

The Scottish Football Association

UEFA Pro Licence Opponent Observation



Why do we do it

- To give the coach more opportunity to prepare training sessions with the opponent in mind
- To give the coach more opportunity to prepare training sessions with the opponent in mind
- To provoke and exploit the weaknesses; paralyze standing weaknesses with the opponent in mind
- Final objective:



Opponent Observation



How do we do it

- We control the opponent throughly by watching all 5 games before we play them + we request videos of other games
- Based on the information: a report is put together, one DVD is edited and one Powerpoint presentation is compiled
- The same report is given to the Manager and the players. This is given immediately in the beggining of the week (except on the day of the active recovery. Emotional & Mental rest)
- The report and the DVD tend to repeat the information so



Opponent Observation



What do we watch ?

The observation controls the following items:

- Offensive & Defensive Organization
- (principles)
- Offensive & Defensive Transition
- Game Patterns and Common behaviours
- Offensive combinations
- Individual
- Analysis
- Set-Play



Opponent Observation



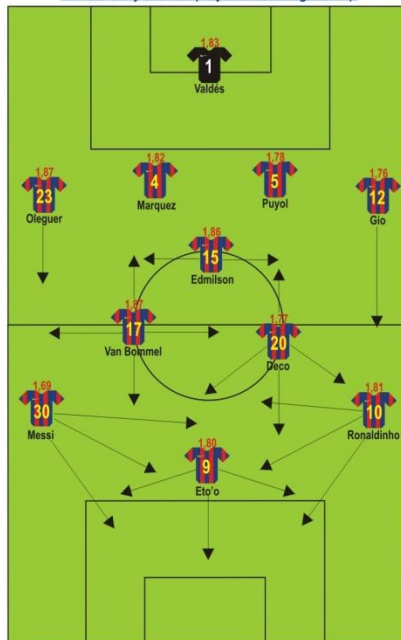
THE REPORT



Opponent Observation



Probable system of play and starting line-up



Motta or Van Bommel. With Motta, Deco goes to the right



Offensive Organization

- * Team organized in a pure 4x3x3. From last year have improved in the aggressiveness of their offensive transition but on the other hand are much weaker in that characteristic possession game and are much more dependable on the creativity of Messi and Ronaldinho. Although it's only 1st leg they will try to score at St. Bridge. A lot of mistakes in 1st phase build-up but in 3rd phase and 4th phase deadly to finish all situations. Will constantly simulate free-kicks and penalties.
- * Short or long build-up will depend on the amount of space and incentivation we give to them. Field is made big by the full-backs who open out as wide as possible. This positioning is dangerous in 1st phase as it leaves the central defenders with no support and makes the line of pass to the full-backs easy to intercept. Will use their typical combination to exit: 1) Deco short. 2) Gio wide. 3) Ball from Deco to Gio who frees Ronaldinho inside or 4) Ball back to Edmílson to organize.
- * Long build-up is oriented to Eto'o and Ronaldinho. No real power to flick ball in depth and great possibility of us to win 1st ball and give continuity by win 2nd ball.
- * Oleguer and Edmílson can be the ideal targets for high pressure. Both with poor notions of time and space. With Edmílson is important to let him receive the ball first and then has he turns surprise him with pressure. With Oleguer his important to reduce the space as the ball is travelling to force him to a mistake. Transition!
- * Always be ready for Gio's arrival from behind. Wants depth inside when Ronaldinho stays opened getting into a position to shoot or on the overlap if he's inside.
- * With Xavi out the moments of pure possession and game domination are much shorter. Their possession now is under much more threat has there are more players prone to make mistakes. In midfield Van Bommel plays simple organization passes but has power and intensity to cover a great radius of action supporting behind the line of the ball. Deco wants to penetrate with the ball (good target to pressure) but his most dangerous movement is the vertical switch when Eto'o short.
- * When Ronaldinho provokes between the lines it's important to communicate with defensive midfielders because the positioning can be too far away for our full back to control (if full-back follows all the way winger has to cover space outside because Gio will penetrate from behind). This momentum can be stopped by fouls.
- * Messi very different than Giuly. Last year with Giuly more depth and width in attack. Messi is the contrary. First he has total freedom and even ends up on the opposite side to create 2vs1 with Ronaldinho. He wants to receive the ball early, linking phases of play by pure ball driving (mainly coming inside to his left foot). Brings creativity and risk to the game in 4th phase. Normally his 1vs1 is a simple touch on the ball to the side on the limit of the defenders intervention. Fouls!
- * Attention on the switches of position: One Eto'o movement circular to the right side with Messi (Larsson vs Betis) coming inside on an aggressive diagonal-danger.
- * See pag. 4 for Ronaldinho's pattern 1st time pass to Eto'o when ball is switching from right side to the left. Eto'o anticipates and reads the off-side line- depth.
- * Eto'o alternates his positioning in relation to the positioning of the ball. In the build-up he will come short between lines to bring defence out, then touches and goes in behind. In the final phase he puts himself between defenders positioning and away from marker, then diagonals!!!

In their 1st phase- we can force mistakes or losses of possession by pressing Oleguer and Edmílson in the correct timing



Typical switch of position for the passage from 2nd to 3rd phase. Important communication to pass or to follow the man without allowing freedom



Offensive Transition - after winning possession of the ball

- * Very different from last year. In transition now they want to kill opponent straight away. After winning back ball and without opponents pressure, they will play vertically into Ronaldinho or Messi (Deco makes the link) to immediately drive ball and exploit spaces at the back. If defence tries off-side immediately Eto'o is released.
- * With opponents pressure the quality of transition is poor and prone to mistakes. This is particularly more evident inside their defending third where Puyol, Marquez, Oleguer and Edmílson will give ball away easily and allow opponent to kill after.
- * When ball lost inside our defending third- major danger!!! Important to be safe in possession because if we commit mistakes they benefit from counter transition. See image below which is the example of a goal suffered against Espanyol in which Eto'o is immediately released in the space behind defence caught sleeping!

Ball lost- Ball regained- Counter Transition- Goal (vs Espanyol)



Defensive Organization

* As last year still suffering from great exposure in defence. Full-backs defend open in relation to the line of the central defenders and still their use of off-side can be completely mistimed by Puyol and the others. In the rest their orientation is to a medium/ high block with zonal behaviour with great emphasis on a strong axis of pressure in the middle of the pitch with Eto'o + Deco + Van Bommel and Puyol pushing team.

* They'll let us build when our field is big in 1st phase but will start to close (defence and triangle pushing up dictated by Puyol and Deco) when they spot our difficulty or a miscontrol situation. Eto'o and Deco are the most dangerous because not only they dictate the beginning of the pressure but also because of their ability to spot a hesitation or a mistake from the opponent. They can pressure with speed and incentivate that pressure from player to player. In our long build-up we can be successful in 1st and 2nd ball. Defence will come up to try to do offside.

* With the correct timing we can provoke Ronaldinho to press inside one of the midfielders. With this (as seen in graphic) there can be a situation of time and space where we can release our full-back with the ball and because of that force Gio out deep to pressure or Deco wide.

* When Deco and Van Bommel press hard in midfield, that pressure is going to be difficult to avoid. But with quick possession it's avoidable and after we can force Edmilon out deep to pressure or enjoy a situation of 2vs1 against him in his position. Tall + plays in anticipation means we can exploit his lack of speed to turn and chase.

* In our 3rd phase and when we use the striker in our possession Puyol pressures hard and chases deep into midfield. When Puyol does this Edmilon immediately compensates in his position. This as shown in graphic will leave us with the chance of killing immediately in depth or go for a situation of superiority in the middle for possession.

* Main problem is position of the full-backs in relation to the line of the central defenders. We have killed them before and still they lack ability to control spaces inside- exploit!!!

* Attention possibility of Valdés mistakes on back passes.

Defensive Transition - after losing possession of the ball

* The most difficult moment is to avoid their 1st phase of transition which is high and strong and condenses space and time for the opponent. Deco and Van Bommel are decisive in this and can force us to make mistakes (it's important to have solutions in depth or wide so that possession is guaranteed and not lost).

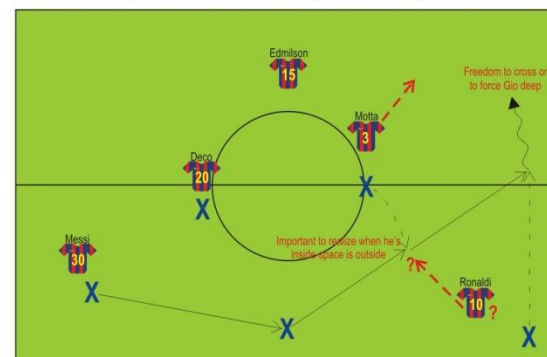
* When opponent avoids this they are completely exposed at the back and makes it the IDEAL MOMENT to kill them. Full-backs are too opened in relation to the central defenders and further from that Puyol will try to coordinate off-side and further increasing space behind for us to attack- goals at St. Bridge last year.

* Attention to back passes to the GK. Eto'o will chase crazy and field is poor!!!

Individual Appreciation

- * 1- Valdés- good Gk. Knows how to control depth and will come out to cover defenders (chips are possible). Likes to build short. Poor kick (Valencia goal)
 - * 23- Oleguer- makes mistakes with the ball making him the ideal target to pressure. Won't go in depth like Gio and will play and cross from position.
- Defensively poor, has no pace, and chooses his timings of tackle poorly.** When he tries to recover is too late: no speed (ideal to kill in diagonals). Strong
- * 5- Puyol- aggressive but very emotional. Gets crazy with the referee in fouls against him and goes mad in provocations. Aggressive defender, plays in anticipation using body. Bad positional sense (comes to midfield with striker) and bad leadership of defence (wants to do off-side when it's not possible). Because he uses his body strength to regain possession we can provoke contacts in the final third or inside the box. Good heading ability and power.
 - * 4- Marquez- better as central midfielder rather than central defender. In possession he's prone to commit mistakes as he wants to do beautiful 30 mts passes to free the full-backs or wingers but under pressure gives the ball away. Defending he is now more exposed, lacks pace and when using their off-side trap he cannot recover depth behind as Puyol can. Very good in the air and very dangerous in set-plays. Fakes contacts like no other. 1 yellow- out!!!
 - * 12- Gio- willing to go forward inside or outside Ronaldinho. Very deep positions allows him to finish some situations. Sometimes wants depth too early which can leave the space behind exposed which is ideal for our transition. Without the ball he defends too open and we can exploit with winger diagonal.
 - * 16- Sylvinho- similar to Gio in attacking terms. Dynamic+combines well with Ronaldinho. Doesn't know how to defend, neither to control inside space.
 - * 15- Edmilon- from his position the only way he creates danger in possession is with quality long diagonal passes to the wingers diagonals (particularly when allowed space to receive the ball free). Otherwise his passing is simple. Under pressure he wants to hold and turn with the ball and can lose it or play back to defenders. Defensively covers Puyol when he presses into midfield, and covers Deco and Van Bommel when they press. Not fast- exploit.
 - * 20- Deco- likes to have responsibility to organize game and on the left side of the pitch will always show short to support. When ball is on the right side, will penetrate deep to receive. Responsible player- will take risks and will encourage team forward (assumes and drives ball to attack). Can be important defensively with his hi-pressure defensive transitions. Will tend to run-out during the game. Falls very easily to gain free-kicks. Takes lateral kicks direct.
 - * 24- Iniesta- always comes on from the bench. Very dynamic player. Great radius of action. Speed of movement and speed of execution. Tricky player.
 - * 17- Van Bommel- powerful and athletic. Simple but effective player in both organizations. Power to shoot from outside the box. Allows possession.
 - * 10- Ronaldinho- technical quality to avoid defender on 1st touch. When opened receives the ball and then attacks full-back 1vs1 (inside to shoot or outside to cross). Much more dangerous when provoking spaces inside (between lines) from those positions forces a central defender out and then with a pen. pass releases Messi, Eto'o or the penetrating midfielder. Very poor defensive transition and defensive work- exploit. Constant cheater- falls easily.
 - * 30- Messi- quality + speed but very left footed. Exactly the same behaviours as Ronaldinho. Inside between lines or diagonals. Encourages team forward by ball driving. Amazing 1vs1. If option is to foul him is important to do it outside the box and as early as possible. As recovered from an injury recently.
 - * 9- Eto'o- explosive and aggressive with or without the ball. Skills in tight spaces. Chases, believes and keeps hi- intensity rhythm throughout all game. Knows how to play in the limit of off-side but also knows how to be a reference for organization- playing short wall passes or provoking between lines. Shoots from anywhere and without preparation. Defensively very strong. Works hard in opp. 1st phase trying to force mistakes or back passes to Gk.

Ronaldinho will press our inside midfielder if provoked (exploit to free full-back)



Edmilon making insertion in defence to compensate for Puyol deep marking. When this happens two main options: 1) still space behind; 2) superiority in the middle



Main problem: full-backs don't know how to close space inside (goals suffered)



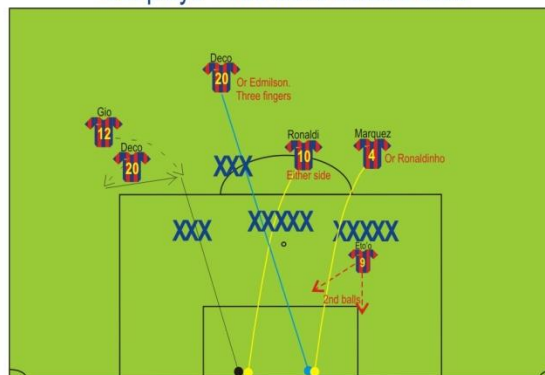
Set plays - for

- * Quick free-kicks particularly in the attacking 1/3. **Men on the ball will try to release Eto'o in depth**, before the referee's whistle and even with opponent standing in front of him. **Important immediate awareness.**
- * Lateral free-kicks are taken by Gio or Deco. No pattern direction but quality precision in the cross for 5 players. **In the box Messi will delay penetration to arrive at the back post while the others attack 1st post diagonally and with pace (ability to lose marker with changes of pace).**
- * Frontal free-kicks can be taken by Ronaldinho: curled over the wall to either right or left post of the Gk, by Deco and Edmílson: from long distances strong and with tremendous precision or by Marquez: indirect free-kicks after combination. **Attention- Eto'o behind wall for 2nd balls.**
- * Corner kicks are taken by Deco. **All three combinations possible: direct, short or normal corner.** Short corners with Eto'o coming on the goal line and turning on his 1st touch to cross and with Messi to create 2v1. Cross quality + precision. **Attention- possible blocks to free one another.**
- * Throw-ins can be taken in depth but not pattern. If not the most dangerous is to Messi and Ronaldinho to shoot on their strong foot.
- * Ronaldinho scored to Cech's right last year but this year has already missed on that side so can go to left of GK (normally low with pace).

Set plays - free kicks from the sides



Set plays - free kicks outside area



Other observations

- * Remember- Marquez and Van Bommel out of 2nd leg if booked.
- * Giuly great doubt. Possibly won't recover on time to travel.
- * Attention team with 11 penalties awarded this season and with 4 players sent-off for their opponents. Constantly simulate inside and outside the box and target opposition players on yellow cards. On the other hand we can provoke and exploit Puyol's aggressiveness for cards. **Important to control also the pressure they put on referee and on linesmen to control their off-side line (very important also our pressure!)**
- * Substitutions won't dictate a change of system in the 1st leg. In case their losing Larsson can come in to the game for V.Bommel with one of the wingers dropping back to midfield. **Larsson brings more danger to the game than Maxi with his movement and sense of goal and still has quality and ability to fight in the air. Iniesta brings movement +creativity.**
- * Quality in the bench: Iniesta, Motta or V.Bommel can all bring more dynamica, creativity and rythm to the game in the final minutes- attention
- * **Big pass pattern between the full-backs to the wingers making a slight inside movement.** We can avoid this by cutting the line of pass with the correct body position and forcing them to a mistake or to a long ball.

Set plays - corners kicks



Set plays - corner kicks



Set plays - throw-ins



Set plays - defensive corner



PATTERN PLAY AND OFFENSIVE COMBINATIONS

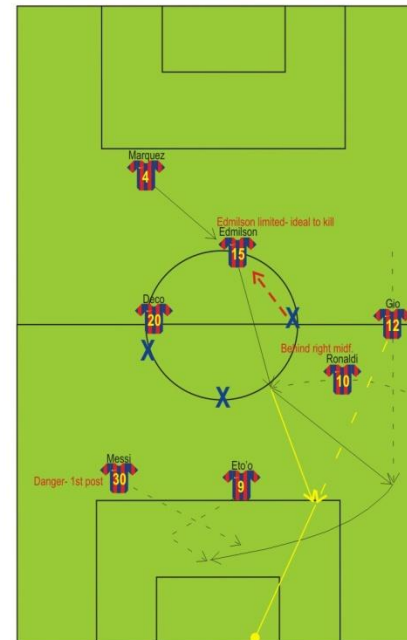
Short build-up from GK- (field very big- defenders opened)



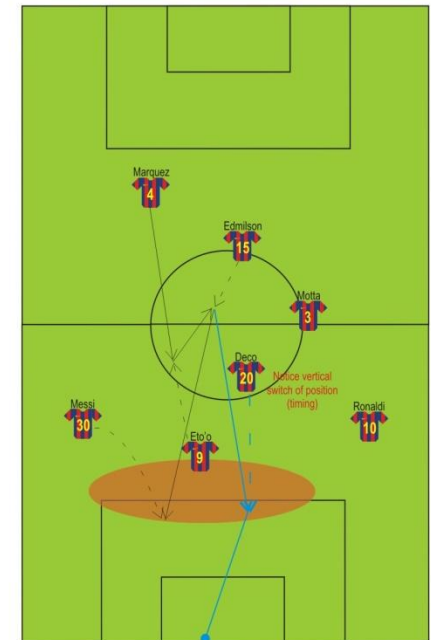
Long build-up from goalkeeper



Typical passage from 2nd to 3rd phase- winger inside



Edmílson free- vision to organize from behind (releases Messi/Deco)



Deco responsibility to link-up phases by pure ball driving



Ronaldinho opened and coming inside and releasing Eto'o and Messi on 1st time passes (depth)



Ronaldinho's pattern decisions (1vs1 inside to pass or shoot big danger)



Constant positional switches of the front three



THE OBSERVATION



Opponent Observation



Offensive Organization

**Offensive
Organization**

Offensive Organization

System Used

**Possible
system**

Phases of

**1st phase- Build-up play; 2nd phase- Organization through
midfield**

**3rd phase- Creation of opportunities; 4th phase- Finishing
(scoring goals)**



Opponent Observation

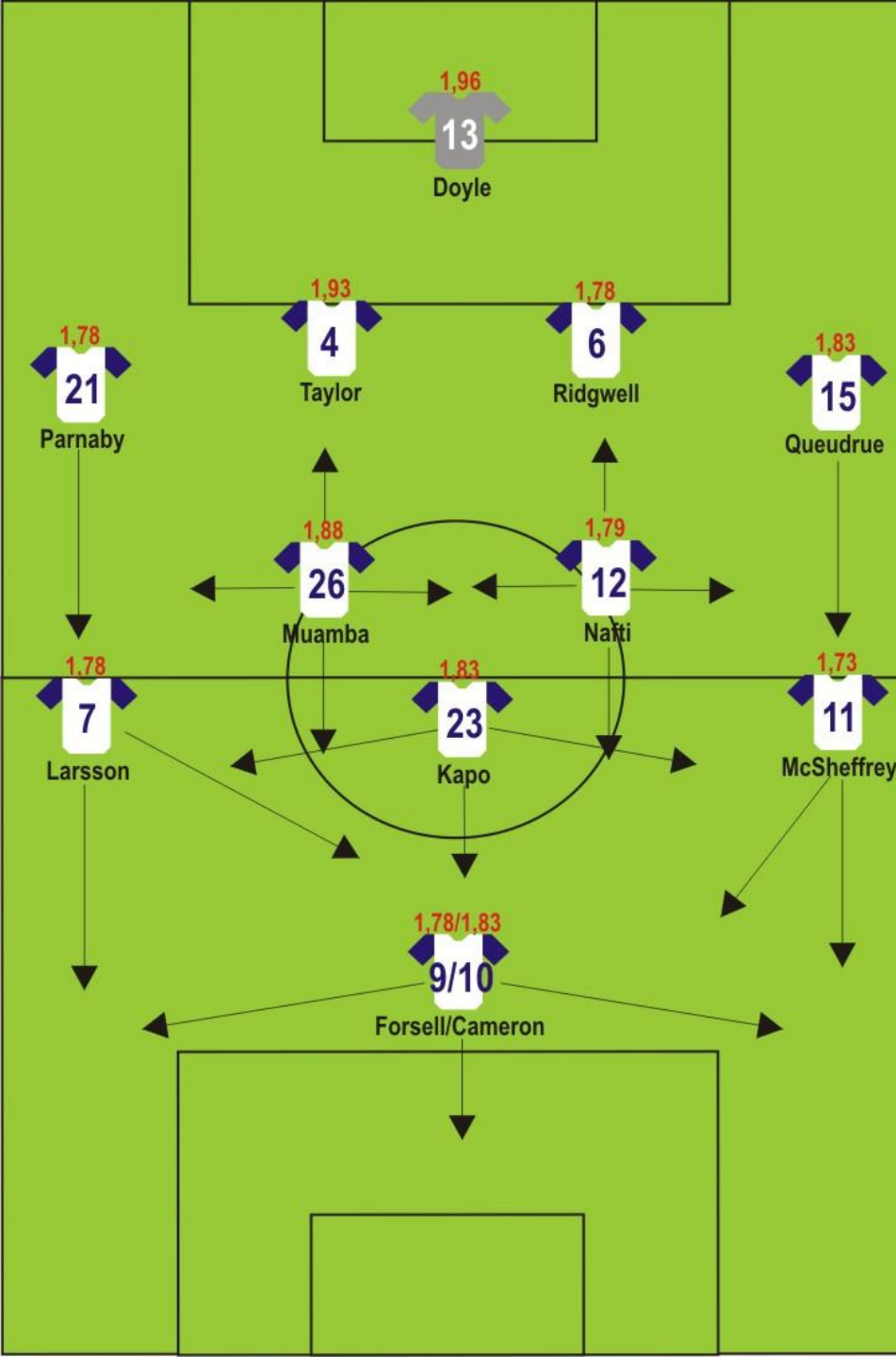


Offensive Organization

System of play used
during games that we
controlled

and

Possible system of play
(their adaptation against
us)



Offensive Organization

Phases of Play

1st Phase – Build-up

play:

Build-up from the Gk (short or long)

Central defenders availability

Full-backs positioning

1st station passes between players

1st ball ? Flick or Lay-off

2nd ball ? Strong or poor pressure

Pressure up or not – ideal?

short
right
short
right
short
right
long
g
long
g



Opponent Observation



Offensive Organization

2nd Phase – Organization through
midfield:

Pitch big behind or short?

Pass pattern: Short or long

What behaviour under pressure?

Positional game (switch position?)

Want width or constantly look deep

Team references - responsibility

Who is more likely to lose possession ?



Opponent Observation



Offensive Organization

3rd Phase – Creation of opportunities

Who links 2nd to 3rd phase?

Support behind (anchor man). Splits or

Midfield penetrations? Who? From

Crosses. Early or late?

Danger, from who? Where?

Strikers movement. Type?

Solutions for 1vs1, 1vs2 or 2vs1



Opponent Observation



Offensive Organization

4th Phase – Finishing (scoring goals):

Diagonals behind our defence

Strikers combinations.

Explosiveness
In crosses- occupancy of the box

Who are the threats in the air?

Who wants to shoot from outside?

Which players simulate contacts?



Opponent Observation



Deffensive Organization



Opponent Observation



Deffensive Organization

As a
Team:

Pressure – as a block or individually

Block High, Medium, Low

Visual references to pressure?

Control of the spaces

Depth exposed or between lines

Shuffle movement – fast/ slow/
positional



Opponent Observation



Deffensive Organization

In Specific zones –

Offensive third:

Beggining of pressure – who?

Do they force centrally or out wide

Intensity of the pressure – Risk !

Desorganized – possible to play

Our full backs free- decisive



Opponent Observation



Deffensive Organization

In specific zones –
midfield:

Passive or active pressure

Midfielders together – spaces or not

Do they track our midfielders

penetration?

Offensive or Deffensive anchor- what
behaviour?



Opponent Observation



Deffensive Organization

In specific zones –
deffensive third:

Aerial game from defenders

Response to 1st and 2nd ball

Full backs closed or opened

Can we provoke to the ball?

Marking – zonal or man to man

Do they conceed fouls? Penalties?

GK- 2nd balls, control of depth, error



Opponent Observation



Deffensive Organization

Individual
ly:

Ability to mark and to track players

Quick or slow? Ability to rotate

Individual position in relation to block

1vs1 ability

Agressiveness – fouls/ cards



Opponent Observation



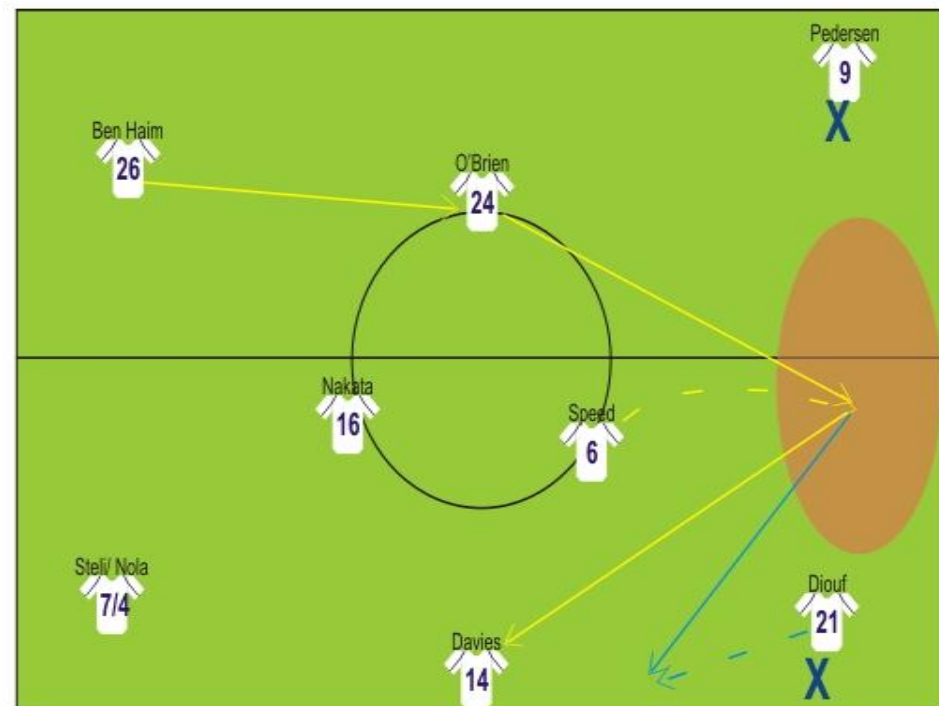
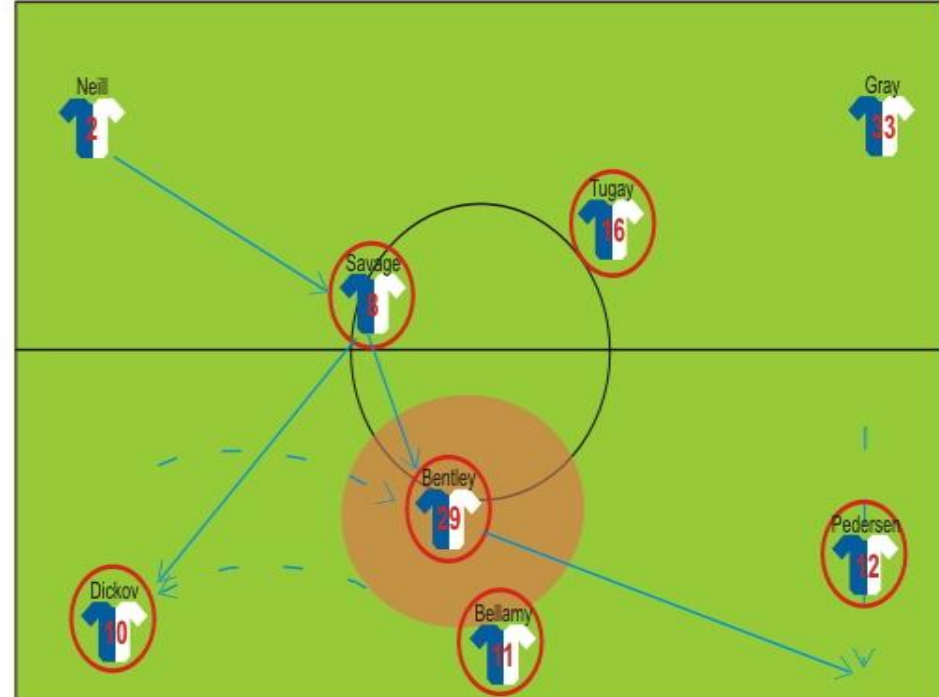
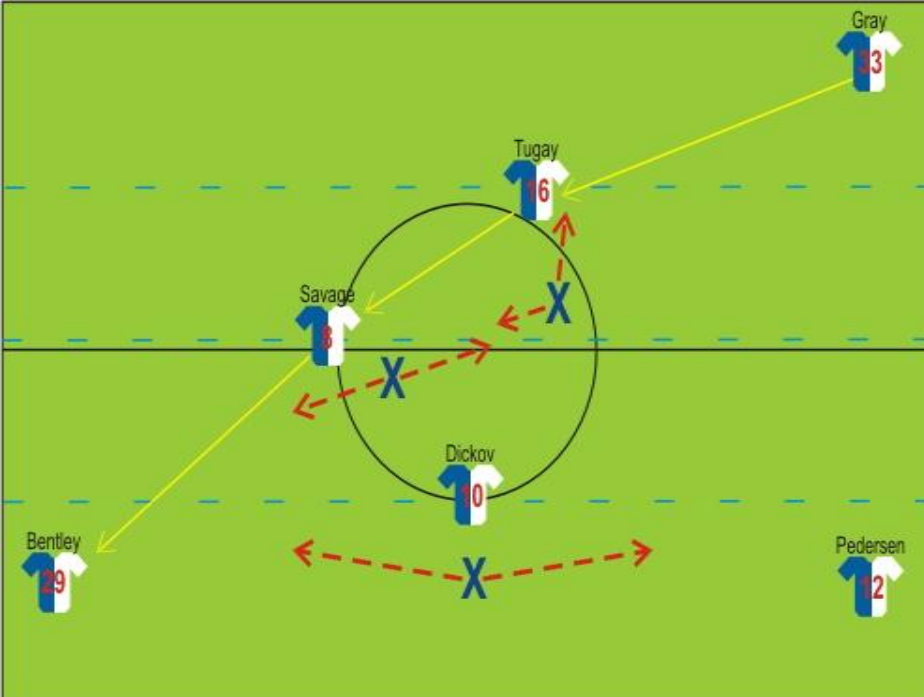
Game Patterns

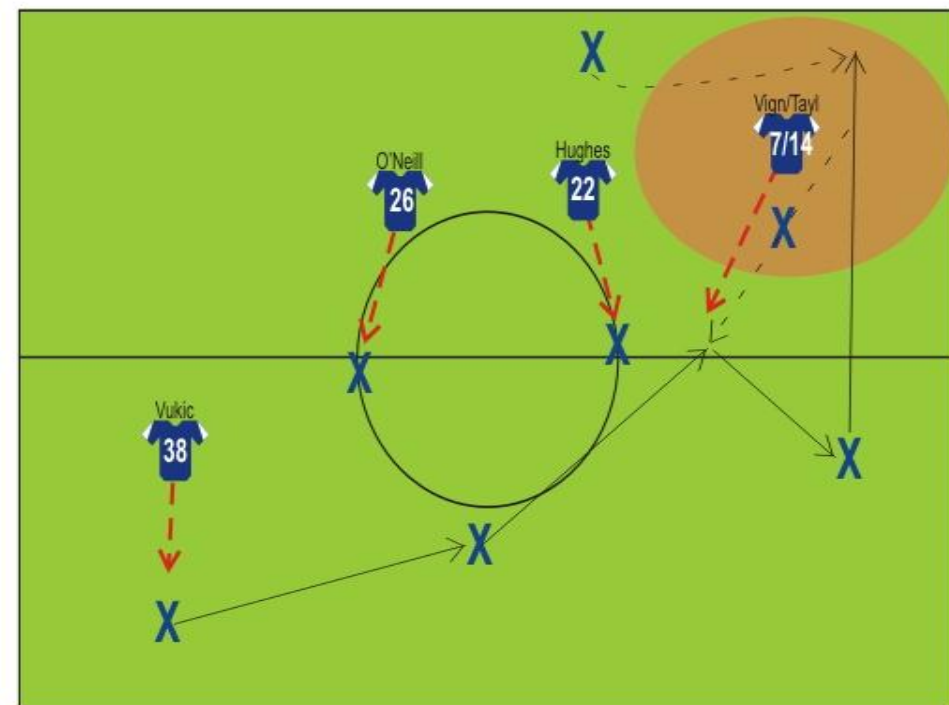
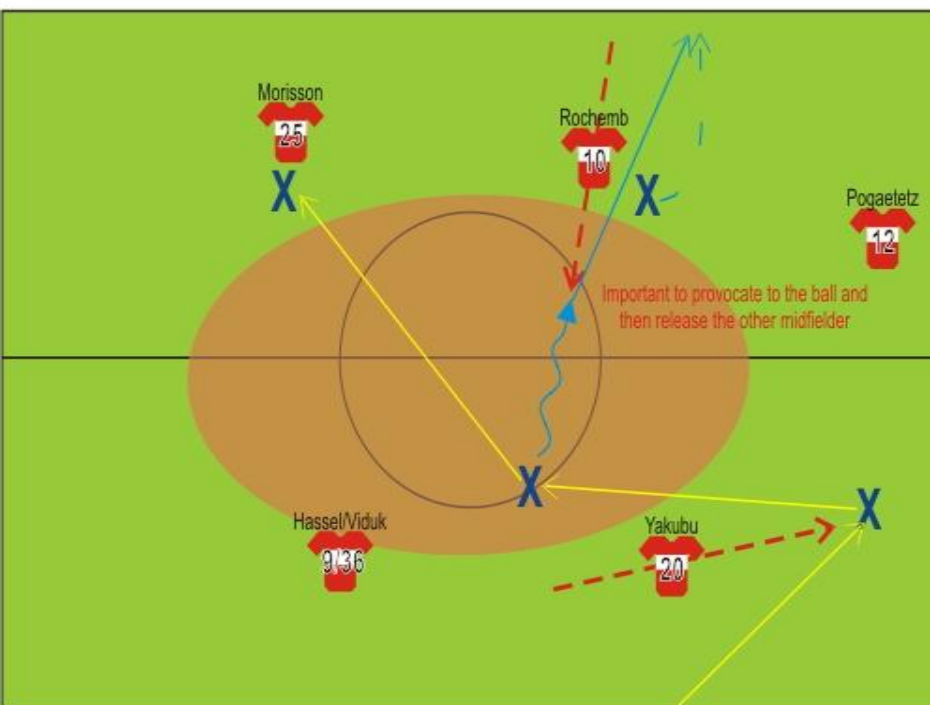
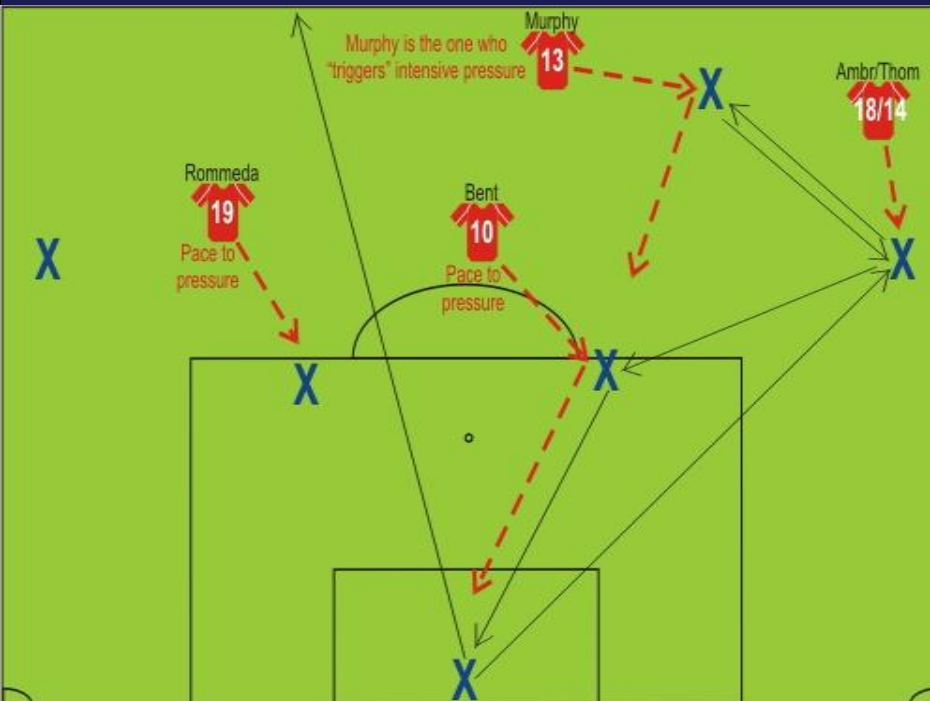
Action or behaviour, of one or more players, that happens with some frequency that denotes a pattern or a characteristic of their game organization (be it defensive or offensive)



Opponent Observation







Offensive Combinations

Combination that involves two or more players, and the ball is normally combined with a movement. The combination is done with frequency and happens automatically during play



Opponent Observation

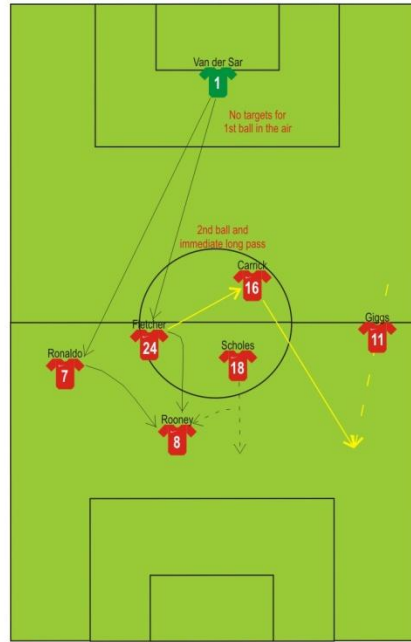


PATTERN PLAY AND OFFENSIVE COMBINATIONS

Short build-up from the goalkeeper



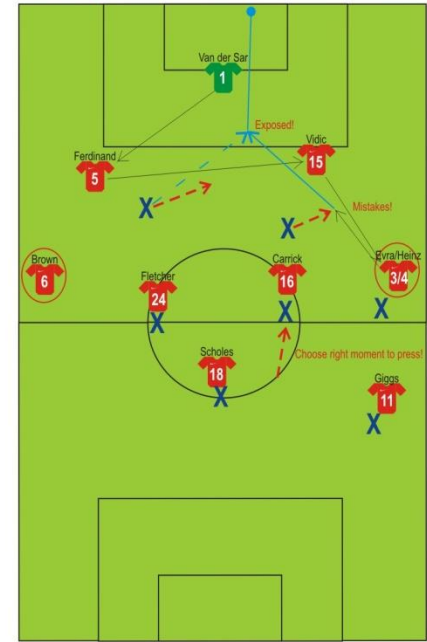
Long build-up from the goalkeeper



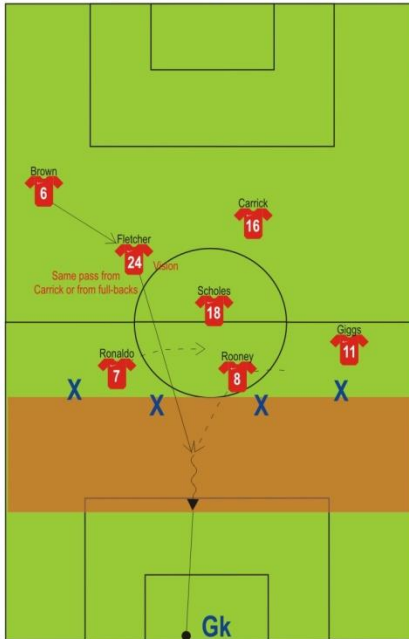
Pitch big. Full-backs pushed forward. Aggressive positioning



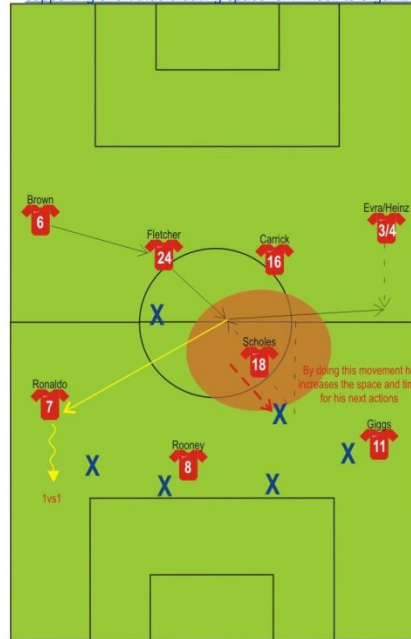
But because of that pitch big a lot of losses in build-up.
Milan goal comes from a situation like that. Press



If our block is up, immediate long pass to release Rooney in depth



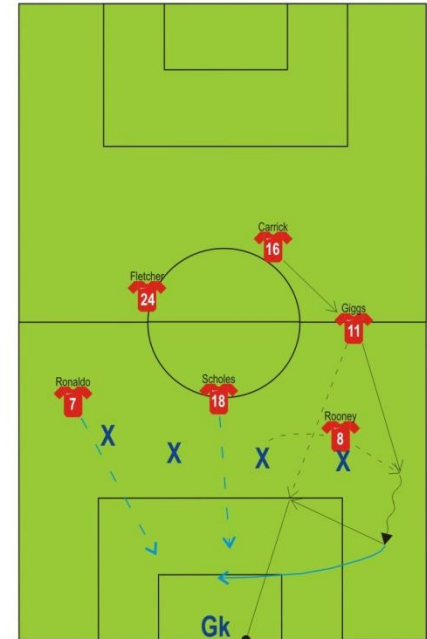
Scholes creates space for himself by moving deep and then supporting short thus creating space for himself to organize



Ronaldo between lines to receive ball. Drives to shoot. Danger



Giggs and Rooney switch position. Space inside attacked by Giggs



Individual Analysis

Total Analysis of the characteristics of the each player (technical, tactical, physical, psychological)

Individual Analysis



Opponent Observation



Set Plays

- Set Plays for (lateral and frontal free-kicks, quick free-kicks, corners, throw-ins, penalties, kick-off)

Set Plays

- Set Plays against (lateral and frontal free-kicks, quick free-kicks, corners, throw-ins, penalties, kick-off)



Opponent Observation



Special positions/ movements in the box: Lucho always on the edge of the box. From there he decides between penetration (6th men inside) or position. Lisandro and Postiga move freely- fake one post go to the other

- * Lateral free-kicks are taken by Quaresma. **Cross or shot, or cross in the direction of the goal**. Precision!!! Inside the box 5 players + Lucho decision. **Pepe is the most dangerous**. Power. Attacks ball high!
- * A lot of good free-kick takers. Lucho and Quaresma always over the wall. Both can go nearest or furthest away post from the Gk. Bruno Alves takes free-kicks from distance, opts for power. **Always one man near the wall to push it or to move and receive in a different position**.
- * Corner kicks are taken by Quaresma. **Quality cross**. Can do short corner with player sitting outside the box and **then go 1vs1**. In the box 5 players to attack ball. Lucho decides between 6th men inside or 2nd balls (**be aware of 2nd ball falling to his feet**). Postiga in the Gk or free.
- * **Long throw-ins only if Fucile is playing**. Otherwise ball is played short into the wingers feet or into the empty space. Quaresma inside to shoot!

- * **In lateral free-kicks** they put Quaresma in the wall, they put Meireles outside the box, they put Bosingwa and Postiga in the space between the wall and the goal. **All the others mark opp. man-to-man (not zonal).**
- * **In frontal free-kicks** they put a wall of 5 players + 1 to stop combination on the channels. They all jumped but might depend on free-kick taker. They didn't leave anyone up front. All the others mark opp. man-to-man.
- * **They defend zonally in corner-kicks.** They put Lisandro in one post. Then they have 4 players in a line all zonal (Bosingwa, B.Alves, Lucho and Postiga). In a 2nd line a further two players (Pepe and Assuncao) who can mark man-to-man on instructions. They put two outside the box and they put Quaresma opened up on the side where the corner is taken (if ball is played out to him he immediately runs with it to opponents half)
- * Always control Helton's transitions. Grabs and wants to release people!

- * Attention they normally water the pitch before the game after warm-up.
- * Team who doesn't hesitate on contacts. Fall easily anywhere in the pitch. Quaresma falls on the 1vs1. Postiga falls in the box. Attention!
- * On 1st and 2nd phase the team is clearly right side oriented.
- * Anderson (Brazilian, attacking midfielder) is out of the game, injured.
- * Team normally doesn't change structure during the game but **might invert the triangle in midfield** to have an offensive midfielder behind the striker (Lisandro or Moraes are both natural strikers and can play in that position. More penetration and more players present inside box to finish).
- * From the bench they have Ibson who is an organizing midfielder with vision and intensity in his game (better than Meireles). They have Alan who is a fast winger. Runs with ball or attacks space in behind. They have Adriano and Sokota who are 2 pure strikers of different behaviours, Adriano has mobility and Sokota has positional sense (as target man). It's also possible that Renteria (quick/ mobile striker) can come in.

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Quaresma

Quaresma opened on the side of the corner!
Transition!

X

Assuncao

X

Meira/Cech

X

X

Pepe

X

Faria

X

Boringwa

B. Alves

Lucho

Postigo

X

Lisandro

Heiton

X

Zonal Behaviour!
Exploit short or 2nd post

Conclusion:

IF YOU FAIL TO PREPARE, YOU WILL FAIL



Opponent Observation

