



CHAPTER 2

TACTICS AGAINST DIFFERENT FORMATIONS

3. TACTICS AGAINST THE 4-3-3

3.5 - PRESSING AND DEFENSIVE ORGANISATION IN A 5-3-2 SHAPE

A. Central Midfielder Moves to Press the Full Back and the Other Players Shift to Mark Potential Receivers



Against the 4-3-3, the 3 midfielders must all be positioned in a line together and the focus is on preventing the opposition from moving the ball into the centre of the pitch:

1. The 2 blue forwards block the passing lanes towards the opposing defensive midfielder.
2. The 3 blue midfielders make sure to block the passing lanes into the centre or apply tight marking to the opposing central midfielders.

In this example, the opposing full back has received in a wide position. When defending in a 3-5-2 shape, the coach should be focussed on the combined movement of the wide centre back (**RCB**), central midfielder (**RCM**) and wing

back (**RWB**) on that side of the pitch. These 3 players have to deal with marking the opposing red central midfielder, winger and forward.

The right central midfielder (**RCM**) moves forward to press the opposing left back. The right wing back's (**RWB**) defensive reaction is determined by the opponents.

In this first example, the opposing red left winger doesn't move and is closely marked by the blue right wing back (**RWB**). Therefore, the right centre back (**RCB**) moves forward to mark the red left central midfielder and the blue **CB** and **LCB** shift across at the same time.

B. Central Midfielder Moves to Press the Full Back and the Opposing Central Midfielder and Winger Switch Positions



NOTE: This example shows a different reaction from the opposing left central midfielder and left winger, as they switch positions. The red left winger moves inside off the flank into the centre and the left central midfielder moves out wide.

This changing situation requires a different reaction from the blue defending team.

The right central midfielder (**RCM**) has again moved to close down the red left back and this creates the following chain reaction to mark the red central midfielder, winger and forward:

1. The right centre back (**RCB**) moves forward to mark the opposing red left winger, who has moved inside off the flank.
2. The right wing back (**RWB**) moves forward to mark the red left central midfielder, who has moved into a wide position.
3. The middle centre back (**CB**) moves across to mark the opposing red forward.
4. The left centre back (**LCB**) shifts across as part of the chain reaction to maintain balance in the defensive line.

C. Wing Back Moves to Press the Full Back and the Opposing Midfielder and Winger Make Opposite Vertical Movements



If the pressing of the opposing full back is to be done by the wing back, the coach must make sure that the wing back presses in a way that blocks the pass up the line towards the opposing winger. The wing back wants to press with the correct body shape to force the ball carrier to play inside, where the team have plenty of players and defensive stability.

The defensive reaction of the right central midfielder (**RCM**) and the right centre back (**RCB**) depends on the movements of the opposing red left central midfielder and left winger.

The right wing back (**RWB**) has moved forward to close down the red left back and this creates the following chain reaction to mark the red central midfielder, winger and forward:

1. The right central midfielder (**RCM**) moves across to mark the opposing left winger, who has dropped back.
2. The right centre back (**RCB**) moves across to mark the opposing red left central midfielder, who makes an opposite forward movement.
3. The middle centre back (**CB**) moves across to mark the opposing red forward.
4. The left centre back (**LCB**) shifts across as part of the chain reaction, providing cover and balance.
5. The left wing back (**LWB**) drops back into the defensive line to create balance and a numerical superiority in defence.

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