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Tactical Formations and Systems of Play

Identifier	
Revision	
Effective Date	1/1/2013
Class Length	1 hr 15 min

Change Summary	
November, 2014	New Lesson Plan Format

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1. Lesson Plan Goals

This presentation is designed to provide AYSO volunteer coaches with a greater knowledge and understanding of how to consider different formations and systems of play, their benefits and disadvantages.

2. Class Length

1 hour 15 minutes (Allow time for questions and discussion during this time)

3. Instructor Requirements

Coach Instructor or Advanced Coach Instructor

4. Learning Objectives

To give coaches an understanding of some of the many different formations and tactics used in the world of soccer today.

Tactics, formations and individual responsibilities are all part of a young soccer player's development, and they should be exposed to different styles of play in order to enhance their overall knowledge of the game.

5. Student Skills Required

Intermediate or advanced coaching knowledge

6. Prerequisites

None required.

7. Materials

Power Point Presentation pre-loaded to Section Meeting Laptop

8. Equipment

- Flip Chart
- Markers
- LCD Projector and screen

9. Special Instructor Notes

Presenter notes have been added to each slide in addition to this Lesson Plan.

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10. Slide Notes (numbers in Bold)

Slide 1: Title page

Slide 2: Agenda and Jose Mourinho video...emphasize, "We don't have to win, but we cannot lose!"

Slide 3: Vision and Mission Statements: Not blatant relationship, but it is important that we always try and connect our value system to the topic (and incorporate where possible). Audience should try and connect.

World class youth soccer programs...enrich children's lives...

In order to provide a world-class soccer program we must be able to deliver basic formation and tactical coaching. By introducing our players to a broad range of systems, we incorporate these aspects of our mission and vision.

Slide 4: AYSO Philosophies.

Again, try and connect our philosophies to the specific topic. Audience should try and connect.

Open Registration: Interest and enthusiasm are the only criteria for playing, therefore, as coaches we should be challenged to tactically adapt our system to accommodate the players...not vice versa.

Balanced Teams: Assuming skill level is somewhat even then tactical understanding and play can be the difference between teams.

Everyone Plays: We should try to give all the players an understanding of the different roles of the formation you are trying to play. Avoid position-specialization too early.

Positive Coaching: Positive feedback is required when your players show good tactical formation and understanding regardless of the score.

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Good Sportsmanship: Changing formation or personnel may be needed in order to show good sportsmanship to your opposition.

Player Development: The tactical side of the game is equally as important as the technical side in a player's development. Players have left AYSO in the past in order to acquire better tactical coaching. Tactical insight and understanding is a key component to Player's "overall" Development.

Slide 5: In this slide we lay the foundation that technical ability must be present in order to challenge players tactically.

Systems of play must be appropriate for players on your team – must find a system of play that fits the ability of your players instead of trying to fit players into a particular system.

Slide 6: Teaching players about systems of play, along with principals of play and objectives of the game will open them up to the concepts of shape and organization – which will in turn help players to read the game

Ultimately no matter the system players need to move has a block (unit) up and down the field.

Slide 7: Brief introduction to specific formations that will be covered:

4-4-2- This formation is standard. You can balance out defense and attack easily with this formation.

4-3-3- Gives teams a more attacking option by having 3 set strikers rather than just two.

4-5-1– Uses one less striker but makes it up in the midfield. Can be very defensive or attacking depending on midfielder's movement and priority.

5-3-2- An effective way of switching between defense and attack.

4-2-3-1 – Defensive in nature, but creates opportunities for the 3 central midfielders to support attacker, along with outside backs making creative runs into the attacking third of the field.

3-4-3- Very attack heavy but can leave you vulnerable with one less defender.

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Slide 8: 4-4-2

The 4-4-2 formation is the most widely used formation in the soccer world. It is made up of 4 defenders, 4 midfielders and 2 strikers. This formation gives many options in attack and defense.

There are many different ways to play this type of formation. Here are a few tactics used at professional level.

Offense

Looking at the 4-4-2 formation, a lot of you will see that there are only two strikers. So how can two strikers take on four defenders? The simple answer is, they can't. Yes, strikers have to score goals but without the right support, they'll just be sitting ducks. It is up to the midfielders to support the 2 strikers up front.

A. You can play a more direct path by trying to cut straight through the central defense. With this tactic, the two central midfielders must get into positions where they can also be a threat on goal. This will force defenders to keep a close eye on them as well. Goals don't just come from strikers. Today's attacking midfielders can are expected to score goals. This strategy however, can leave you vulnerable for a counter-attack and could cost you a goal.

B. Rather than attack through the center, you also have the option of attacking from wide areas with either the left or right wing players. Going wide can often stretch the opposition's defense and create openings in the central area to give strikers more space and time. This option of play is slightly safer as the midfield players can focus on controlling midfield by picking up loose balls and making tackles if necessary.

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Defense

Defending is as simple as tracking players who could pose a threat on goal. Strikers are the biggest threat but midfielders and wing players cannot be left out completely.

Midfielders must try to drop back to help the back four otherwise; you'll be out numbered.

Some teams occasionally play a defensive midfielder to stay back and help out the defense. This is good as this player acts as an extra defender, allowing the actual defenders to defend more deeply to prevent through balls. Look at Defending for more tips.

Slide 9: 4-4-2 strengths

- Strong attack and defense if used properly
- Multiple attacking options
- Can adapt to play more defensive (drop player back)
- Easy to play and easy for players to understand
- Easy to improvise new tactics

4-4-2 weaknesses

- Can become static and limit movement and creative play
- Not especially strong in any specific area of play
- Very predictable to play against and easy to counter

Tactics against a 4-4-2

- The 4-4- 2 formation can be a static a predictable formation so counter that with unpredictable play, i.e., encourage 3rd man runs from midfield, fullbacks to push on and join in the attack.

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Slide 10: 4-3-3

Offense

With this formation, you have more option of attack because of the extra man forward. Both left and right forwards can be used to stretch the defense to open up for the center striker. Alternatively, you can also have the central midfielders attack through the center and force them to defend more centrally, then using your wide players to go behind the defense to create openings. Either way, you will always have enough attackers to improvise. When counter-attacking, it is always encouraged to be quick and to attack with pace. Catch the opponents off guard with 3 forwards. When on the counter, try to stay wide and keep the defense stretched. This will make it harder for the opponent as they have to track your players while at the same time, try to keep a tight defense.

Defense

This formation has a weakened defense compared to others. This is because you have one less person to defend. It is always important to play a defensive midfielder, someone to pick up loose balls in midfield and act as another defender in front of the back four defenders. Try to keep a tight defense and try to stay closer together (more compact). This makes it harder for opponents to get past you. When you get a chance, hit them with a counter-attack as you will always be ready for it with 3 attackers waiting.

Slide 11: 4-3-3 strengths

- Strong attack, can stretch defense with wide players
- Ideal for counter-attacks

4-3-3 weaknesses

- Midfield has a lot of area to cover defensively
- Vulnerable in wide areas
- Can limit movement of forwards (with 2 forwards they can make unpredictable channel runs and switch positions)

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Tactics against a 4-3-3

- Control the midfield and use wide areas as the opposition only have 3 players covering the full width of the field. However do not over commit defenders forward otherwise you could get caught on the break.

Slide 12: 4-5-1

Utilizes a stronger midfield to help control the central area of the pitch. This is good for holding possession of the ball and winning tight battles that tend to happen in the midfield area.

Offense

With having only one striker, it can be harder to score goals if not used effectively. Midfielders must push forward to assist the lone striker, otherwise, he will just be outnumbered and isolated. It's not just about getting men into the box, but about making runs in the right places to open up defense or even make dummy runs to create room for the striker. With this tactical play, you have the same wing options as the 4-4-2 but going wide might not be a good idea with only one striker to aim for. If you do go wide, try to make sure midfielders get themselves into the box for a chance to head on goal. The striker must have good strength to be able to shrug off defenders. Smaller players have a greater disadvantage when playing as a lone striker as most defenders will most likely try and use their strength to try and intimidate and pressure them for the ball. A very good first touch is also recommended as poor touch can often lead to losing the ball in tight situations.

Defense

The 4-5-1 utilizes a much stronger defense than the 4-4-2. Having 5 midfielders gives the team a lot more options in the central area. For example, rather than playing one defensive midfielder, you could play two. More defenders give a stronger defense!

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Slide 13: 4-5-1 strengths

- Strong midfield, easier to control the pace of the game
- More defending options
- Good attacking options if used effectively

4-5-1 weaknesses

- Striker must be strong (able to hold up ball and hold off defenders)
- Midfielders must be able to support otherwise you limit your attacking options and will encourage the opposition to pressure at all times

Tactics against a 4-5-1

- Encourage wide defenders to join in the attack at all times to even out the numbers in midfield. They only have 1 player in attack and therefore does not require 4 defenders sitting back at all times.

Slide 14: 5-3-2

The 5-3-2 formation can be an effective way of switching between defense and attack.

Offense

The two wide midfielders are really attacking full-backs, so you could almost call it a 3-5-2 formation. The full backs are essential components for this formation and they must penetrate effectively down the sidelines to give attacking options. It is their job to work the full length of the pitch, supporting both the defense and the attack by getting crosses in and tackling back respectively. If the two attacking defenders struggle with the pace of the game, the team can be left short of support, be it up front or at the back.

It does put a lot of responsibility on to the shoulders of just two players. They do need to be very fit.

Defense

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5-3-2 offers five defenders with 3 players playing in a central position. One of the 3 central players can play a little deeper as a sweeper to add extra cover.

Slide 15: 5-3-2 Strengths

- Strong midfield and defensive coverage on the center of the field.
- Can switch easily between offensive and defensive modes.

5-3-2 Weaknesses

- Requires high level physical effort to sustain attacking options.
- Difficult to give full support both attack and defense.

Tactics against a 4-5-1

- Encourage wide defenders to join in the attack at all times to even out the numbers in midfield. They only have 1 player in attack and therefore does not require 5 defenders sitting back at all times.

Slide 16: 4-2-3-1

This formation is widely used by Spanish, French and German sides. While it seems defensive to the eye, it is quite a flexible formation.

Offense

This formation allows for creativity from the 3 central midfielders and allows the outside defenders to join the attack as wingers. The lone striker may be very tall and strong to hold the ball up as his midfielders and full-backs join him in attack. The striker could also be very fast. In these cases, the opponent's defense will be forced to fall back early, thereby leaving space for the offensive central midfielder. This formation is used especially when a playmaker is to be highlighted. The variations of personnel used on the flanks in this set-up include using traditional wingers, using inverted wingers or simply using wide midfielders

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Defense

This formation is similar to either the 4–5–1 or 4–4–1–1. It is used to maintain possession of the ball and stopping opponent attacks by controlling the midfield area of the field.

Slide 17: 4-2-3-1 Strengths

- Inherently defensive in nature.
- Creates a solid “spine” throughout the team.
- The two “pivot” players defensively act as a screen for the back 4 (sliding left and right) and not allowing penetrating passes into the final third.
- Offensively, they are an immediate link for defenders to play to.
- The 3 attacking midfield players provide great support to the single striker creating lots of mobility and attacking options.
- The system also allows the outside backs to get forward with the “pivot” players providing cover for them.

Slide 18: 4-2-3-1 Weaknesses

- Inherently defensive in nature.
- Can be exposed by teams with good wide players.
- If the 2 holding midfielders are not particularly mobile and do not adjust accordingly, the outside backs may get exposed in 1 v 1 situations.
- Offensively, the attacking midfielders must be ready and alert to support the lone striker.
- If left isolated the lone striker may struggle to maintain attacking plays (must be able to hold up the ball).

Slide 19: 4-2-3-1 Tactics

- A 4-4-2 with 4 midfielders in a narrow diamond could expose the 4-2-3-1’s lack of width and space in front of full-backs (the two wide men atop the 4-2-3-1 are

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wing forwards more than typical left and right midfielders and can compromise space behind them when they compensate for the lack of a second striker in the middle).

- Isolate their full backs and create 1 v 1s in wide areas high up the field quickly before the two pivots adjust.
- Consider playing a deeper back line to try and draw them out a bit (creating space for the two forwards to check to the ball).
- A 4-5-1 could confront the 4-2-3-1 midfield organization (although the 1 striker might be left isolated with their 2 “pivot” players screening).

Slide 20: Some Considerations for Changing Formations

Graph indicates the various formations used in the 2014 World Cup

- Winning or losing.
- Circumstances of the particular match.
- Player availability, roles, performance, injury or fitness.
- Disciplinary sanctions, i.e., yellow or red cards.
- Weather, field, your next game

Slide 21: Review clip of Jurgen Klinsmann.

Choosing the right soccer formation can make a great difference in how well your soccer team plays. The right soccer formation can allow a team to play to the best of their ability. Fortunately, choosing the right soccer formation is one of the easiest things a coach can do to help his team play better and have more fun. Every soccer team is different, and the soccer formation that is best for one team might not be the best for another team. You should choose the formation that works best for your players and NOT try to force your team to play a formation that they can't be successful with. The soccer formation you choose should be based on your team's speed, ability, endurance, field size and the speed and ability of your opponents.

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Slide 22: Presenter: Use whiteboard to demonstrate teaching a 4-4-2 and how the formation moves according to movement of the ball.

- Do Not coach player on the ball... Many coaches, if not all, will find themselves at some point giving instructions to the player in possession of the ball. “Pass, shoot, take the space, etc.” Coach the players OFF the ball. When the goalkeeper has the ball you can be talking to your wide players about their position. When the attackers have the ball you can instruct your defense to push up, etc.
- Let the players with the ball make their own decisions.

Slide 23: Summary

- You can’t do tactically what you can’t do technically!
- Suit your system to available talent.
- No system will overcome a lack of basic skills.
- Players, not formations, win games.
- Any system should consider available talent and the physical and environmental conditions.
- Be open-minded to adapt.
- Winning or losing
- Player availability (injury, illness)

Can you think of any others? Meaningful discussion: weather, field, the next game...

Slide 24: And what would any workshop on tactics be without a quick look at Barcelona...but again, note the comment regarding “playing the ball *without* spin for their teammate to control”...you can’t do tactically what you can’t do technically...enjoy and thank you!

Slide 25: Questions? Thank you!