

CHAPTER 4

CREATING & EXPLOITING SPACE IN THE FINAL THIRD (MASSIMILIANO ALLEGRI TACTICS)

DROPPING BACK TO GET FREE OF MARKING OR CREATING & EXPLOITING SPACE IN BEHIND

Massimiliano Allegri has used the 3-5-2 formation at his time with Juventus, but he has also often used the 4-2-3-1 (and the 4-4-2) very successfully in Serie A and in the Champions League.

In this chapter we are going to focus on Allegri's 4-2-3-1 formation, with variations showing the 4-4-2 formation. The 3-5-2 formation will be analysed in chapter 4 using the tactics of Antonio Conte.

When using this specific formation (4-2-3-1), Allegri asked his forward and wingers to drop back between the lines. This action created a dilemma for the opposing defenders:

- If the defenders didn't follow the dropping back movement, then the Juventus players could receive and turn unmarked.
- If the defenders did follow the dropping back movement, space was created behind them. This available space was then exploited by a forward run into the created space. Having a player like Miralem Pjanic in midfield was very important, as he is able to read the different tactical situations and make the right decisions to deliver accurate passes.

If a team has mastered the tactics to find time and space on the ball between the opposition's midfield and defensive lines, the next step is to create favourable situations. As already mentioned earlier in the book, a favourable situation for the attacking team is created when one of the players receives between the midfield and defensive lines of the opposition and turns with the ball, in at least a 4 v 4 situation.

An action which can lead to getting free of marking to receive within a crucial area, is to drop deep towards an available passing lane. If the defender responsible for this player's marking decides not to follow him, the player will be free to receive and turn in space.

**** An important element to take into account is that the two forwards should not be positioned on the same side - one should be on the weak side and one on the strong side.***

Forward Dropping Back to Receive or Create Space in Behind

Forward Drops Back to Get Free of Marking, Receive and Turn for a 4 v 4 Attack (4-2-3-1)



As soon as the ball is directed to the central midfielder (8) who receives and turns, the forward (9) drops back into a deeper position between the opposition's midfield and defensive lines.

This action enables the forward (9) to get free of marking, as the opposing centre back No.4 doesn't follow him - this means he is able to receive in space and turn to face the opposition's goal.

A 4 v 4 situation is created in favour of the attacking team and the opportunity for creating a goal scoring chance is high. In the diagram we show three different passing options, which all lead to a player receiving in behind the opposition's defensive line:

1. Simple straight pass through the middle for the diagonal run of No.10.
2. A diagonal pass in between the centre back and full back for the forward run of the left winger No.11.
3. A diagonal aerial pass to the right winger No.7 - this is the most difficult option to execute.

SESSION 4



**Based on Tactics of
Massimiliano Allegri**

Creating & Exploiting Space in the Final Third

PROGRESSION (4-2-3-1)

3. Creating & Exploiting Space in the Final Third with Dropping Back Movements in a Functional Game



Objective: Creating space with dropping back movements and exploiting the created space in centre or wide.

Description (4-2-3-1)

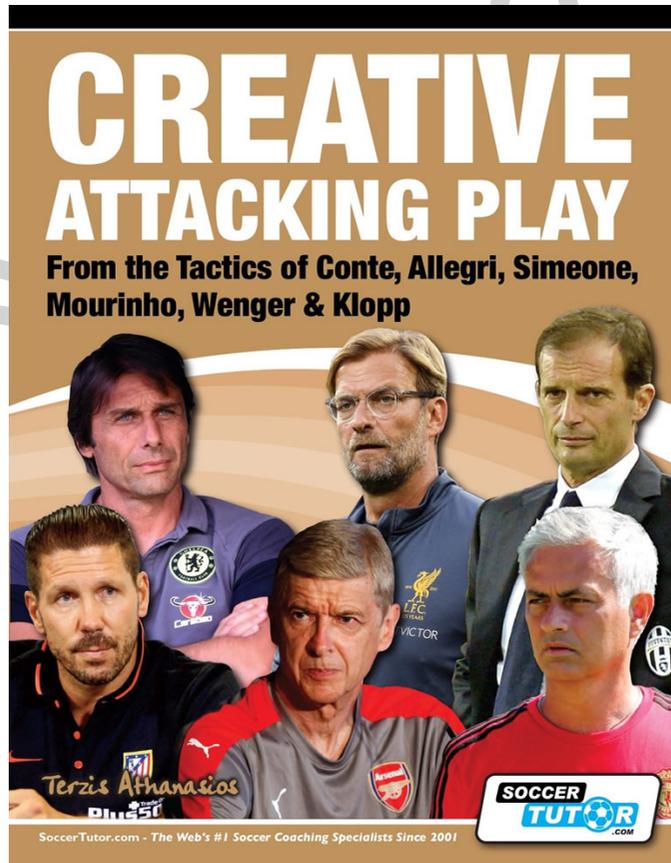
Using 2/3 of a full pitch, we mark out 12 zones with 3 mannequins (defending team's midfield). The black team are using the 4-2-3-1 formation. The goalkeeper starts the practice by passing into the first zone where there is a 4 v 3 situation inside + 3 extra players who support outside (goalkeeper and 2 full backs in blue zones).

The black team's aim is to find time on the ball to make a forward pass. As soon as this takes place and according to the positioning of the man in possession (No.6 in diagram), the respective player drops back - this can either be the forward (9) or one of the 2 wingers (11 or 7). **The black player in possession (6) has to read the defender's reaction and either direct the ball to the player's feet, or into the created space (if the defender follows him).**

The black team then try to score past the goalkeeper. If the forward or winger receives under marking, the black team have to use a passing combination to exploit the space (*see next page*). If the blues win possession inside the first zone, they try to dribble the ball through the end line to score.

Restriction: The defenders cannot enter other zones but can move back to defend in behind.

Variation: Change formation from 4-4-2 to 4-2-3-1 very easily, as shown in the first 2 practices of this session.



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