do I want an attacking midfielder? No, if anything I have too many and only being brutally harsh with low performance ratings (i.e dropping players) has staved off any "too much competition" problems, ironicly.

Do I want a pure Striker? I already have a "God-in-waiting" for Rooney's role you may have met him before, Jaume. And I will still have Rooney at his peak for about two seasons, then Rooney below his peak for a few more. I still have Berbatov, and a few brash and exciting youngsters that don't have the greatest of potential but still seem excitable enough to score goals when I play them.

So what do I want?

Building For The Future

What I want is a replacement for Rooney, but there are none. I have checked. In depth. As much as I possibly could. Unsurprisingly my FM world is not awash with a multitude of "Rooney's in the making".

But what I really want is an effective team. And I believe my tactical premise is fundamentally lethal. If I cannot find another Rooney to continue what I currently have then I want to find players that will join my team, reshuffle it a bit in terms of personell, but then produce an even more potent whole. I want to improve my team as a unit so that it is even more potent along the tactical lines I think work profoundly well.

I would dearly love for any change I make to get the best out of the players I play. I want my changes to enhance my team.

And this leads me back to Rooney. For I have trained Rooney to play deeper but when I play Rooney deeper and Jaume upfront my team is not significantly better. My team plays worse. My previous plan of dropping Rooney deep and playing Jaume upfront so far seems to show that it is not going to be as good as my current system. This is bad.

I also want to get the best or get better out of my current under-performers. Players that look like they should be awesome but when I play them are distinctly underwhelming. An addition or change to a team should benefit a team. Should enhance the performances of players like this:



Ozil looks amazing but when I play him left wing he looks isolated and when I play him through the middle he looks uninterested and weak. I know he is a great player, I have seen him do things no one else can do, I am battling my guts out to raise his Determination, but still he wont fulfill his ability. What else can I do?

Ozil a genius but when I play him in midfield his underwhelms. My next management decision I hope is one capable of getting the best out of Ozil. He seems unable to play where he is supposed to be good at playing. No height, strength, workerate for the middle and far too flamboyant for the wing. He should be a footballing good, but he is about third choice at the minute,

But likewise I have the issue of Rooney and Jaume to contend with. The plan to drop the battleaxe, creative and flamboyant Rooney into midfield behind the potent and lethal Jaume makes sense, but on the field it completely sucks. Rooneys strengths cancel out Jaumes weaknesses and Jaumes strengths cancel out Rooneys weaknesses for a pretty average combination. Sure I am a wall of fanatical purpose in defence when you get the ball beyond my striker, but if I have any intention in FM it is quite simply not to be Rafa's Liverpool. I will willingly take on the principles of Liverpools defensive strength in the Champions League several years ago, but first and foremost my ambition is to slice teams apart.

It's not an ambition to be fair, at the level I play at slicing teams apart is a fundamental necessity.

So the question remained, in thie coming season how do I improve my team?

Playmaker Upfront



Yes that's right, I intend to retrain Mesut Ozil to play as a lone striker. The guy is a horrible striker and a terrific playmaker, so I am training him to play upfront.

Yup, only me. You saw it here first.

Does he differ all that much from Rooney? In terms of being a striker, not heaps. His Off the Ball is a fraction lower, overall pace is probably higher, anticipation equal, composure about 3 points lower and the same for Finishing. He isn't a striker, but we kinda gathered that from this whole topic. What he is, is a rediculously good playmaker with bags of pace, teamwork, dribbling skills and movement.

Ozil behind Rooney didnt work for the simple reason Ozil wasnt a good AMC in terms of involvement and action and effort. Rooney is an awesome AMC in terms of involvement and action and effort but his accuracy lets him down. But in this system the playmaker is not the AMC. The playmaker is the CF. The "strikers" come from players running onto his passes and can you think of a system better than Wayne Rooney running from AMC and Aguero running from AML onto the passes from the CF Ozil?

I will be honest, this sounds like it could be the cleverest thing I have ever done FM. I havn't done it yet but the brainwave excited me so much I wanted to stick it in this thread.

Now let's see if it fails.

Not sure what to do in the off-season? That's when all good managers should be redesigning their teams.

Last edited by SFraser; 26-03-2011 at 23:03.

Reply | **Reply With Quote**

26-03-2011 23:38 #35

Jenko_EFC

Amateur
Join Date: 4th January 2010
Posts: 593

Bloody hell, never saw that coming.

When you started going on about Ozil I had an idea but still, wow. I was actually going to ask in this thread what you saw the next "tactical evolution" being, my idea was Goalscoring Number 8's, reckon Rooney will play that? Are you going to make any changes to your Midfield to compensate?

Reply | **Reply With Quote**

27-03-2011 04:12 #36

Cleon

Moderator
Join Date: 22nd February 2003
Posts: 20,487

I've added all the info to the 2nd post down SFraser for you

I've been playing Eden Hazard and VDV upfront on my Spurs game because Defoe got injured for several months and I had no other back up. It was the best move I have done. The link up play between Bale from the AML, Lennon from the AMR and whoever I play as the AMC is awesome when one of them 2 is upfront. The speed of play and the precision at which we cut open defences is scary. I actually score a lot more this way than when Defoe plays.

Reply | **Reply With Quote**

27-03-2011 05:00 #37

terrybecker

Amateur
Join Date: 12th September 2003
Posts: 71

yea cause in real life the defenders would let Rooney turn and face the goal like that, and give him the space and time to play though balls, what a ridiculous thread, and a silly tactical idea, Roma tried it with Totti and it really took Totti out of the game as he never had the options he would have playing behind the strikers. if you put a "play-maker" up front he will spend 89 minutes with his back to the goal.

Reply | **Reply With Quote**

27-03-2011 05:26 #38

Cleon

Moderator
Join Date: 22nd February 2003
Posts: 20,487

> Originally Posted by **terrybecker**
> *yea cause in real life the defenders would let Rooney turn and face the goal like that, and give him the space and time to play though balls, what a ridiculous thread, and a silly tactical idea, Roma tried it with Totti and it really took Totti out of the game as he never had the options he would have playing behind the strikers. if you put a "play-maker" up front he will spend 89 minutes with his back to the goal.*

What a ridiculous response, if you don't like it stay out of the thread. It's really that simple.

Reply | **Reply With Quote**

27-03-2011 05:47 #39

terrybecker
Amateur
Join Date: 12th September 2003
Posts: 71

> Originally Posted by **Cleon**
> *What a ridiculous response, if you don't like it stay out of the thread. It's really that simple.*

i gave a reason why i thought this tactical idea is ridiculous, you on the other hand haven't.

Reply | **Reply With Quote**

27-03-2011 06:58 #40

lam
Part-Timer
Join Date: 1st June 2007
Location: London
Posts: 1,915

> Originally Posted by **SFraser**
> *.....Alex Ferguson. A fellow Scotsman.....*

JESUS man..... didn't know that..... not talking to you again

> Originally Posted by **SFraser**
> *I am battling my guts out to raise his Determination,*

How would one go about this other than commenting on poor performances and poor training?

Last edited by lam; 27-03-2011 at 08:19.

Reply | **Reply With Quote**

27-03-2011 07:07 #41

lam
Part-Timer
Join Date: 1st June 2007
Location: London
Posts: 1,915

> Originally Posted by **terrybecker**
> *i gave a reason why i thought this tactical idea is ridiculous, you on the other hand haven't.*

TB,

Are you stating that Rooney has never been able to do this in the real world? Your direct responses and your reply about, which in all honesty is fair but strong, would suggest that you ferverently support your earlier comments..... that this wouldnt happen in the real world.

I am sure, at some point in the past, I have seen Rooney do this.

Why would you think that ALL DC's or DM's are of sufficient quality to stop him doing this every time?

I am sure too, that Mr Frasers team do not score goals like this every 20 minutes.....

Reply | **Reply With Quote**

#42

27-03-2011 08:18

Flohrinho

Amateur
Join Date: 16th March 2010
Posts: 292

Well Messi does it so why shouldn't Özil be capable of doing it? It's the essence of the concept of a false 9 at least in real life football so giving it a try in FM doesn't look like a bad idea.

Reply | Reply With Quote

27-03-2011 10:06 #43

legod

Amateur
Join Date: 8th March 2011
Posts: 13

my goodness

had trouble with mr ganso paulo henrique.

marked out of the game as an mc,
did decently at amc but was overshadowed by another amc with poorer stats.
had a striker crisis and threw him as a striker.

that was where he had the time, space and circumstances to really wreck havoc

got 3 assists and 2 goals in his first two games and i don't see his performance dropping...wooo!!

i play with a assymetric 4-2(mc)-2(amc, aml)-2 (stcr, stcl). ganso plays in the stcr position so he often drifts into the empty right wing position where he has more space and time as well as being in a dangerous enough position to use all his mad skillssss and stats (found a way to make use of his 17 for crossing too, something thats wasted when he plays in mc/amc positions)

Reply | Reply With Quote

27-03-2011 10:30 #44

footballmanager84

Amateur
Join Date: 17th February 2011
Posts: 88

Quite an interesting update SFraser! If that's the tactical direction you're going in, with Ozil up front, Rooney behind and Aguero on the left, what happens to Jaume? Do you still have a plan for him? I'm guessing he'll fill in for Rooney on occasion?

Reply | Reply With Quote

27-03-2011 10:59 #45

legod

Amateur
Join Date: 8th March 2011
Posts: 13

just a quick update since i was totally blown away by how ganso has been owning the ****

5 assists and 6 goals in 4 games now!

ingame, the headlines read

"Classy Paulo Henrique worshipped by fans"

"Paulo henrique was hailed as a god-like figure..."

previously, his match ratings hovered around the 6.5-7.3 mark..in his last 4 games, it hass been 8, 9, 8.3, 9.8!!

watching the match engine, its easy to see why

playing him as a striker-playmaker(i trained him to have a ppm moves deep to get ball previously), ganso often drifts to the right or deep into space= the space between the opponent fullback/winger or the centerback/centermid. once he gets the ball there, he can

go for a killer ball or
dribble forwards to draw the defender/before sending the killerball,
take a long shot (has scored quite a few of those)

or simply spread the ball to somewhere else if there is nothing dangerous "on".

the crucial thing is previously in MC/AMC positions, ganso was marked out/ had little space and time or simply was too far back to really use those 19 creativity 18 passing 16 flair attributes to create/score goals but in a strikerplaymaker position, he is the exact position where you want a player like him to be in but failed to when trying to play him as an mc/amc.

Reply | **Reply With Quote**

27-03-2011 13:16 #46

terrybecker

Amateur
Join Date: 12th September 2003
Posts: 71

> Originally Posted by **Iam**
>
> *TB,*
>
> *Are you stating that Rooney has never been able to do this in the real world? Your direct responses and your reply about, which in all honesty is fair but strong, would suggest that you ferverently support your earlier comments..... that this wouldnt happen in the real world.*
>
> *I am sure, at some point in the past, I have seen Rooney do this.*
>
> *Why would you think that ALL DC's or DM's are of sufficient quality to stop him doing this every time?*
>
> *I am sure too, that Mr Frasers team do not score goals like this every 20 minutes.....*

he is playing against Juventus, Rooney has played up front irl but like every one else was forced to play with back to goal, no good defender would let you turn, they certainly wouldn't give such space.
i'm reading people using Ozil too in that position, at least Rooney is strong, Ozil would be useless as he is much weaker.
this only happens because of weaknesses in the me.

Reply | **Reply With Quote**

27-03-2011 14:07 #47

KrisL

Amateur
Join Date: 25th August 2009
Posts: 159

in a recent game against chelsea he was allowed a similar amount of time and space on the ball and scored from it

Reply | **Reply With Quote**

27-03-2011 14:18 #48

karax268

Amateur
Join Date: 28th April 2009
Posts: 147

I'm pretty sure Rooney scored a goal irl very similar to the one discused in this thread. A few weeks ago against Chelsea.

Yes, it was badly defended. But the goal isn't the point of this thread. It's about the movement of the playmaker FC, creating space for himself and for others. That movement was good, even if the defending was not.

Reply **Reply With Quote**

27-03-2011 14:22 #49

terrybecker
Amateur
Join Date: 12th September 2003
Posts: 71

> Originally Posted by **KrisL**
> *in a recent game against chelsea he was allowed a similar amount of time and space on the ball and scored from it*

i saw the game, he was allowed once due to defensive error and e took a quick shot, to playmake though you need more than 3 seconds in a whole game.

Reply **Reply With Quote**

27-03-2011 15:37 #50

karax268
Amateur
Join Date: 28th April 2009
Posts: 147

If you really want a irl example, take a look sometime at van Persie and Messi, to just name two.

Reply **Reply With Quote**

27-03-2011 16:11 #51

Flohrinho
Amateur
Join Date: 16th March 2010
Posts: 292

> Originally Posted by **terrybecker**
> *he is playing against Juventus, Rooney has played up front irl but like every one else was forced to play with back to goal, no good defender would let you turn, they certainly wouldn't give such space.*
> *i'm reading people using Ozil too in that position, at least Rooney is strong, Ozil would be useless as he is much weaker.*
> *this only happens because of weaknesses in the me.*

You obviously totally fail to grasp the concept of a false 9.

If you play and intelligent playmaker type of up front it's key to let him drop deep move into space out wide or into an AM position this way creating an overweight where ever he pops up and creating space if a defender follows him. This way he rarely face the goal with his back or is isolated so I really don't see why you think this is such a ridiculous idea playing your playmaker up front?

http://www.guardian.co.uk/sport/blog...onathan-wilson

This is btw a very good article about the concept of a false 9 or fake striker and which teams used it to great effect.

Reply **Reply With Quote**

27-03-2011 16:12 #52

Ville Valo
Semi Pro
Join Date: 24th December 2005
Posts: 2,195

> Originally Posted by **karax268**
> *If you really want a irl example, take a look sometime at van Persie and Messi, to just name two.*

Messi is the ideal example, given that this system's based from the likes of David Villa and Iniesta's wide play.

Reply | **Reply With Quote**

27-03-2011 16:18 #53

Mike_Cardinal
Amateur
Join Date: 4th November 2007
Posts: 713

I suppose that if a side is playing a DM or two, then the AM is going to have problems creating through the centre. Personally, I just give mine instructions to roam and move out wide, so that he can find space, and hope that with wingers who occasionally come inside and DMs who charge forwards needing to be picked up, enough space is made for him to create. Another, perhaps better, solution would be to stick the playmaker up front, but as I said before, I'm curious as to what purpose the AM should then fulfil in the team.

Reply | **Reply With Quote**

27-03-2011 22:14 #54

Bluebeard
Amateur
Join Date: 7th January 2001
Location: London
Posts: 189

I'm annoyed that I just sold Henrique/Ganso before I read this! He was doing nothing at MC/AMC despite great stats.

However, my 4-2-3-1 asymmetric doesn't have the playmaker up-front. I rotate three strikers who are respectively a hard-working, pacy deep-lying forward, a target man and a clinical poacher/advanced forward. My AMC tends to be another pacy, clinical type. The majority of my assists come from AML inside forward. I actually regard my MC as my playmaker though, as he (while not assisting much) is the 'metronome' of the side, mopping up second balls, collecting from the defence and constantly recycling and probing. Either way, anything wrong with this approach? Or does is just reflect their inherent attributes and intelligence (which is why I set the team up as I do)?

Reply | **Reply With Quote**

28-03-2011 15:00 #55

mikewalker
Amateur
Join Date: 26th January 2010
Posts: 33

Isn't it pretty easy to slot loads with any international quality player up front if you're Manchester Utd? Genuine question, I've never tried playing as them.

Surely this Juame cat deserves a run up front (looking at his stats etc from another thread) maybe Ozil's just not a 'Man Utd' player and its time to move him on.

Last edited by mikewalker; 28-03-2011 at 15:15.

Reply | **Reply With Quote**

28-03-2011 16:18 #56

Ville Valo
Semi Pro
Join Date: 24th December 2005
Posts: 2,195

> Originally Posted by **mikewalker**
> *Isn't it pretty easy to slot loads with any international quality player up front if you're Manchester Utd? Genuine question, I've never tried playing as them.*

It's more about the style of football, rather than scoring loads of goals. I figure.

A playmaker of Ozil's quality would maximize the #9 coming in from the wing, by providing key passes, and dropping into space. Juame is more of a pure poacher, who will latch onto the shoulder of a defender. In the Torres mould.

btw SFraser, have you tried playing with an even 'purer' #9 than Aguero? I have had great success using Daniel Welbeck in a similar fashion to your footballing style. Perhaps, if Ozil's a success up top, Juame could be developed for this role?

Reply | **Reply With Quote**

29-03-2011 00:23 #57

SFraser

Semi Pro



Join Date: 19th September 2008
Posts: 2,664

> Originally Posted by **Jenko_EFC**
> *Bloody hell, never saw that coming.*

Neither did I

But the list of potential transfers, my shortlist and scout recommendations were so poor that in my annual hunt to improve my squad I had to look within.

> *my idea was Goalscoring Number 8's, reckon Rooney will play that? Are you going to make any changes to your Midfield to compensate?*

My idea was dribbly AMC's, the traditional 11 played in the hole behind Rooney but that hasn't panned out so well. The only reason I am thinking of Ozil upfront is because I am thinking of Rooney in the hole. Rooney solidifies my midfield in a way no other player does, and he also links up exceptionally well in that role. He doesn't have the absolute creativity of some other players but his Determination/Workrate /Teamwork/Creativity means he is an acceptionally good link-up man. Unfortunately his accuracy isn't good enough to get the most out of Jaume.

Playing Rooney in the hole will automatically change my midfield due to Rooney playing in the hole. You know my philosophy of attributes being king. It's an obvious philosophy, a basic philosophy, but one that is very often forgotten and one I have re-learned to a high degree. Dropping Rooney will change my midfield (hopefully for the better as I previously struggled with involvement for my AMC's) and so changing the FC to compensate is only logical.

I'm basicly just swapping Rooney and Ozil from their normal positions of FC and AMC to AMC and FC to see if it works. It's not really that profound and epic, it's more subtle than anything else, but it's an interesting idea.

> Originally Posted by **Cleon**
> *I've added all the info to the 2nd post down SFraser for you*

Appreciate that. Thanks Cleon.

> Originally Posted by **Cleon**
> *I've been playing Eden Hazard and VDV upfront on my Spurs game because Defoe got injured for several months and I had no other back up. It was the best move I have done. The link up play between Bale from the AML, Lennon from the AMR and whoever I play as the AMC is awesome when one of them 2 is upfront. The speed of play and the precision at which we cut open defences is scary. I actually score a lot more this way than when Defoe plays.*

Arsenal have Hazard in my game and he is an *absolute nightmare* to defend against. I hate that lad with a passion.

And the reasons why I hate playing against Hazard when he plays wide left for Arsenal pretty much sum up the point of this thread. His finishing isn't great, his movement is impressive but not world shattering, but his overall ability to really worry and disturb defenders and mess people up and then find a clever ball after all his trickery and skill is utterly brutal.

I don't worry about Hazard scoring goals when I play against him, I worry about Hazard chewing up my backline and then playing someone else in to score. Like Theo Walcott sneaking in at the back post as my defence gets sucked into the middle.

I would hate to face him through the middle. He knows how to tie defenders up in knots and then exploit those gaps. Playing against him when he is left wing is bad enough.

I signed this beast recently for the United Right Fullback position:



But Hazard tears him up. I like this right back as well. He might not get high ratings but when I watch him in my team he is excellent. Gives away a few fouls though.

> Originally Posted by **terrybecker**
>
> *yea cause in real life the defenders would let Rooney turn and face the goal like that, and give him the space and time to play though balls, what a ridiculous thread, and a silly tactical idea, Roma tried it with Totti and it really took Totti out of the game as he never had the options he would have playing behind the strikers. if you put a "play-maker" up front he will spend 89 minutes with his back to the goal.*

Roma didn't play with strikers on the wings, I do.

The point isn't really about Juventus' defence, it's more about how quickly and how well Rooney exploited the space. The Juve defence didn't have three and a half hours to study these screenshots, this happened over the course of a few seconds in an entire match.

I didn't instruct Rooney to peel off Sissoko and stand ten yards infront of the Juventus centrebacks. I told Rooney to play with a lower Mentality and to Roam from Position. Juventus look like they are playing a high closing down Midfield as you would do in a diamond, with a Zonal Marking and deep back four. I didn't set that up. I didn't tell the clogged midfield to press like mad while the back four mops up.

And it certainly wasn't me that played a 20 workrate DM. I would rather keep that level of endeavour for my AMC, who I already described as having high workrate and the job of running from AMC to Striker position.

I don't think Juve's defence was poor, I just think Rooney's movement was better than it. We can look for flaws in the ME all day long but for this game to be realistic at any degree then sometimes a great off the ball mover is going to have to find space against good defences. If all defending was perfect FM wouldn't be football.

> Originally Posted by **Iam**
>
> *How would one go about this other than commenting on poor performances and poor training?*

Mentor him with a better player. I'm mentoring the 26 year old Ozil with the 26 year old Aguero. It seems age doesn't matter. This might be a bug but then Darren Fletcher and Michael Carrick and Dimitar Berbatov all seem keen to learn to learn from their peers. Berbatov seems quite taken with Rooney in real life.

> Originally Posted by **footballmanager84**
>
> *Quite an interesting update SFraser! If that's the tactical direction you're going in, with Ozil up front, Rooney behind and Aguero on the left, what happens to Jaume? Do you still have a plan for him? I'm guessing he'll fill in for Rooney on occasion?*

That's an excellent question.

The interesting thing about Jaume is that he is the complete opposite of the idea of playing your playmaker upfront. Jaume is just about the purest goalscorer I have ever seen.

If we ignore Rooney as the awesome-jack-of-all-trades that is still by far my first choice CF untill he starts to radically decline, and look only at Jaume and Ozil, then infact I have two completely different attacks. One where my CF is a creative genius and needs lots of "strikers" running from deep and another where my CF is a goalscoring God and needs lots of supply from deep.

Having a plan for Jaume in the longterm and being able to effectively use Jaume in the short term are not always the same thing. I have a rough idea for how I need to develop my team over the longterm but I have a clear view of how to set my team up to effectively support Jaume today.

Apart from Jaume my team is quite flexible. Ozil can play LW and AMC as well as me training him for CF. Aguero can play LW and AMC and CF. And so on. I have options, I can tinker, I can test, I can play around. A season is not only just about getting the maximum out of your squad now, but also about getting the maximum out of your squad now while you test out ideas for tomorrow.

Next season should be quite exciting for me, I have a lot of different things I can play with.

> Originally Posted by **Mike_Cardinal**
>
> *I suppose that if a side is playing a DM or two, then the AM is going to have problems creating through the centre. Personally, I just give mine instructions to roam and move out wide, so that he can find space, and hope that with wingers who occasionally come inside and DMs who charge forwards needing to be picked up, enough space is made for him to create. Another, perhaps better, solution would be to stick the playmaker up front, but as I said before, I'm curious as to what purpose the AM should then fulfil in the team.*

That's a rather open question. I only used Shelvey at AMC three times this season and two of those were in the Champions League Semi Final against Juventus that I won 6-3 on aggregate.

My back six (two CM's and back four) are pretty much set in stone but my front four are a matter of taste. Particularly my choice of AMC has a significant impact on how the match pans out, a defensive AMC gives me defensive strength, a creative AMC gives me creativity and an attacking AMC gives me direct threat.

When I play Ozil upfront the role of my AMC is very likely to be get into the box and score goals, while battling up and down the pitch. When someone else is upfront the role for AMC will change. And when I say role I really mean player.

Last edited by SFraser; 29-03-2011 at 00:28.

Reply | **Reply With Quote**

31-03-2011 11:18 #58

volharding

Amateur
Join Date: 28th December 2006
Posts: 5

Thank you SFraser for starting this. It really helps me alot. I have a question about mentoring though. I often get a response of a player that he does not want to be mentored by another player. What can I do about that ? How do you deal with that ? Do all your players want to be mentored ?

Reply | **Reply With Quote**

31-03-2011 12:06 #59

ham_aka_stam

Moderator
Join Date: 10th September 2008
Posts: 24,172

I've lately been doing something similar with Rooney. Only in the second season, but I found that with no real creative force in United's MF, Rooney's work-rate physicality and general roundedness should make him a very good player attacking from deep and playing others in.

I play a lop-sided formation as follows:

Berbatov and Hernandez upfront as a fairly standard partnership of creative forward and goal-scorer. Berba can roam, and drift wide if required. Hernandez stretches the backline towards their own goal, not only making space for Berba, but also:
Rooney at AMLC (behind Berbatov) also roams, but has run from deep on often, a high mentality to make this happen as soon as there's a sniff, but often throughballs, so that he'll play Hernandez in if he's in a better position.
On the right wing (RM) is Nani, Ideally he'd be further forward at AMR, but this unbalances the team a little, and I rely on Nani to be floating around on the right wing. He also has throughballs and run from deep often, to try to convince him to get rid of the ball when someone else is in a better positon. I also tell him to hug the touchline. This counters his natural tendancy to cut inside a bit, meaning he plays as a

neutral winger, making decisions based on the fb's positioning.
Carrick and Fletcher marshal the deeper areas of midfield. Carrick more likely to play cutting through balls if and when he sees them, but Fletch more likely to win the ball higher up the pitch and lay it off quickly.
O'Shea is my defensive RB, told to be economical with the ball, and not to get forward unless necessary.
Foiled by Evra on the left who bombs forward when my left wing is vacated, take the ball round someone and either play a pass across the edge of the box to Berba or cross it in for the running Rooney or Hernandez.

It was born out of a similar issue that SFraser has now, Berba was struggling to get himself involved at AM, even though he had all the space in the world, and when he did he was dallying on the ball as the two standard forwards were each marked by a FB.

Equally, Rooney was blasting too many shots either over or straight at the keeper, often ignoring his team-mates because of his PPMs or getting dragged too wide with his willingness to attack.

By dropping Rooney back I delay his attacks into the box for times when there's a gap, either caused by the stretching of Chicharito or the dropping of Berba. I see lovely one-twos from them all, and flick-ons from Berba, who now has two on-rushing targets to pick from. It also means that when Nani or Evra get in the position to cross, there are three players, all positioned differently, to aim for - useful because none of them are particularly prolific in the air.

I also recently have Ganso, who's not been performing too well. I bought him to take Rooney's place when needed, but reading this I feel he may be better in Berba's role, albeit a more active one.

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01-04-2011 13:26 #60

nik1313

Amateur
Join Date: 11th December 2009
Posts: 132

Ok, i ll give it a go.
While playing 4-2-3-1 and countering...
...In this case actually, its more like(as shown in the image/sorry for the quality) having your AMC and ST coming deep to get the ball and the winger from the opposite flank moving to the direction of the first pass A1
So the most important thing is your's AMC and ST "smart passing" in order to deliver the pass to the winger from the opposite flank who moves into space and then cut inside to receive a through ball



Seems like when countering against teams with strong DMC, flanks are useless, and your team's AMC and ST have to own playmaker abilities in order to break the wall that creates the oppoment's DMC. Sissoco's poor desicion/flair?/of the ball? in the OP gave rooney the space he needed to shoot from distance.

nice thread

Last edited by nik1313; 01-04-2011 at 13:31.

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03-04-2011 11:41 #61

Mike_Cardinal

Amateur

Join Date: 4th November 2007
Posts: 713

> Originally Posted by **SFraser**
>
> *The first screenshot shows a narrow three man midfield no more than 20 yards apart if even that, that is shaped in such a way to push attacks away from the middle and down the flanks. The 4-3-3 would simply have these three midfielders in a line while the 4-1-2-3 would be shaped to channel attacks in to the centre from the wide areas.*

Just something I've been thinking about - how is a 4-2-3-1 or 4-2-1-3 any better as a defensive shape for dealing with sustained pressure than the 4-3-3? Surely a flat line would force the opponent wide in just the same way, and if you had your midfield 3 sitting deep in a holding midfield position, in a similar way to Mourinho's Porto playing a counter attacking 4-3-1-2 away from home in the Champions League, would it not, in fact, be a stronger shape? If you are going to suggest that the strength comes from the triangle shape, then is it not conceivable that the best answer to the holy grail that is to defend with a 2-1 shape and attack with a 1-2 shape is to use a fluid, adaptable flat line? With no runs from deep, low mentality but very high closing down, the central player can be both your sitting player as you push forward and your highest midfield player when defending, whilst your other two midfielders shuttle back and forwards, supporting your attacks but, assuming they have the stamina for it, forming your defensive shield when you lose the ball.

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13-04-2011 13:05 #62

mikewalker
Amateur
Join Date: 26th January 2010
Posts: 33

SFraser, how is the Ozil-as-striker experiment faring?

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13-04-2011 13:47 #63

messi2009
Amateur
Join Date: 15th March 2009
Posts: 41

so you guys are basically saying play ganso as a striker?????????

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25-05-2011 20:50 #64

Ville Valo
Semi Pro
Join Date: 24th December 2005
Posts: 2,195

Did this ever work out for you SFraser? I saw you used Ozil of the bench as a striker in one of your 'Meet the System' pkms.

Reply | **Reply With Quote**

25-05-2011 23:06 #65

SFraser
Semi Pro

Join Date: 19th September 2008
Posts: 2,664

> Originally Posted by **Ville Valo**
>
> *Did this ever work out for you SFraser? I saw you used Ozil of the bench as a striker in one of your 'Meet the System' pkms.*

Not as well as I hoped with Ozil. He works well as a playmaker but his Composure and Finishing is very low for the goalscoring positions he gets into.

It's a good option to have upfront though for when I play dual Inside Forwards.

Reply | **Reply With Quote**

25-05-2011 23:13 #66

R0ca
Amateur

Join Date: 16th October 2008
Posts: 382

> Originally Posted by **SFraser**
> *Not as well as I hoped with Ozil. He works well as a playmaker but his Composure and Finishing is very low for the goalscoring positions he gets into.*
>
> *It's a good option to have upfront though for when I play dual Inside Forwards.*

I imagine he'd be a immense creative outlet in a defensive counter attacking team, i could see him working well in FM term's supplying the bullets for a lone forward who has space to play in.

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