



CHAPTER 2

TACTICS AGAINST DIFFERENT FORMATIONS

3. TACTICS AGAINST THE 4-3-3

3.1 - OVERCOMING THE FIRST LINE OF PRESSING (BUILD-UP PLAY FROM THE BACK)

A. The Ball is Moved Easily Between the 3 Centre Backs Against the 1 Opposing Forward



When building up play from the back against the 4-3-3, the team has a 3 v 1 numerical superiority against the 1 forward.

The 3 centre backs are distant from each other (but not too much) so it's difficult for the forward to apply pressing and/or mark them.

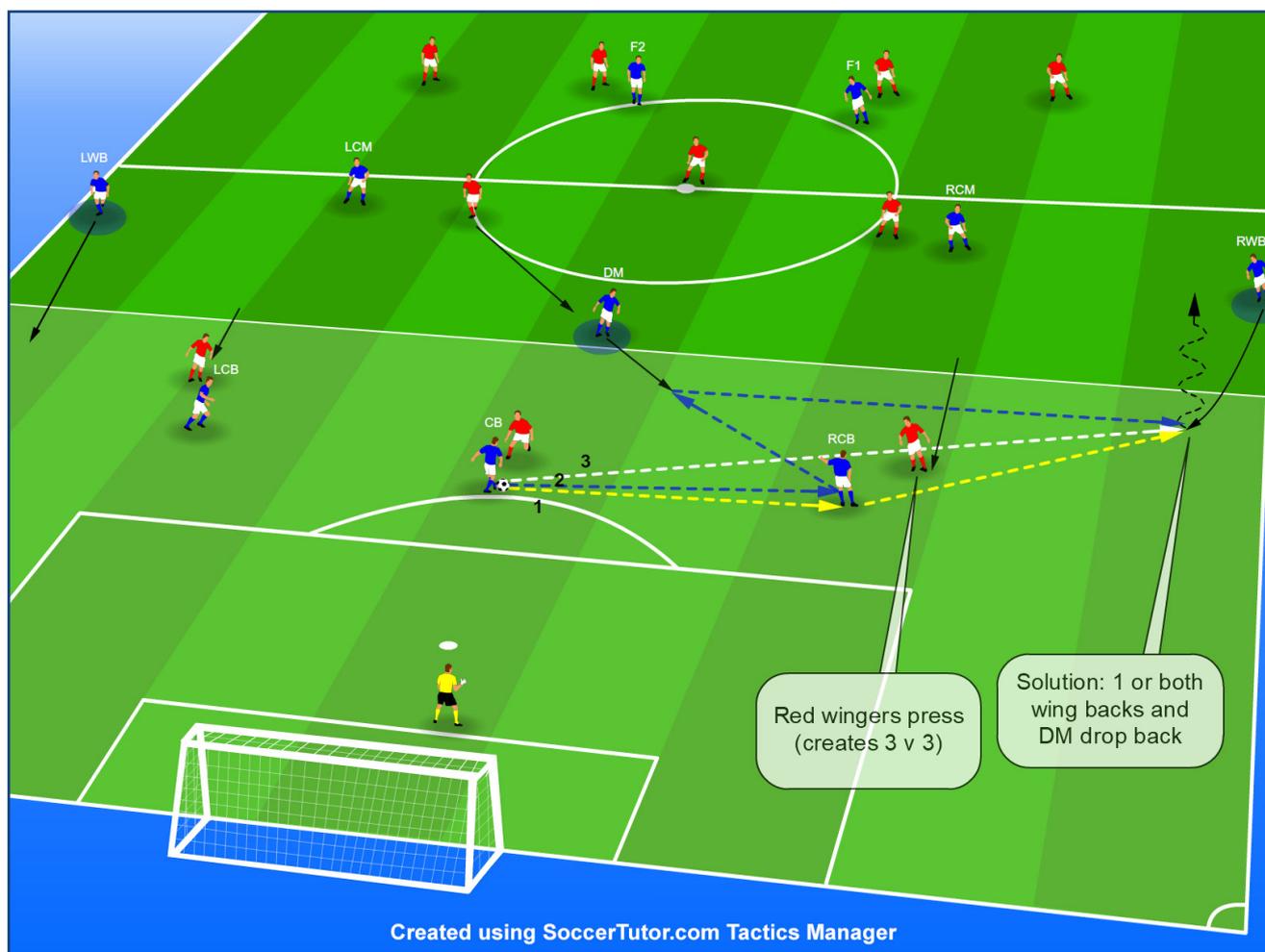
Usually in this situation, a wide centre back is able to receive in space and exploit the situation to move the team forward and overcome the first line of pressing.

In this example, the middle centre back (**CB**) is put under pressure by the red forward and passes to the right centre back (**RCB**).

These are the 2 Options for the **RCB**:

1. If the red forward is unable to press the **RCB**, he can dribble the ball forward freely.
2. If the red forward is able to apply pressure, the **RCB** can easily pass to the defensive midfielder (**DM**), who is free in the centre.

B. Tactical Solution when the Opposition Wingers Move Up to Press: Wing Backs and DM Drop Back



If the opposing team decide to move their wingers into advanced positions to apply 3v3 pressing against the 3 centre backs, the blue team need to adapt quickly to recreate a numerical superiority at the back and build-up play.

The tactical solution is for 1 or both wing backs and the defensive midfielder (**DM**) to drop back closer to the defence.

In this example, the middle centre back (**CB**) has possession and the left centre back (**LCB**) is closely marked.

These are the **3 Options** for the blue team to successfully overcome the first line of pressing from the 3 red attackers:

1. The right wing back (**RWB**) drops back. The middle centre back (**CB**) passes to the right centre back (**RCB**), who then passes out wide to the right wing back (**RWB**).
2. The defensive midfielder (**DM**) drops back. The middle centre back (**CB**) passes to the right centre back (**RCB**), who passes to the defensive midfielder (**DM**). The **DM** then passes out wide to the right wing back (**RWB**).
3. If the opposing winger is closely marking the right centre back (**RCB**) and there is a clear passing lane, the middle centre back (**CB**) passes directly to the right wing back (**RWB**).

C. Tactical Solution when the Opposition Wingers Move Up to Press: Defensive Midfielder Receives



When the opposing team are playing with the 4-3-3 formation and press high with both wingers, they often leave a large space in between their attacking and midfield lines.

In this example, the defensive midfielder (**DM**) is able to receive a simple pass in the middle and dribble forward into the space.

D. Tactical Solution when the Opposition Wingers Move Up to Press: Defensive Midfielder Drops Back into Defensive Line



In this variation, the wide centre backs (**LCB** & **RCB**) push very wide to drag their markers (red wingers) away and create more space in the centre of the pitch.

The defensive midfielder (**DM**) is able to drop back into the defensive line to create a 2v1 numerical advantage in the centre, receive from the middle centre back (**CB**) and dribble forward into space.

3.2 - MOVING THE BALL IN BETWEEN THE OPPOSITION'S MIDFIELD AND DEFENSIVE LINES

A. Wide Centre Back's Options to Play Through the Opposition's Midfield when Pressed by the Opposing Winger



The right centre back (**RCB**) is being closed down by the opposing red team's left winger and the aim is to move the ball to a team-mate in between the opposition's midfield and defensive lines.

These are the **3 Options** for the **RCB**:

1. Pass directly to the right wing back (**RWB**).
2. Pass to the right wing back (**RWB**) or right central midfielder (**RCM**) via the defensive midfielder (**DM**), who moves across.

3. Pass inside to the defensive midfielder (**DM**) in space, who either passes short to the left central midfielder (**LCM**) or switches the play out wide to the left wing back (**LWB**) in an advanced position on the flank.

NOTE: The choice of the options above mainly depends on how the opposing winger presses and what passing lanes are available.

B. Wide Centre Back's Options to Play Through the Opposition's Midfield when Pressed by the Central Midfielder



This is a variation of the example on the previous page, with the right centre back (**RCB**) now being closed down by the opposing red team's central midfielder, instead of the winger.

NOTE: The choice of the options above mainly depends on how the opposing central midfielder presses and what passing lanes are available.

These are the 3 Options for the RCB:

1. Pass directly to the right wing back (**RWB**).
2. Pass to the right central midfielder (**RCM**) via the defensive midfielder (**DM**), who moves across.
3. Pass inside to the defensive midfielder (**DM**) in space, who either passes short to the left central midfielder (**LCM**) or switches the play out wide to the left wing back (**LWB**) in an advanced position on the flank.

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