

Jürgen Klopp's Pressing and Counter-pressing Philosophy



Direct from
Jürgen Klopp's
Training Sessions

PRESSING AND COUNTER-PRESSING

PRESSING

Pressing is when pressure is applied by the defending team on a player or team that has possession of the ball.

Pressing is used to rush the opponent's next action and limit the time and space available for good decision making.

The aim is to force the ball away from dangerous areas and win the ball from your opponents.

However, pressing is not only a defensive tactic used to stop your opponent from creating chances and scoring goals.

Pressing, counter-pressing and counter attacks provide defending and attacking tactics for a team, with the aim to apply pressure, win the ball and then launch a quick counter attack to score.

The higher a team recovers possession, the nearer the opposition goal is and the faster the ball is recovered after its loss.

In addition, the opposition may be unbalanced with limited time to cover space, which leaves gaps and lines available. In this way, counter attacks become a natural consequence of ball recovery.

COUNTER-PRESSING

Immediate pressing around the ball area just after losing possession to win the ball back as quickly as possible.

By using counter-pressing, your team are pressing a transition from defence to attack or counter attack from the opposition without retreating back, thus stopping their attack before it starts.

Counter-pressing Tactics

1. Overload the space around the ball.
2. Press the ball carrier while he is receiving and/or controlling the ball with one or two players.
3. Block passing lines for potential receivers.
4. Be compact around the ball area.
5. Try to force a mistake or at least force the play wide.

JÜRGEN KLOPP'S COUNTER-PRESSING

Jürgen Klopp: "The best moment to win the ball is immediately after your team just lost it. The opponent is still looking for orientation where to pass the ball. He will have taken his eyes off the game to make his tackle or interception and he will have expended energy. Both make him vulnerable."

JÜRGEN KLOPP'S COUNTER-PRESSING

Liverpool are and have been the best counter-pressing team in world football for a few years.

Jürgen Klopp wants his players to:

1. Play with a high defensive line.
2. Play with a high intensity.
3. Play with a fast and exciting all-action attacking style.
4. Attack the space in front after losing the ball (aggressive counter-pressing).
5. Surround the man with the ball.
6. Win the ball back as quickly as possible!

Jürgen Klopp explains that:

"The closest player goes 100% and puts total effort into the press."

"One player can always defend two opponents by blocking the line, pressing the ball carrier and checking over the shoulder."

"The last two yards of the press define everything. As far as aggression goes, yes please, but this must be controlled with

an anticipation of where the next pass will go, and with teammates reorganising as a group constantly and quickly."

BENEFITS OF LIVERPOOL'S COUNTER-PRESSING STYLE

1. Regaining possession high up the pitch.
2. Gaps in opposition's disorganised shape can be exploited.
3. More chances created as they are closer to the opposition's goal.
4. More goals scored!
5. Continuously win the ball back quickly = longer spells of possession.
6. Stop the opposition from having successful counter attacks.
7. Improve work rate, teamwork and motivation for the whole team with a very positive style of play (on the front foot).
8. Excite the crowd and create high energy, engagement and noise to encourage the team further.

PRESSING AND COUNTER-PRESSING FOCUS IN LIVERPOOL'S TRAINING

Jürgen Klopp: "We want to attack the opponent non-stop when we have the ball, when we lose it and when the opposition have it."

RONDOS

The emphasis of Rondos is normally expected to be about possession, but at Klopp's Liverpool the focus is on pressing and counter-pressing.

As Klopp has talked about, defending is Liverpool's first attacking action. Their playing style is with a high line and pressing with high intensity to win the ball as quickly as possible.

Klopp's Assistant Coach Pep Lijnders has explained how rondos and possession games are all about pressing in Liverpool training sessions, explaining that they must "stimulate our counter-pressing vision where we try to disrupt the build-up of the opponent inside their first few touches."

When referring to the Rondos which are part of all of Liverpool's training sessions, Pep Lijnders remarks that the 5v2 rondo is a **Pressing Rondo**. He goes on to say:

"Our game is about movement and speed, and with only five players, those five have to run non-stop."

"The two guys in the middle are encouraged to intercept within the first six passes. If they succeed, they can both go out at the same time. Otherwise, only the player who intervened is allowed to leave the middle."

POSSESSION GAMES

Liverpool's possession games are focused on immediate fast transitions and making sure to never pause or delay after losing the ball, even for a second.

Pep Lijnders explains that "The players first have to understand the importance of counter-pressing to our team - that element comes back in every exercise."

"When a team lose the ball in training, you will hear me, Jürgen or Pete (Krawietz) screaming: 'Go! Get it back! Don't stop!'"

When observing Liverpool's rondos and possession games in their training sessions, the following is clear:

- The players keep count of the passes to maintain a high level of competition.
- In the rondos, the motivation to win the ball within 6 passes increases the speed and intensity of the pressing to replicate Liverpool's non-stop running counter-pressing philosophy.
- The Liverpool players react immediately to press the new ball carrier.
- The Liverpool coaches and players really focus on the counter-press, to act collectively as a team and try to win the ball back immediately after losing possession.

Pep Lijnders Quotes from: Renard, A - The Guardian. 2019. Interview with Liverpool's Pep Lijnders [Online]. [Accessed 30th October].

Available from: <https://www.theguardian.com/football/2019/dec/02/liverpool-pep-lijnders-jurgen-klopp-assistant-paddle-tennis-james-milner>

Pressing and Counter-pressing Rondos and Possession Games



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"The best moment to win the ball is immediately after your team just lost it. The opponent is still looking for orientation where to pass the ball. He will have taken his eyes off the game to make his tackle or interception and he will have expended energy. Both make him vulnerable."



9. Pressing & Counter-pressing in a 3-Team 4 (+4) v 4 Possession Game



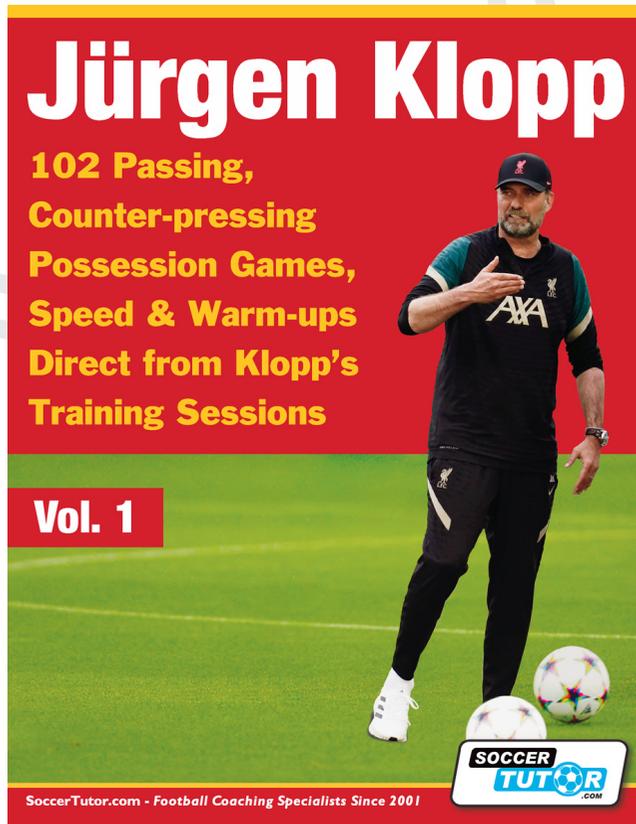
Practice Description

- In a 10 yard square, there are 3 teams of 4 players (red, white, and yellow). 2 teams start in possession with 3 outside players and 1 inside player each. The other team defends with all 4 players operating inside the area.
- The players mostly use **1 or 2 touches**.
- The 4 defending players (yellows in diagram) work together to press, block off passing lines and try to win the ball.
- The reds and whites look to move the

ball quickly and maintain possession. If the defending team win the ball, they switch roles with the team that lost it.

- In this example, the yellows win the ball, switch roles with the reds and try to keep possession with the whites. The reds must react very quickly to try and win the ball back (**counter-press!**).
- **COACHING POINT:** The coach's focus is triangle shapes in possession and the counter-press, for the outside players to compress quickly and win the ball back immediately after losing the ball.

Source: Jürgen Klopp's Liverpool training session at AXA Training Centre, Liverpool - July 2022



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