

# How to Spot Football Tactics



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## Chapter 4: Defensive Tactics

Let's do a quick recap. So far you learned the basic set-ups of the most used formations. Then you learned the concept of The Interconnected Wholeness. Thereafter we went a bit more in-depth. We talked about the 5 different corridors and the advantages and disadvantages of each, and how functionality ensures that no formation is the same. I went on to explain that the paradox of it is that due to player movement and the spaces teams want to occupy the field-occupations are often very similar, and that this is usually a 2-3-2-3.

So we discussed the basic theoretical background that you needed to know. Now we are really going into the practical things. We will start with the defensive tactics. Why? Because defending is easier than attacking, so understanding and spotting defensive tactics is easier than spotting attacking tactics.

There are two basic forms of defending: zonal-marking and man-marking. However what is important to realize is that these types of defending are a bit like defining your gender: you aren't one or the other, but it is a spectrum between those two points and you are somewhere on that spectrum. You aren't necessarily fully zonal marking or fully man-marking. A lot of teams use a mixture of both forms. For example, most teams that use zonal defense will go man-to-man on the side of the ball, or when the ball approaches their own penalty box. Meanwhile man-marking doesn't mean that defenders will always stay tight to their opponent, but they will move along with the ball

and letting go of their man when he is on the other side of the pitch.

In this chapter we are firstly going to look at man-marking and what it looks like during a match. Secondly we will take a look at zonal-marking, which can be divided in three sub-categories: regular zonal marking, man-orientated zonal marking, and finally passing lane-orientated zonal marking

### *Man-marking*

You probably understand the idea behind man-marking. I mean, it is in the name, **man**-marking, mark the man. In the most rigid form of man-marking every player is responsible for one particular opponent. That means if your opponent walks to the left, you follow him to the left. If he drops, you drop as well, and if he makes a run, you follow the run.

The most rigid use of man-marking (everyone going 1v1) is hardly used anymore as far as I know. Most teams always want to keep at least a 2 against 1 overload at the centre of the defense. However going 1 against 1 in the midfield has been and is still being used a lot.

During a match that looks a bit like this:



(Cardiff using man-marking (man-orientations) against Manchester City)



(Scotland using man-marking (man-orientations) against Mexico)<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Both of the pictures used here are actually temporally moments of man-marking used in a man-orientated defensive system. But for the purposes and clarity of this book I have used them as examples of man-marking.

There are certain pros and cons to man-marking. The biggest advantage of man-marking is that you are able to press every opponent at any given time. This asks a lot of the technical abilities of the opponent. If a pass is bad, the ball can immediately be pressed. If a touch is bad, the ball can immediately be won. Therefore this type of defending works well against lesser opponents, and is still often used during pressing (which we will talk about later). When you play against lesser opponents, getting into 1v1's can be wise because you are qualitatively better, and thus it is easier to win the duels.

That is not to say that it won't work against a 'big' team, as most players experience difficulty when they are pressed immediately after receiving, however the better the opposition's players become, the more difficult it becomes to defend against them in this way.

Another advantage of man-marking is that everybody feels responsible. When it is obvious that Player A marks Opponent A and Player B marks Opponent B, then it is also obvious whose fault it is when these players are able to get free. This isn't necessarily to be able to blame someone when it goes wrong, but it ensures that everyone feels responsible when defending.

On the other side, there is one massive disadvantage about man-marking which is the main reason that most top-teams have stopped using it as their main-method of defending. This disadvantage is that when using man-marking the opponent decides where our players end up.

If they pull all our midfielders to one side of the field there will be gaps in our formation. In addition, when we recover the ball counterattacking will be hard, as our players could be all over the place.

Opponents can also use this to easily open up passing lanes. An often-used example is dragging the midfielders to the side, which opens up the through ball to the striker.



(Klaasen pulls Pogba out of position, which opens up the passing lane to Dolberg).

## Zonal-Marking

### *Regular zonal-marking:*

Zonal-marking is the other way around. I will start with regular zonal-marking. I believe this is the most used/ most common form of zonal marking. It comes down to one player stepping out to press the ball, and the other players taking up positions in relation to his position. An example of this would be when a midfielder steps out to press the player with the ball, the other midfielders position themselves diagonally behind him to provide cover (see 'layered midfield' diagram below).

Instead of marking opponents you now mark a certain space. Every player is responsible for a certain part of the pitch, depending on the position of the ball. Therefore to determine their own position, defenders first look at the position of the ball, then at the position of their teammates, and only last to the position of the opponents.

When defending like this it is very important that the defense is layered. Otherwise the opponents will be able to break a defensive line with just one pass.



(The Blue team is defending and has a layered midfield: 3 lines of cover).



(The midfield is not layered. There is no cover and with just one pass, the opponent is able to outplay all the midfielders).

The biggest advantage of zonal-marking in general (so for all 3 forms) is that you determine the position of your defensive formation. Where during man-marking your players can end up all over the place, during zonal-marking they won't be dragged out of position too much. This makes it much harder for the opponent to create spaces in your defensive formation, while it is also easier to counter-attack as your players are still in position. Another advantage is that there are less 1v1 situations compared to man-marking. Because the opponent is able to influence your field-occupation during man-marking, they can isolate one of your defenders.

During zonal-marking your field-occupation stays more intact, which allows you to more often have cover for the defender who steps out to press the ball. Zonal-marking also requires less energy than man-marking as defenders don't have to trace their opponent over the entire pitch, but can just stay in their zone.

The biggest downside of zonal-marking is that you don't have access to press every player. Which means that certain lesser players (usually the defenders) won't always be pressed. When the opponents manage to get a player free between the lines, you don't have a player that is able to immediately press that opponent. And when an opponent takes a bad touch or something similar, you aren't always immediately able to exploit that mistake.



(Atletico Madrid using zonal-marking and having a layered midfield).



(Huddersfield's midfield (Black team) is not layered, all players are in one line. This creates a big space between the lines and they can be outplayed with one pass).

Two other forms that have become more and more popular are zonal man-orientations and passing-lane-orientated zonal marking, both of which I will discuss below.

### *Zonal man-orientations*

Zonal man-orientations are a style of defending that is in between man-marking and zonal-marking. Where with a rigid form of zonal-marking the orientation points are ball, then teammates, then opponents, for zonal man-orientations they are ball, then opponents, then teammates. This sounds perhaps a bit complicated but on the pitch it isn't that hard. It means that every player has a certain zone he has to cover, and when there is an opponent in his zone he marks that opponent.

On the one hand you have the advantages of man-marking. You are able to press every player of the opponent's team and no-one is allowed time and space on the ball, and you also have the advantage of the zonal element as that your entire organization won't be disrupted. When an opponent walks out of the player's zone he just stays in position.

On the other hand due to the man-orientations the midfield is still rather easy to dismark<sup>2</sup> for the opponent, because usually having the midfielders move towards the sides of the field is enough to create spaces in the centre. However,

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<sup>2</sup> To Dismark means to disorganise the marking. So, to say 'the midfield is easy to dismark' means it is easy to disorganise the opponent's defensive system in the midfield area (to either create free players in the midfield, or to pull the opposition's midfielders out of position).

creating actual chances can be quite hard, as the team overall often remains organized.

This kind of defending works best when your formation lines up with the formation of the opponent. For example, the opponent plays a 4-3-3 and you play a 4-2-3-1. When this is the case all of your players already have an opponent in their zone whom they can mark without having to adjust your field-occupation.

A manager who usually uses zonal man-orientations is Jose Mourinho. He has used this kind of defending with all the clubs he has worked at.



(Zonal man-orientations at Chelsea).



(Zonal man-orientations at Real Madrid. Players who have an opponent in their zone, that is able to receive, mark him (man-orientated). Alonso's opponent isn't dangerous so he covers the centre(zonal-oriented)).



(United using zonal man-orientations).

### *Passing-lane-orientated zonal marking:*

Another way of zonal defending that is becoming more and more popular is cutting out the passing lanes in the midfield area. I think this mainly got popular after Jurgen Klopp started using it at Liverpool and Dortmund. This tactic is usually used by teams that defend in a 4-5-1 formation as this gives you the biggest reach in midfield, but can also be used in other formations as the 4-4-2. The striker usually positions himself at the defensive midfielder of the opponent and presses the central defenders while taking out the passing lane to that midfielder. The two wingers position themselves in between the central defenders and the fullbacks, cutting out the passing lanes to those players, while the three central midfield players take out the passing lanes to the opponent's central midfielders.



(Blue 4 has the ball. The red team position themselves in such a way that they take out the passing lanes to the blue players).

The big advantage of this kind of defending is its counterattacking ability. When you win the ball back, your players are already in front of their opponent, which means that you have a big advantage during the transition. In addition, it is quite hard for the opponent to dismark when this is executed correctly, as none of the midfield players are able to receive the ball at their feet.

The downside of this kind of defensive set-up is its difficulty to implement. To execute this perfectly, it requires all the players to know exactly what to do in every scenario, and to constantly coach each other to take up the right positions. Liverpool is a team that really ‘owns’ this type of defense. And therefore, even though it might seem ‘risky’ on paper, it actually makes them quite solid defensively. Teams that are not as synchronized and playing this system often fall apart in two blocks as the space between the midfielders and defenders becomes too big. Tactically, the weak point is a ball over the top which one of the midfielders is able to pick up. As your midfielders are in front of the opposition’s midfielders, this also means that you are in a disadvantage when the opposition is able to reach those players.



(Liverpool taking out the passing lanes to all the Arsenal players).

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## *High-press*

Unorganized pressing situations:

Just as there are different pros and cons to defending in a certain way, there are also different pro's and con's to pressing high up the pitch. In addition, there are also different ways in which you can press. The most 'aggressive' option is man-orientations / man-marking, a bit less aggressive is option-orientated pressing and the least advanced is marking the short options.

Let's start with the pros and cons of pressing high-up in general.

Pressing high-up allows you to win the ball back near the opponent's goal. On one hand this helps you to create immediate danger, you are already near the goal when you win the ball. Teams that press with this philosophy in mind usually start by retreating a bit, allowing the opponents goalkeeper to play the ball short first before they start pressing.

There are also teams that press high to force the opponent to play long. Teams that use this philosophy usually ensure that the goalkeeper isn't able to play any short passes. Their pressing is also usually less precise, as they care about disrupting the build-up instead of actually winning the ball back. The main advantage of doing this is that you don't allow the opponent any chance of a clean build-up, as you are marking all their players. When they still try to build-up, you can intercept the ball and create a chance. Or, as it often results, the opponent plays an inaccurate long ball and you are able to start your own build-up again.

So, the pros are: winning the ball back near the opponent's goal, not allowing the opponent to build from the back and, when done right, easy recovery of the ball.

On the other side, the big downside of pressing high-up is that you leave spaces behind that your opponent can exploit when they beat your press.

Imagine two castles with kings that are some kilometers apart. Both don't like each other, so they want to destroy each other's castle. If a king sends his troops immediately forward, he has the advantage that the fight will mostly take place near the other king's castle. So, when his knights win the fight, they can immediately enter the fortress. The downside is that when his first line of knights is beaten, the 'opponents' can immediately run up to his castle without much defense left.

We separate three kinds of pressing, man-orientated press, option-orientated press, and forcing a long ball press.

A man-orientated press means pressing man-to-man. Some teams go fully 1v1 over the entire pitch. Most want to keep a spare man at the back, so they leave one player free or have one or two players option-orientated, which we will discuss later.



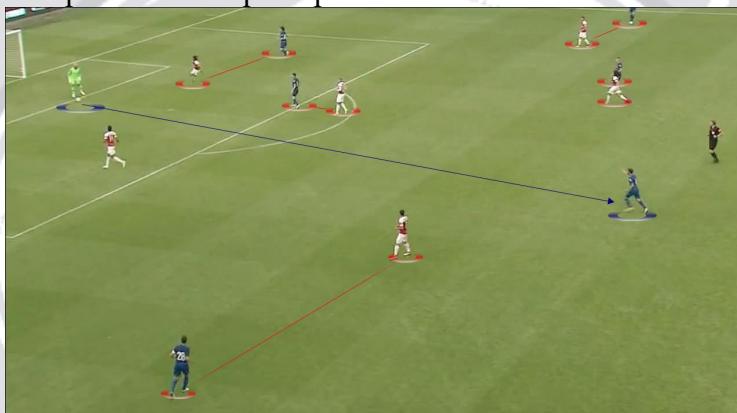
(Arsenal using a man-oriented press)



(Atletico Madrid using a man-oriented press on the side of the ball).

The advantages of man-oriented pressing are about the same as that of man-marking. You have access to every player that is able to receive the ball during build-up, so you can press any player. This allows you to punish every bad pass or touch instantly.

The downside is that you have to leave space behind, as your players have to step fully forward to press the opponent's players. Another downside is that your players again can be dragged out of position as they follow the opponents. Teams that are good on the ball often try to drag the pressers towards their own goal, and then exploit the space further up the pitch.



(Chelsea absorb the pressure and then look for the space further up the pitch).

The second way of pressing is option-orientated.

Option-orientated, also called being ‘half-and-half’, means that a player takes up a position between multiple opponents. This allows him to press multiple players, depending on who receives the ball.

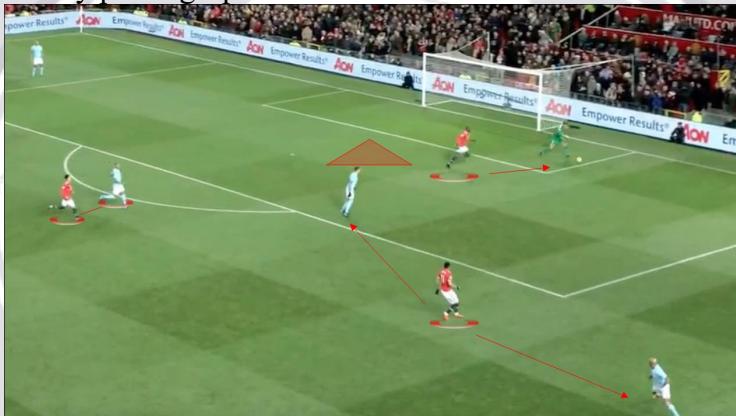


(Sevilla using an option-orientated press from where they can press multiple opponents).

The advantage of pressing this way is that you need fewer players to have access to all the players you want to press, and therefore can keep more man at the back. The downside is that you don't have immediate access to every player, so you are not able to punish every mistake and it is easier to play out underneath the press. Teams that use man-orientated pressure usually use option-orientated press on the far-side, so they can commit more players on the side of the ball while still keeping players at the back.

The third way of pressing is forcing a long ball.

With every way of pressing a long ball can be forced, but with this kind of pressing it is the main objective. This type of pressing is usually used during open play when the opponent plays the ball back to the goalkeeper. One player presses the ball from the side, while trying to take out passes to that side. And about two other players mark the nearby passing-options.



(United forcing a long ball. Lukaku presses the goalkeeper and takes out the passing lane to one side. Fernandinho is being marked and the right winger is option-orientated to be able to press both the central defender and the fullback).

The advantage of pressing like this is that you don't need a lot of players to force a long ball. So you can keep a lot of players at the back, while still having an OK press.

The downside is of course that you don't have access to a lot of players, so the opponents can easily play out underneath it when the press is not executed perfectly.

Organized pressing situations:

The next step when watching a team press is determining which player is pressing which player, especially at goal kicks. This doesn't necessarily mean the names of the players, e.g. Ronaldo is pressing Jordi Alba, but the positions in the original defensive and attacking set-up (right winger presses left fullback). As normally most teams don't want to go fully 1v1 they will leave a player free somewhere on the pitch. When this free player does receive, the defensive team (usually) has a plan that determines which player now has to step out to press the new ball carrier.

There are numerous ways to press a team on a goal kick, and naming all of them would go beyond the stretch of this book. I will discuss some examples here.

The first way of pressing is the most used way in The Netherlands. Especially in the Youth Leagues you see it everywhere, as it can be quite effective.

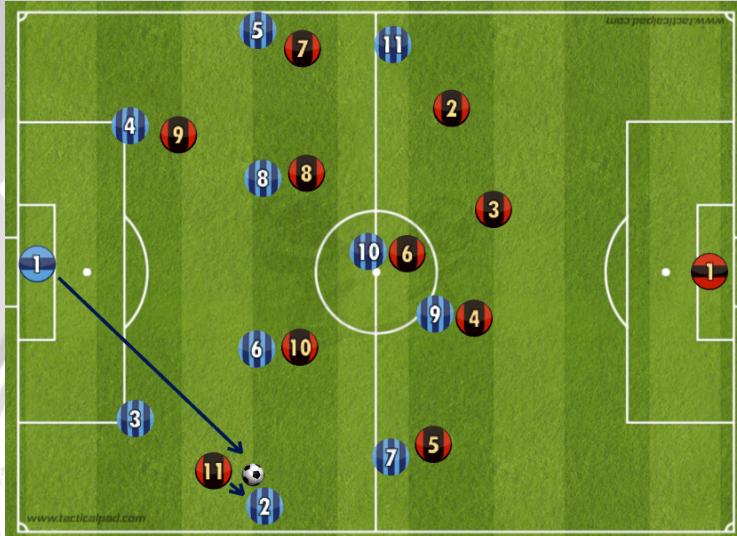
One of the wingers and the striker cover the central defenders, while one of the fullbacks is 'left open'.



(The Red team presses the Blue teams goal kick by leaving the Blue rightback (2) 'free'. The leftwinger (11) is in between the central defender and the fullback)

Now the Blue goalkeeper could try to play the ball to Blue 2. When this happens the Red team can have multiple responses, determining on the qualities of the players and the preference of the coach.

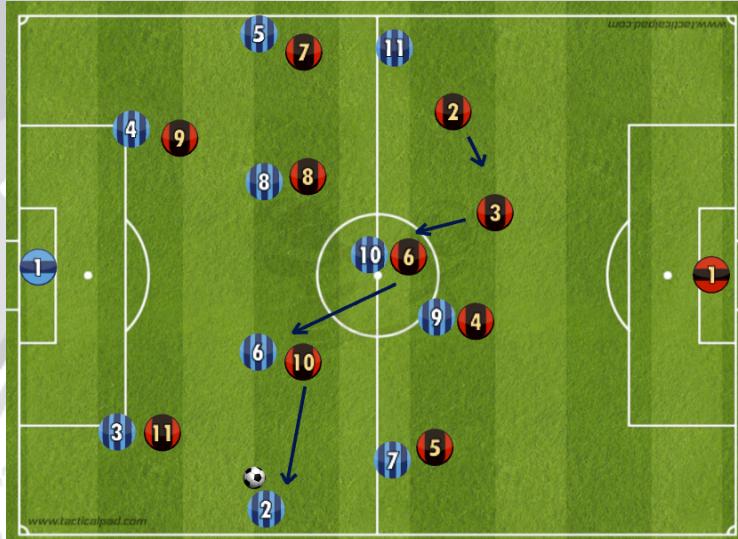
The first option would be to have Red 11 press Blue 2. This could only be possible when the space between the central defender (3) and the fullback (2) isn't too big.



(Space is small enough for Red 11 to cover when the ball goes to Blue 2)

Usually the space between the central defender (3) and fullback (2) is bigger (we come to that later), so another player has to step out.

Another option could be to have the midfielder Red 10 step out to press Blue 2 when the ball is played. As his opponent Blue 6 would then be free, Red 6 could also step through, and Red 3 would then have to take over Blue 10.



(Red 10 goes to Blue 2, Red 6 takes over the marking of Blue 6, and Red 3 takes over the marking of Blue 10).



(Which makes you end up with this field-occupation).

This is a way of pressing I have seen in Dutch youth leagues, and even a way of pressing I did myself for a practice at my UEFA C license. However, you don't see this much at the top-level at the moment as this 'passing over' of players is quite difficult if we also take into account that Blue 6 might drop back to his own penalty box. In addition, there aren't a lot of managers at the top level who are willing to have one of their central defenders leave the defensive line.

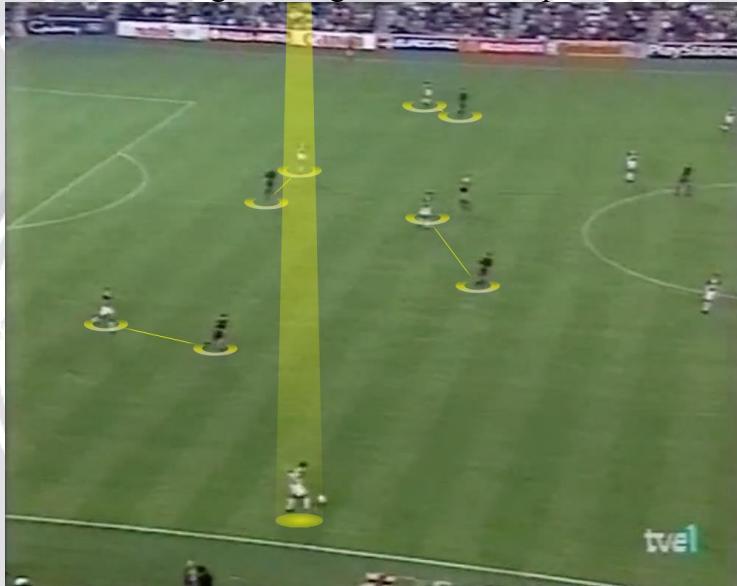
Another option to cover the Blue 2 would be to have your fullback Red 5 step out to defend him.



(Blue 2 has received the ball from the goalkeeper, Red 5 steps out to press him and Red 4 takes over the marking of Blue 7, with Red 2 and Red 3 moving to cover the centre).

The advantage of this is that the midfielders can now just stay in position and follow their own man.

This is also the way of pressing Louis van Gaal used at Barcelona during certain games, for example.



(One fullback is left free)



(Fullback steps out to press the opposition's fullback (the player who received in the previous picture), the central defender takes over the marking of the winger).

Once the opponents have chosen a certain way to press on a goalkick, the team that tries to build-up has two choices:  
1) Don't build-up and play a long ball,

2) Move players in such a way that you are able to create a new free player, which is usually done by creating bigger distances between players. Once the attacking team does this, the defending team has to come up with a reaction to counter this

Let's look at some practical examples of Premier League games:

## Arsenal – Tottenham:



Here in the first picture you can see that Arsenal press with their 3 strikers who are positioned on the 18-yard box. In order to create bigger distances between the players, Tottenham have dropped their central defender back to the goal-line, and two central midfielders to the edge of the 18-yard box.



As the distances are big enough, Tottenham are able to create a free player. Arsenal's fullback is too late to press

Tottenham's fullback, and Arsenal's midfielder and striker are too far to press Tottenham's midfielder.

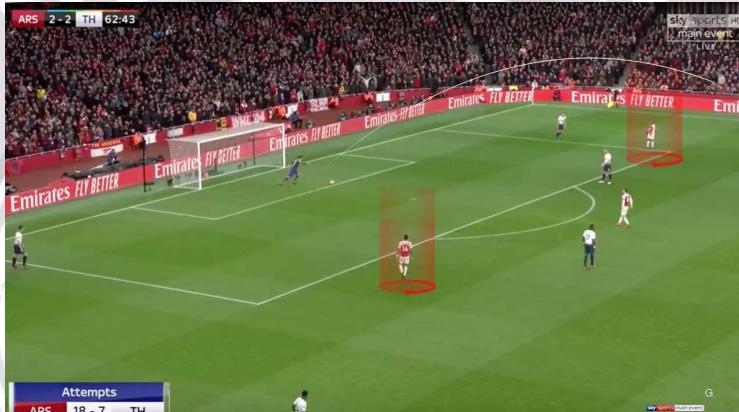


A couple minutes later and Arsenal have changed their pressing. Now the Tottenham midfielder is marked, and Tottenham are forced to play a long ball.



This is near the end of the match. Arsenal now chooses to force the play to the right central defender of Tottenham. Look at the positions of the Arsenal attackers. The one on the right is on the edge of the penalty area, the one on the

left is more on the inside. This allows the one on the left to be able to press the midfielder easier if the goalkeeper does choose to pass the ball to him.



A couple minutes later Arsenal press in the same way. Tottenham again have two choices: either move and create a new free player, or just play a long ball. Last time the Tottenham defender lost the ball, so they don't want to pass the ball to him again, and decide to go for the long ball.

## Chelsea – Manchester City



Here is another example. Manchester City have made the spaces bigger by pulling their central defenders back and having two midfielders fall back to the 18-yard box. Chelsea don't want to go 1v1 so they leave one central defender free.



When the ball is passed to the free defender the nearest Chelsea player steps out and the other players move over to cover the player he leaves.



When Manchester City do manage to reach the other side of the field (switched through the goalkeeper), one of Chelsea's midfielders (Kante) steps out to press him.



Same scenario, right central defender left free is just outside the screen.



As the distances between the City players are too big for the Chelsea players to cover, City are able to create a free midfielder once the Chelsea attacker steps out to press the receiving defender.

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### *Pressing triggers*

Pressing all the time however, is pretty pointless and a waste of energy. If the opponent is completely organized and has the capabilities to play out, the press will most likely be ineffective from the get-go. On the other side, there are also moments during a game in which the chances of you winning the ball during pressing are much higher. These moments are called ‘pressing triggers’. Examples of pressing triggers are: a bad touch, a difficult pass, a ball into a corner, or a player that receives without orientating himself first.

Just think about the kings that are fighting between the castles again. It is much easier to defeat the other army when they are on the edge of a cliff than when they are organized on the open battlefield.

There are three categories of pressing triggers. The first one is pressing when the opposition are not yet organized. I think most people have heard of the infamous “five second rule” once installed at Barcelona by Guardiola, or the so-called ‘gegenpressing’ by Klopp.

The idea behind this is that the opposition isn’t in an ideal shape when they win the ball, since they are in their defensive formation instead of their attacking one. Therefore ball retention will be more difficult, and it is easier to win the ball back.



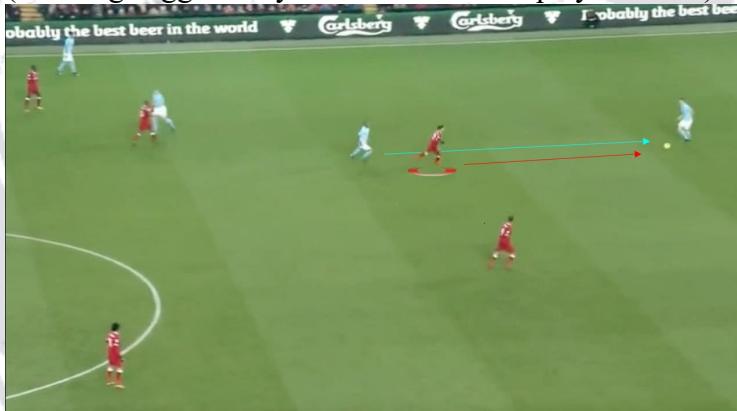
(Guardiola's 5-second rule: Immediate pressure after losing the ball).

The second one is a lack of control of the attacker. This involves: a bad pass, a ball that is difficult to control (high ball, bad pace of pass), a long ball, a player that hasn't orientated himself before receiving, a ball played into a corner, a ball played vertically back, a bad first touch, long or slow ball back, player receiving with his back to goal, a player looking to switch the play (and therefore has to put his head down), and even bad parts of the pitch can be this type of pressing trigger.

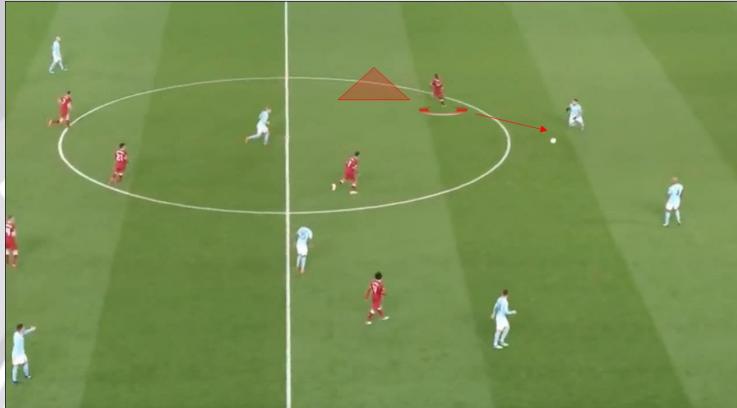
The idea behind this kind of pressing trigger is that the opponent won't have full control of the ball so pressing him will increase our chances of winning the ball back.



(Pressing trigger: Player with his back to play receives).

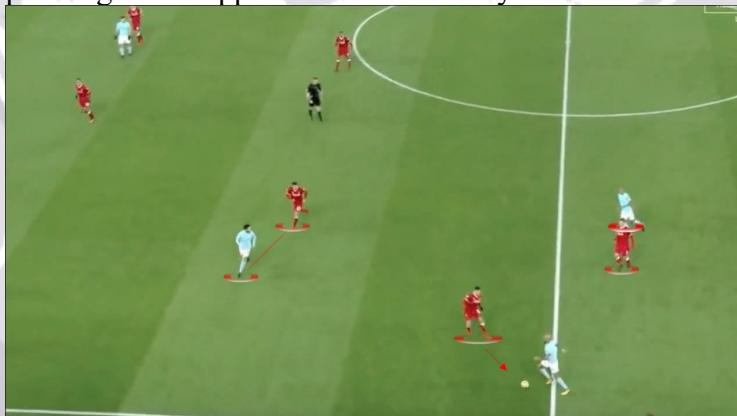


(Pressing Trigger: Ball is played vertically back. Presser is able to press the new ball carrier and take out the passing lane to the player that passed the ball).



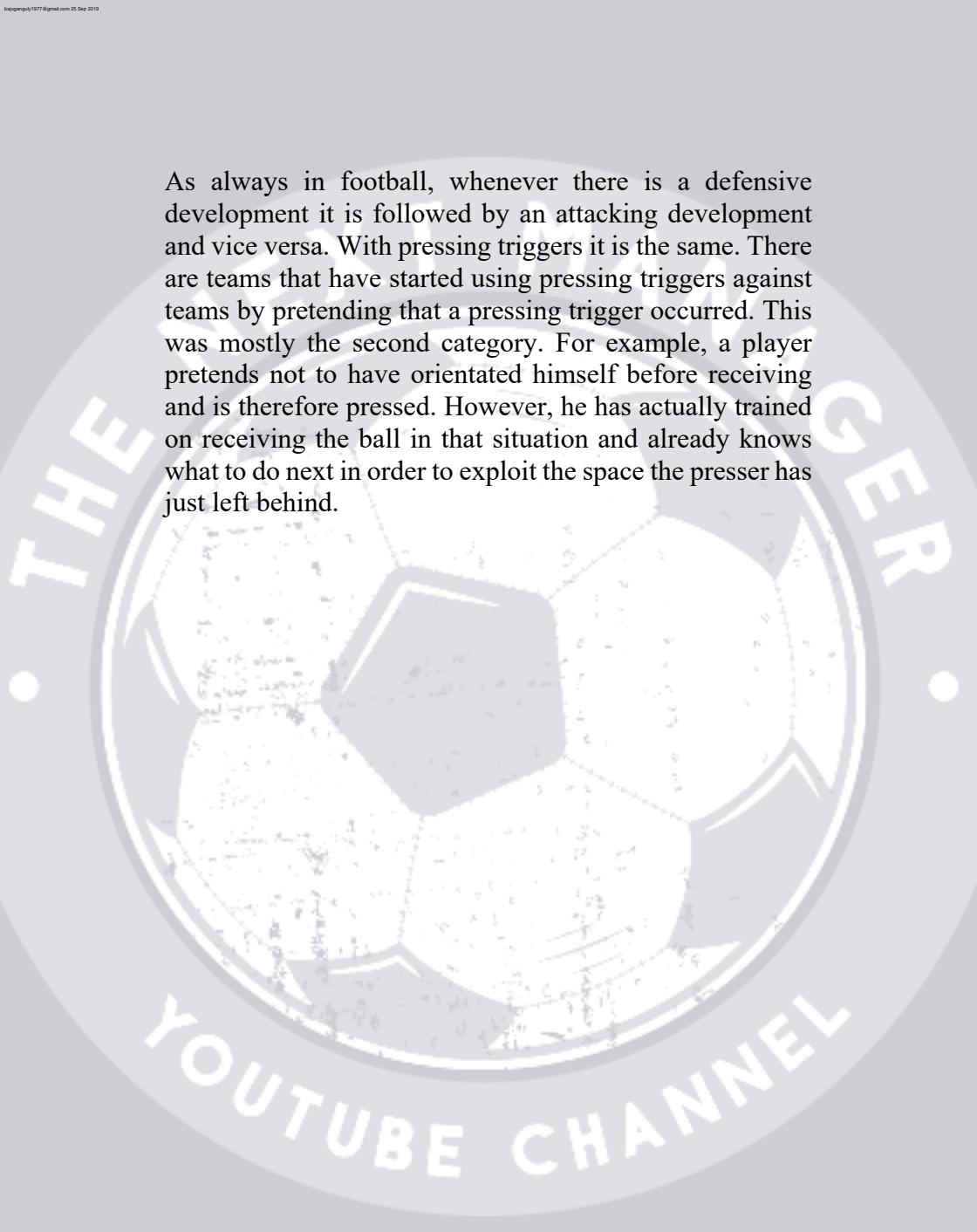
(Pressing trigger: Switch of play)

The third kind of pressing trigger is a forced pressing trigger. This means that a team forces the opponent to a certain part of the pitch in which pressing is easier. An often-used example is teams making themselves compact in the centre, which forces the opponent to the outside. When the opponent plays the ball to the side, they start pressing as the opponent is closed in by the sideline.



(Ball is played to the side so Liverpool start pressing).

As always in football, whenever there is a defensive development it is followed by an attacking development and vice versa. With pressing triggers it is the same. There are teams that have started using pressing triggers against teams by pretending that a pressing trigger occurred. This was mostly the second category. For example, a player pretends not to have orientated himself before receiving and is therefore pressed. However, he has actually trained on receiving the ball in that situation and already knows what to do next in order to exploit the space the presser has just left behind.



## Counterpressing

I already mentioned it briefly in the last paragraph, counterpressing or ‘gegenpressing’. Loved by internet analysts, hated by ‘old school’ journalists (well, at least here in The Netherlands).

Imagine that you are playing a game of football, perhaps even at the highest level, and you are a central defender. A football field is about one hundred meters in length, so about fifty meters per half. That means that every time you win the ball and advance into the opponent’s half you have to sprint fifty meters forward. Which is usually doable, especially as it is ‘positive’ mentally as you start attacking.

Now, every time you lose the ball you have to sprint back about 50 meters. This gets exhausting and annoying very soon (at least for me as a player it did). In addition, when you are a possession-based team you just advanced to a certain part of the pitch. If every time that you lose the ball you run back, you have to start over from scratch during every attack.

But have no fear, because counterpressing is here!

The ‘5 second rule’ basically just means immediately pressing after you lose the ball. The main advantages of that being that you don’t have to run backwards every time you lose the ball, and able to intercept the ball where you lost it so you don’t have to start all over again.

However, the philosophy of counterpressing actually goes one step further. Where some coaches just want their team to immediately press the ball so they can win it back, there

are coaches like Jurgen Klopp who deliberately look for counterpressing moments. He has had teams who lost the ball on purpose, just so they could counterpress. The advantage that counterpressing in this way has is that it takes advantages of the opponents' positive transition.

The opponents win the ball back, so start spreading out to get into their attacking shape, which leaves holes in their defense. By counterpressing and immediately playing the ball forward you are able to exploit these spaces (remember that unbreakable wholeness I talked about earlier ☺). Klopp also called counterpressing “The best playmaker in the world”, as taking advantage of this transition is so effective.

Roughly, there are four different kinds of counterpressing. Each one immediately presses the ball, but they have different orientation points.

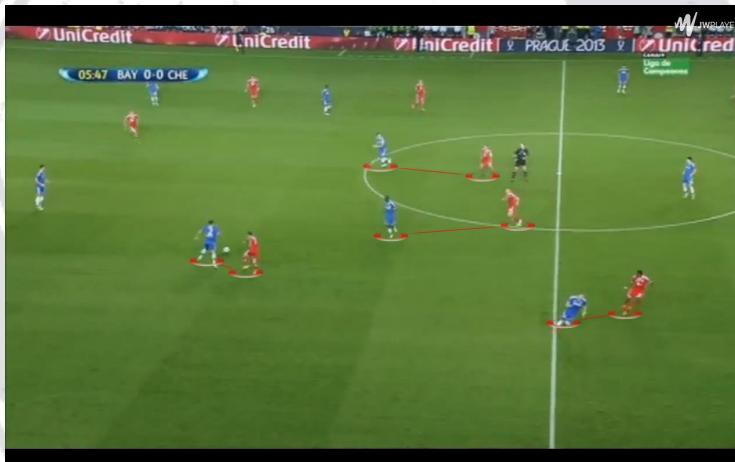
The first one has the ball as orientation point. This is the first way teams started pressing the ball after losing it. The main example is the Dutch National team of 1974. They all ran forward to close down the ball. However, this was mainly possible because of the different interpretation of the offside rule. Back then offside was flagged if there was even just one player somewhere on the pitch offside. Nowadays it only counts for the player receiving the ball. That is the reason that this kind of pressing isn't used anymore.



(The Netherlands ‘counterpressing’ in 1974).

The second one has opponents as orientation point. Each player immediately starts to mark an opponent. The pressure on the ballcarrier isn't intense, but because all his passing options are heavenly pressed it is usually enough to win the ball back.

The team that is most associated with this type of counterpressing is Heynckes' Bayern Munich that won the Champions League in 2012.



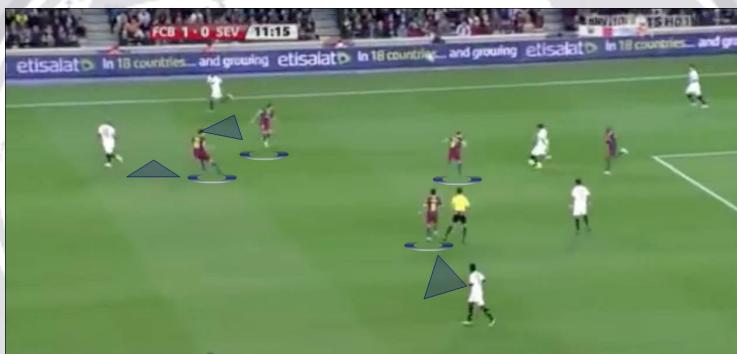
(Man-orientated counterpressing. One Bayern player immediately presses the ball, the other ones mark a passing option).

The third one has space as its orientation point. The players around the ball immediately press the space around the new ball carrier. Hereby blocking passing lanes, reducing space, and putting pressure on the ball, Klopp's Dortmund side made this type of counterpressing iconic. And it is still a popular way of counterpressing.



(Dortmund loses the ball and 4 players immediately close down the space around the new ball carrier).

The fourth and last one has passing lanes as its orientation point. After losing the ball the players near the ball immediately take out a passing lane, reducing the options for the opponent on the ball. This type of counterpressing is less about immediately winning the ball back, but more about forcing passes to a certain space, to win the ball back cleanly. Pep Guardiola's Barcelona used this type of counterpressing.



(Pep's Barca immediately pressing the ball after losing it and taking out passing lanes to potential receivers).

So, does every team counterpress? No, not every team. However, every team does transition after losing the ball. Therefore (almost) every team wants immediate pressure on the ball. This allows the rest of the team to get into the defensive shape, while the opponent isn't able to counterattack. The most important thing in that way of pressing is to take out the forward passing option for the opponent. But that kind of pressing is more orientated on 'getting into the defensive shape' then on 'winning the ball back'.

In this chapter you learned the different kinds of defensive tactics and how they are used. In the following chapter I will tell you the different ways in which teams try to pull apart these defenses.



## Worksheet #3

In this worksheet we are going to look at recognizing zonal- and man-marking during matches.

### Exercise #1

I'm going to show you pictures from a match, and your job is to say what formation is being played, and what kind of defense they are using: man- or zonal-marking. When it is zonal-marking, also try to say what kind of zonal marking (regular, passing-lane-orientated, zonal man-orientations).

You see these two shots during a game. How is Nigeria (Green team) defending?



Nigeria is defending in a 5-3-2 using zonal man-orientations. You can see the structure in the first picture, as there is quite clearly 3 in midfield and 2 upfront. The first picture also shows man-orientations in midfield, however this can still be either man-marking or zonal man-orientations. In the second picture we see it is the latter, as they are now positioned zonally when there isn't a man in their zone.



Looking at this picture, how is Chelsea defending?



Chelsea is defending in a 5-4-1 using regular zonal defending.

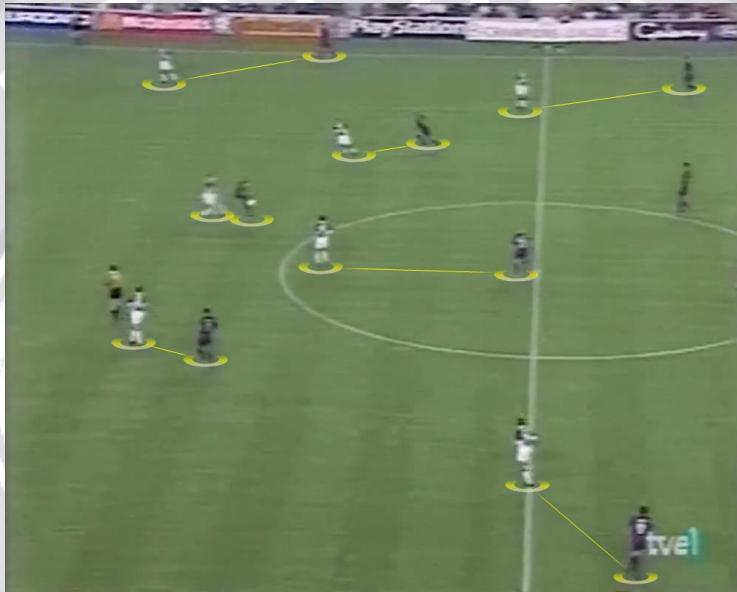
First of all it is a 5-4-1 as you can clearly see a line of 5 and a line of 4, leaving just one player outside of the screen. Second, the “lines” show it is zonal marking. And you can see it is teammate-orientated as one of the central midfielders steps out to press the ball, and two other midfielders provide cover for him.



How is PSV (Black and White team) defending here?



I would say this is a case of man-marking. As you can see all players have followed their opponent, and the far-ball midfielder hasn't tucked inside to cover the centre.



How is Liverpool defending?



Liverpool is defending in a 4-3-3/4-5-1 shape, and they have a clear passing-lane-orientated style of defending. The striker is trying to take out the pass to the defensive midfielder, and you can clearly see the two midfielders taking out the passing lane to opponents behind them



How is Valencia (Black and Orange team) defending?



Valencia is defending in a 4-4-2 shape, in which they use regular zonal marking. This is noticeable as the left midfielder has stepped out to press the player on the ball, and the left central midfielder is taking up a position in which he is able to cover his teammate.



How is Manchester United (Blue team) defending?



Manchester United is clearly using Zonal Man-orientations. You can see all the players on the left side marking the player in their zone. While the players on the other side of the field have moved inside to cover the centre.



And lastly, let's do a more difficult one. How is Real Madrid defending here? Mainly focus on the two defensive midfielders.



Real Madrid is here using zonal man-orientations. However this is the more zonal way of doing it. In the first picture you can see the right defensive midfielder having a man-orientation on his opponent, while the left defensive midfielder covers the centre. In the second picture they same thing is happening. The left defensive midfielder is now on the side of the ball and goes to the side, while the right defensive midfielder takes the centre. However, there isn't an opponent in the left defensives midfields zone, therefore he just stays in a zonal position.



## Worksheet #4

In this worksheet we are going to look at some forms of high-pressing. We start with unorganized pressing situations, which are situations during open play in which a team presses high-up. For now the only thing you have to find-out is which way of pressing is being used: man-orientated, option-orientated, or forcing a long ball.

### Exercise #1

How is Real Madrid pressing here?



Real is using a man-orientated press. Everyone steps up to be able to cover an opponent.



What kind of pressing is Spain using here (you could say it is a combination of two)



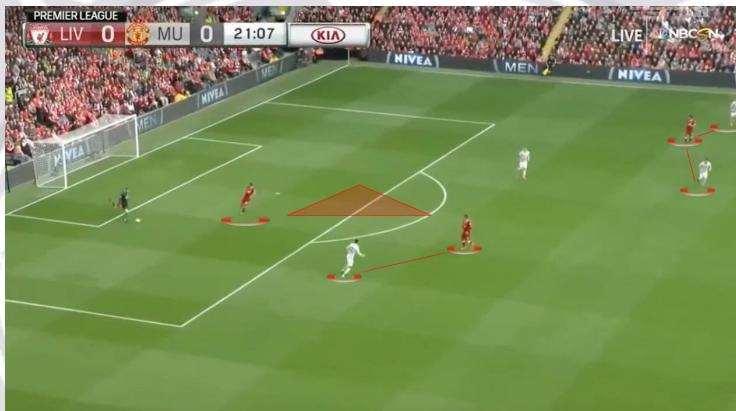
Spain is forcing the opponent to play a long ball by using man-orientations. It is a man-orientated press in the beginning, but one player makes a curved run to be able to press the goalkeeper.



How is Liverpool pressing here?



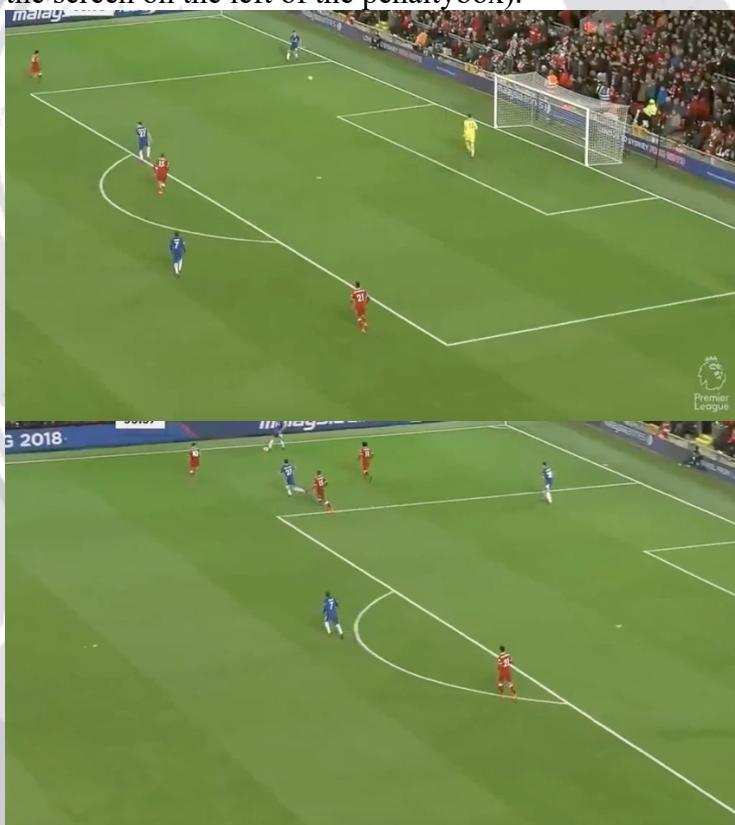
Liverpool is pressing in the same way as Spain in the previous picture. Forcing a long ball by using man-orientations. The reason I put in the same kind of pressing twice is because this is by far the most common way of pressing in these kind of situations



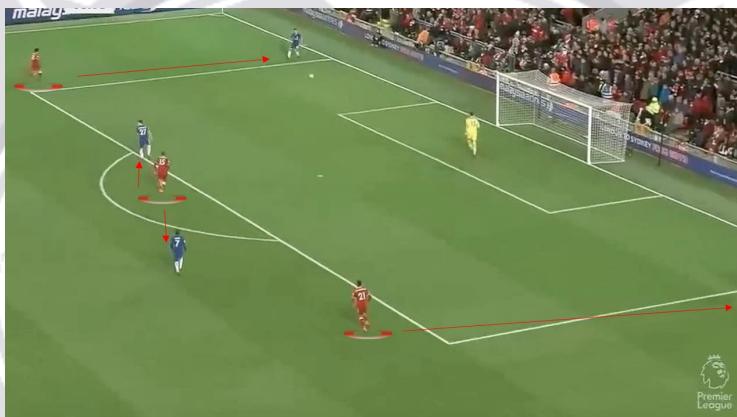
## Organized pressing situations:

Look at the following two pictures of a team pressing on a goalkick, and tell me which three players form the first line of pressing and who are they responsible for in the press. And second, when the first line of pressure is broken (free player is reached), who is responsible for pressing the free player?

(One central defender of the attacking team is just outside the screen on the left of the penaltybox).



The striker is option-orientated between the two midfielders that have dropped. Both the wingers are responsible for pressing the central defender on their side and tucking inside when the play goes to the other side.



Once one of the free fullbacks is reached, a central midfield player steps out to press him.



## Exercise #2

### Pressing triggers

Below I will show you some examples of a team pressing. Your job is to say which pressing trigger is being “triggered” in the shot.

What pressing trigger do we see here?



An opponent receiving with his back to goal.



What Pressing trigger do we see here?



An opponent that wants to switch the play, and therefore has to put his face down to look at the ball.



What pressing trigger do we see here?



A ball that is difficult to control/bouncing ball



What pressing trigger do we see here?



Trapping the opponent on the side of the field



Assignment: Now I want you to look at a match and decipher the entire defensive plan of a team. Do they use zonal- or man-marking, in what formation, how do they press on goalkicks, who goes to press once the opponent finds a free player, when do they press, do they use certain pressing triggers, do they try to force the opponent to a certain part of the field?

Don't be alarmed when you have to watch a match multiple times to really figure this out. But I would definitely recommend doing this, because once you understand the patterns you recognize them in every game.