



Recommended playing formation for 2021

1-4-3-3

The 1-4-3-3 formation is an attack-minded formation at heart. It is a well-balanced system that allows you to play possession-based football and direct football towards the opponent's goal.

You will need hard-working players and athletic fullbacks to make this formation possible.

The team's movement will create a lot of space in which to play. The energy and pressing of the team can impede the opposition from getting their passing game going. This will limit the space available to them.

In this formation, attack is the best form of defence, and you will need high energy players to make the best of it.

What is certain, though, is that you will have a lot of fun playing this formation.

The 1-4-3-3 gives players the flexibility and structure needed to express themselves to play to the best of their abilities.

Below is a brief description of the numbering system and positions within the 1-4-3-3 formation.

Teams usually play a goalkeeper (**1**), standard back four with the two centre-backs (**3 and 4**), two wing-backs (**2 and 5**), three midfielders (**6,8,10**) and three forwards (**7,9,11**).

There are five different variations of midfield positioning. Some coaches call it "point back", which means you are playing a triangle with a holding midfielder (**6**), a box to box player (**8**) and the creative midfielder (**10**). You can also play two (**8's**) and a (**10**) or an (**8**) and two (**10's**), commonly known as "point forward". You may also wish to play with three flat midfielders.



Diagram 1 displays the “point back” with the holding midfielder.

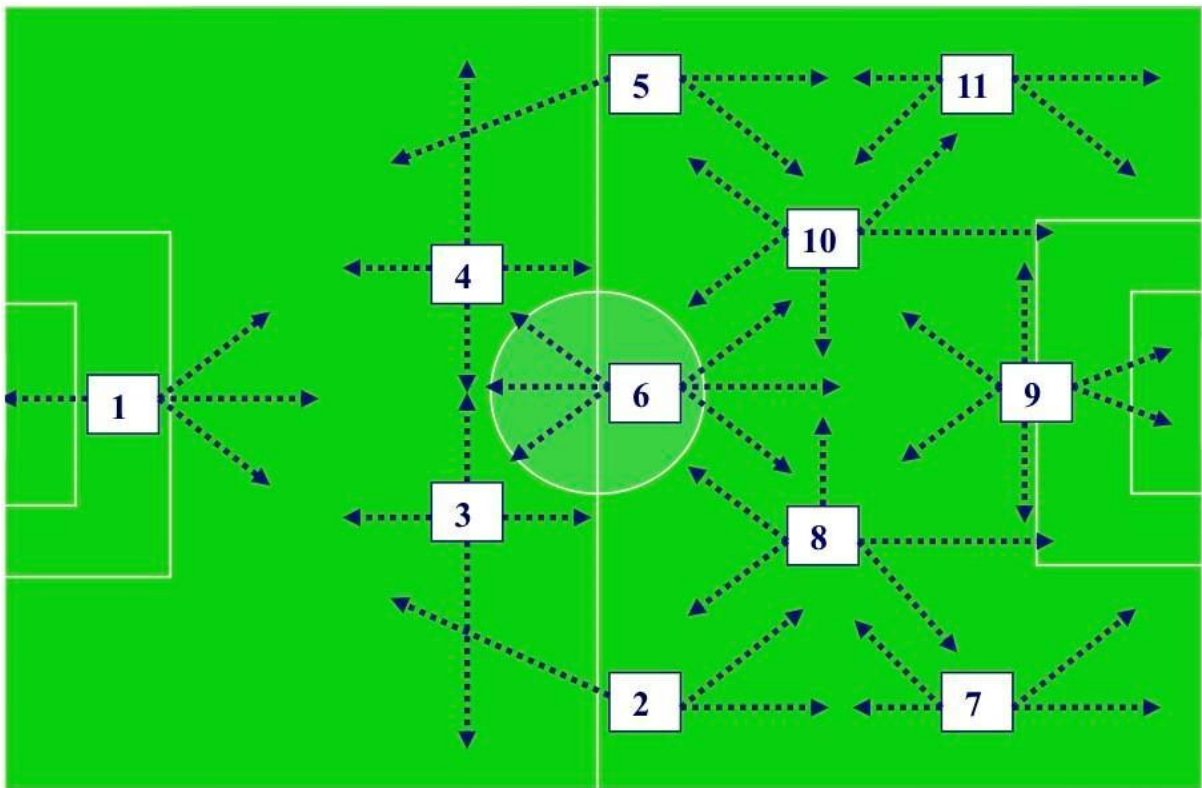


Diagram 2 displays player movements in the numbering system.



Below is a brief description of outcomes in the 1-4-3-3 formation

Positioning and discipline are critical to the 4-3-3 formation, which can otherwise leave large gaps on the pitch for the opposition to exploit if any player neglects their responsibilities.

Although attacking in nature, a well-trained team will naturally limit their opponent's game with their energy and understanding of how the team functions as a whole.

Control possession: The formation works best with technically competent players who pass, move, and recycle the ball around the team. Due to the passing angles it creates, this, in turn, limits the opposition from retrieving the ball.

Lots of passing options and angles for the player on the ball: Due to the focus on movement and space, the player on the ball, should always have several options available to them, and this, in turn, helps the team to dominate possession

Attacking options upfront: With three forwards upfront, there will always be attacking options for the team to exploit. Coupled with the fullbacks and midfielders pushing forward, this makes for a potent attacking force.

Pressure the opposition into mistakes: Due to the high energy nature of the formation and the number of players pushing up the field, it is possible to force the opponents into mistakes by limiting their time on the ball and the space that they receive it in.

Off-ball movement confuses the opposition: The flexible nature of 4-3-3 formation means that the interchanging forward line up and the different runs that the players make can create havoc amongst the opposition, which are then unsure of who to mark.

Overwhelm the opposition: With a potential seven players rushing forward, the 4-3-3 can be mayhem for the defending team as a stream of people push up the field towards them.

Disciplined players limit the formation's weaknesses: If well-drilled and tactically competent, the team can stop the opponent from taking advantage of the 4-3-3 line up by tracking back and supporting their teammates with the defensive work.

A specialised holding player acts as insurance at the back: With one of the central midfielders usually dedicated to defensive play, the fullbacks can attack without worrying so much about the gaps they leave behind them.

Tactical flexibility to change to other formations: From 4-3-3 formation, the coach can manage the game and counteract the opposition by changing the shape of the team relatively easily.

Roles & Responsibilities of Players

Goalkeeper

1. He/She needs to be constantly talking to his/her defenders and work well with them as a unit.
2. Obviously, the main role of the keeper is to keep a clean sheet and they must therefore do anything possible to prevent the opposition from scoring.
3. In the past, the goalkeeper, like the fullback, was only responsible for defending the goal with their lives.
4. But in today's game, goalkeepers are increasingly expected to have good footwork so that they keep possession within the team and play accurate long balls forward to instigate attacks.

They need to act almost as a sweeper and need to be ready to sprint forward to clear any ball that the opposition plays over the defenders standing on the halfway line.

In this way, the keeper can stop counter-attacks before they even begin.

As the 4-3-3 formation traps the opposition in their half of the pitch, the goalkeeper needs to keep their concentration as they will not see the ball for large parts of the game.

A good keeper can always be the difference between victory and defeat.

Central Defenders

In the attack-minded 4-3-3 formation, the centre-backs are the sole true defenders of the team.

They need to clearly convey any danger to the rest of the players on the team to ensure they fulfil their defensive duties.

They must work well as a unit with the two fullbacks and the defensive holding player in front of them to plug any gaps that the attacking players leave behind them.

Strong in the tackle with a good sense of positioning, the centre-back's job is to arrive at the ball before the opposition's strikers and either pass it to a teammate or clear it away.

If they are second to the ball, they need to hold off the striker, stop them from getting past, and give the rest of the team enough time to get back in position.

In the air, they should aim to win most of their headers and stop the opposition's striker from controlling the ball and bringing their teammates into play.

They need to not dive into tackles and make sure they are aware of any space that the striker may try to run into.

With balls played into the channel behind the team's fullbacks, the centre-back needs to come across and stop the opponent's striker from driving at the defence.

The other centre-back then either comes across to cover them, or the defensive midfielder drops in and takes up the position.

The centre-backs always need to be aware of the movement of the opposition's forwards and attempt to intercept any passes that are aimed at the space behind them.

When playing the offside trap, they need to communicate together to know when to step up and when to drop off.

In the 4-3-3 formation, there is less of an onus on the centre-backs to be good with the ball at their feet as more of the play will go through other players on the team. Ideally, they're comfortable on the ball, but their main priority is to put their bodies on the line and limit the opposition's goal-scoring chances.

Left and Right Fullbacks

Although their priority is to defend, offensive fullbacks who are confident on the ball and can deliver a good cross are very important to the 4-3-3 formation.

They are responsible for providing the team with width, and they also provide the central midfielders with more space within which to operate. They're also another passing option out on the flank.

Without a wide midfielder, it is even more crucial they get forward and support the wide forward in attacking the opposition's fullback.

With the fullback overlapping and running in behind the defence, the wide forward is afforded a lot more space and time to choose what option they think is best.

If the ball reaches them behind the opponent's defence, the fullback should attempt to put in a good cross for the central striker.

If the pass does not come, then their decoy run has helped drag the opposition's defenders out of position.

With all this running up and down the pitch, they need to be very fit and have an exceptional sense of timing to know when to go forward and when to stay back.

The holding midfielder helps in this respect as they can cover the space the fullbacks leave when contributing offensively to the team's play.

The fullback, though, should always attempt to remain goal-side of the opposition's winger and it is their job to stop crosses into the box and put tackles in to stop the winger from dancing past them.

When playing the offside trap alongside the centre-backs, the fullbacks need to communicate well with their teammates and understand exactly when to play it and when to drop off.

They also need to make sure that they call the wide forward in front of them back to help out when the opposition is attacking down their wing.

If isolated against two players, the fullback must make the best of the situation and slow them down so that one of their teammates can come across and help out.

As they are involved further up the field, the fullbacks should be good on the ball and confidently keep the ball in the team's possession.

Their movement is very important in creating passing angles and the triangles that are so prevalent in the 4-3-3 formation.

Central Midfielders

In a 4-3-3 formation, there are a number of ways that a coach may decide to line up the midfield depending on the opposition they are facing, the personnel available, and the game plan they wish to follow.

One of the trio is usually a specialised holding player which is integral to the success of the formation to provide balance and security for their teammates.

The holding midfielder is crucial due to the attacking nature of the formation.

They must cover the gaps and spaces left by the rest of the team. It is their job to sniff out danger, drop into the fullback positions, and slow down the opposition's strikers if they are streaming forward.

As with all midfielders, they need to be good on the ball, calm in possession and as the deepest midfielder, it is up to them to pick up the ball off of the centre-backs and move it forward.

The other two midfield slots can be filled in a variety of ways...

Either by another defensive-minded midfielder to further protect the team, a ball-carrying centre mid, or by an offensive-minded attacking midfielder.

All of the midfielders, though, should be good on the ball, tactically disciplined, and contribute both offensively and defensively to the team's shape.

It is up to the coach to decide on the combination in midfield and what type of game plan they want to bring to the opposition.

The ball-carrying midfielder should be energetic, constantly searching for the ball, and comfortable dribbling and passing forwards.

They can act as a carrier between the lines and push up the field by gliding between the opposition's players.

If they break through the opponent's midfield, then they can be particularly dangerous running at their defence, either taking them on or by releasing a pass to the central striker.

They should also look to run past the central striker of the team and help drag the opposition's team out of shape with their movement.

The attacking midfielder has more creative responsibility than the others and should have a high level of technical skills as well as good close ball control as they often operate in small spaces which require quick decision-making.

The attacking midfielder helps to alleviate the creative responsibility of the team's wide forwards and fullbacks by contributing to attacking play through the centre.

They also need to contribute to the team's goal-scoring and create chances for their teammates.

When the ball is delivered from out wide, they should be pushing forward to meet it on the edge of the box. And by making runs forward, they also contribute to opening up space for the rest of the team to play in.

The central three midfielders need to communicate well and make sure they do not close down each other's space.

They must not leave too much space behind them and should all be disciplined enough to contribute defensively.

With the team often playing in the opposition's half, they should dominate possession with the defenders effectively trapping the opposition and stopping them from playing out. A well-balanced midfield is essential to the 4-3-3 formation's success and they must work well together to ensure they fulfil all their responsibilities.

Forwards

There are a number of ways that a manager may decide to organise the team's front three...

Depending on the personnel available to them, they may decide on a flat three, two up front and one behind, a false 9, or one central striker with two number 10s behind them.

Such is the beauty of football that an inexhaustible variety of ways to play exist!

An attacking formation at heart, the 4-3-3 formation relies on the forwards buzzing around the opposition's defence and putting pressure on them in the hopes that they make a mistake.

Their energy carries the game to the opponent and ensures that they can never relax when in possession. This helps limit their ability to play out from the back.

If indeed they do make a mistake, the team's forwards are now a lot closer to the goal with the majority of the opposition's team members already behind them.

With the three in midfield stopping the opposition's defenders from passing into their midfielders, the wide forwards coupled with the fullbacks pushing up can effectively completely strangle the opposition and force them to go long.

Attack, really can be the best form of defence.

In this formation, the wide forwards (if this is indeed how the team plays) must be fearless with their creativity, constantly attempting to create goal-scoring opportunities for the central striker.

They can do this by overloading the wing alongside the fullback and getting crosses into the box or by using the decoy outside to drive at the opposition's defence.

They can then either get a shot off or attempt to slip someone through behind the opposition's central defenders.

This requires that they're good at dribbling and have a good shot on them.

Defensively, it is important that they track back and support their fullback when the opposition is attacking.

The central striker in the 4-3-3 formation can have a variety of strengths though hopefully, they would be able to contribute in various ways to the team's play.

As the team's main goalscorer, they must be a good finisher, have great movement, and be able to anticipate and take any chances that come their way.

The opposition's central defenders will try to stop them in any way possible so it is important for the striker to be tough and make sure they keep the ball despite the defenders' best efforts.

By holding up the ball, they can bring their teammates into play and help the team move up the pitch.

As a team playing 4-3-3 will often dominate possession and be playing in the opposition's half of the pitch, the striker will be surrounded by the opponent's players and consequently have little time or space in which to operate.

Therefore, their one-touch passing must be accurate and their runs behind the defence are crucial for increasing the space that their teammates can play in.

Unlike in other formations where the central striker has few defensive responsibilities, in a 4-3-3, their job is to put the defenders under pressure and stop them playing out from the back.

Conclusion

The 1-4-3-3 is an attacking formation when we are in BP (Ball possession). When we need to defend we can move the 7 & 11 back to create a 1-4-4-1-1 formation till we win the ball back from the opposition (BPO Ball Possession Opponents). There are also transitional moments in games when we lose the ball or win the ball.

Good Luck!

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27/1/2021