

FC England - Game Model

Formation

Our general setup is a 4-3-3 formation. When we attack, we transition to a 2-3-5. From a defensive perspective (if we don't win the ball back immediately after losing it), we transition to 4-5-1 with everyone behind the ball (both wide forwards become midfielders).



4-3-3 general



2-3-5 attacking



4-5-1 defending

5-minute video showing our in-possession team shape and movement from back to front:

<https://youtu.be/o2EAKupk6lw>

A huge element in the transition to our defensive setup is a willingness to show the required effort to get back behind the ball and form a 4-5-1 block (when we don't have possession). It is about effort and commitment, not skill. Anybody not willing to make the effort to get back (every time, not just sometimes) will not be able to play in our system. It goes without saying that a high level of fitness is required from everyone.

Perfect example of our desired reaction to a breakaway after losing possession (pure effort!):

<https://youtu.be/J7A0f6BytZM?t=5>

Out of possession

If we lose possession, immediately press the ball (your reaction must be instant). Run towards your opponent at full speed/intensity; if you cannot directly press the opponent in possession, still move towards the ball and cover another opponent. Often, it won't be the 1st player that wins back possession, it will be the 2nd, 3rd or 4th. That is why supporting the press is so important. Why is pressing immediately after losing possession so important? Our opponents are still unbalanced and not in a great shape to keep the ball and so the quicker we can press them, the less chance they have of establishing balance and shape.

Example of how to react and press immediately after losing possession (watch how quickly they react and move towards the ball):

<https://youtu.be/yc4gFLenLio>

If we lose the ball and can't get it back immediately, don't focus on trying to get to your position; go to the nearest position in our 4-5-1 defensive setup. If you are a right-back for example and have just made an inverted run across the field, go to one of the nearest midfield positions and communicate to ensure someone covers your right-back position (one of the midfielders or defenders should recognize this also and communicate to ensure it is covered). This is the massive importance of communication.

Think of our system as a net or chain; if someone moves out of their position, move towards the vacated space to fill it.

Keep short distances and compactness so that we can operate as an organized unit and support each other when pressing or organizing a block.

6-minute video of how to cover space/opponents in a 4-5-1 setup when defending:

<https://youtu.be/yWQ1C6M6L2s>

Attacking chaos

Our approach to attacking is organized chaos. Why chaos? It is extremely difficult to defend against unpredictable movement off the ball.

Linear movement (and strictly holding your position) is not the most ideal way to move opponents and confuse them. We want to encourage positional fluidity and chaotic movement with the front three in particular interchanging in terms of both positions and movement. You do not have 'team positions' when we attack, particularly in the final third. Your movement is based on the position of the ball, the position of opponents/teammates and the potential space where you feel you can best impact the game in that moment.

Full backs (more like wing backs when we attack) join in with virtually all attacking movements to create overloads and width for switching the play especially. Full backs also have the opportunity and responsibility to make inverted diagonal runs across the field to further confuse and disrupt opposing defenses.

This attacking movement and chaos provides great threat to opposing teams but it is ESSENTIAL that players communicate and cover each other when play breaks down and we lose possession, otherwise we will be exposed on counter attacks.

Example of full backs joining in with attack (look how far up the field they are, basically joining in as wide forwards):

<https://youtu.be/zM2D6po1rpE>

Basic (but informative) instructional video on movement to create and exploit space:

<https://youtu.be/dYy4QGXnns>

Individual instructions

Goalkeeper:

Examples of sweeper keeper, passing and positioning - <https://youtu.be/1fyWOXIt8sA>

- Position yourself as a sweeper. Be an additional defender so that we essentially have 3 center backs (with you the deepest).
- Always be an option for a back-pass when teammates face their own goal in possession. Constantly check your surroundings. If you don't have a clear passing option (with a teammate under no pressure), go long to either wide forward.
- When defenders move up the field, go forward with them. Stay 15-20 yards behind them and always be alert to intercept any counter long balls behind the back line. This is a vital role for you, intercepting long balls which will happen a lot.
- Play short to center backs from goal kicks to allow us to build from the back, unless we are being aggressively pressed by multiple players. In that situation, you make the decision whether or not to kick longer (it is a good option if a wide forward is in a potential 1v1 situation because the other team are pressing high).

Center Backs:

Examples of driving out of the back, covering space, passing and interceptions - <https://youtu.be/5q1nXewu1Fs>

- Because of the long ball style of many teams, one center back must always drop in anticipation of the long ball while the other center back marks the opposing center forward. The long ball should not be able to beat the center back who has dropped plus the keeper who is also outside of the 18 yard box looking to intercept. The ball has to be perfect to beat that.
- Stay 5 yards or so deeper than full backs (especially when circulating the ball at the back) so you are not in a straight line and can always be a passing option when they have pressure. When defenders or midfielders face you in possession, drop deeper to give yourself space to receive the ball. Always be an option from throw ins taken by full backs; drop deep enough back to give yourself time and space.
- Drive forward if you are not pressed when in possession or opponents leave space for you to exploit. If necessary, a midfielder should cover for you.
- If you have time and space, look for diagonal long passes towards the wide forwards (in behind defenders if possible) so they have a 1v1 situation or run on goal.

Full Backs:

Examples of defensive and attacking movement/concepts for full backs - https://youtu.be/Q2a_dJ_YnyI

- When we have possession on your side of the field, get wide and create width; be ahead of the center backs to give forward passing options rather than sideways.
- Whenever there is space in front of you, drive forward in possession but be aware of not running into multiple players without passing options ahead of you.
- When the other full back advances with the ball, sprint forward and be an option for either a switch to the wide area or a ball through the middle (your run can be inverted centrally if our wide forward stays wide; this requires verbal communication and eye contact between you both).
- If you pass the ball diagonally into the middle of the field, move forward on the wing to give the next passing option. If you pass the ball straight down the line, move forward diagonally into the middle to give a return passing option.

Defensive Midfielder:

Examples of tackling, interceptions, covering and passing - <https://youtu.be/J0zv-4YxO9U>

- If the center back goes forward, you are the first option to fill in for them so check surroundings/opponents and decide whether you need to drop deeper to cover. Also be aware of full backs attacking and leaving their position exposed; you need to cover that danger.
- From goal kicks especially and also when center backs or full backs have the ball, you always have to be a passing option. If you are tightly marked, check out and let one of the other midfielders rotate in to give a passing option.
- Stay centrally as much as possible without straying into wide areas. Our full backs and wide forwards have the wide areas covered; we need your presence in the middle of the field.
- When space opens up and you are in possession, drive forward and one of the midfielders can cover if necessary.
- Because this is such a vital position for the team, you must communicate constantly to organize midfielders. There is pressure on you to do a lot of work both when we have possession and when we don't. Thrive on the responsibility and importance of this role for the team by working your socks off.

Center Midfielders:

Examples of movement off the ball, playing between the lines, passing and creativity - <https://youtu.be/MAw6K-yDAgg>

Examples of always showing for the ball and finding space to receive - <https://youtu.be/21Kwovy2gws>

- When we are in possession, you should operate as a rotating triangle with the other two midfielders (including defensive mid). Once you have passed the ball, vacate your space and look to rotate with another midfielder. The opposing midfielders should always have to question themselves on who to mark. Constant movement on your part is vital.
- Look to receive on the half-turn and drive towards goal as often as possible. Sideways and backwards passes are ok but only when there is not a potential forward pass or run available. Play positively, not passively. Primarily we want to attack and both midfield players are a big part of that. Check your shoulders constantly; know exactly what's going on around you.
- If we play long balls into central or wide areas, you must react and make up ground to pick up the second ball when defenders potentially knock it down or clear it. If you are intelligent about your run and follow the long pass as it is in the air, you will very often pick up the 2nd ball before an opponent.
- When wide forwards attack with the ball, particularly in 1v1 situations, you must do everything you can to get forward and give an option of a cutback pass. Additionally, if the ball is being crossed, arrive late (you will almost never be marked in this situation) and be an option to get on the end of the cross or pick up loose balls on the edge of the 18 yard box.

Forwards:

Examples of movement off the ball, dropping deep to receive and diagonal runs - <https://youtu.be/kHOIfRML4lo>

Examples of diagonal and curved runs off the shoulder of defenders to receive in space - <https://youtu.be/dD1GBBVT724?t=45>

- You must interchange and rotate in terms of your positions. You should play right, left and center forward during the game to confuse opponents and maintain chaos. Communication (eye contact and verbal) is vital to allow this forward rotation.
- Look to occupy the space behind their full back if he advances or the channel between full back and centre back.
- Your movement and runs should be unpredictable; that means curved runs to lose your man or diagonal runs across the front of the back four where you will not be followed and picked up.
- Keep your touches limited unless you face the opponents' goal in a 1v1 situation. When you receive with your back to goal, lay the ball off quickly to a teammate and spin immediately to give another passing option or drag a defender out of their position. Check your shoulders constantly; know exactly what's going on around you and whether a defender is marking you.
- If one of the midfielders advances forward, you can drop deeper into the vacated space to lose your marker and be a passing option. Outside of this situation, try to stay high and be a passing/through ball option for all attacks.

Clearly, there is more detail and nuance to our playing style but this game model is a clear and concise version of how all FCE teams will play, both from an individual and collective perspective.

If there is anything you do not understand, please speak to any of the FCE coaches and/or discuss with your teammates who will very likely be able to help.

Final thought

Effort and attitude. We control both of these things and how we apply ourselves in relation to them will ultimately determine how successful we are (we define success by the quality and consistency of our performances, not by results).

