

CHAPTER 4



THE CREATING PHASE

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After building up play with a short pass from our goalkeeper, we proceed with an effective passing game up to the midfield zone. The tactical context that we see at this point is the opposing team lined up according to their preferred formation, with almost all of their players inside their own half and behind the line of the ball.

The Opposition's Positioning During the Creating Phase



During our creating phase, the opposition set up in one of two ways:

1. **4-1-4-1 Formation**
(as shown on page 78)
2. **4-4-1-1 Formation**
(as shown in diagram above)

In this situation, the first objective is "Creating an Opening," ideally in behind the opposition's midfield line, where we can then dribble the ball forward or play a final pass.

Moving the ball in between the opposition's midfield and defensive lines is a fundamental condition needed for the team to then move into the next phase of "Accelerating the Attack."

1. CREATING AN OPENING (MOVING THE BALL TO THE WEAK SIDE)

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To advance from one zone to the next (e.g. from the "Creating Zone to the "Finishing Zone" - see diagram below) and at the same time move the ball in between the opposition's midfield and defensive lines, a team can either: **Dribble the Ball Forward** or **Pass the Ball Forward** (directly or indirectly).

Pitch Zones and Sectors for "The Creating Phase"



As mentioned previously, during our creating phase, the opposition set up in one of two ways:

1. 4-1-4-1 Formation

(as shown in diagram above)

2. 4-4-1-1 Formation

(as shown on page 76)

Naturally, the search for an opening in the opposition's defensive block and where to dribble or pass the ball must be a logical consequence of strategic ball movements, which have the objective of maintaining possession of the ball, while at the same time "force" movements of opposing players and opposing sectors.

"The Creating Phase" can be successful when we:

- Force the opposing players, who are initially organised into a compact formation, to move and eventually reconfirm their compact formation within a certain zone of the pitch.
- This creates space in other zones where we then aim to play the ball through rapid and accurate ball circulation (switching play to the weak side).
- Break the cohesion between opposing players inside a certain sector, thus creating holes (spaces) between 2 players within the midfield or defensive line.

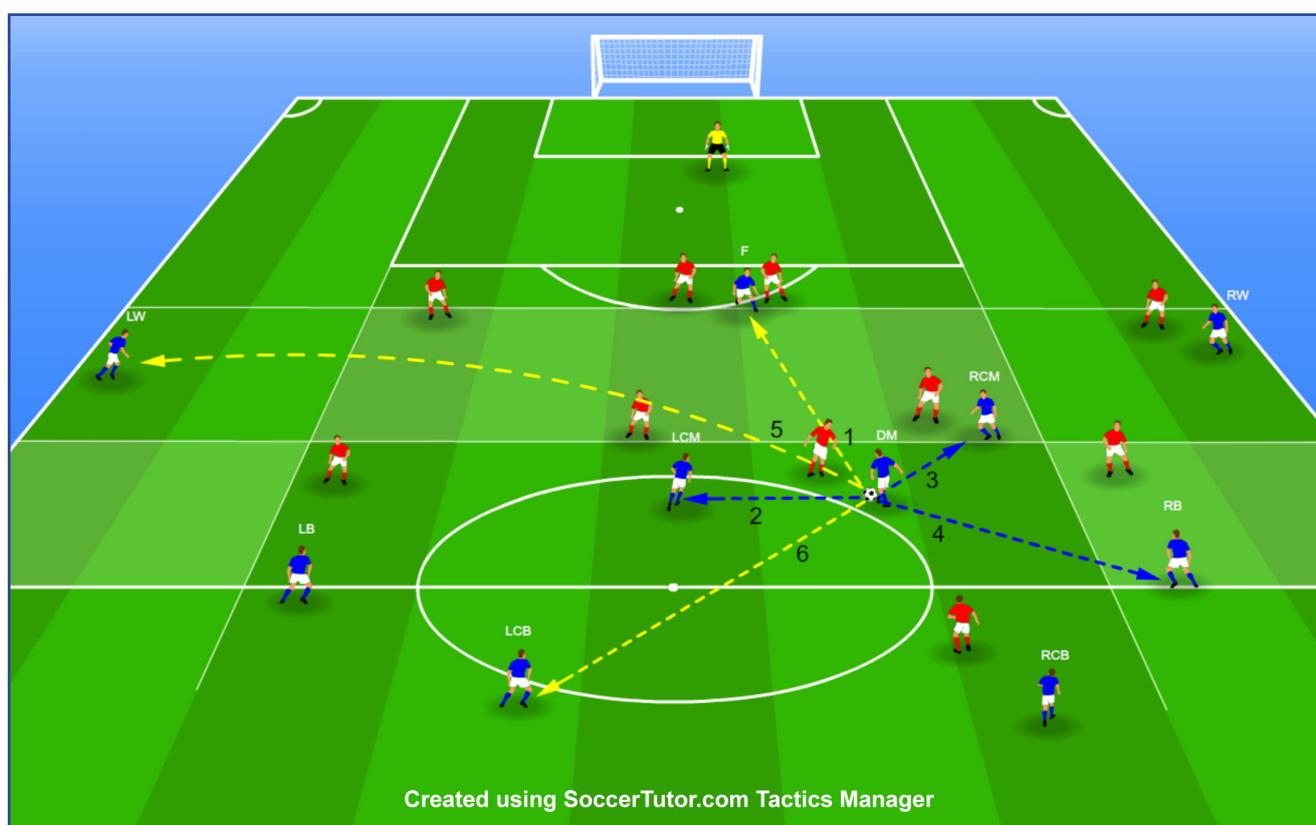
1.1 - HOW TO CREATE PASSING OPTIONS FOR THE BALL CARRIER

Following the fundamental premise explained on the previous page, it is important to train our players on how to build grids or appropriate passing options around the player in possession of the ball.

This should be done in such a way for this player to count on the following solutions (see diagram below):

1. **"Imbucata"** ("entry ball" with an accurate forward pass to a teammate - F in diagram)
2. **Lateral Support** (short sideways pass to the closest teammate - LCM in diagram)
3. **Front Support** (short forward pass to a supporting teammate - RCM in diagram)
4. **Back Support** (short backward pass to a supporting teammate - RB in diagram)
5. **Switch to Free Player** (switch the play with a long pass to a teammate free in space - LW in diagram)
6. **Pass Back** (pass back to reset - LCB in diagram)

EXAMPLE: Passing Options for the Defensive Midfielder



1.2 - PLAYING IN TACTICAL GRIDS: PASSING PATTERNS TO SWITCH THE PLAY

If the opposition are not particularly organised and aggressive, it's possible to simply switch play by passing inside to a player who then makes the pass across:

If the opposing team is well organised and does not allow this inside pass (close receiver is marked), it becomes important to know how to move the ball inside of the tactical grids.

The ball can be moved beyond the first support player (horizontally) with different sequences.

For each pattern we display, we have identified 2 possible developments on the weak side, with the attacking players establishing their positions and choosing the appropriate passing option, according to the tactical organisation of the opposition.

In the diagrams to follow, we show how to play through the opposing midfield and successfully switch the ball to the opposite flank.

The "Rhombus Shape" is clearly identifiable (on the side where the ball is), resulting from the players' specific positioning for the passing patterns to switch the play.

We use the example with the right back in possession. Here are 2 specific requirements:

1. Play beyond the closest teammate (RCM), who is in the middle of the rhombus shape and moves without the ball to open up a passing lane.
2. The forward (or advanced central midfielder) takes the position of "Front Support."



CM Moves Wide to Create Space in the Centre for a Switch of Play to the Weak Side (1a):

This right back (RB) has the ball and the RCM is moving to the right side, thus "drawing" his marker with him and opening up a passing lane towards the defensive midfielder (DM).

The DM can then open the play up on the weak side by passing to the left back or left winger, both of whom are free in space.



"Front Support" Option Blocked: Play 1-2 with RCM, Pass to Centre and Switch Play (3a):

The forward is in the "Front Support" position but the passing lane to him is blocked by an opponent.

The right back plays a 1-2 with the RCM and moves slightly away from his marker to receive the return pass. The RCM moves forward a little to help open the passing lane for the right back to pass to the DM.



"Front Support" Option Blocked: Play 1-2 with RCM, Pass to Centre and Switch Play (3b):

This is very similar to 3a. We just have a slightly different tactical situation on the weak side.

The winger (LW) moves inside to receive a forward pass in the centre and takes the opposition full back with him. This movement also allows the full back (LB) to move into a more advanced position to receive a switch of play high up the pitch.

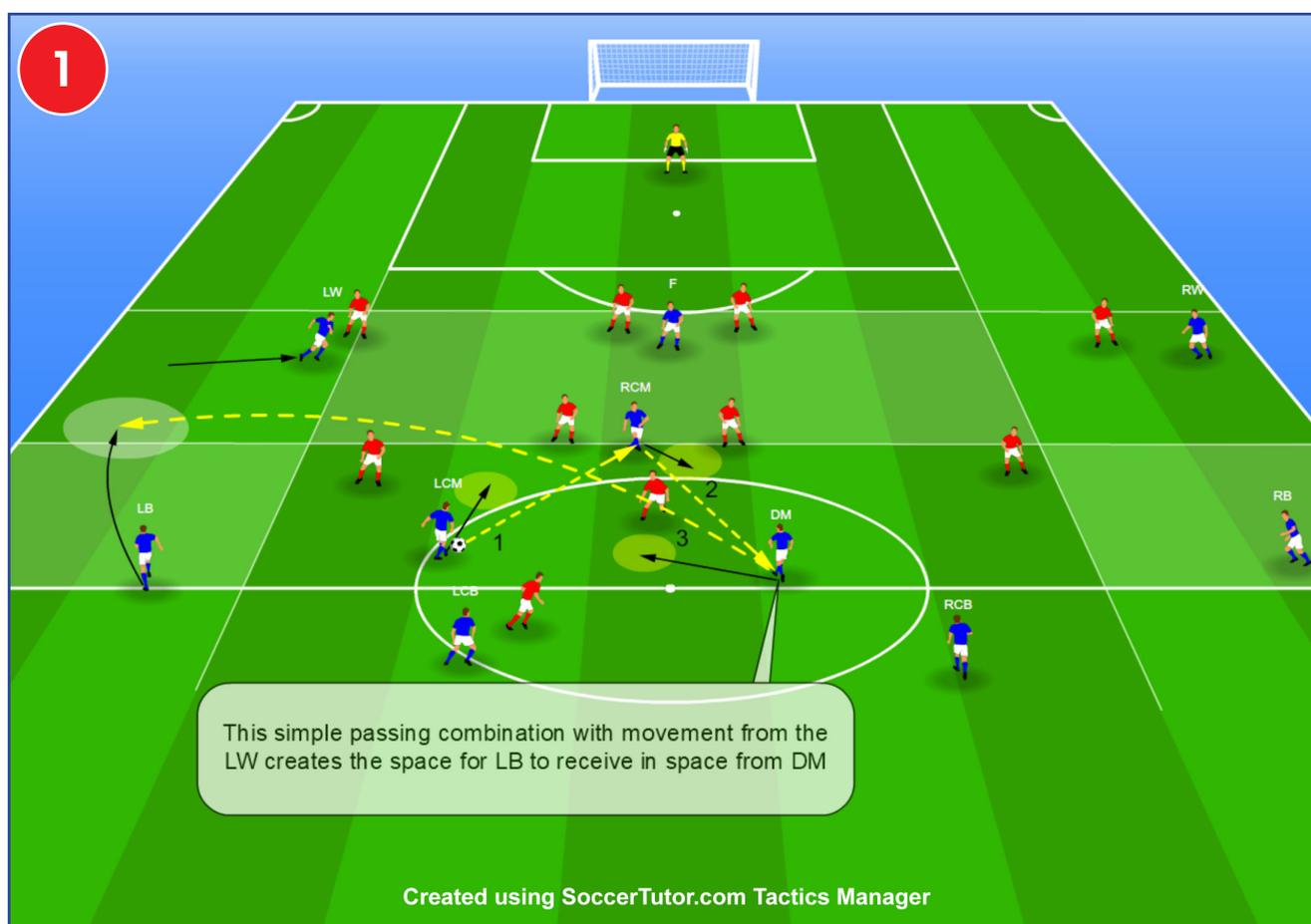
1.4 - PLAYING IN TACTICAL GRIDS: ROTATIONS IN THE CENTRE WITH THE BALL

The rotations with the ball occur when the ball is already in possession of the 3 rotating players.

In this situation, the main purpose of the rotation, in addition to maintaining possession in a specific zone (usually in the centre of the pitch), is about:

1. "Drawing" opposing players into that zone
2. And then moving the ball rapidly into an open space (usually one of the flanks)

The following examples show a series of combinations between the defensive midfielder (DM) and 2 central midfielders (LCM and RCM). This involves a rapid ball exchange amongst themselves (one-touch passing), while rotating their positions at the same time.



Example 1 is the simplest combination. The LCM passes to the RCM and he passes to the DM, as they all make rotating movements.

The DM is able to receive in space and pass out wide to the left back (LB).

PRACTICE EXAMPLES FOR THE CREATING PHASE

2. Possession and Attacking in Behind in a 7 v 7 (+3) Dynamic Game



Attacking Objective: Ball possession and attacking in behind the opposition.

Defending Objective: Collective pressing, interceptions, winning the ball and transition play.

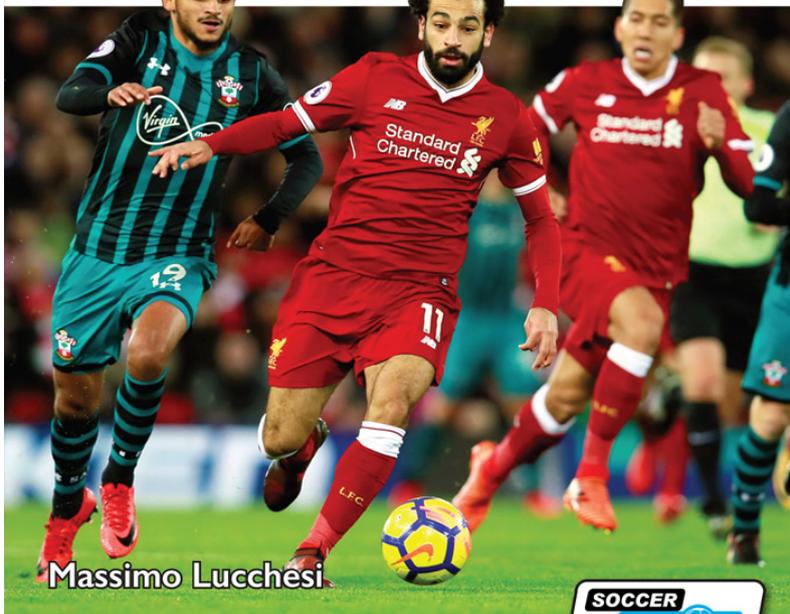
Practice Description

Using the area shown, the pitch is divided into 3 zones. In zone 1, we have 7 v 7 + 3 yellow neutral players (centre back and 2 wingers) who play with the team in possession. Both teams are organised into a 4-3-3 formation but you can adapt the red team to your next opponents.

1. The practice starts with the coach's pass to one team who therefore become the attacking team (blues in diagram). They have a 10 v 7 numerical advantage in the main zone with the neutral players.
2. The first aim for the attacking team (blues) is to complete 6-8 passes (1 point) before they are able to play out of zone 1.
3. The blues can then leave zone 1 with the second aim to attack using 1 touch passes and score a goal, while trying to avoid the 2 white defenders (who must stay within zone 2).
4. If the blues finish their attack, score or the ball goes out of play, the practice starts with the coach's pass to the reds and the team roles reversed. Both teams attack, in alternate fashion, in the same direction.
5. If the defending team (reds) win the ball, the practice continues with the team roles reversed. After winning the ball, the reds would have to complete 6-8 passes (1 point) before they can attack the goal with 1 touch passes.

COACHING 4-3-3 TACTICS

154 TACTICAL SOLUTIONS AND PRACTICES



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