

Tactical Development

Counter Attack from Open Play

Hit Teams on the Break!

For years, everyone has been in awe of what FC Barcelona and the Spanish National Team have achieved by playing attractive, passing soccer. It would be great if all our teams could play like that but in the real world, there is one tiny flaw. How can we play like that if we haven't got the ball or if indeed we see a common character trait in youth – we keep losing it! To win the ball back, it is important to have a strong midfielder whose job it is to tackle the opposition, win the ball back and get to their team-mates time and time again.

A strong tackler in the middle

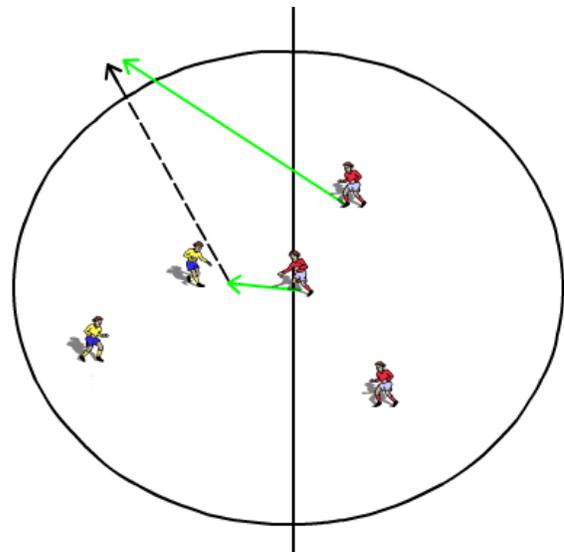
If your team is trying to keep possession and this particular style of soccer, then you have to allow for winning the ball back. Most of your players will be able to tackle but on each team you always need one player whose dedicated role is to winning the ball back. One of the best examples of this would be Gennaro Gattuso who played at Milan and with the Italian National Team in the early 2000's.

Use your best tackler in midfield

The player who is best at tackling should be in the middle of the field. Show them how to stop attacks and hit the opposition hard with some good, quality passes that will split their defence open. When a team loses possession, they are vulnerable at the back and this midfielder will be able to expose their weaknesses all from a good pass. I can guarantee that player will be the first name on your team-sheet and the rest of the team will look up to them and they will be a vital part of your team when you do not have the ball.

The Midfield Ball Winner

- Tell your player to play in the hole in front of the central defenders.
- Get him to close down any player running at the defence and stop them in their tracks.
- You've seen games where the opposition kick off and runs right through your team to score. This player stops that. He targets the man with the ball and makes sure he gets it.
- When he gets the ball, he's off running, passing, opening up the opposition defence.
- The rest of the team have to be ready to support his role and be open for the pass.



Key Coaching Points

- Close down and win the ball back from the opposition
- Set up wingers and attackers with good accurate passes