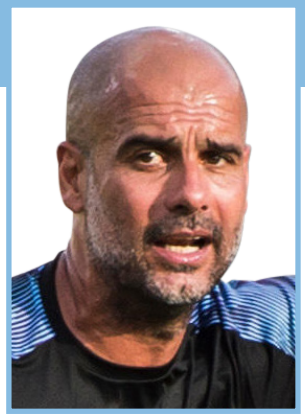
TACTICAL SITUATION 9



Pressing High Up to the Goalkeeper Against Formations with 4 Defenders

Content from Analysis of Manchester City during the 2020/2021 and 2021/2022 Premier League winning seasons.

The analysis is based on recurring patterns of play observed within Pep Guardiola's Manchester City team. Once the same phase of play is observed multiple times across many matches, the tactics are seen as a pattern. The analysis included is built from examples of the team's tactics being used effectively, taken from specific matches.

Each action, pass, individual movement with or without the ball, and the positioning of each player on the pitch including their body shape, are presented.

The analysis is then used to create a full progressive session to coach this specific tactical situation.

Pressing High Up to the Goalkeeper Against Formations with 4 Defenders

3v2 / 8v6 Situation in the Opposition's Half Against the 4-2-3-1



When the opposing goalkeeper has possession of the ball and he cannot use his hands, pressure can be applied directly to him. As the 2 red centre backs are in wide positions, the 2 most advanced Manchester City players control them. They are the forward **Jesus (9)** and the left attacking midfielder **Gündoğan (8)**.

When the objective of the advanced players is to press the GK, there is a limitation in the team's compactness. This is because the halfway line offside rule prevents the defensive line from staying close to the midfielders.

If the red forwards are positioned just inside their own half, they can avoid being offside and also stop the Manchester City defenders from moving further forward to try and keep the team more compact.

Another important element to take into account is which formation the opposition are using. If they use a 4-2-3-1 or 4-3-3, there will be 3 advanced red attackers (No7, No9, and No11 in diagram). City have to retain 4 defenders at the back (4v3) to defend with safety. This leaves only 6 players in advanced positions to deal with 8 red players (including the GK).

This means that there will be 2 opponents unmarked. One of them is the GK who is always the extra player for the attacking team when building up play from the back (3v2 situation in the high part of the pitch, as highlighted in the diagram).If the GK is pressed by **Jesus (9)** or **Gündoğan (8)**, a red player will get free of marking.

NOTE: The main aim when pressing the GK is to put at least one of the free players in your shadow to block him from receiving.

The 2 Different Options to Block Potential Passes to Unmarked Players

Option 1

Blocking 2 free players from receiving

The perfect situation is to put both free players in your shadow, as then every player will be marked or blocked from receiving, while Manchester City retain a 4v3 numerical advantage at the back. However, succeeding in this depends mainly on the positioning of the opposing players.

Option 2

Blocking 1 free player from receiving

If only 1 free player is blocked from receiving, the Manchester City players have to deal with the other free player.

Therefore, 1 defending player (usually one of the wingers) has to mark 2 attacking players at the same time. This means that he takes up a balanced position between the 2 and marks them from a longer distance than usual.

In addition, this player has to adjust his distance from each of the 2 opponents under his control according to their distance from the player in possession. He has to be closer to the opponent nearest to the ball as a pass to him will take a short time, while the other one is marked from a longer distance as the pass will take more time to reach him.

Additionally, the closest defending player to the opponent who is furthest from the ball (out of the 2 players we are describing) is usually the full back on that side, and he is ready to leave his direct opponent and move quickly to close this player down if needed to.

This action is part of the chain reaction of Manchester City defenders which can lead to the numerical advantage at the back being reduced to equal numbers (3v3).

Pressing the GK Against the 4-2-3-1 with 2 Free Players Blocked from Receiving

1. The Attacking Midfielder in a Wider Defensive Position as the Forward Presses the Back Pass to the GK



In this example, **Jesus (9)** presses the GK in a way that blocks the pass to both free red players (No5 & No10). This means the **defensive midfielder Rodri (16) can leave No10 unmarked to move forward** and mark the red central midfielder No8.

If the attacking midfielder **Gündoğan (8)** sees his direct opponent (No8) is marked behind him, he stays close to centre back No4 to control him. He still tries to keep the passing lane to No8 narrow and is in position to intervene if needed.

The positioning of **Gündoğan (8)** forces the winger **Sterling (7)** to stay low and shift wide to get close to the red right back No2.

Manchester City's defenders take advantage of the back pass to move forward in synchronisation, leaving the red attackers offside.

The left back **Cancelo (27)** does not have to move wide to control red No2, so he stays in a central position.

2. The Attacking Midfielder Presses Centre Back After GK's Pass



If the GK passes to the red centre back No4, Manchester City's **attacking midfielder Gündoğan (8) is able to obtain a short closing down distance** by pressing him immediately. This creates a favourable new pressing situation.

It is very important that the left winger **Sterling (7)**, who is the second defender, has already scanned the positioning of the players behind him before the pass towards red No4 is played.

Sterling (7) sees left back **Cancelo (27)** is in the correct position to mark the opposing winger (red No7), so he moves closer to his direct opponent No2 while also keeping the passing lane narrow. **Cancelo (27)** marks No7 closely as he moves back.

The **defensive midfielder Rodri (16) marks the red central midfielder No8** even though he is inside the shadow of the first defender **Gündoğan (8)**.

The weak side attacking midfielder **De Bruyne (17)** notices the positioning of **Jesus (9)** keeping the passing lane towards red No6 narrow, so he drops back to keep the formation balanced instead of moving to mark him. However, he does not move too deep in case of a back pass to the GK, where he would have to then move forward quickly to mark No6.

Jesus (9) also controls the pass back to the GK and blocks the pass to the other centre back No5.

SESSION 9 BASED ON THE TACTICS OF PEP GUARDIOLA



Pressing High Up to the GK Against Formations with 4 Defenders

SESSION FOR THIS TACTICAL SITUATION (3 PRACTICES)

1. Pressing High Up to the GK Against 4 Defenders in a 6v6 (+GK) Functional Practice

1a. Blocking 2 Free Players from Receiving (Option 1)



Description

- The blue defensive midfielder (16) starts outside the playing area and enters when he decides to. The other blue players have to scan behind them when pressing to find out the positioning of the blue defensive midfielder and act accordingly.
- The practice starts with the red GK's pass to one of the centre backs. The blues press the ball to force the red player to play a bad pass or go backwards. The red try to score in either small goal. **The blue team defend effectively using the tactics fully described on the analysis pages 202-203 in this section of the book**.
- If the blues win the ball, they counter to score within 10-12 seconds. If the reds kick the ball out of play, the nearest Coach plays a new ball to the blues for a counter attack.
- **Option 1:** If the **blue defensive midfielder (16) is outside of the playing area** and the reds pass back to the GK, the **situation is 5v6 (+GK), which is effectively 5v7**. The first defender and forward (9) tries to block the 2 free opponents (red No5 and No3) from receiving. If this is not possible, the winger (20) takes a more balanced position to control 2 players.

1b. Blocking 1 Free Player from Receiving (Option 2)



- **Option 2:** This second diagram shows the same practice but with Option 2 being used. This time, the **blue defensive midfielder (16) is inside the playing area**, so he can mark one of the opposing red central midfielders (No8 in diagram).
- Therefore, the **situation is now 6v7 (including the GK)**, so the blue team only need to block 1 free player from receiving.
- After the back pass to the GK, the forward (9) presses the GK in a way that blocks the pass to the unmarked red centre back No5.
- **NOTE: As this practice is very physically demanding, you can have another team of 6 waiting on the sideline who switch roles with the defending team after a set period of time**.

Coaching Points

1. The players need to be scanning to be fully aware of the situation behind them, especially to see the positioning of the defensive midfielder (16) which determines how they apply their defensive movements and tactics.
2. The closest player must press the GK immediately after a back pass (forward or attacking midfielder).
3. Fast reactions are needed throughout this high tempo high pressing practice.

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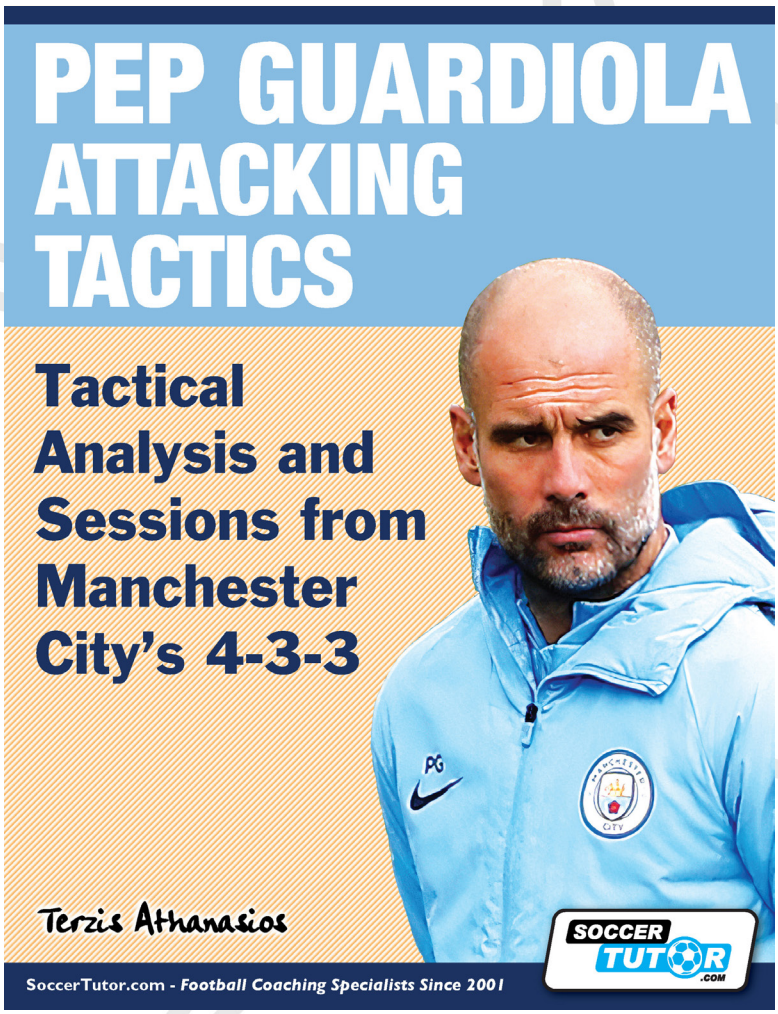


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