

BUILD UP TO BEAT THE PRESS

Tactical Analysis

Against Ultra- Aggressive Pressing with Zonal Defending and Man Marking

Build up play
patterns from
Flick, Klopp, and
Emery's teams



Build Up Against Ultra-Aggressive Pressing with Zonal Defending and Man Marking

We have already mentioned that when high pressing is applied (see page 83), there is a 7v6 situation in favour of the possession team.

When this pressing extends up to the goalkeeper (ultra-aggressive pressing), the defending team must also account for the goalkeeper, who becomes actively involved in the build up play.

The possession team, therefore, has a **+2 numerical advantage (7 outfield players + GK vs 6 defenders)** in this specific part of the pitch.

When the objective of the defending team is to apply ultra-aggressive pressing, some principles must be applied.

1. **First Principle:** When pressing is applied to the goalkeeper, it is to **block the passing lane towards one of the centre backs, who stays free.**

This eliminates the first numerical advantage problem for the pressing team.

If the first principle is not applied properly, a pass to the centre back would at least neutralise the player who presses the goalkeeper.

2. **Second Principle:** Set up to **control all the receivers of a potential short pass** from the goalkeeper.

If the second principle is not applied properly, an easy short pass can be played to a free player.

This pass will again at least neutralise the player who presses the goalkeeper, and potentially more players.

To achieve the second principle, the defending team must apply close marking to all opponents near the ball. One way to carry this out is by using a **hybrid of zonal defending and man marking in midfield**, which we will fully analyse in this section.

This means that the **midfielders should mark the opponents within their zone of responsibility** and especially the defensive midfielders, who are potential receivers of a short first pass. If they do receive, the aim is to use close marking to prevent them from turning.

Note: Although we set out the opposition's pressing structure and aims, the focus of this section is on how to build up play with a single pivot (4-3-3) and double pivot (4-2-3-1) against this type of defending/pressing, with tactical solutions provided.

Build Up Against Ultra-Aggressive Pressing with Zonal Defending and Man Marking (Single Pivot)

1. Opposition Positioning Adjustments to Apply Marking Against a 4-3-3 Build Up Shape



This first diagram reflects the second principle outlined on the previous page: **The opposition set up to control all the receivers of a potential short pass from the goalkeeper (GK).**

The red central midfielder N°6 marks the **left attacking midfielder (N°8)**, while red N°8 is positioned between the **defensive midfielder (N°6)** and the **right attacking midfielder (N°10)** to control both players.

This is because a **3v2 disadvantage exists for the reds in the key central midfield area** for the reds, so a midfielder must cover 2 opponents.

Note: Red N°8 must be close enough to press N°6 if he receives, while limiting potential passing lanes towards N°10.

2. Opposition Press the Goalkeeper and Ensure All Nearby Passing Options are Marked (4-3-3)



When playing against ultra-aggressive pressing with zonal defending and man marking, **as soon as the opposing forward (Nº9 in diagram) decides to press the goalkeeper (GK), a red central midfielder (Nº8) must move forward to mark the defensive midfielder (Nº6).**

The other red forward (Nº10) reduces his distance to the blue centre back (Nº5), so that he is able to put him under pressure immediately if he receives.

Red Nº9 presses in a way that blocks a direct pass to his direct opponent (blue centre back Nº4).

All potential receivers of a short pass are either marked or passing lanes towards them are blocked.

However, in this situation there are **2 free players**:

1. **Centre back (Nº5)** who is in the shadow of red Nº9's pressing.
2. **Attacking midfielder (Nº10)**, who stays completely free of marking after the forward movement of red Nº8.

3. Using the Link Player Closest to the Ball to Move the Ball to the Free Player (4-3-3)



Principles to apply or actions to take in order to build up effectively are:

1. Use the link players near the ball carrier to move the ball to the free defender.
2. Move the ball to the free midfielder (directly or indirectly via a link player).

In the diagram example, the blue team manage to apply the first principle successfully.

The goalkeeper (GK) passes to the closest available link player - the defensive midfielder (Nº6) who is in a good position to direct the ball to the closest free player - the **centre back (Nº4)**.

From there, the aim is to move the ball to the **advanced free player in between the lines - the attacking midfielder (Nº10)**.

If **Nº4** carries the ball forward, a numerical advantage on that side can be quickly exploited to make this a fairly easy option.

4. Potential Link Player Positioning and Scanning to Support the Free Defender Before Pressure is Applied (4-3-3)



Key principles link players follow to be effective:

1. Stay high enough to form an effective passing angle.
2. Constantly scan for teammates and opposing players' positions, especially in the area likely to be used after the goalkeeper (GK) is pressed.

Once a red player presses **GK**, it becomes clear which defender is free and will act as the target player (**Nº4** in diagram example).

Nº6's focus then shifts to the red winger Nº11, who is the opponent most likely to intervene and intercept a pass, making it essential for **Nº6** to be aware of this while being ready to offer support to **GK**.

Before pressure is applied to the goalkeeper (GK), the defensive midfielder (Nº6) must scan the space around him and the positioning of players in the highlighted yellow area.

5a. Timing of Link Player's Movement Creates a Narrow Passing Angle to Prevent Interceptions (4-3-3)



Following on from the 2 principles outlined on the previous page, the link player must also apply a third principle:

3. Offer support at the right moment (not too early), otherwise the passing angle becomes ineffective.

To do this, the **potential link player should start from a relatively high position**. As the red N°9 moves to press the goalkeeper, the **defensive midfielder (N°6) should drop back to support**.

Both of these actions must be perfectly synchronised. The correct timing is key to creating an effective passing angle.

In the diagram example, **N°6 moves in sync with the red forward N°9 pressing the goalkeeper (GK)**. This allows N°6 to stay high and then drop to receive with enough space, resulting in a **narrow diagonal passing angle**.

Importance of Narrow Passing Angle:

The nearest opponent (red N°11), arriving from the blind side, is kept far enough from the passing line to the target player (centre back - N°4), lowering the risk of interception. Red N°11 may be seen during N°6's scanning, but by the time the pass is made, he is usually out of the link player's view.

6. Free Defender Must Act Quickly to Exploit Available Space or 3v1 Situation Near the Ball (4-3-3)



Note: As soon as the pass is directed to the free player via the link player, the receiver will find available space, a numerical advantage, or both - if he acts quickly.

In the diagram example, the blue **centre back (No.4)** receives from the **defensive midfielder (No.6)** and has space in front of him, while a **3v1 situation forms near the ball area**.

The next action depends on how red No.11 reacts. For example, if red No.10 presses No.4 in a way that blocks the passing lane to the **attacking midfielder (No.10)**, then the pass to the **full back (No.2)** - yellow arrow becomes available.

If red No.11 blocks the pass to blue No.2, then No.10 becomes the clear passing option (blue arrow).

If red No.11 drops deeper to try and avoid being bypassed, No.4 will have more room to drive forward with the ball.

The key to exploiting this situation is the speed of action by No.4. If there is a delay, the red central midfielder No.8 will have time to shift across and narrow the passing lane to blue No.10, allowing red No.11 to focus solely on controlling blue No.2, and reducing the original numerical advantage.

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Training Session 7 (5 Practices)

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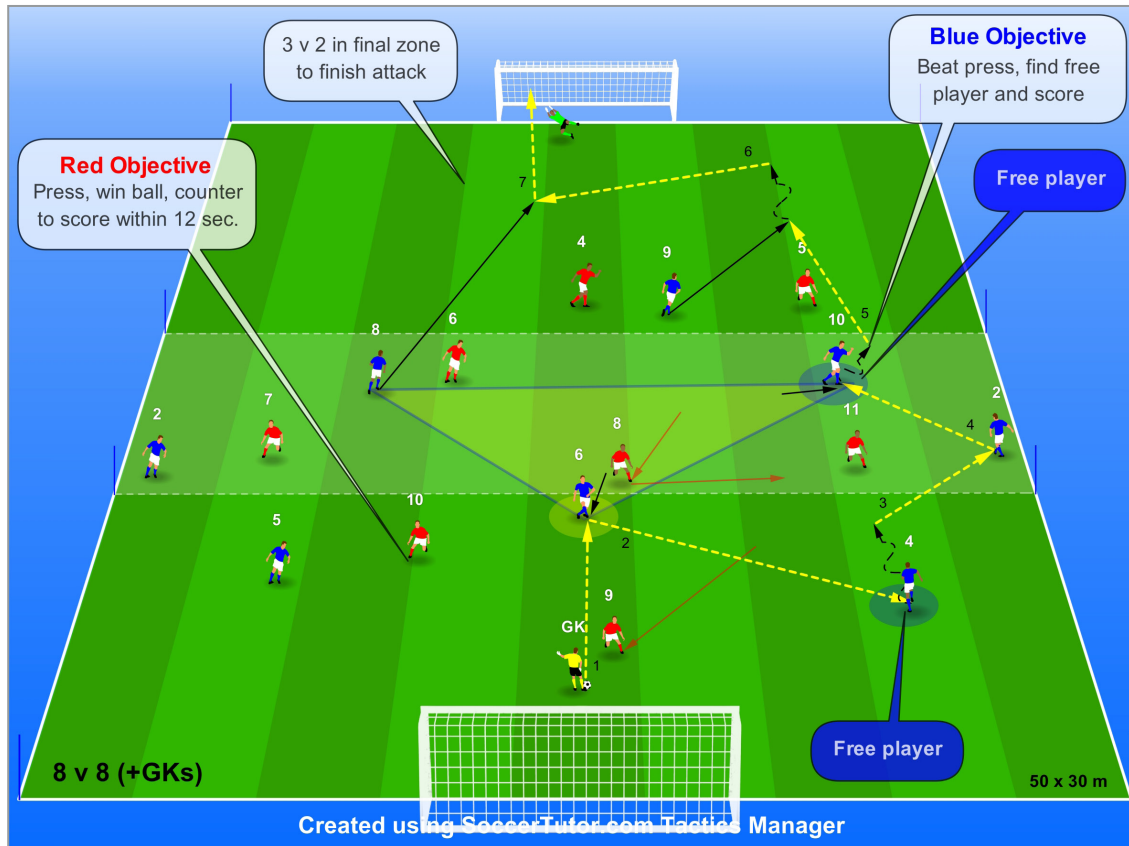
Based on Flick,
Klopp, and
Emery build up
patterns



PROGRESSION

3. Using the Link Player to Move the Ball to the Free Player 8 v 8 (+GKs) Conditioned Game

Variation 1: Find the Free Player through Deep Link Player (DM)



Practice Description (Variation 1)

- The blue attacking team have 2 centre backs, 2 full backs, 3 central midfielders, and 1 forward (**4-3-1 from 4-3-3**).
- The red defending team have 2 centre backs, their midfield 4, and 2 forwards from the 4-4-2.
- The pitch is split into 3 zones. The low zone starts with an initial 2 (+GK) v 2 situation. The middle zone starts with 5v4 and the high zone is 1v2.
- Red Objective:** Apply ultra-aggressive pressing to win the ball and counter to score within 8-12 seconds.
- Blue Objective:** Build up through thirds and score (find free player with direct pass or via link player using *link player principles* - see page 129).
- The Variation 1 diagram shows the DM (N°6) as the link player.** Once N°10 (free player) receives, it can be 3v2 or 3v3 to finish the attack. Restart from blue GK.

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