



# Using a Three Player Midfield

## Part 1: In Possession

# Three Player Midfield

This on-line resource is designed to help you develop your team's ability to play with a three player midfield.

It will guide you through the following:

- ✓ The different formations available
- ✓ Elite examples in the Champions League
- ✓ How to set up your midfield
- ✓ The different players required
- ✓ Youth development – Individual Player
- ✓ Youth development – Team
- ✓ Training practices to develop your players and team



# Formations & Elite Examples

# Elite Examples

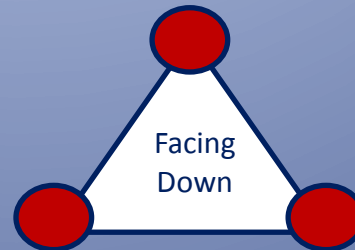
When viewing the worlds greatest club teams, it is clear to see that a three player midfield is the preferred choice of these clubs.

See below for the different teams and the players who make up the midfields.

FC Barcelona



2011 CL Winners  
2011 World Club Winners  
2013 La Liga Winners  
2013 Super Cup Winners



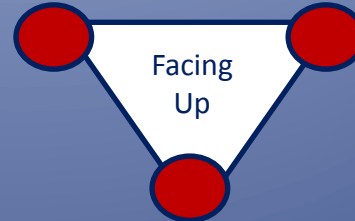
## Key players used

Busquets,  
Xavi,  
Iniesta,  
Fabregas

Chelsea FC



2012 CL Winners  
2012 FA Cup Winners  
2013 Europa League Winners

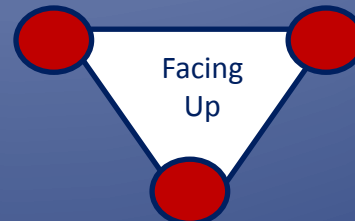


Ramires  
Lampard  
Oscar  
Mata

Real Madrid CF



2012 La Liga Winners  
2012 Supercopa Espana Winners  
2013 Copa Del Rey Winners

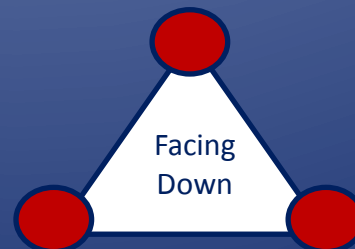


Khedira  
Modric  
Alonso  
Isco

FC Bayern



2013 Champions League winners  
2013 World Club Winners  
2013 Bundesliga Winners  
2013 German Cup Winners



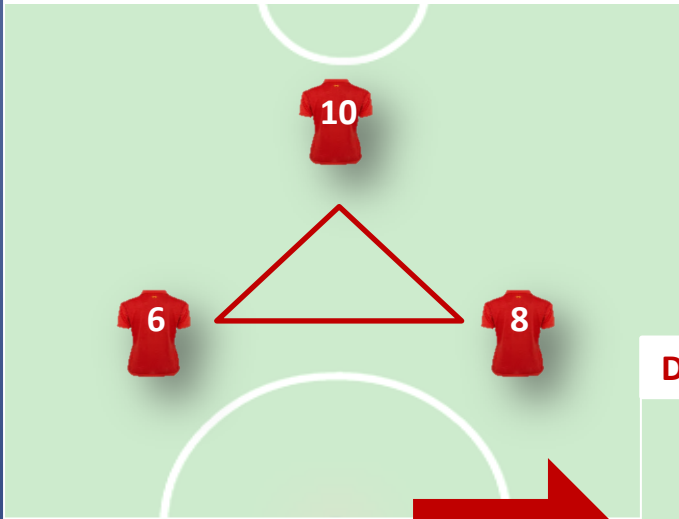
Martinez  
Schweinsteiger  
Lahm  
Kroos  
Muller



# How to set up your midfield

# How to set up your midfield triangle?

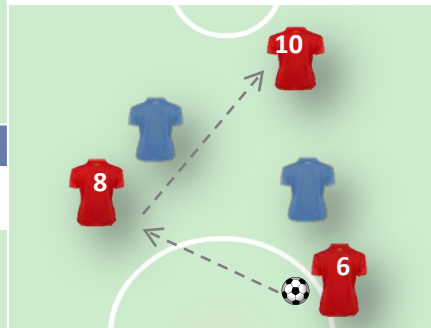
## Facing up



## Triangle facing up (the pitch)

- Two central midfielders who give the team balance
- If one midfielder attacks, the other midfielder sits deep to cover the centre of the pitch
- The attacking midfielder plays behind the teams forwards
- This midfielder is in a “free-role” and is able to move around the pitch in order to receive the ball. This player must provide a goal threat with assists or goals.

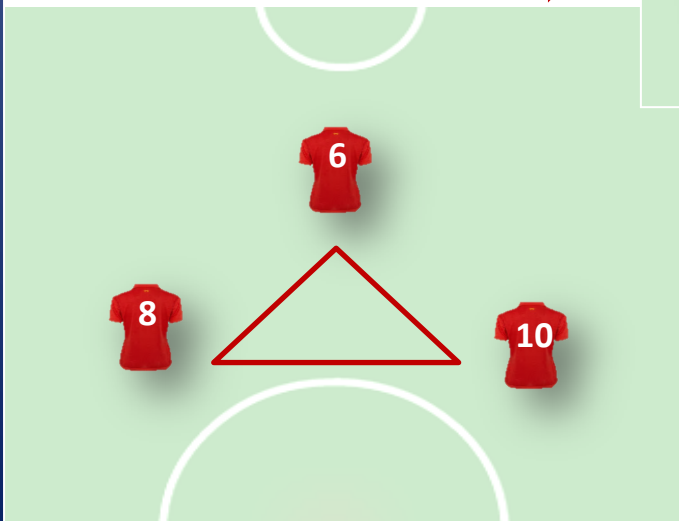
## Different Lines to zig-zag



## Playing on different lines

When the team is in possession, can the players get on different lines so that they can zig-zag themselves through the opponents midfield with passes?

## Facing down

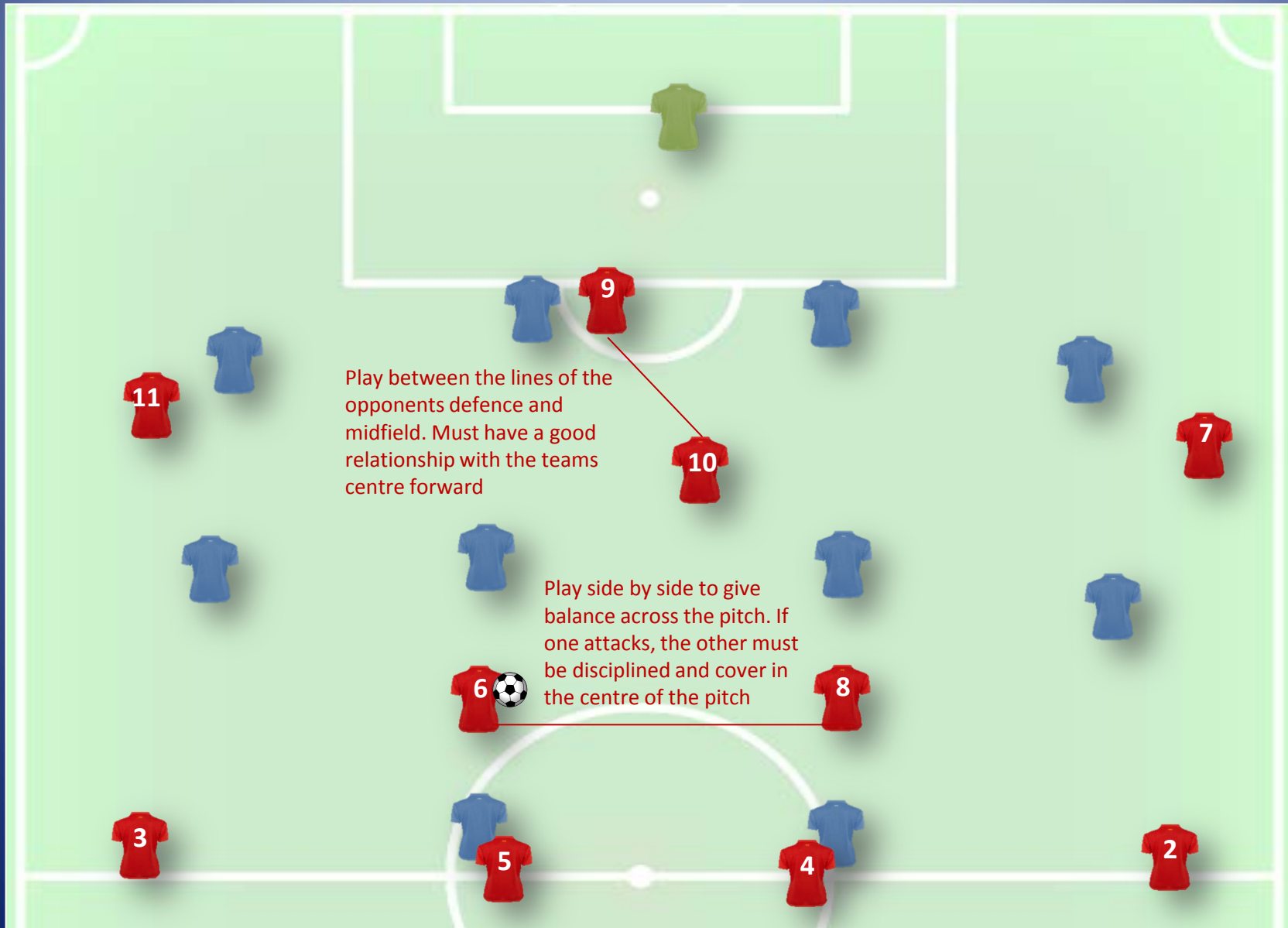


## Triangle facing down (the pitch)

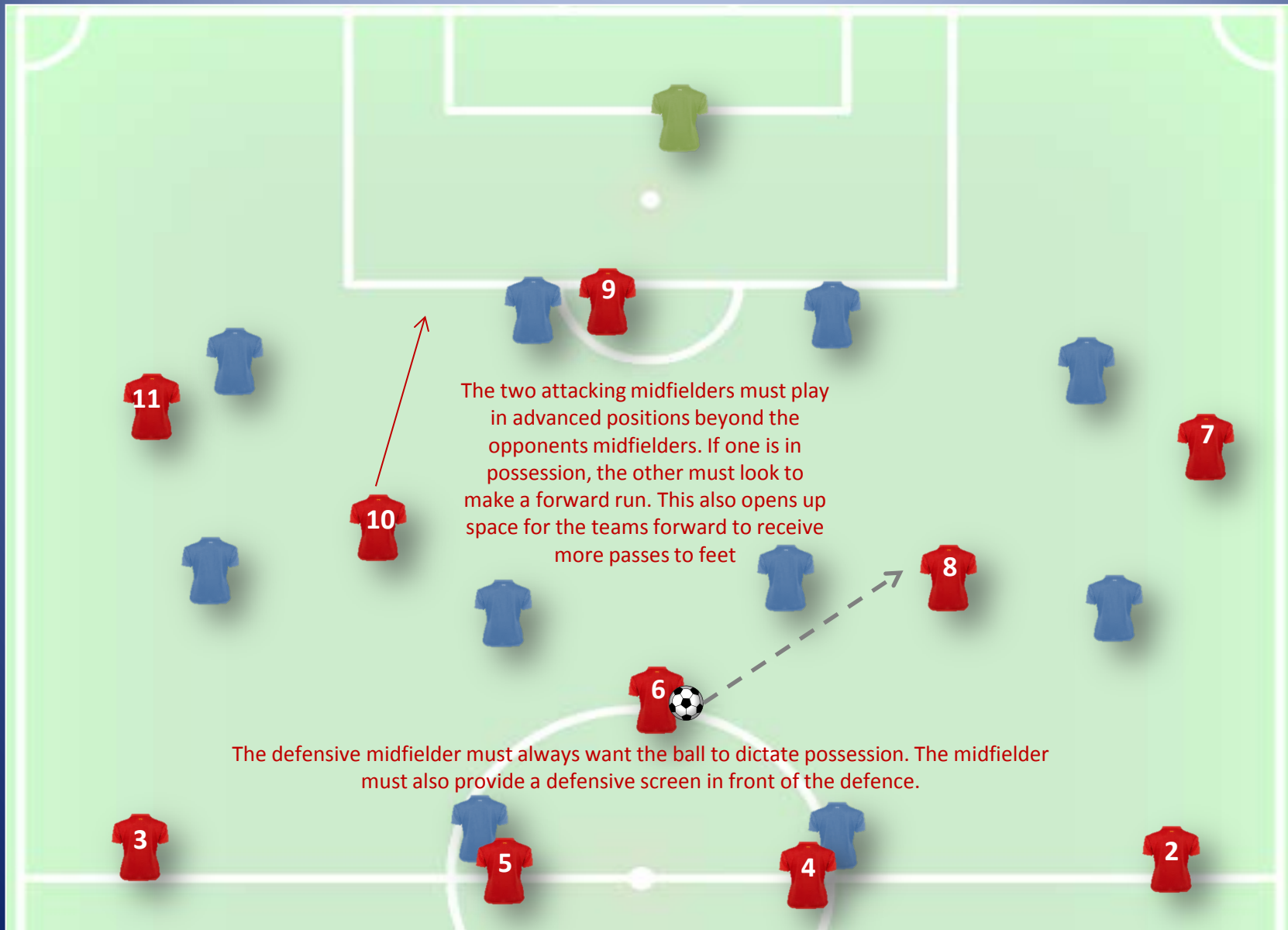
- One defensive midfielder is used to keep possession of the ball
- This midfielder is also used to cover behind the two attacking midfielders and to provide a defensive “screen” in front of the teams defence
- The two attacking midfielders play to the right and left of the defensive midfielder
- When one attacking midfielder is in possession, the other should be making a forward run into goal scoring positions.



# Example - Triangle Facing up



# Example - Triangle Facing down







Different types of player

When selecting the players to make up your midfield, it is important to select players that have different playing personalities (styles, strengths) as this will give the team balance and natural rotation/movement due to the players taking on different roles in the game.

### Types of player

**Passer** – The passer likes to be in possession of the ball and dictating the teams build up with different passes

**Energiser** – The energiser is a box to box midfielder who has high stamina levels and covers lots of distance

**Spider in the web** - This type of player links the teams play with lots of short combination passes to keep possession

**Magician** – The magician is the creative influence who gets on the ball to dribble/pass to create goalscoring chances

**Destroyer** – A defensive midfielder who breaks up the opponents attacks with tackles or interceptions.

### FC Barcelona



**Xavi**  
**Spider**

**Iniesta**  
**Magician**

**Busquets**  
**Passer**

### Real Madrid CF



**Khedira**  
**Energiser**



**Alonso**  
**Passer**



**Modric**  
**Magician**

**Tip 1** - When selecting your midfield it is important that the three players have clear strengths and compliment the other midfielders. You can have two players that are similar in style, however it is strongly advised that you do not pick three of the same type (for example, three destroyers or three magicians which will effect your teams balance)

**Tip 2** – You can identify the level of a midfield player using the following questions.

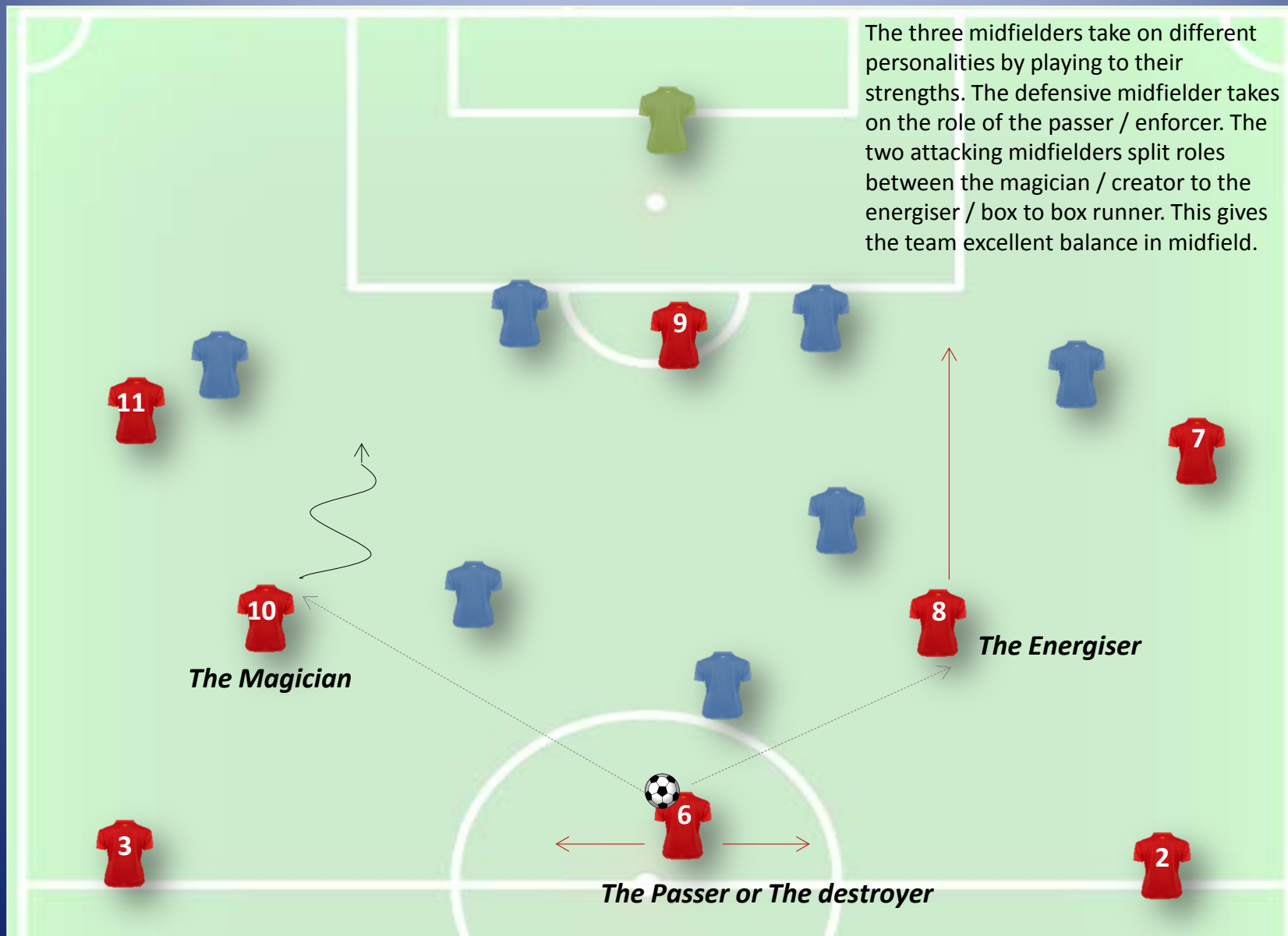
(1) do you score goals? (2) do you create goals? (3) do you stop goals?

A top midfielder should give positive answers for two of the questions. A world class player will often answer yes to all three.

# Example - Triangle Facing up



# Example - Triangle Facing Down





# Youth Development



# Individual Player Development

## ➤ Technical Master

World class midfielders are technical masters who can receive in tight areas, twist away from pressure, keep possession with different types of pass technique and can score/assist goals. In training, work your players hard technically on both sides, begin with ways to receive (with 360 pressure) and pass over 10-15yds to maintain possession. Can your players open their shoulders to see both goals? can they work space to pass or dribble forward?



## ➤ Experience of playing different roles

World class midfielders are able to take on different roles in the team. The best midfielders are flexible and not “specialists”.

In youth development, it is important to gain experience in all forms of play before you select the one which compliments your individual strengths. Therefore, give your players time as the energiser, the magician, the passer, the enforcer to develop their all round game.



## ➤ Not a number, a midfielder

Young players should not be rigid or stuck to one position. Often you hear coaches name a team and tell players “you are the number 6 or you are the number 10” etc. This immediately labels a player and gives a vision of the game they must play. However, the game of football is unpredictable and forces players to constantly problem solve. The best teams in the world (Spain) are continuously rotating positions to create space to get on the ball. Players must therefore, be comfortable moving in different areas of the pitch to receive.



## ➤ Positively effecting the game

Young players must have a huge desire to be in possession of the ball and positively dictating the outcome of games. The best players want the ball and they want to show what they can do.

- (1) Do you score goals? YES / NO
- (2) Do you create goals? YES / NO
- (3) Do you stop goals? YES / NO

Complete this questionnaire with your midfielders

What is there current level?

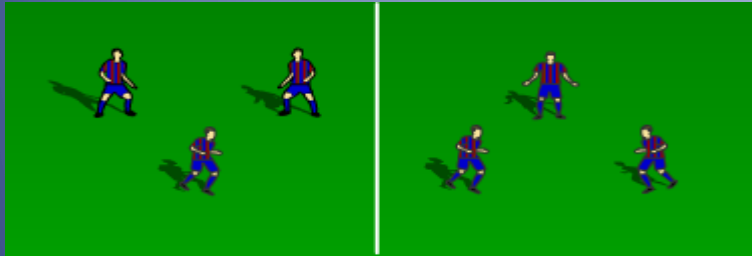
What areas must they improve to develop further?





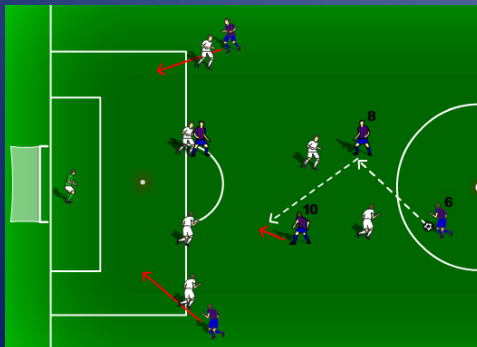
# Team Development

## ➤ Experience of playing with triangle facing up and facing down



The aim for your team is to be rotating the midfield triangle naturally in order to disrupt the opponents defence and to play through midfield. The perfect example of this is FC Barcelona. Therefore, its important to give your players experience of playing with the triangle facing up and down before this free-form style becomes comfortable for your team

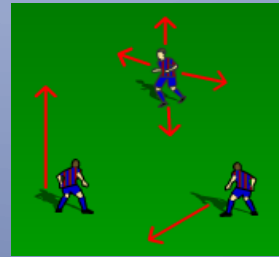
## ➤ In Possession, don't play on the same line – Zig-Zag through the pitch



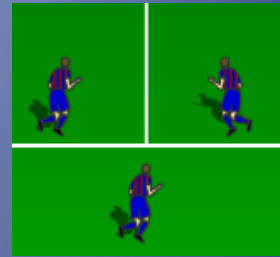
In Possession, get your players working on different lines so that its hard for the opponents midfield to make play predictable. This tactic stops your team playing square passes and helps you to make zig-zag passes through midfield.

## ➤ Building Relationships

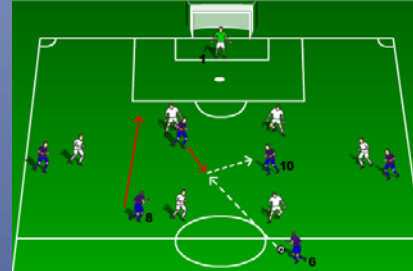
### Other Midfielders



If one midfielder attacks, another should cover. If one midfielder likes to sit, the other must like running forward. Can your players cover different corridors on the pitch?



### With forwards



If the number 9 comes short, can one of the midfielders look to run behind? Can one of the midfielders support from the front?

Can the attacking midfielder (10) constantly co-ordinate movement with the forward to disrupt the opponents defence?

### With defenders



When playing out of defence, does one midfielder go to support the defenders? How do the other midfielders react? When a defender is stepping out, can the midfielders split to open the midfield and create passing options?



# Practices

# Practices

1.

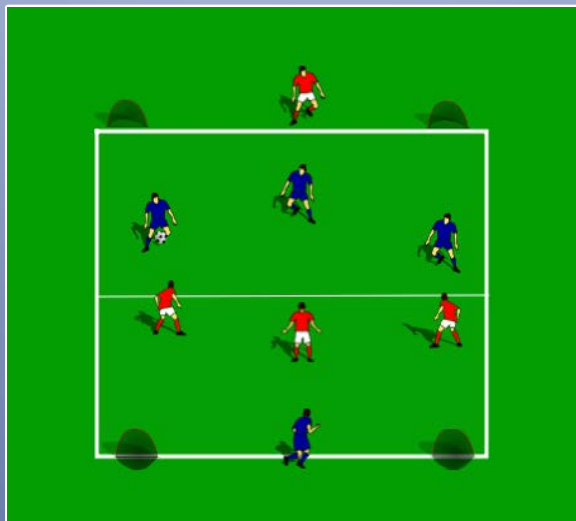


Tight pitch – 10x12yds with 6yd end zones

3v3 inside the pitch with each team having a goalkeeper protecting the two mini goals

The players must combine quickly to score in the mini goals. encourage disguised finishing

2.



Small game

Three players in each half and one player as a target between the two mini goals

The players must circulate the ball and then with disguise try to score by passing in the mini goals or to the target player

3.



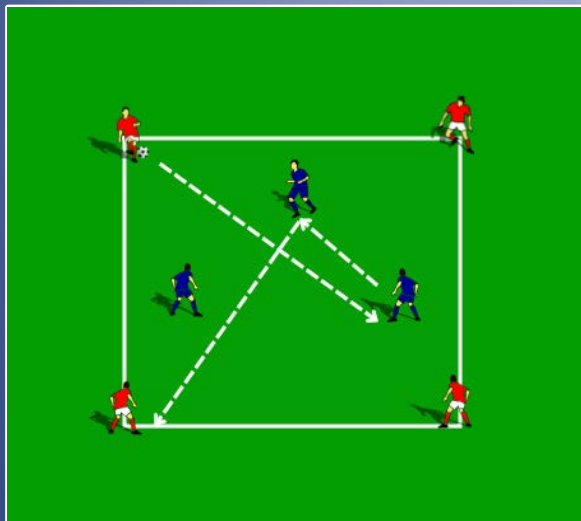
Three players in the centre of the area

The players must combine in order for one player to pass to the outside and then follow

The players in the middle must be free to use various movements to play outside

# Practices

4.

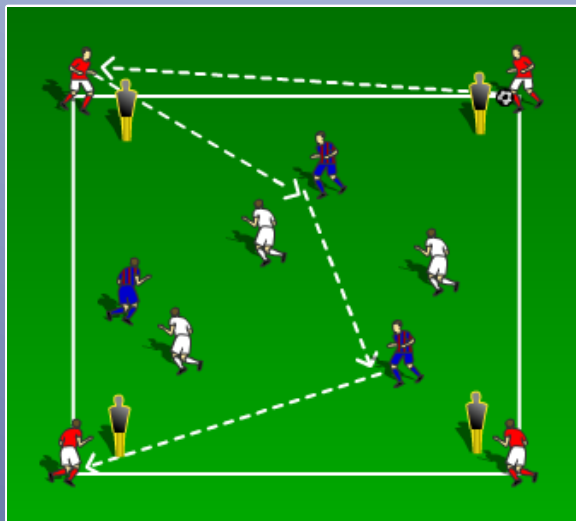


Three players in the middle

Four players on the outside.  
Outside players must pass across to another outside player and then into the area

The central players must rotate as the square pass is made and combine 1 or 2 touch to work the ball from one end to the other

5.



3v3 inside the pitch to keep possession of the ball

Four neutral players on the outside work behind mannequins.

The rule for the outside players is that on receiving a pass, they must quickly transfer the ball to another outside player before passing back into the 3v3 game

6.



3v3 on the outside

2v2 + one neutral in the middle

The team must keep possession by using the outside players and the neutral player

The neutral player makes the three player midfield

# Practices

7.



## 3v3 in the middle

Two neutral centre backs and one neutral forward.

The attacking team try to build up and score in the mini goals. The defending team must regain the ball and pass out to the centre backs to reverse roles

8.



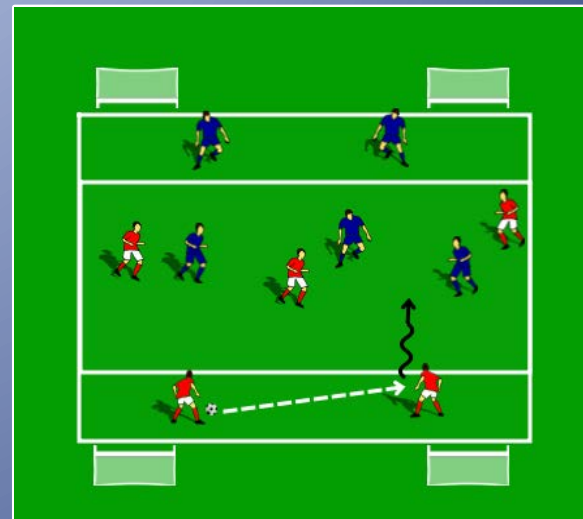
## 3v3 in the middle

Four team mates on the outside. Outside players are limited to two touches

Game 1 - Bounce pass with outside players

Game 2 - Rotate positions with outside players

9.

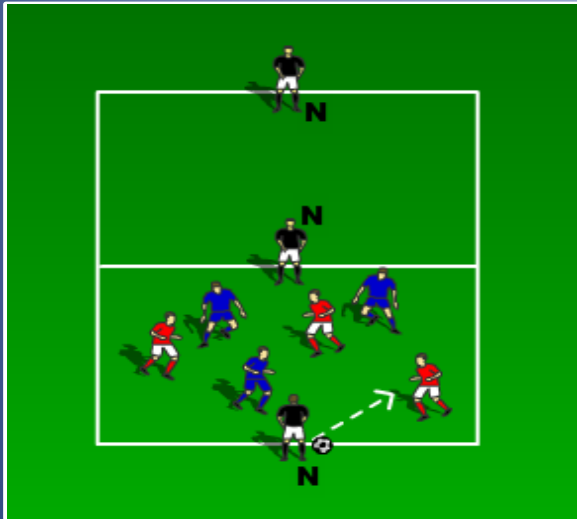


## 3v3 in the centre of the pitch with two centre backs in the end zone

The centre back in possession can step out to create an overload in the middle zone. The aim is to free a player to go 1v1 against an opponents centre back

# Practices

10.



The pitch is split into two halves. One neutral goes on each end line and one goes on the middle line.

The game starts with the reds keeping possession with two neutrals in a 5v3 situation. The blue team must regain the ball and pass to the opposite neutral player to switch the game to the opposite half. 8 passes = a goal

11.



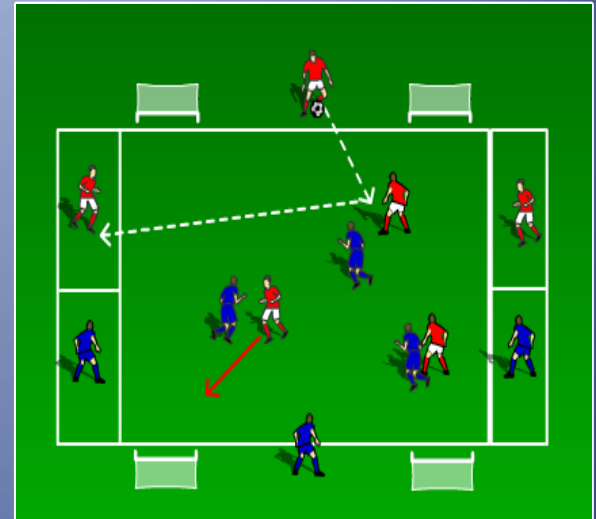
3v3 in the middle

Three neutrals on the outside

The red team must play off the neutral to score in the two wide mini goals

The blue team must play off one of the two neutrals to score in the central mini goal.

12.



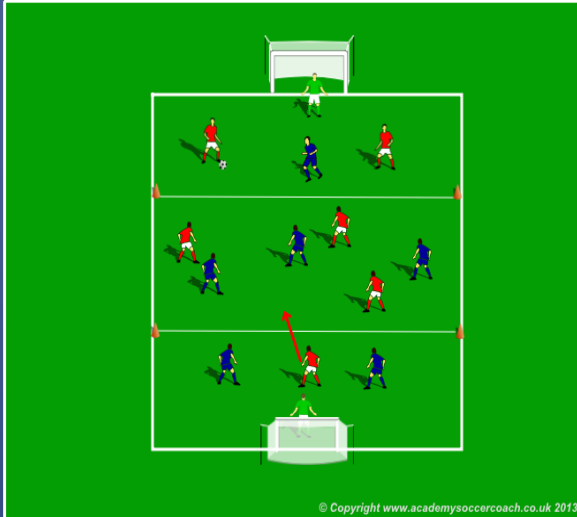
3v3 in the middle. Each team has a right back, left back and centre back outside the pitch. These players cannot pass to each other and are limited to two touches.

The teams must use the three defenders to score in the opponents goals. Each time a goal is scored, the losing team rotate the three players in the game



# Practices

13.



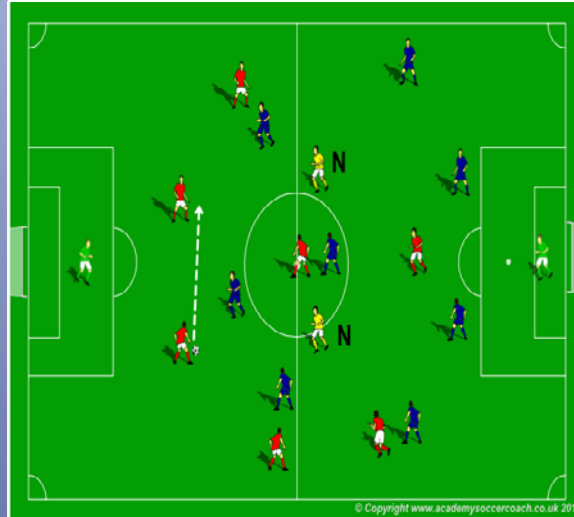
Playing across the 18yd box

Two teams. Each team has a GK, two defenders in the defensive zone.

Three midfielders in the middle zone and one forward in the attacking zone.

Can the team build up to score?

14.



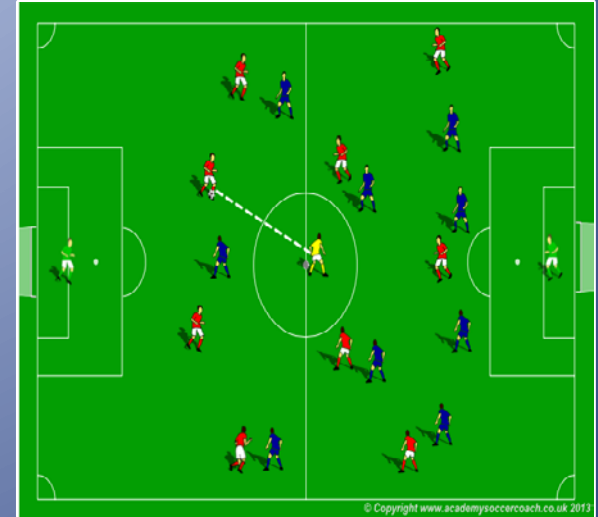
Two teams.

Each team has a GK, 4 defenders, a number 6 and 3 forwards.

Two neutral players (8/10) play for the team in possession

These players are limited to one touch (can be increased to two if the game lacks rhythm)

15.



Two teams. Each team has a GK, 4 defenders, 2 midfielders and 3 forwards

A neutral number 6 plays for the team in possession and offers an overload in midfield.

The number 6 can be limited to two touches to improve speed of play



Reflection

# Reflection

This resource has provided you with information to consider when implementing a three player midfield.

You should now have a good understanding of:

- ✓ Formations that use a three player midfield
- ✓ Elite team examples
- ✓ How to set up your midfield triangle
- ✓ Playing on different lines to zig-zag through the pitch or disrupt the opponents defence
- ✓ The different types of player needed
- ✓ Youth development considerations for Individual player development
- ✓ Youth development considerations for team development
- ✓ Training practices that develop three player midfields

In addition to this course, please visit [www.academyfootballcoach.com](http://www.academyfootballcoach.com) to view our formation E-books that include GK433 (6), GK433 (10), GK451, GK352

These step by step guides compliment the information provided in this resource and will support the implementation for your team of players.

© Copyright [www.academyfootballcoach.co.uk](http://www.academyfootballcoach.co.uk) 2014

## Disclaimer – Copyright & Intellectual Property Rights

This content is subject to English copyright law and intellectual property rights. Any use of said content not permitted under the English copyright and intellectual property right laws requires the previous written permission of Academy Soccer Coach or respective holder of rights. This shall especially apply to the copying, processing, translation, storage, conversion or reproduction of content in databases or other electronic media and systems.

Illicit copying or reproduction of partial content or entire pages is not permitted and is punishable by law. Only the generation of copies and downloads for personal, private, non-commercial purposes is permitted.

