KLOPP V GUARDIOLA

A LOOK AT THEIR TACTICS AND STYLES OF PLAY

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ **DEFENDING** ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

by LUCA BERTOLINI

Klopp v Guardiola Defending

A look at their tactics and styles of play

By

Luca Bertolini

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Authors – Luca Bertolini
Editor - Mike Saif
Cover Art By - Barrie Smith

Contents

Introduction: Quotes

- **Pep Guardiola**

"I'd rather my players to thank me for improving them, rather than for the titles"

"Success without playing the way you like to play means nothing to me".

"I will win and I will lose, but I will go on attacking with 10 players".

"My period in Munich was judged like a disaster because we were not able to win the Champions League. I won three leagues in a row, we won two cups from three, we arrived every time in the semi-finals and finals, but it was judged a disaster."

"I'm here because the Premier League is a huge challenge. I proved myself in Barcelona and again in Germany and now I want to prove myself here with my staff and amazing players."

"I know how hard the Premier League is; it is a tough league in which to put together lots of wins back-to-back. That is a challenge. There are many teams who can finish in first place and the competition will be fierce."

"Of course. I thought 'If it doesn't work, I'll go home, another one is coming and someone can try in his way', so in that moment there was concern about the results, what we can do to improve."

"I want each of my players to be a good teammate; this is the most important quality. I like a player who thinks about himself but also about the group and Manchester City."

"What I want most of all is after each game, and after the season ends, City supporters saying that they have enjoyed the football. That is the most important thing."

"We are all working here to make this club better. I don't like the guys to think about what the club can do for them. We are here to help Manchester City to become a better club over the upcoming years and hopefully that is what you will see."

- **Jürgen Klopp**

"80,000 people in a stadium and it's a boring game is not okay."

"The best football is always about expression of emotion. Always."

"Jürgen creates a family. We always say: 30 per cent tactic, 70 per cent teambuilding."

"It is not my sport. I don't like winning with 80% [possession]. Sorry that is not enough for me. Fighting football, not serenity football, that is what I like. What we call in German 'English' — rainy day, heavy pitch, 5-5, everybody is dirty in the face and goes home and cannot play for weeks after."

"I show my team very often Barcelona but not the way they play. just the way they celebrate goals. Goal no 5768 in the last few weeks and they go 'Yeeeess' like they never scored a goal. This is what I

love about football. That's what you have to feel all the time. Until you die. And then everything is OK."

"Counter-pressing is the best playmaker in football."

"Jürgen 'philosophy is very much that we've got to run further, run faster, run quicker than any other team because if we can do that then the skill will take over."

"Energy. I'm happy when the stats say that we ran 10 km more than the opponents, in the end of the game. You could say that you have to run in the right direction. Okay, in the right direction, but 10 km better than the others. It's the first rule they give you as a child: run."

"Without being the most confident person in the world, I think I am the right person for Liverpool." This club means everything to the people. So, it's our job to show that it means absolutely everything for us as well. It's a lot about emotion, the intensity, how the supporters live. Where did you ever hear a better message than "You'll never walk alone"? It's the most beautiful song in the world. Everybody feels it, everybody loves it. Everybody gets the message. In your darkest moments, you are not alone. I love that. We are Liverpool and that means we have to entertain the people. We have to show all the desire, all the love for the game. We will all be together soon. There will be a moment for us. For now, tell the world: we are Liverpool... Champions of England."

What players say about them?

- **About Pep Guardiola:**

"Guardiola wants to make football better, to take his team to another level. [. . .] He played in the third team back then (when he was given his first-team debut at Barcelona in 1990), and physically he was nothing, but he knew how to help himself with the right movement. And this experience in turning disadvantages into advantages distinguishes him as a coach. To me, he's one of the best in the world. What is really outstanding about Guardiola is that he doesn't force his style of football onto his team. He analyses what is best for the team, utilizes the special details and through that leads them to the greatest possible success. It's no coincidence that Spain won the 2010 World Cup with seven of Guardiola's players, and now Germany with six or seven of his players."
(Johan Cruyff)

"Pep never stops thinking. I will give you an example. We beat Dortmund 3-0 last month. We were on the plane, very happy as we'd beaten our biggest rival, but he sat at the front, opened his laptop and started preparing for the next match. He is obsessed with football."
(Karl-Heinze Rummenigge)

"If Pep told me to throw myself off the second tier at the Camp Nou, I'd think: 'There must be something good down there."
(Dani Alves)

"He doesn't give himself a minute's rest. He's pig-headed, football is his everything and he puts so much intensity into everything. Pep's almost got a sickness for football."
(Xavi)

"Pep doesn't just give you orders, he also explains why. That makes you a better footballer because you learn the reasoning behind his instructions."
(Gerard Pique)

"There is one thing you can be sure of — he wants to dominate. People associate his teams with the number of goals they score but his teams also don't concede a lot. He always wants to be on the front foot, having the ball, possession, and he wants to dominate."
(Thierry Henry)

"He gives you so many solutions for when you are then in the middle of a game, and nearly all of them turn out to be the right solutions when you apply them."
(Andres Iniesta)

"He is an incredible coach on a completely different level in terms of tactics," he said. "He's a brilliant coach and I'm sure he'll do a great job [at City]. "He really helps players develop and he even helped me improve at the age of 30. With Pep it's more than just about winning trophies. You're always measured by the number of trophies but he developed a lot of players with the way he thinks about tactics, the way he analyses games and prepares teams for particular opponents."
(Phillip Lahm)

"I had to learn a few things in the first couple of months but Pep was able to see he could get the best out of me to help the team. I'm in my second year with him, I've learned a lot and working with him has been just what I needed. Pep looks at everything we need to do. I watched what I ate and I trained at home. I know the little things are important too. Pep thinks about football 24 hours a day. He covers every angle to the smallest detail and he always demands 100 per cent in training and in games."
(Robert Lewandowski)

"I have learned a lot from Pep. He's a genius. I can learn more from him in an hour than from others in one year. He not only lifts you to the next level on the pitch, but also in your mind. He has revealed totally new options to me. I did not know that was possible when I got to Munich. He found a new position for me."
(Douglas Costa)

"He's the world's best in terms of analyzing the opposition, game preparation and coming up with solutions."
(Toni Kroos)

"Pep brought greater emphasis on putting value on possession and controlling the game. "The Bundesliga has always been a competition of strength, power and goals. He changed the concept of German football in general and they found a harmony that saw them go on to become world champions."
(Thiago Alcantara)

"He is more like a genius who reads the game and covers every situation imaginable. He is always showing us how to create space and find solutions and there is no manager like him, which makes him probably the best in the world."
(Ilkay Gundogan)

- **About Jürgen Klopp**

"He is a bit of a funny guy, but at the same time, he is a serious guy. Usually when I am talking to him off the pitch it is about personal things. Things about lifestyle and life – and that is important to me. I think I have somebody I can confide in."
(Sadio Mané)

"I think I improved a lot in every way: physically, tactically, mentally, I learned a bit of every aspect." […] "I am never tired of praising Klopp. He has so many good things on and off the pitch. He really helps us on a daily basis, we learn so much from him in every way."
(Roberto Firmino)

"I came to Dortmund from a relatively small team and I struggled during my first six months to find my place there. I was a bit shy and, to be honest, I wasn't brave enough to do certain things. But thanks to the help of my team-mates, and with the help of Jürgen and his staff, too, I managed to improve."
(Ilkay Gundogan)

"I have a very similar connection with Jürgen Klopp at Liverpool as I had earlier with Ronald Koeman at Southampton. Like Koeman, Klopp knows exactly how to get the best out of me – by being critical. […] "When the media are hyping me and being very positive, he will downplay the praise and all that often with a wink. And when I was voted UEFA Player of the Year and had to go to the ceremony, Jürgen told all the lads that I was picking up the trophy on behalf of the entire team." […] "All the boys in the squad know I can take that sort of stuff very well. I know what he means. At the same time, the boss gives me a lot of respect and responsibility."
(Virgil van Dijk)

"I was not used to defending from the front. I didn't even know that it was a two-way game. Jürgen taught me modern football."
(Ivan Perisic)

"I am thankful to Klopp. He worked on my personality and the psychological part. Klopp showed me the way. He supported me and told me I had to keep my head up because good things were coming."
(Henrikh Mkhitaryan)

"He taught me how to have a strong personality and how to improve my level. I have a lot of respect for this man."
(Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang)

"He's just a great coach, one of the best in the world. A real leader. I learned so much from him, especially on the mental level."
(Philippe Coutinho)

"He taught me everything about professional football. At that time, I was just 17 and coming up from the youth team. He introduced me to everything. He let me play."
(Mario Götze)

 "I'm delighted I was able to get to know such a coach and such a person as Jürgen because he's amazing – both as a coach and a person. I learned so much from him and that means a lot."
(Robert Lewandowski)

 "A lot of teams have qualities, but when you have a good manager who is tactically strong and have a good club with good fans, then there's no secret. You can achieve great things."
(Divock Origi)

"If Jürgen sits in front of you with his aura, which he radiates even when speaking, with his stature, it's really quite impressive […] "He was definitely one of the reasons why I signed for Dortmund. Jürgen can develop players and make them better. He has a special way about him."
(Marco Reus)

"Obviously without him who knows what would've happened. He's the one that's given me the most opportunities, more than I could even ask for."
(Trent Alexander-Arnold)

Jürgen Klopp's & Pep Guardiola's careers, historic landmark and trophies (2016-2020)
Per Guardiola and Jürgen Klopp has become Premier League Champions through two different careers, as former players and coaches; the Catalan had been a great player, the first real holding/playmaker midfielder at Barcelona under Johan Cruijff , the German coach has been just a good player for FSV Mainz 05 during the 90s'.

While Pep Guardiola was winning trophies at Barcelona (6 La Liga, 2 Copa del Re, 4 National Super Cups, 1 UEFA Champions League, 1 Uefa Super Cup, 1 Uefa Cup Winners Cup), with the National Team (1 Olimpic Games gold medal), and making experiences in the Italian Serie A, Jürgen Klopp was keep going on with his medium player career in Germany before becoming the coach of the team he was being playing for on 28th February 2001. When Pep Guardiola was about to stop his carrier in the field, the German coach was leading his FSV Mainz 05 to the promotion to the Bundesliga (2004).

The first "common season" between them if the 2008/2009; Per Guardiola become Fc Barcelona first team head coach after 1 year spent as FCB B's coach and Jürgen Klopp become Borussia Dortmund head coach in Germany to fight the hegemony of Bayern Munich. This is also the first big difference between them; Pep started his career as Best Teams Coach, Jürgen Klopp as Under Dog Teams coach. Thereafter, they started to be points of references for all the coaches all over the world, apart from the trophies: tiki taka, false 9, high pressure, counter-pressing, fast attacking transitions have become common words in soccer language, and all the philosophical, practical and active factors are their inventions.

The 2013/2014 season is the first fight between these two coaches, when Pep Guardiola joined Bayern Munich on a 3 years contract; the first battles happened in Germany. We can say that Pep beat Jürgen 3 – 2 during 2 seasons, as Bayern won 2 Bundesliga of 3 and 1 German National Cup of 2 against BVB, but Jürgen Klopp won the German Supercup Final 2 times in a row.

The German years have been innovation and developing years for Pep; we may say that he has said goodbye to Barcelona's tiki taka and short passing possession phases and he welcomed the "Half spaces" and Inverted Fullbacks and Wingers tactics, making Bayern one of the most interesting club in the world, even without a Champions League triumph (the Bavarian missed the final 3 times in a row against Spanish teams: Real Madrid, Barcelona and Atletico Madrid). Guardiola also converted his style of play to a center striker attacking shape, helping Lewandowsky to become one of the best forward of these recent years; the same tactic that caused him so many troubles from tactical and relational points of view with Zlatan Ibrahimovic at Barcelona (2009/2010); indeed, the Swedish player is one of the few players who hasn't a good opinion about the Catalan, together with Samuel Eto'o. Why? Maybe because "The Space" was the real striker for Pep at that time and Ibrahimovic and Eto'o suffered this tactical situation in the field. But this is also is point of strength; Guardiola is not a "closed mind" coach, and he has understood how crucial a center striker can be. Robert Lewandowsky and El Kun Aguero are the proofs.

During the fighting seasons in Germany, Klopp had already done the best for Borussia Dortmund, winning 2 Bundesliga in a row (2010/2011 and 2011/2012) thanks to counter-pressing and fast transitions to attack tactics and bringing an entire generation of players to their career's top performances. The proof is that all the players who were sold to other clubs from BVB had never reached the same level again away from Dortmund and without their coach.

On the other side, as Klopp stated the day when he was introduce the English press as Liverpool's head coach, "I don't work to coach the best team in the world, I work to beat it"; in other words, he wants to be an underdog a try to beat the top teams. As this 2019/2020 season has just demonstrated, eventually he has done it; Liverpool is now Champions of England, and Manchester City is about 20 points behind, after 2 seasons with the Pep's Citizens at the top of the table.

Despite Klopp's evolution is blinder than the Guardiola's one, it becomes evident if Liverpool is analyzed in a deeper way; but apart from this, his passion, his emotions, his "stage" leadership, his good human being and his idea to be "The Captain of the ship" when he works for a club have always been the same; in fact, he coached Borussia Dortmund and Liverpool, 2 teams with the "warmest supporters" in their countries. "He is always right man, in the right place, at the right time."

Pep's last season in Germany is also the first one for Jürgen Klopp in England at Liverpool (8th October 2015); the next season (2016/2017) is also the first one against each other as Premier League (and Champions League) rivals. This 2019/2020 seems to be the last campaign against each other in England and to draw conclusions is very hard; Pep develop a style of play in a club without a big history but that was winning home trophies even before his arrival, and Jürgen has led Liverpool to three European finals, the reds has won the 3 most important international cups in 2019 and the Premier League for the first time in 30 years. Without judgements, this is the sum up scheme of these 4 seasons:

Liverpool 2016 - 2020		Manchester City 2016 - 2020	
2016 - 2017	4th seat in Premier League	2016 - 2017	3rd seat in Premier League
2017 – 2018	4th seat in Premier League Champions League runner up	2017 – 2018	League Cup winner Premier League Winner
2018 – 2019	Champions League Winner European Super Cup Winner Fifa Club World Cup Winner 2nd seat in Premier League	2018 – 2019	Community Shield Winner League Cup Winner Fa Cup Winner Premier League winner
2019 - 2020	Premier League Winner	2019 - 2020	?

Liverpool vs Manchester City matches 2016 - 2020	
2016 - 2017	Liverpool – Manchester City: 1 – 0 (Premier League, Anfield Road 31/12/2016) Manchester City – Liverpool: 1 – 1 (Premier League, Ethiad Stadium 19/03/2017)
2017 – 2018	Manchester City – Liverpool: 5 – 0 (Premier League, Ethiad Stadium 09/09/2017 Liverpool – Manchester City: 3 – 0 (Champions League, Anfield Road 04/04/2018) Manchester City – Liverpool: 1 – 2 (Champions League, Ethiad Stadium 10/04/2018) Liverpool – Manchester City: 4 – 3 (Premier League, Anfield Road 14/01/2018)
2018 – 2019	Liverpool – Manchester City: 0 – 0 (Premier League, Anfield Road - 07/10/2018) Manchester City – Liverpool: 2 – 1 (Premier League, Ethiad Stadium - 03/01/2019)
2019 - 2020	Liverpool – Manchester City: 1 – 1 (4 – 5 after penalty kicks) (Community Shield, Wembley - 04/09/2019) Liverpool – Manchester City: 3 – 1 (Premier League, Anfield Road - 10/11/2019) Manchester City – Liverpool: 4 – 0 (Premier League, Ethiad Stadium - 02/07/2020)

Liverpool formations (2016 – 2020)

- ## 2016/2017 Squad List

#	Player	Date of birth / Age	Nat.	Height	Foot	Joined	Signed from	Contract expires	Market value
22	**Simon Mignolet** Goalkeeper	Mar 6, 1988 (28)		1,93 m	right	Jul 1, 2013		30.06.2021	**£10.80m**
1	**Loris Karius** Goalkeeper	Jun 22, 1993 (23)		1,89 m	right	Jul 1, 2016		30.06.2021	**£7.20m**
13	**Alexander Manninger** Goalkeeper	Jun 4, 1977 (39)		N/A	N/A	Jul 22, 2016		-	**£180Th.**
32	**Joel Matip** Centre-Back	Aug 8, 1991 (24)		1,95 m	right	Jul 1, 2016		30.06.2024	**£22.50m**
6	**Dejan Lovren** Centre-Back	Jul 5, 1989 (26)		1,88 m	right	Jul 27, 2014		30.06.2021	**£15.30m**
12	**Joe Gomez** Centre-Back	May 23, 1997 (19)		1,88 m	right	Jul 1, 2015		30.06.2024	**£3.60m**
17	**Ragnar Klavan** Centre-Back	Oct 30, 1985 (30)		1,87 m	left	Jul 20, 2016		-	**£3.15m**
18	**Alberto Moreno** Left-Back	Jul 5, 1992 (23)		1,71 m	left	Aug 13, 2014		-	**£9.00m**
2	**Nathaniel Clyne** Right-Back	Apr 5, 1991 (25)		1,75 m	right	Jul 1, 2015		30.06.2020	**£18.90m**
66	**T. A. Arnold** Right-Back	Oct 7, 1998 (17)		1,80 m	right	Jul 1, 2016		30.06.2024	**£1.35m**
56	**Connor Randall** Right-Back	Oct 21, 1995 (20)		1,80 m	right	Jul 1, 2015		-	**£450Th.**
23	**Emre Can** Defensive Midfield	Jan 12, 1994 (22)		1,86 m	right	Jul 1, 2014		-	**£13.50m**
21	**Lucas Leiva** Defensive Midfield	Jan 9, 1987 (29)		1,79 m	right	Jul 1, 2007		-	**£6.30m**
35	**Kevin Stewart** Defensive Midfield	Sep 7, 1993 (22)		1,82 m	both	Jul 7, 2014		30.06.2021	**£900Th.**
5	**Georginio Wijnaldum** Central Midfield	Nov 11, 1990 (25)		1,75 m	right	Jul 22, 2016		30.06.2021	**£25.20m**
14	**Jordan Henderson** Central Midfield	Jun 17, 1990 (26)		1,87 m	right	Jul 1, 2011		30.06.2023	**£25.20m**

#	Player	Date of birth / Age	Nat.	Height	Foot	Joined	Signed from	Contract expires	Market value
7	**James Milner** Central Midfield	Jan 4, 1986 (30)		1,75 m	right	Jul 1, 2015		30.06.2022	**£10.80m**
-	**Ovie Ejaria** Central Midfield	Nov 18, 1997 (18)		1,84 m	right	Jul 1, 2016		-	**£450Th.**
10	**Philippe Coutinho** Attacking Midfield	Jun 12, 1992 (24)		1,72 m	right	Jan 30, 2013		30.06.2022	**£40.50m**
20	**Adam Lallana** Attacking Midfield	May 10, 1988 (28)		1,72 m	both	Jul 1, 2014		31.07.2020	**£22.50m**
58	**Ben Woodburn** Attacking Midfield	Oct 15, 1999 (16)		1,74 m	right	Jan 1, 2017		30.06.2022	**£1.35m**
19	**Sadio Mané** Left Winger	Apr 10, 1992 (24)		1,74 m	right	Jul 1, 2016		30.06.2023	**£36.00m**
54	**Sheyi Ojo** Right Winger	Jun 19, 1997 (19)		1,79 m	left	Jul 7, 2015		30.06.2020	**£1.80m**
-	**Harry Wilson** Right Winger	Mar 22, 1997 (19)		1,73 m	left	-		-	**£90Th.**
9	**Roberto Firmino** Centre-Forward	Oct 2, 1991 (24)		1,81 m	right	Jul 1, 2015		30.06.2023	**£34.20m**
15	**Daniel Sturridge** Centre-Forward	Sep 1, 1989 (26)		1,85 m	left	Jan 2, 2013		-	**£18.00m**
27	**Divock Origi** Centre-Forward	Apr 18, 1995 (21)		1,85 m	right	Jul 29, 2014		30.06.2024	**£10.80m**
28	**Danny Ings** Centre-Forward	Jul 23, 1992 (23)		1,78 m	right	Jul 1, 2015		30.06.2020	**£7.20m**
-	**Rhian Brewster** Centre-Forward	Apr 1, 2000 (16)		1,80 m	right			-	-

- **Recurrent systems of play**

4-2-3-1 3%	4-3-1-2 3%	4-1-4-1 3%	3-5-2 2%
4-4-2 2%	4-5-1 2%	4-2-2-2 1%	3-4-2-1 1%

4-3-3 71%

- **Main starting 11**

- ## 2017/2018 Squad List

#	Player	Date of birth / Age	Nat.	Height	Foot	Joined	Signed from	Contract expires	Market value
1	**Loris Karius** Goalkeeper	Jun 22, 1993 (24)		1,89 m	right	Jul 1, 2016		30.06.2021	£10.80m
22	**Simon Mignolet** Goalkeeper	Mar 6, 1988 (29)		1,93 m	right	Jul 1, 2013		30.06.2021	£9.00m
52	**Danny Ward** Goalkeeper	Jun 22, 1993 (24)		1,91 m	right	Jan 30, 2012		30.06.2021	£2.25m
34	**Ádám Bogdán** Goalkeeper	Sep 27, 1987 (29)		1,94 m	right	Jul 1, 2015		-	£900Th.
4	**Virgil van Dijk** Centre-Back	Jul 8, 1991 (25)		1,93 m	right	Jan 1, 2018		30.06.2023	£45.00m
32	**Joel Matip** Centre-Back	Aug 8, 1991 (25)		1,95 m	right	Jul 1, 2016		30.06.2024	£22.50m
12	**Joe Gomez** Centre-Back	May 23, 1997 (20)		1,88 m	right	Jul 1, 2015		30.06.2024	£19.80m
6	**Dejan Lovren** Centre-Back	Jul 5, 1989 (27)		1,88 m	right	Jul 27, 2014		30.06.2021	£18.00m
17	**Ragnar Klavan** Centre-Back	Oct 30, 1985 (31)		1,87 m	left	Jul 20, 2016		-	£3.15m
26	**Andrew Robertson** Left-Back	Mar 11, 1994 (23)		1,78 m	left	Jul 21, 2017		30.06.2024	£22.50m
18	**Alberto Moreno** Left-Back	Jul 5, 1992 (24)		1,71 m	left	Aug 13, 2014		-	£9.00m
66	**T. A. Arnold** Right-Back	Oct 7, 1998 (18)		1,80 m	right	Jul 1, 2016		30.06.2024	£22.50m
2	**Nathaniel Clyne** Right-Back	Apr 5, 1991 (26)		1,75 m	right	Jul 1, 2015		30.06.2020	£18.00m
23	**Emre Can** Defensive Midfield	Jan 12, 1994 (23)		1,86 m	right	Jul 1, 2014		-	£27.00m
21	**Alex O. Chamberlain** Central Midfield	Aug 15, 1993 (23)		1,75 m	right	Aug 31, 2017		30.06.2023	£36.00m
5	**Georginio Wijnaldum** Central Midfield	Nov 11, 1990 (26)		1,75 m	right	Jul 22, 2016		30.06.2021	£27.00m
14	**Jordan Henderson** Central Midfield	Jun 17, 1990 (27)		1,87 m	right	Jul 1, 2011		30.06.2023	£22.50m

#	Player	Date of birth / Age	Nat.	Height	Foot	Joined	Signed from	Contract expires	Market value
7	**James Milner** Central Midfield	Jan 4, 1986 (31)		1,75 m	right	Jul 1, 2015		30.06.2022	£13.50m
-	**Curtis Jones** Central Midfield	Jan 30, 2001 (16)		1,85 m	right	-		-	-
-	**Philippe Coutinho** Attacking Midfield	Jun 12, 1992 (25)		1,72 m	right	Jan 30, 2013		30.06.2022	£90.00m
20	**Adam Lallana** Attacking Midfield	May 10, 1988 (29)		1,72 m	both	Jul 1, 2014		31.07.2020	£22.50m
58	**Ben Woodburn** Attacking Midfield	Oct 15, 1999 (17)		1,74 m	right	Jan 1, 2017		30.06.2022	£4.50m
19	**Sadio Mané** Left Winger	Apr 10, 1992 (25)		1,74 m	right	Jul 1, 2016		30.06.2023	£63.00m
11	**Mohamed Salah** Right Winger	Jun 15, 1992 (25)		1,75 m	left	Jul 1, 2017		30.06.2023	£135.00m
9	**Roberto Firmino** Centre-Forward	Oct 2, 1991 (25)		1,81 m	right	Jul 1, 2015		30.06.2023	£72.00m
29	**Dominic Solanke** Centre-Forward	Sep 14, 1997 (19)		1,86 m	right	Jul 10, 2017		30.06.2022	£9.00m
28	**Danny Ings** Centre-Forward	Jul 23, 1992 (24)		1,78 m	right	Jul 1, 2015		30.06.2020	£7.20m

- **Recurrent systems of play**

4-3-3 78%

4-2-3-1	4-4-2	3-4-2-1	4-2-1-3
4%	2%	2%	1%

5-3-1
1%

- **Main starting 11**

2018/2019 Squad List

#	Player	Date of birth / Age	Nat.	Height	Foot	Joined	Signed from	Contract expires	Market value
13	**Alisson** Goalkeeper	Oct 2, 1992 (25)		1,91 m	right	Jul 19, 2018		30.06.2024	£72.00m
22	**Simon Mignolet** Goalkeeper	Mar 6, 1988 (30)		1,93 m	right	Jul 1, 2013		30.06.2021	£7.20m
-	**Kamil Grabara** Goalkeeper	Jan 8, 1999 (19)		1,95 m	right	-		-	£360Th.
-	**Caoimhin Kelleher** Goalkeeper	Nov 23, 1998 (19)		1,88 m	right	-		-	-
4	**Virgil van Dijk** Centre-Back	Jul 8, 1991 (26)		1,93 m	right	Jan 1, 2018		30.06.2023	£81.00m
12	**Joe Gomez** Centre-Back	May 23, 1997 (21)		1,88 m	right	Jul 1, 2015		30.06.2024	£31.50m
32	**Joel Matip** Centre-Back	Aug 8, 1991 (26)		1,95 m	right	Jul 1, 2016		30.06.2024	£27.00m
6	**Dejan Lovren** Centre-Back	Jul 5, 1989 (28)		1,88 m	right	Jul 27, 2014		30.06.2021	£18.00m
26	**Andrew Robertson** Left-Back	Mar 11, 1994 (24)		1,78 m	left	Jul 21, 2017		30.06.2024	£54.00m
18	**Alberto Moreno** Left-Back	Jul 5, 1992 (25)		1,71 m	left	Aug 13, 2014		-	£8.10m
66	**T. A. Arnold** Right-Back	Oct 7, 1998 (19)		1,80 m	right	Jul 1, 2016		30.06.2024	£72.00m
-	**Ki-Jana Hoever** Right-Back	Jan 18, 2002 (16)		1,80 m	right	-		-	-
3	**Fabinho** Defensive Midfield	Oct 23, 1993 (24)		1,88 m	right	Jul 1, 2018		30.06.2023	£45.00m
8	**Naby Keïta** Central Midfield	Feb 10, 1995 (23)		1,72 m	right	Jul 1, 2018		30.06.2023	£54.00m
5	**Georginio Wijnaldum** Central Midfield	Nov 11, 1990 (27)		1,75 m	right	Jul 22, 2016		30.06.2021	£45.00m
14	**Jordan Henderson** Central Midfield	Jun 17, 1990 (28)		1,87 m	right	Jul 1, 2011		30.06.2023	£31.50m
21	**Alex O. Chamberlain** Central Midfield	Aug 15, 1993 (24)		1,75 m	right	Aug 31, 2017		30.06.2023	£31.50m

#	Player	Date of birth / Age	Nat.	Height	Foot	Joined	Signed from	Contract expires	Market value
7	**James Milner** Central Midfield	Jan 4, 1986 (32)		1,75 m	right	Jul 1, 2015		30.06.2022	£13.50m
-	**Curtis Jones** Central Midfield	Jan 30, 2001 (17)		1,85 m	right	-		-	-
20	**Adam Lallana** Attacking Midfield	May 10, 1988 (30)		1,72 m	both	Jul 1, 2014		31.07.2020	£13.50m
-	**Isaac Christie-Davies** Attacking Midfield	Oct 18, 1997 (20)		1,88 m	right	-		-	-
10	**Sadio Mané** Left Winger	Apr 10, 1992 (26)		1,74 m	right	Jul 1, 2016		30.06.2023	£108.00m
11	**Mohamed Salah** Right Winger	Jun 15, 1992 (26)		1,75 m	left	Jul 1, 2017		30.06.2023	£135.00m
23	**Xherdan Shaqiri** Right Winger	Oct 10, 1991 (26)		1,69 m	left	Jul 13, 2018		30.06.2023	£22.50m
-	**Rafael Camacho** Right Winger	May 22, 2000 (18)		1,75 m	right	-		-	-
9	**Roberto Firmino** Centre-Forward	Oct 2, 1991 (26)		1,81 m	right	Jul 1, 2015		30.06.2023	£72.00m
27	**Divock Origi** Centre-Forward	Apr 18, 1995 (23)		1,85 m	right	Jul 29, 2014		30.06.2024	£18.00m
-	**Dominic Solanke** Centre-Forward	Sep 14, 1997 (20)		1,86 m	right	Jul 10, 2017		30.06.2022	£16.20m
15	**Daniel Sturridge** Centre-Forward	Sep 1, 1989 (28)		1,85 m	left	Jan 2, 2013		-	£13.50m
-	**Rhian Brewster** Centre-Forward	Apr 1, 2000 (18)		1,80 m	right	-		-	-

- **Recurrent systems of play**

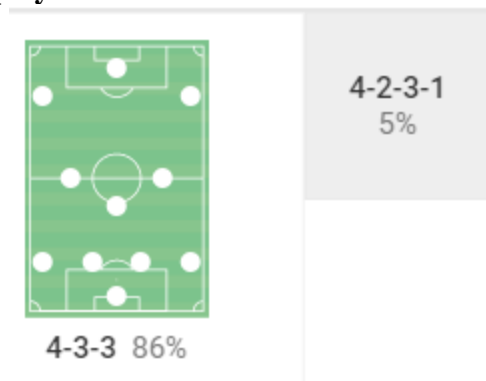4-3-3 65%   4-2-3-1 23%   4-4-2 1%

- **Main starting 11**

- ## 2019/2020 Squad List

#	Player	Date of birth / Age	Nat.	Height	Foot	Joined	Signed from	Contract expires	Market value
1	**Alisson** Goalkeeper	Oct 2, 1992 (27)		1,91 m	right	Jul 19, 2018		30.06.2024	£64.80m
13	**Adrián** Goalkeeper	Jan 3, 1987 (33)		1,90 m	right	Aug 5, 2019		30.06.2021	£3.60m
62	**Caoimhin Kelleher** Goalkeeper	Nov 23, 1998 (21)		1,88 m	right	Jul 1, 2019		30.06.2022	£810Th.
22	**Andy Lonergan** Goalkeeper	Oct 19, 1983 (36)		1,93 m	left	Aug 12, 2019		31.07.2020	£225Th.
4	**Virgil van Dijk** Centre-Back	Jul 8, 1991 (28)		1,93 m	right	Jan 1, 2018		30.06.2023	£72.00m
12	**Joe Gomez** Centre-Back	May 23, 1997 (23)		1,88 m	right	Jul 1, 2015		30.06.2024	£30.15m
32	**Joel Matip** Centre-Back	Aug 8, 1991 (28)		1,95 m	right	Jul 1, 2016		30.06.2024	£28.80m
6	**Dejan Lovren** Centre-Back	Jul 5, 1989 (30)		1,88 m	right	Jul 27, 2014		30.06.2021	£14.40m
26	**Andrew Robertson** Left-Back	Mar 11, 1994 (26)		1,78 m	left	Jul 21, 2017		30.06.2024	£57.60m
66	**T. A. Arnold** Right-Back	Oct 7, 1998 (21)		1,80 m	right	Jul 1, 2016		30.06.2024	£89.10m
3	**Fabinho** Defensive Midfield	Oct 23, 1993 (26)		1,88 m	right	Jul 1, 2018		30.06.2023	£50.40m
5	**Georginio Wijnaldum** Central Midfield	Nov 11, 1990 (29)		1,75 m	right	Jul 22, 2016		30.06.2021	£36.00m
8	**Naby Keïta** Central Midfield	Feb 10, 1995 (25)		1,72 m	right	Jul 1, 2018		30.06.2023	£30.15m
14	**Jordan Henderson** Central Midfield	Jun 17, 1990 (30)		1,87 m	right	Jul 1, 2011		30.06.2023	£25.20m
15	**Alex O. Chamberlain** Central Midfield	Aug 15, 1993 (26)		1,75 m	right	Aug 31, 2017		30.06.2023	£25.20m
7	**James Milner** Central Midfield	Jan 4, 1986 (34)		1,75 m	right	Jul 1, 2015		30.06.2022	£5.85m
48	**Curtis Jones*** Central Midfield	Jan 30, 2001 (19)		1,85 m	right	-		30.06.2024	£1.62m

#	Player	Date of birth / Age	Nat.	Height	Foot	Joined	Signed from	Contract expires	Market value
20	**Adam Lallana** Attacking Midfield	May 10, 1988 (32)		1,72 m	both	Jul 1, 2014		31.07.2020	£8.55m
10	**Sadio Mané** Left Winger	Apr 10, 1992 (28)		1,74 m	right	Jul 1, 2016		30.06.2023	£108.00m
18	**Takumi Minamino** Left Winger	Jan 16, 1995 (25)		1,74 m	right	Jan 1, 2020		30.06.2024	£9.00m
11	**Mohamed Salah** Right Winger	Jun 15, 1992 (28)		1,75 m	left	Jul 1, 2017		30.06.2023	£108.00m
23	**Xherdan Shaqiri** Right Winger	Oct 10, 1991 (28)		1,69 m	left	Jul 13, 2018		30.06.2023	£14.40m
9	**Roberto Firmino** Centre-Forward	Oct 2, 1991 (28)		1,81 m	right	Jul 1, 2015		30.06.2023	£64.80m
27	**Divock Origi** Centre-Forward	Apr 18, 1995 (25)		1,85 m	right	Jul 29, 2014		30.06.2024	£14.40m

- **Recurrent systems of play**

4-2-3-1 5%

4-3-3 86%

- **Main starting 11**

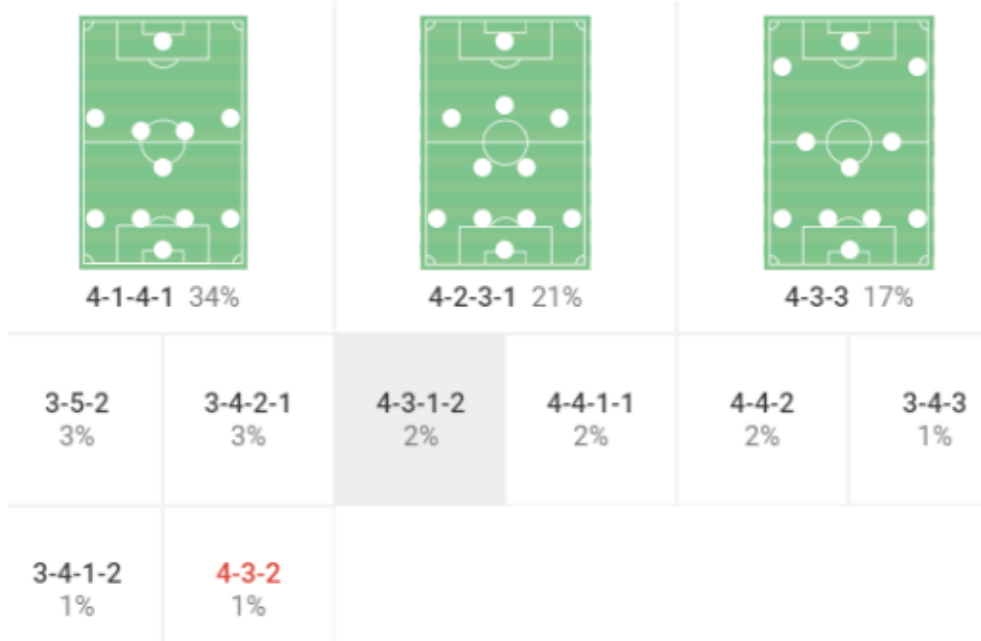## Manchester City formations (2016 – 2020)

- **2016/2017 Squad List**

#	Player	Date of birth / Age	Nat.	Height	Foot	Joined	Signed from	Contract expires	Market value
1	**Claudio Bravo** Goalkeeper	Apr 13, 1983 (33)		1,84 m	right	Aug 25, 2016		31.07.2020	**£7.20m**
13	**Willy Caballero** Goalkeeper	Sep 28, 1981 (34)		1,86 m	right	Jul 8, 2014		-	**£1.35m**
54	**Angus Gunn** Goalkeeper	Jan 22, 1996 (20)		1,96 m	right	Jul 1, 2016		30.06.2020	**£225Th.**
5	**John Stones** Centre-Back	May 28, 1994 (22)		1,88 m	right	Aug 9, 2016		30.06.2022	**£31.50m**
30	**Nicolás Otamendi** Centre-Back	Feb 12, 1988 (28)		1,83 m	right	Aug 20, 2015		30.06.2022	**£27.00m**
4	**Vincent Kompany** Centre-Back	Apr 10, 1986 (30)		1,90 m	right	Aug 22, 2008		-	**£19.80m**
20	**Eliaquim Mangala** Centre-Back	Feb 13, 1991 (25)		1,87 m	left	Aug 11, 2014		30.06.2020	**£13.50m**
11	**Aleksandar Kolarov** Left-Back	Nov 10, 1985 (30)		1,87 m	left	Jul 24, 2010		-	**£9.00m**
22	**Gaël Clichy** Left-Back	Jul 26, 1985 (30)		1,76 m	left	Jul 4, 2011		-	**£6.30m**
35	**Oleksandr Zinchenko** Left-Back	Dec 15, 1996 (19)		1,75 m	left	Jul 4, 2016		30.06.2024	**£4.05m**
-	**Angeliño** Left-Back	Jan 4, 1997 (19)		1,70 m	left	-		-	**£450Th.**
15	**Jesús Navas** Right-Back	Nov 21, 1985 (30)		1,72 m	right	Jul 1, 2013		-	**£10.80m**
5	**Pablo Zabaleta** Right-Back	Jan 16, 1985 (31)		1,76 m	right	Aug 31, 2008		-	**£6.30m**
3	**Bacary Sagna** Right-Back	Feb 14, 1983 (33)		1,76 m	right	Jul 1, 2014		-	**£3.60m**
25	**Fernandinho** Defensive Midfield	May 4, 1985 (31)		1,79 m	right	Jul 1, 2013		30.06.2021	**£16.20m**
6	**Fernando** Defensive Midfield	Jul 25, 1987 (28)		1,83 m	right	Jul 1, 2014		-	**£9.00m**

#	Player	Date of birth / Age	Nat.	Height	Foot	Joined	Signed from	Contract expires	Market value
8	**Ilkay Gündogan** Central Midfield	Oct 24, 1990 (25)		1,80 m	right	Jul 1, 2016		30.06.2023	**£27.00m**
18	**Fabian Delph** Central Midfield	Nov 21, 1989 (26)		1,74 m	left	Jul 17, 2015		30.06.2020	**£7.20m**
42	**Yaya Touré** Central Midfield	May 13, 1983 (33)		1,88 m	right	Jul 2, 2010		-	**£7.20m**
75	**Aleix García** Central Midfield	Jun 28, 1997 (19)		1,73 m	right	Jul 1, 2016		30.06.2020	**£900Th.**
-	**Phil Foden** Central Midfield	May 28, 2000 (16)		1,71 m	left	-		-	**-**
17	**Kevin De Bruyne** Attacking Midfield	Jun 28, 1991 (25)		1,81 m	right	Aug 30, 2015		30.06.2023	**£58.50m**
21	**David Silva** Attacking Midfield	Jan 8, 1986 (30)		1,70 m	left	Jul 14, 2010		31.07.2020	**£27.00m**
-	**Brahim Díaz** Attacking Midfield	Aug 3, 1999 (16)		1,71 m	both	-		-	**-**
7	**Raheem Sterling** Left Winger	Dec 8, 1994 (21)		1,70 m	right	Jul 14, 2015		30.06.2023	**£40.50m**
19	**Leroy Sané** Left Winger	Jan 11, 1996 (20)		1,84 m	left	Aug 2, 2016		30.06.2021	**£31.50m**
9	**Nolito** Left Winger	Oct 15, 1986 (29)		1,75 m	right	Jul 1, 2016		30.06.2020	**£10.80m**
10	**Sergio Agüero** Centre-Forward	Jun 2, 1988 (28)		1,73 m	right	Jul 28, 2011		30.06.2021	**£58.50m**
33	**Gabriel Jesus** Centre-Forward	Apr 3, 1997 (19)		1,75 m	right	Jan 1, 2017		30.06.2023	**£27.00m**
72	**Kelechi Iheanacho** Centre-Forward	Oct 3, 1996 (19)		1,85 m	left	Jul 1, 2015		30.06.2021	**£13.50m**

- **Recurrent systems of play**

4-1-4-1 34%		4-2-3-1 21%		4-3-3 17%	
3-5-2 3%	3-4-2-1 3%	4-3-1-2 2%	4-4-1-1 2%	4-4-2 2%	3-4-3 1%
3-4-1-2 1%	4-3-2 1%				

- **Main starting 11**

- **2017/2018 Squad List**

#	Player	Date of birth / Age	Nat.	Height	Foot	Joined	Signed from	Contract expires	Market value
31	**Ederson** Goalkeeper	Aug 17, 1993 (23)		1,88 m	left	Jul 1, 2017		30.06.2025	£45.00m
1	**Claudio Bravo** Goalkeeper	Apr 13, 1983 (34)		1,84 m	right	Aug 25, 2016		31.07.2020	£3.15m
5	**John Stones** Centre-Back	May 28, 1994 (23)		1,88 m	right	Aug 9, 2016		30.06.2022	£45.00m
14	**Aymeric Laporte** Centre-Back	May 27, 1994 (23)		1,90 m	left	Jan 30, 2018		30.06.2025	£45.00m
30	**Nicolás Otamendi** Centre-Back	Feb 12, 1988 (29)		1,83 m	right	Aug 20, 2015		30.06.2022	£31.50m
4	**Vincent Kompany** Centre-Back	Apr 10, 1986 (31)		1,90 m	right	Aug 22, 2008		-	£9.00m
22	**Benjamin Mendy** Left-Back	Jul 17, 1994 (22)		1,85 m	left	Jul 24, 2017		30.06.2023	£36.00m
35	**Oleksandr Zinchen** Left-Back	Dec 15, 1996 (20)		1,75 m	left	Jul 4, 2016		30.06.2024	£6.30m
2	**Kyle Walker** Right-Back	May 28, 1990 (27)		1,83 m	right	Jul 14, 2017		30.06.2024	£45.00m
3	**Danilo** Right-Back	Jul 15, 1991 (25)		1,84 m	right	Jul 23, 2017		30.06.2024	£18.00m
25	**Fernandinho** Defensive Midfield	May 4, 1985 (32)		1,79 m	right	Jul 1, 2013		30.06.2021	£13.50m
8	**Ilkay Gündogan** Central Midfield	Oct 24, 1990 (26)		1,80 m	right	Jul 1, 2016		30.06.2023	£36.00m
18	**Fabian Delph** Central Midfield	Nov 21, 1989 (27)		1,74 m	left	Jul 17, 2015		30.06.2020	£13.50m
47	**Phil Foden** Central Midfield	May 28, 2000 (17)		1,71 m	left	Jul 1, 2017		30.06.2024	£6.30m
42	**Yaya Touré** Central Midfield	May 13, 1983 (34)		1,88 m	right	Jul 2, 2010		-	£2.25m
17	**Kevin De Bruyne** Attacking Midfield	Jun 28, 1991 (26)		1,81 m	right	Aug 30, 2015		30.06.2023	£135.00m
21	**David Silva** Attacking Midfield	Jan 8, 1986 (31)		1,70 m	left	Jul 14, 2010		31.07.2020	£27.00m

#	Player	Date of birth / Age	Nat.	Height	Foot	Joined	Signed from	Contract expires	Market value
55	**Brahim Díaz** Attacking Midfield	Aug 3, 1999 (17)		1,71 m	both	Jan 1, 2018		-	£4.50m
7	**Raheem Sterling** Left Winger	Dec 8, 1994 (22)		1,70 m	right	Jul 14, 2015		30.06.2023	£81.00m
19	**Leroy Sané** Left Winger	Jan 11, 1996 (21)		1,84 m	left	Aug 2, 2016		30.06.2021	£81.00m
20	**Bernardo Silva** Right Winger	Aug 10, 1994 (22)		1,73 m	left	Jul 1, 2017		30.06.2025	£45.00m
10	**Sergio Agüero** Centre-Forward	Jun 2, 1988 (29)		1,73 m	right	Jul 28, 2011		30.06.2021	£72.00m
33	**Gabriel Jesus** Centre-Forward	Apr 3, 1997 (20)		1,75 m	right	Jan 1, 2017		30.06.2023	£72.00m
-	**Lukas Nmecha** Centre-Forward	Dec 14, 1998 (18)		1,85 m	right	-		-	-

- **Recurrent systems of play**

4-3-3 68%

3-5-2	4-1-4-1	4-2-3-1	3-4-2-1
7%	6%	3%	3%

3-5-1-1	4-4-2	4-3-1-1	
2%	1%	1%	

- **Main starting 11**

- ## 2018/2019 Squad List

#	Player	Date of birth / Age	Nat.	Height	Foot	Joined	Signed from	Contract expires	Market value
31	**Ederson** Goalkeeper	Aug 17, 1993 (24)		1,88 m	left	Jul 1, 2017		30.06.2025	£63.00m
1	**Claudio Bravo** Goalkeeper	Apr 13, 1983 (35)		1,84 m	right	Aug 25, 2016		31.07.2020	£2.25m
14	**Aymeric Laporte** Centre-Back	May 27, 1994 (24)		1,90 m	left	Jan 30, 2018		30.06.2025	£67.50m
5	**John Stones** Centre-Back	May 28, 1994 (24)		1,88 m	right	Aug 9, 2016		30.06.2022	£54.00m
30	**Nicolás Otamendi** Centre-Back	Feb 12, 1988 (30)		1,83 m	right	Aug 20, 2015		30.06.2022	£22.50m
15	**Eliaquim Mangala** Centre-Back	Feb 13, 1991 (27)		1,87 m	left	Aug 11, 2014		30.06.2020	£9.00m
4	**Vincent Kompany** Centre-Back	Apr 10, 1986 (32)		1,90 m	right	Aug 22, 2008		-	£7.20m
22	**Benjamin Mendy** Left-Back	Jul 17, 1994 (23)		1,85 m	left	Jul 24, 2017		30.06.2023	£31.50m
35	**Oleksandr Zinchenk** Left-Back	Dec 15, 1996 (21)		1,75 m	left	Jul 4, 2016		30.06.2024	£18.00m
2	**Kyle Walker** Right-Back	May 28, 1990 (28)		1,83 m	right	Jul 14, 2017		30.06.2024	£45.00m
3	**Danilo** Right-Back	Jul 15, 1991 (26)		1,84 m	right	Jul 23, 2017		30.06.2024	£18.00m
25	**Fernandinho** Defensive Midfield	May 4, 1985 (33)		1,79 m	right	Jul 1, 2013		30.06.2021	£10.80m
8	**Ilkay Gündogan** Central Midfield	Oct 24, 1990 (27)		1,80 m	right	Jul 1, 2016		30.06.2023	£45.00m
47	**Phil Foden** Central Midfield	May 28, 2000 (18)		1,71 m	left	Jul 1, 2017		30.06.2024	£22.50m
18	**Fabian Delph** Central Midfield	Nov 21, 1989 (28)		1,74 m	left	Jul 17, 2015		30.06.2020	£13.50m
17	**Kevin De Bruyne** Attacking Midfield	Jun 28, 1991 (27)		1,81 m	right	Aug 30, 2015		30.06.2023	£117.00m
21	**David Silva** Attacking Midfield	Jan 8, 1986 (32)		1,70 m	left	Jul 14, 2010		31.07.2020	£18.00m

#	Player	Date of birth / Age	Nat.	Height	Foot	Joined	Signed from	Contract expires	Market value
55	**Brahim Díaz** Attacking Midfield	Aug 3, 1999 (18)		1,71 m	both	Jan 1, 2018		-	£15.30m
7	**Raheem Sterling** Left Winger	Dec 8, 1994 (23)		1,70 m	right	Jul 14, 2015		30.06.2023	£126.00m
19	**Leroy Sané** Left Winger	Jan 11, 1996 (22)		1,84 m	left	Aug 2, 2016		30.06.2021	£90.00m
20	**Bernardo Silva** Right Winger	Aug 10, 1994 (23)		1,73 m	left	Jul 1, 2017		30.06.2025	£90.00m
26	**Riyad Mahrez** Right Winger	Feb 21, 1991 (27)		1,79 m	left	Jul 10, 2018		30.06.2023	£54.00m
33	**Gabriel Jesus** Centre-Forward	Apr 3, 1997 (21)		1,75 m	right	Jan 1, 2017		30.06.2023	£63.00m
10	**Sergio Agüero** Centre-Forward	Jun 2, 1988 (30)		1,73 m	right	Jul 28, 2011		30.06.2021	£58.50m

- **Recurrent systems of play**

4-3-3 77%

| 4-1-4-1 5% | 4-2-3-1 4% | 4-4-2 2% | 3-4-3 1% |

| 3-5-2 1% | 3-5-1-1 1% | | |

- **Main starting 11**

- **2019/2020 Squad List**

#	Player	Date of birth / Age	Nat.	Height	Foot	Joined	Signed from	Contract expires	Market value
31	**Ederson** Goalkeeper	Aug 17, 1993 (26)		1,88 m	left	Jul 1, 2017		30.06.2025	£50.40m
1	**Claudio Bravo** Goalkeeper	Apr 13, 1983 (37)		1,84 m	right	Aug 25, 2016		31.07.2020	£1.08m
33	**Scott Carson** Goalkeeper	Sep 3, 1985 (34)		1,88 m	right	Aug 8, 2019		31.07.2020	£720Th.
14	**Aymeric Laporte** Centre-Back	May 27, 1994 (26)		1,90 m	left	Jan 30, 2018		30.06.2025	£54.00m
5	**John Stones** Centre-Back	May 28, 1994 (26)		1,88 m	right	Aug 9, 2016		30.06.2022	£32.40m
30	**Nicolás Otamendi** Centre-Back	Feb 12, 1988 (32)		1,83 m	right	Aug 20, 2015		30.06.2022	£13.05m
50	**Eric García** Centre-Back	Jan 9, 2001 (19)		1,83 m	right	Jul 1, 2019		30.06.2022	£5.67m
22	**Benjamin Mendy** Left-Back	Jul 17, 1994 (25)		1,85 m	left	Jul 24, 2017		30.06.2023	£25.20m
11	**Oleksandr Zinchenko** Left-Back	Dec 15, 1996 (23)		1,75 m	left	Jul 4, 2016		30.06.2024	£21.60m
2	**Kyle Walker** Right-Back	May 28, 1990 (30)		1,83 m	right	Jul 14, 2017		30.06.2024	£36.00m
27	**João Cancelo** Right-Back	May 27, 1994 (26)		1,82 m	right	Aug 7, 2019		30.06.2025	£32.40m
-	**Yan Couto** Right-Back	Jun 3, 2002 (18)		1,68 m	right	Jul 1, 2020		30.06.2025	£3.24m
16	**Rodri** Defensive Midfield	Jun 22, 1996 (24)		1,91 m	right	Jul 4, 2019		30.06.2024	£57.60m
25	**Fernandinho** Defensive Midfield	May 4, 1985 (35)		1,79 m	right	Jul 1, 2013		30.06.2021	£7.20m
-	**Ante Palaversa** Defensive Midfield	Apr 6, 2000 (20)		1,87 m	right	Jan 31, 2019		30.06.2023	£3.24m
8	**Ilkay Gündogan** Central Midfield	Oct 24, 1990 (29)		1,80 m	right	Jul 1, 2016		30.06.2023	£36.00m
47	**Phil Foden** Central Midfield	May 28, 2000 (20)		1,71 m	left	Jul 1, 2017		30.06.2024	£24.30m

#	Player	Date of birth / Age	Nat.	Height	Foot	Joined	Signed from	Contract expires	Market value
17	**Kevin De Bruyne** Attacking Midfield	Jun 28, 1991 (29)		1,81 m	right	Aug 30, 2015		30.06.2023	£108.00m
21	**David Silva** Attacking Midfield	Jan 8, 1986 (34)		1,70 m	left	Jul 14, 2010		31.07.2020	£10.80m
77	**Ryotaro Meshino** Attacking Midfield	Jun 18, 1998 (22)		1,71 m	right	Aug 8, 2019		30.06.2022	£405Th.
7	**Raheem Sterling** Left Winger	Dec 8, 1994 (25)		1,70 m	right	Jul 14, 2015		30.06.2023	£115.20m
19	**Leroy Sané** Left Winger	Jan 11, 1996 (24)		1,84 m	left	Aug 2, 2016		30.06.2021	£72.00m
20	**Bernardo Silva** Right Winger	Aug 10, 1994 (25)		1,73 m	left	Jul 1, 2017		30.06.2025	£72.00m
26	**Riyad Mahrez** Right Winger	Feb 21, 1991 (29)		1,79 m	left	Jul 10, 2018		30.06.2023	£43.20m
9	**Gabriel Jesus** Centre-Forward	Apr 3, 1997 (23)		1,75 m	right	Jan 1, 2017		30.06.2023	£50.40m
10	**Sergio Agüero** Centre-Forward	Jun 2, 1988 (32)		1,73 m	right	Jul 28, 2011		30.06.2021	£46.80m

- **Recurrent systems of play**

4-3-3 41%

4-2-3-1 29%

4-4-1-1 6%

3-4-3 4%

4-4-2 3%

4-1-4-1 2%

3-4-2-1 2%

3-4-1-2 1%

3-5-2 1%

5-3-1 1%
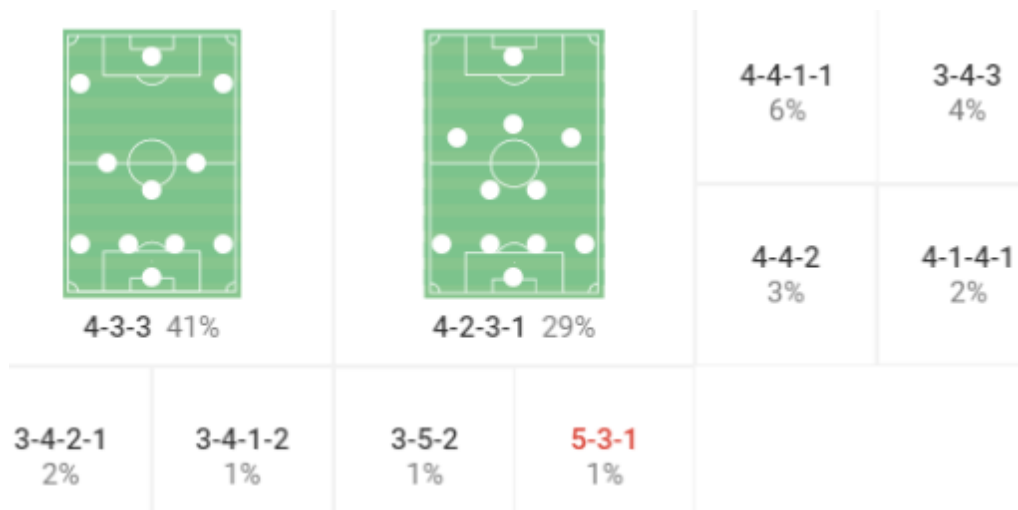
- **Main starting 11**

Liverpool and Manchester City defensive stats (2016 – 2020)

- **Liverpool 2016 – 2020**

2016/2017	Ball losses	p90	Defensive duels	won	%	Challenge Intensity	Ppda
Average		112.25	75,34	47,92	63,6	7,2	8,2
Total	4565		2863	1821			

Shots blocked	p90	% blocked shots	% blocked shots against
69	1.7	28.9	23.4

	Shots against	p90	on target	%
Average	7,66	6,62	3,13	40,89
Total	291		119	

Aerial duels	won	p90	%	Sliding tackles	successful	%
51,47	21,5	48.1	41,8	5,84	2,76	47,3
1956	817		222	105		

Interceptions	p90	Clearances	Fouls	Conceded goals
41,18	38.48	16,16	10,39	1,11
1565		614	395	42

Klopp planned the 2016/2017 season with the essential principles of play which allowed him to win the Bundesliga as Borussia Dortmund head coach 2 times in a row: high tempo, high pressure in the final third and all over the field and fast direct possession phase and counter-attacks.

The result was a high number of possession losses in the middle third, a high averaged number of defensive duels, a consequent required high value of challenge intensity and counter-attacks conceded to the opponents. 42 conceded goals were too much for a club and a team which aimed to seat at the top of the table. Hypothetically, Liverpool started more than 1 goal down to the opponents every match of the league, despite being out of the European competitions.

All defensive issues during that season are confirmed by the high number of sliding tackles (an average that would have decreased during the seasons to come) which usually represent the last defensive weapon to prevent the opponents from advancing along the field or shooting on goal. The low percentage of this data is another proof of "desperate defensive situations" which Liverpool had to face during the whole campaign.

2017/2018	Ball losses	p90	Defensive duels	won	%	Challenge Intensity	Ppda
Average		108,61	66,32	42,39	63,9	6,5	9,51
Total	4395		2520 (p90 – 62,27)	1611			

Shots blocked	p90	% blocked shots	% blocked shots against
65	1.61	26.2	25

	Shots against	p90	on target	%
Average	7,05	6,62	2,82	39,93
Total	268		107	

Aerial duels	won	p90	%	Sliding tackles	successful	%
43,13	18,08	40,5	41,9	4,18	2,21	52,83
1639	687			159	84	

Interceptions	p90	Clearances	Fouls	Conceded goals
41,84	39,29	15,87	8,95	1
1590		603	340	38

The following season 2017/2018 season Liverpool become the Uefa Champions League final runner-up, losing 3 – 1 to Real Madrid. This season can be considered as the first one with a decisive evolution to the future, furthermore from January, signing Virgil Van Dijk.

The ball losses in the middle third started to decrease, the direct defensive duels also decreased, as well as the challenge intensity and counter-attacks conceded to the opponents. Despite the improvements the conceded goals average were still too high. Hypothetically, Liverpool started again 1 goal down to the opponents every match of the league; still too much to stand higher than the 4th seat in the table.

The number of sliding tackles was still too high to consider the defensive balance as a crucial factor for Liverpool's defensive tactic which will be so essential during 2018/2019 and 2019/2020 seasons.

2018/2019	Ball losses	p90	Defensive duels	won	%	Challenge Intensity	Ppda
Average		100,52	61,34	39,82	64,9	6,5	10,8
Total	4061		2331 (p90 - 57,7)	1513			

Shots blocked	p90	% blocked shots	% blocked shots against
11	1.83	25.3	26

	Shots against	p90	on target	%
Average	7,39	6,96	2,58	34,88
Total	281		98	

Aerial duels	won	p90	%	Sliding tackles	successful	%
34,87	15,76	32,8	45,2	2,71	1,39	51,46
1325	599			103	53	

Interceptions	p90	Clearances	Fouls	Conceded goals
39,79	37,43	13,45	7,8	0,58
1512		511	315	22

Apart from the averages and data, 2 players were decisive for the final step of Klopp's Liverpool; Virgil Van Dijk had been signed on January 2018 and the new goalkeeper from As Roma, Alisson Becker. From then on, all the second center backs improved their performances (Lovren, Matip and Gomez); we may say that Liverpool back 4 were designed for 3 fix players and a fourth one to complete it.

Liverpool become European Champions and seated second in the table, just one point behind City.

The ball losses in the middle third decisively decreased, as well as the direct defensive duels; meanwhile, the challenge intensity was the same, and this means that the efficacy of the defensive phase increased, using a lower intensity style of pressure (as Ppda confirms).

The number of sliding tackles was halved and this data confirms how the defensive balance has been a crucial factor for Liverpool's defensive tactic and the matches against City were the breaking points of the season, as the Reds only one 1 point against City's 5.

2019/2020	Ball losses	p90	Defensive duels	won	%	Challenge Intensity	Ppda
Average		105,2	56,03	33,26	58,5	6,6	9,17
Total	3951		1961 (p90 – 49,02)	1164			

Shots blocked	p90	% blocked shots	% blocked shots against
63	1.68	27.3	20.2

	Shots against	p90	on target	%
Average	8,63	8,04	2,89	33,44
Total	302		101	

Aerial duels	won	p90	%	Sliding tackles	successful	%
32,69	16,80	30,46	51,4	2,74	1,49	54,17
1144	588			96	52	

Interceptions	p90	Clearances	Fouls	Conceded goals
39,29	36,61	15,80	8,15	0,77
1375		553	306	27

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- **Manchester City 2016 – 2020**

2016/2017	Ball losses	p90	Defensive duels	won	%	Challenge Intensity	Ppda
Average		99,26	69,11	49,23	62,6	7,6	7,13
Total	4050		2626 (p90 - 64,36)	1645			

Shots blocked	p90	% blocked shots	% blocked shots against
55	1,35	25,9	20,4

	Shots against	p90	on target	%
Average	7,73	6,86	2,89	39,29
Total	280		110	

Aerial duels	won	p90	%	Sliding tackles	successful	%
38,74	18,53	36,08	47,8	4,82	2,39	49,73
1472	704			183	91	

Interceptions	p90	Clearances	Fouls	Conceded goals
1550	37,99	16,79	10,37	1,03
		638	394	39

We may call the four seasons of Guardiola as head coach of Citizens as a "swing."

During the first season, he tried to develop the style of play that made Bayern 3 times German Champions in a row, but some players didn't fit his ideas and tactical issues put Manchester City at the 3rd seat of the English Premier League table and prevent the team from winning a trophy.

The high number of defensive duels (despite the high percentage of the duels won) and the low average data of Ppda show that the high pressure was really effective when it worked, but it caused issues when it wasn't efficient; the was not balanced enough to be winning.

The average of the conceded goals was high, as City started all the match 1 goal down to the opponents; the most of the goal conceded were from counter-attacks after failed pressure phases.

2017/2018	Ball losses	p90	Defensive duels	won	%	Challenge Intensity	Ppda
Average		88,79	56,47	34,55	61,2	7,5	7,15
Total	3609		2146 (p90 – 52,8)	1313			

Shots blocked	p90	% blocked shots	% blocked shots against
56	1.38	21.1	25

	Shots against	p90	on target	%
Average	6	5,61	2,34	39,04
Total	228		89	

Aerial duels	won	p90	%	Sliding tackles	successful	%
30,26	15,47	28,29	51,1	4,26	2,21	51,85
1150	588			162	84	

Interceptions	p90	Clearances	Fouls	Conceded goals
34,03	31,81	12,37	9,05	0,71
1293		470	344	27

The second season saw Citizens braking the all-time records of the League's history.

New fullbacks and the new goalkeeper resulted essential to provide defensive balance at the back of the 5 payers attacking line.

The challenge intensity and Ppda were the same of the previous season, but City conceded 27 goals only, and many of these after having a huge advantage on the opponents; many of these goals were not crucial to decide the final score.

The defensive duels decreased, showing that the ball recovery from high pressure worked well throughout the season and allow City to score 106 goal at the end of domestic campaign.

2018/2019	Ball losses	p90	Defensive duels	won	%	Challenge Intensity	Ppda
Average		85,45	52,87	33	62,4	6,3	8,48
Total	3456		2009 (p90 – 49,67)	1254			

Shots blocked	p90	% blocked shots	% blocked shots against
56	1.38	27.4	27.9

	Shots against	p90	on target	%
Average	5,66	5,32	2,21	39,07
Total	215		84	

Aerial duels	won	p90	%	Sliding tackles	successful	%
31,53	48,3	29,62	15,24	2,87	1,16	40,37
1198			579	109	44	

Interceptions	p90	Clearances	Fouls	Conceded goals
33,68	31,65	11,66	8,55	0,61
1280		443	325	23

The third season saw City Champions again, but Reds undermined their reign, finishing just 1 point back to the Citizens. On the other side, Guardiola won all the domestic trophies at the end; Man City won the crucial matches against Liverpool to be Champions.

Manchester City pressed with a low intensity, but the balanced shape was at the best among the 4 seasons, as the conceded goals demonstrated (only 23).

The number of defensive duels decreased again, confirming the efficacy of the pressure phase that the strikers and wingers performed.

One data is essential; the number of ball's losses touched the lowest average of Guardiola's reign: 4050 (2016/2017), 3609 (2017/2018) till 3456 (2018/2019). Possession has really been the best defensive weapon for City during this season.

2019/2020 (as of 15/07/2020)	Ball losses	p90	Defensive duels	won	%	Challenge Intensity	Ppda
Average		86,51	52,97	30,97	58,5	6	10,32
Total	3272		1854 (p90 – 49,02)	1084			

Shots blocked	p90	% blocked shots	% blocked shots against
57	1.51	30.3	25.5

	Shots against	p90	on target	%
Average	6,71	6,21	2,97	44,26
Total	235		104	

Aerial duels	won	p90	%	Sliding tackles	successful	%
27,89	14	25,08	50,2	2,94	1,43	48,54
976	490			103	50	

Interceptions	p90	Clearances	Fouls	Conceded goals
34,86	32,26	12,46	9,54	0,97
1220		436	334	34

The swing turned totally during the last season; City tried to play in a more balanced way, as Ppda shows, but the defensive duels won decreased as well; pressure phase was less effective, as opposition started to beat it thanks to quick through passes, always overcoming the first line of pressure.

The increased number of shots against (on target too), clearances, fouls tells that City's pressure was less effective, that City was forced to defend more than in the 2 previous seasons and that the defensive phase was generally less effective.

Possession wasn't the decisive weapon fir City anymore, as the opposition's possession average data increased (34,73% during 2019/2020 – 33,08% in 2018/2019 campaign – 30,27% in 2017/2018 and 36,01% in 2016/2017).

The efficacy of the whole tactical organization decreased and allow Liverpool to win the league 7 matches before.

Pressure phase and counter-attacks (Liverpool) or attacking organization (Manchester City): the difference through the seasons and between the Reds and Citizens

High pressing teams could be a common definition for Liverpool and Manchester City; but it's true just thinking about the definition, as there are crucial differences between the teams.

Pressing trap and force the opposition's build up (Liverpool), or force the opposition not to build up and play long (Manchester City)?

For Jurgen Klopp, pressure means counter-pressing, the strong pressure around the ball just after its loss; on the other side, it means 6" rule for Pep Guardiola, when the team press all over the field for 6" trying to win the ball back quickly, before placing the team for the defensive phase. But these are their historical landmarks, as they have adapted their tactics over the time.

Despite Liverpool has become a more balanced team behind the ball line (Ppda through the seasons: 2016/2017 > 8,2 – 2017/2018 > 9,51 - 2108/2019 > 10,8 – 2019/2020 > 9,28), the pressure phase aim is to start the move as high up in the field as possible; Guardiola at City (and Bayern) more than at Barcelona's time sees the pressure phase as a method to regain possession and to start the attack with a lower intensity.

As Jurgen Klopp was used to say, "No playmaker in the world can be as good as a good counter-pressing situation"; attack is the key word for pressure phase; when Pep Guardiola says "Defensive organization is the cornerstone of everything else I want to achieve in my football", he wants to underline that organization is the aim of pressure phase.

Liverpool's midfield is more mobile and athletic to close the passing lanes, to intercept the passes, to cover the spaces toward the defensive line and to create strong sides around the ball out wide, if Salah and Mane are not quick enough to counter the opposition's fullbacks. Man City is built up with top technical gifted players who can get out of the tight spaces and play fast transitions to possession after 1 v 1 man-mark defensive situations.

The way both teams lose the ball is important to define the way the press the opposition.

Liverpool is usually more direct during possession phase (midfielders and fullbacks high up in the field to play through passes and crosses), apart from this last 2019/2020 season, as the Reds are showing more thoughtful patterns of play; force long ball would expose the defense to 1 v 1 duels and counter-attacks or, even to outnumbered situations. Attacking in numbers makes easier the combination of pressure and closure of passing lanes; this is the reason why the midfielders have become the players who cover the fullbacks when they are attacking higher up in the field.

Manchester City fullbacks, Zinchenko and Walker are usually active parts of the defensive phases; when the ball is being played along one flank, the opposite fullback becomes inverted shifting across the center and the one along the same flank of the drops along the defensive line or provide coverage behind the ball line; long balls can be managed easily. As Citizens are usually spread out all over the field and due to the positional play, 1 v 1 pressure is the natural consequence. The way the opponents can now overcome the pressure phase is one of the main tactical issues for City during this current 2019/2020 season.

2016/17 2017/18 2018/19

adjusted for posession*
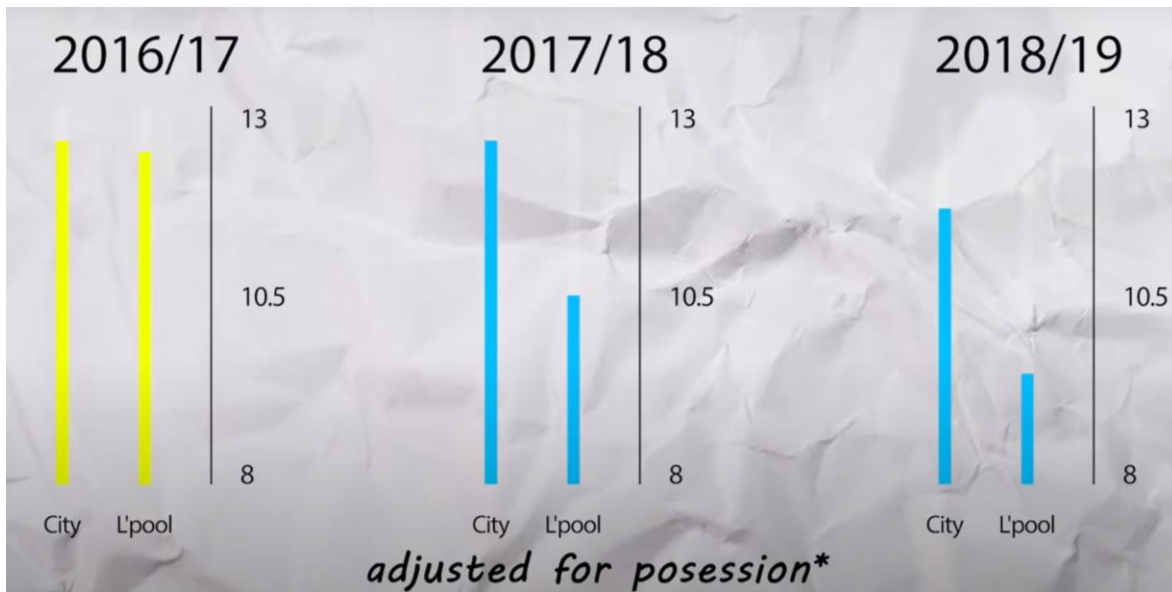
The pressing tactics takes the team to react differently when the transition to defend is not effective; City is committing more tactical fouls than Liverpool, as the Reds work more on interceptions and anticipations.

Liverpool's front 3 are crucial to create the pressing traps against the opponents: they surround the ball area all over the final third; Salah and Mane cut off the opposition's wide passing options, standing between the center back and the fullbacks (they "mark the ball). Firmino presses the holding midfielder (or center midfielder) or one of the center backs
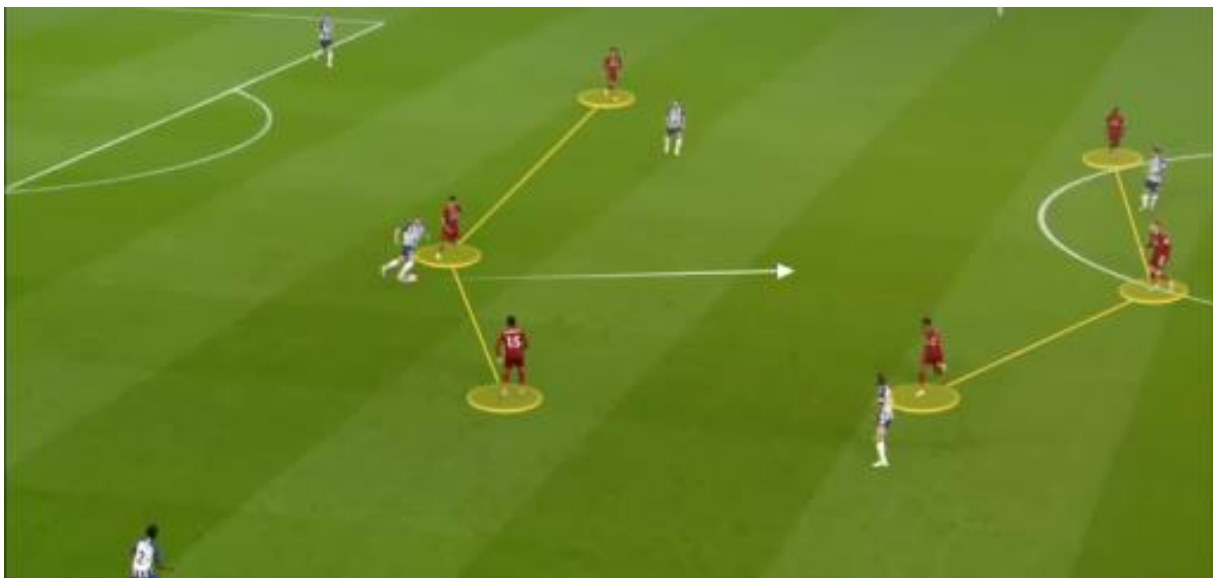
[In this situation, Firmino is tracking the opposition's center back, who is forced to dribble the ball up in the field, as Salah is covering the passing options along the right flank, and Oxlade-Chamberlain (instead of Mane) is closing the passing path to the opposition's right flank. The 3 midfielders, Wijnaldum, Henderson and Kieta are marking the center passing options and closing the path to the first third].

[The combined pressure by Firmino and Henderson forces the opponent to play too quickly, and the ball is won back inside the center midfield cycle].

Liverpool can now counter-attack quickly through forward passes.

[The counter-attacking passing pattern starts from Kieta, who passes forward to Firmino in between the lines and the Salah receives, standing between the opposition's center back and fullback; none of them can counter him due to the distance from the ball carrier].

[The opposition's fullback tracks Salah and he can close the space toward the goal; Henderson acts as center support back to him, he receives and shots on goal, scoring for Liverpool].

The midfield trio stands behind the ball line and the opposition's midfield's line and as one opponent receives, they start the pressure phase

[In this example, Fabinho put pressure against the opposition's holding midfielder and he passes to Firmino, who is standing in between the lines and who was pressing the center back in the previous pressure action, just in front of him].

Salah and Mane positioning allows to launch quick counter-attacks through the same spaces they were standing to press together with Firmino.

[Firmino passes to Salah, who is standing between the opposition left center back and wingback, which are too far from him to try to put pressure].

[Salah dribbles the ball inside the opposition's box, Firmino supports the move from the back after the ball's distribution and Liverpool can finish the counter-attacking move].

Manchester City's aim of the pressure phase is to restarts the attacks: man mark all the passing options nearby the opposition ball carrier, his decision making process and long balls.

[Aguero is forcing the goalkeeper to a forced long ball pressing him 1 v 1; all the shorter passing options can be pressed quickly by Citizens' advanced midfielder Silva and wingers Mahrez and Sterling].

Guardiola's pressure idea at Manchester City has basically two objectives:
1. Force long passes to recover the possession and to start new attacks with stable build-up.
2. The 6" rule is now used to force mistakes rather than to win the ball back quickly.

[Zinchenko recovers the ball down the left flank, and it possible to notice that all the potential receivers of goalkeeper's long pass were preventively marked 1 v 1 or could be pressed very quickly throughout the middle third].

This second example is similar to the previous one, but the 1 v 1 pressure/marking actions allow City to recover the possession along the right flank in the final third.

[Gabriel Jesus and Aguero are pressing 1 v 1 the opposition's center backs; Zichenko is pressing preventively the short passing option and De Bruyne is moving toward the second short passing option; this way the ball carrier must play a longer ball along the flank].

[City creates a 3 v 2 duel around the receiver and the first potential passing option of the ball carrier; the opponents can't play out and City recovers the possession].

Seeking for numerical advantage around the ball during pressure phases, allows City to find quickly easy passing options to counter-attack, when the possession is won back high up in the field. Looking at the footage is clear that the ball carrier has 2 potential options to advance the move.

[David Silva recovers the ball and he plays an aerial pass over the opposition right fullback for Sanè; meanwhile, De Bruyne supports the move underlapping inside the 18 yds. box].

[De Bruyne receives over the defensive last line and a 2 v 2 duel is the played around the box; Gabriel Jesus is ready to attack the goal directly and Mahrez stands behind him after shifting across from the right flank].

Gabriel Jesus invites the defenders toward the goal and a space is then opened inside the box at their back that Mahrez, the right inverted winger, can exploit shifting across from flank to receive and to shot on goal, scoring for City.

Shots from counter-attacks:

(Divide the number by 10 – 3 = 0,3)

The middle third areas where Liverpool usually press take the Reds to score more goals from direct counter-attacks, recovering the ball as high up in the field as possible; it's interesting to notice that during this current 2019/2020 EPL winning season, Ppda has increased, and this means that Klopp's team tendency is to stand a bit deeper and the pressure phase is now more balanced than the past seasons. Liverpool 2019/2020 has become a possession and more defensively organized team.

Short passes conceded per game:
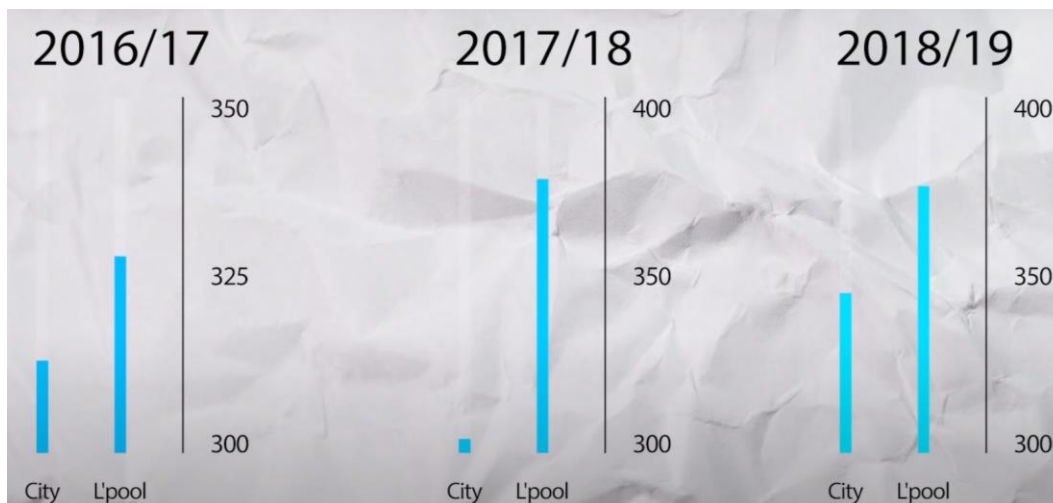
On the other side, the different type of pressure that Manchester City use in the final third takes the team to concede less passes to opposition; these are the same passes that Liverpool uses to organize the pressing traps and that Man City doesn't allow at all, forcing the opposition's building up phase with long passes or mistakes to reorganize the possession and attacking phase (Liverpool 2019/2020 – 306, after 33 Epl games and City 334, after the same number of matches).

Liverpool and Manchester City defensive phases

- **Liverpool 2016/2017**

During the second season with the German coach in charge at Anfield, some improvements could be noticed from possession, attacking and finishing points of view. But conceded goals resulted to be too many, at the end of the season (7 more than expected).

Total (Epl)	p90'	xGa	xGa per shot	From head shots	From penalties	From free kicks	From outside area
42	1.03	**35.04**	0.12	9	3	2	5

The back four weren't those we can see included in the line ups today and the high pressure had also the objective to try to keep the opponents away from the goal. Lost ball average (120,13) was much higher that the recoveries (95,63) and goal conceded average was 1,11 pg; it means that Liverpool were used to start the matches ideally down 1 – 0.

When the pressing actions were not 100% efficient, Liverpool suffered positioning issues and conceded too many goals that made the club sitting fourth in the EPL table. Apart from the individual mistakes of the defenders and the alternated goalkeepers during that season (Mignolet and Karius), Reds conceded goals in 3 ways:

Through balls between the center back and the fullback:

[In this sequence, the left center back Klavan and the left fullback Clyne are overcome by a through pass in behind; Klavan is to far from the ball to intercept it, Clyne is not positioned properly to be able to track the opposition's receiver, who can control the ball and dribble it along the flank. He crosses the ball to the near goal's post where the closer opposition's forward can header the ball to goal, exploiting the space between the center backs; the second Cb Matip, nor can counter the opponent while running to meet the ball, neither he can anticipate him due to his late position. The goalkeeper is also too far from the ball to leave the line and to try to catch it in the air].

This following sequence is essential to understand how Liverpool's front 3 wrong positioning led the Reds to concede chances.

[Coutinho, Sturridge and Origi are standing along the same line, touching the field's half one; anyway, nor, they are pressing the opposition's ball carrier, neither they are closing the passing lanes to the first third. Furthermore, the midfield trio is too deep to counter the receiver of the pass from the opposition's holding midfielder].

[Liverpool left fullback Moreno is too wide, as he has to control the opposition's winger, who forced him to stretch the defensive line. The 3 defenders in the center, Klavan, Matip and Gomez would be positioned with the right distances between them, but the opposition's forward are acting in the spaces between the center backs and between the right center back and the right fullback. The ball carrier drives an long diagonal aerial pass, exploiting the space between Moreno and Klavan, at the back of the defensive line. The right fullback Gomes is late while retreating his position and he can't cover the space toward the goal; Matip can't intercept the pass as the ball's trajectory is passing to far from him. The further opposition's forward can meet the ball inside in 18 yds. box and header the ball to goal].

This next sequence shows a goal that Liverpool conceded against Arsenal and it should be representative of how much the transfers in and out, during the seasons have made the fortune of the Reds, arriving to be the champions in charge of all the most important international trophies (at the date of today 21/07/2020) and the new Champions of England.

[The center backs, Matip and Klavan are man-marking the opposition's forwards, turning backward in relation to the ball's position. The left fullback Moreno is late along the flank and the opponent in front of him can receive without pressure. The midfield trio are leaving space between them and the defensive line; then the ball carrier has time and space on the ball to play properly].

[The left center back and fullback, Klavan and Moreno try to recover their positions inside the box, but they are both late and any defensive action isn't possible to prevent the forward from scoring to the far post].

Counter-attacks with quick passing combinations.

The next sequence is a tactical situation that would have taken Jürgen Klopp to adopt the exchange of positions between the fullbacks and the outer midfielder during the possession phases of play.

[Liverpool has just lost the possession in the middle third while both fullbacks were pushing high up the field, leaving the sector's teammates Klavan and Matip alone at the back; furthermore the marking/covering actions are missing, as they are standing along the same line.]

[The opposition's forward can receive between them and drive the ball in behind, exploiting his speed skill superiority against the center backs, and score to the goal's far post.]

In this second example is an example of another issue that Liverpool had to face during the whole season; the wrong midfielder's positions behind the forwards that caused many counter-attacks after the loss of the ball.

[The front 3 are very narrow on the center right just out of the penalty area; both the fullbacks have pushed up along the flanks and none of the midfielders is providing depth at the back of the advanced lines. The back 3 have no protection. As the opposition wins the ball back, one pass is enough to overcome 8 Reds' players.]
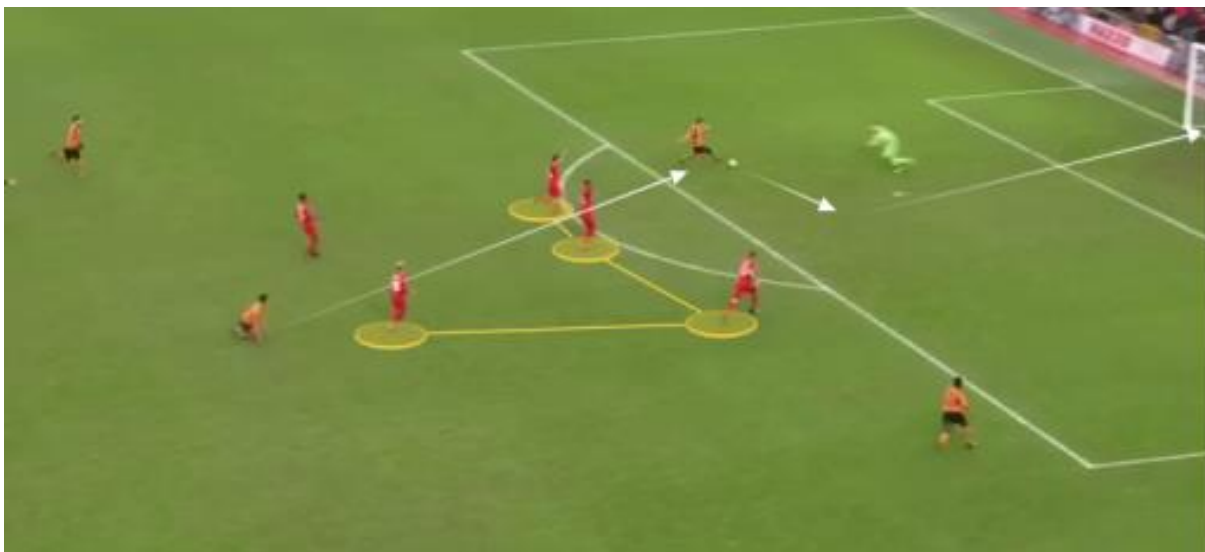
[The opposition's ball carrier can dribble it forward up in the field without pressure, despite the fullbacks try to retreat and get narrower in relation to the opponents; in addiction to wrong middle third positions, the back 3 are aligned along the same line and none of them is providing depth's coverage against through passes; the opponent who has supported the move along the defensive right flank, moves inside in play, and he can receive at the back of the defenders and exploit their flat shape. The goalkeeper leaves the line too late and the receiver can score with 2 quick touches.]

This is another example of wrong pressure's positioning up front which is overcome with just a pass and the receiver can drive the ball up in the field without pressure, facing the goal and having enough time and space to play a through pass at the back of the defensive line.

[Emre Can is standing in front of the ball carrier, but he doesn't cover the passing lane in between the triangular defensive shape. Klavan is properly covering the space against the opponent in front of him, but Gomez is retreating between 2 opponents and he decides to run back, allowing a free ball's reception of the further opponent; this way he can dribble the ball up in the field and enter in to the final third. On the other side, if Clyne countered the receiver, he would have opened a long passing path to the goal for the opponent he is tracking.]

[The right center back Matip doesn't support his teammate's tactical choice, as he stand flat in front of the ball carrier and he doesn't look at the space toward the goal; his body positioning doesn't allow him to counter the opposition's receiver, and furthermore, Gomez doesn't track the advanced opposition's forward, who can receive and drive the ball inside the 18 yds. box. The left center back Klavan hasn't shifted across to try to close the forward down due to a second opponent to mark; if he shifted across, he would have opened the passing path to the direct opponent. All the Reds' midfielders are too late to be able to retreat on time to be defensively effective.

The opposition's forward can score without pressure, as all the midfielders and the back 4 have been cut off with 2 through passes.

- **Manchester City 2016/2017**

Total (Epl)	p90'	xGa	xGa per shot	From head shots	From penalties	From free kicks	From outside area
39	0.96	**31,03**	0.111	5	2	0	4

At the beginning of the season, Pep Guardiola shaped City with the 1-4-2-3-1, with the basic idea to replicate the system of play that made Bayern Munich so outstanding even without a Champions League triumph. But City started to concede goals due to through passes outside the 18 yds. box or losing second times of the ball inside opposition's zone 14, after the first victories.

[Clichy, Kolarov, Kompany and Sagnà are the back 4; Sterling and Clichy are double teaming the ball carrier but they are not closing the space toward the center and the passing path the nearest opposition's ball carrier option. Fernandinho and David Silva are defending too wide and they create a gap in front of the back 4 inside zone 14.

The opponents are free to distribute in front of the penalty area, the left winger Sterling is not effective anymore, as David Silva; the center midfielders are out of shape and they can't provide cover in front of the back 4. Fernandinho is not marking goal side and the receiver in front of the back line, inside zone 14 can control the pass with enough space and time to play a through pass in behind the defensive line. Clichy is not aligned with the other teammates and he leaves the scorer in play at the back of the defenders.

With 3 at the back and attacking wingers, City conceded chances from long ball and 1 v 1 duels against the outer center backs.

[Otamendi is countering 1 v 1 the opposition's forward just out of the box; the other defenders, Stones and Kolarov are late due to the high shape of the team during the attacking phase, and Navas, the right wingback can't be help the linked defender, due the distance between them.]

[The physical superiority of the forward, who saves the ball, maintaining the opponent behind him, allow to control the ball, turn and shot on goal to the far post.]

As we already stated, Guardiola tried many formations' shape during his first season as City's head coach, but the shape itself didn't fix the main issue during the whole season; when the pressure phase was not immediately effective, there wasn't any covering actions behind the ball position and furthermore, long ball at the back of the defensive line were enough to reach the opposition's final third, due to defensive shapes issue wrong connections among the defenders. This issue has been solved during the 2 previous seasons and it has come back during this last one (2019/2020).

Switching to the 1-4-1-4-1, the holding midfielder helped to fix the issue of opposition's ball carrier freedom inside zone 14, but the second one, the counter-attacks, would have afflicted all the season and caused City the 3rd place in the table. A wrong Fernando or Fernandinho position caused the same troubles to the back 4 line.

[Here again, the high pressure phase inside the final third is not effective, a long ball is enough to overcome the middle third and Fernando isn't screening the forwards in front of the back 4; furthermore, De Bruyne and Silva are too far to be defensively effective against the opposition's quick passing combination in between the lines.]

[The opponent in between the lines can receive, turn and play a through pass between the opposition's center back and fullback (Stones and Kolarov). The right fullback Zabaleta couldn't retreat back to stand along the defensive line, due to his attacking support tasks and Sagnà doesn't shift across to get narrower to Stones. For this reason, the left center back can't close the forward down and he must face (with a wrong flat body position the ball carrier). There isn't depth cover and the opposition's forward can receive facing the opposition's goal, with all the defenders behind him.]

[He scores to the far post of the goal, after an inside ball's control.]

Here again the same situation; long ball to overcome the opposition's pressure and space at the back of the defensive line to exploit, facing the opposition's goal.

[The right fullback Zabaleta is out of position high up along the right flank, as well as Fernando, who is overcome by the ball and he can't protect the back teammates. Kolarov, the left fullback can't counter the opposition's inverted winger, as the receive passes forward with one touch, preventing him from tackling. The left center back Stones is late and he can only track the opposition's forward from the back; he can't cover the space in front of him.]

The opposition forward can control the ball, overcoming the goalkeeper's save and score without a real pressure against him.

By the end of the season, with the 1-4-3-3 Pep laid the foundation of the 2 winning incoming seasons, despite not having all the right players at the right places yet.

[De Bruyne loses the ball in the middle third, but the team's shapes seems to be the right one to counter the opposition's possession phase; David Silva is behind the ball position and he is ready to counter the ball carrier's easier passing option, Tourè is even backward in front of the back 4 to control the opponent in between the lines. Sanè, the left winger is standing along the ball line and he is leaving space at the back.]
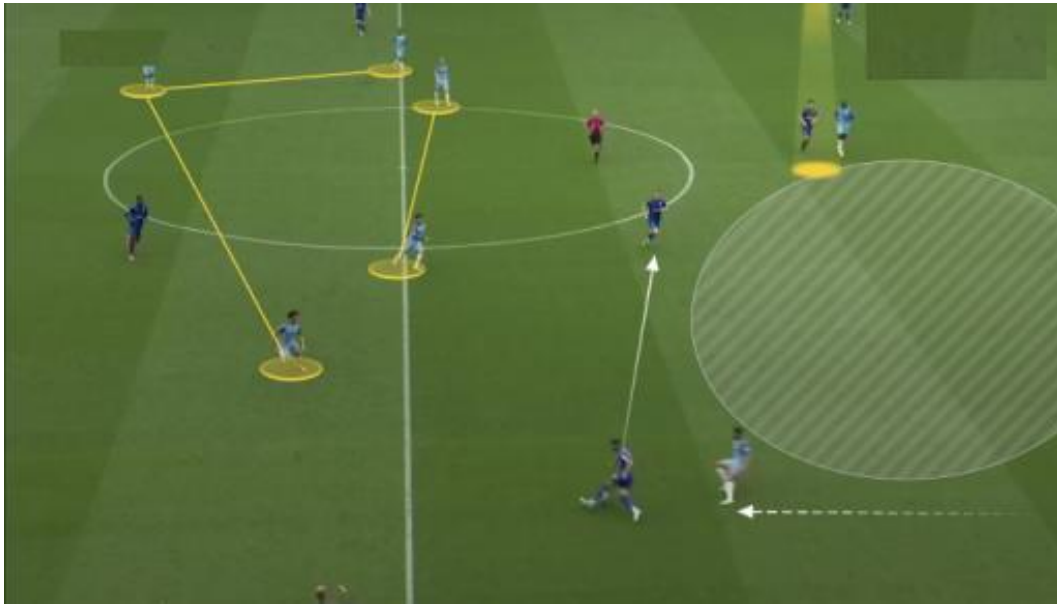
[The opposition inverted right winger and the center midfielder can exploit the space at the back of Sanè; the left fullback Kolarov moves out of position to try to counter the receiver, who otherwise plays a one touch inside pass. De Bruyne and Silva are standing in the positions where they would have stand for the incoming 2 seasons, but Tourè remains the only midfielder in front of the back 4; this way, one of the opponents in between the lines can receive and combine with the winger through the center.]

[The winger move inside to receive the back pass in the center, Tourè doesn't cover the space at the back but he faces the ball carrier, leaving the opponent in between the lines free from marking and to run toward the penalty area. On the other side, Tourè is forced to face the ball carrier, as De Bruyne and Silva are retreating from their advance positions and the inverted fullback in the center, to pair Tourè is also missing, as Sagnà and Kolarov are 2 classic up and down fullback. In this situation, the inverted fullback would have counter one of the opponent in the center and the holding midfielder could have mark the man between the lines.] This is the reason why City spent so much during the summer for new fullbacks in the squad.

- **Liverpool 2017/2018**

After the first season as Europa League's final runner up, with Klopp as head coach, reds started to improve the 4th seat in the EPL and to try to get closer to win a domestic trophy after more than 6 years; but after 14 matches they had already conceded 18 goals. The recurrent system of play was the 1-4-3-3 that requires correct distances among the back 4 and the 3 midfielders to ensure protection of the field's width shifting across when the front 3 don't drop off to help, and vertical coverage of the defensive line.

Liverpool's midfield trio used to push high up to support the front 3 during attacking and pressure phases; the main tactical choice for the back 4 was to stand deeper and to protect the final third and move out of the line to counter the opposition player in between the lines.

[In this sequence, the right winger Salah is pressing the opposition's ball carrier high up in the final third along the right flank, Firmino, the center forward is preventively marking the opposition's center back to force a long ball along the flank, and the left winger Coutinho is shifting across the center to out pressure against the holding midfielder.]

[The right fullback Gomez runs out of the back line and he counters the opposition's midfielder, winning the ball back. The midfield trio Henderson, Emre Can and Milner have shape the defensive triangle trough the strong side around the ball's area].

Apart from the ball's recovery, the other 3 defenders are positioned to cover the weak side (the left fullback Moreno) and to press the opposition center forward (the center backs shape a 2 v 1 duel along the strong side).

In this second sequence, Liverpool forward's pressure has been overcome thanks to a switch of side with a long ball and the midfielders along the weak side try to press even if they are late on the ball, instead of covering the space retreating back.

[The opposition right fullback receives the switch of side and he headers the ball forward along the flank; the left midfielder Emre Can runs out of position and he tries to press the opponent, but he is out of time and too far from him to be effective].

The midfield trio doesn't shift across with the right positioning and the distances among them are too large to be act an effective pressure phase; the receiver is free to turn and to play forward again. Furthermore, the left fullback runs out of position and he tries to press the ball carrier, but he is on late too and too far to be effective.
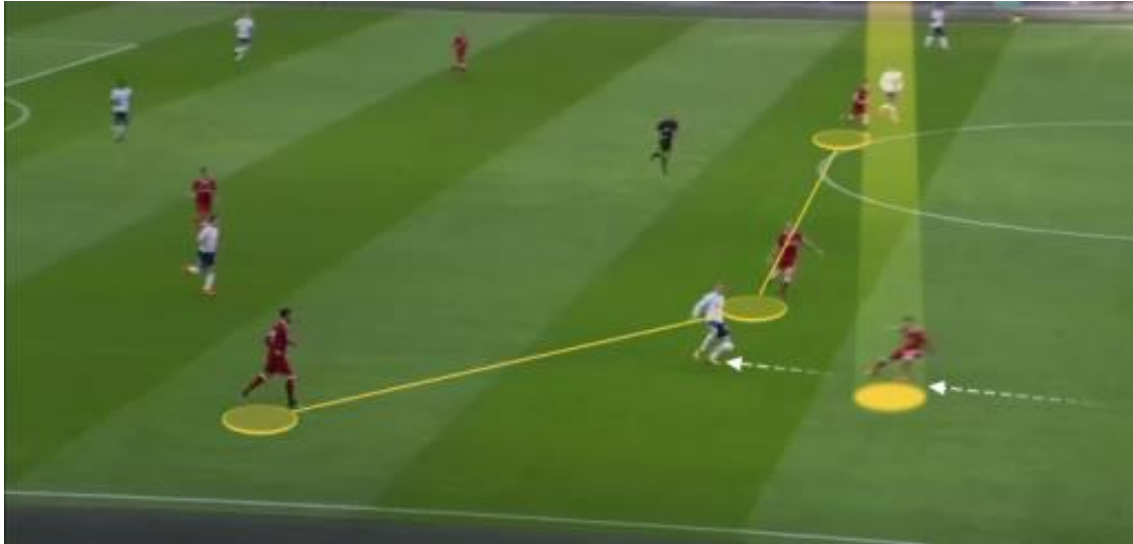
[Emre Can has been overcome, Henderson is too late to counter the ball carrier, Miner is covering the weak side and the left fullback Moreno has pushed up but he's too late to counter the opponent; this way, he opens an available space at his back along the left flank].

Lovren, the left center back shifts wide and he can anticipate the opposition's forward; along the weak side, the second center back is very far from the teammate, and the right fullback is shifting across to cover the second forward.

The fullbacks high up the field and one center midfielder marking the opposition's striker was the most recurrent and dangerous situation that Liverpool used to face at the time in case the covering and balance chain didn't work.

The attacking based mind of the Reds exposed them to concede counter-attacks to the opposition.

[In this sequence, the opposition goalkeeper has just played a hand long pass; all the defensive line is standing very high on the field inside the attacking half, but the second center back Matip. The center back misses the header and he opens the space for the forward to dribble the ball through the open field…
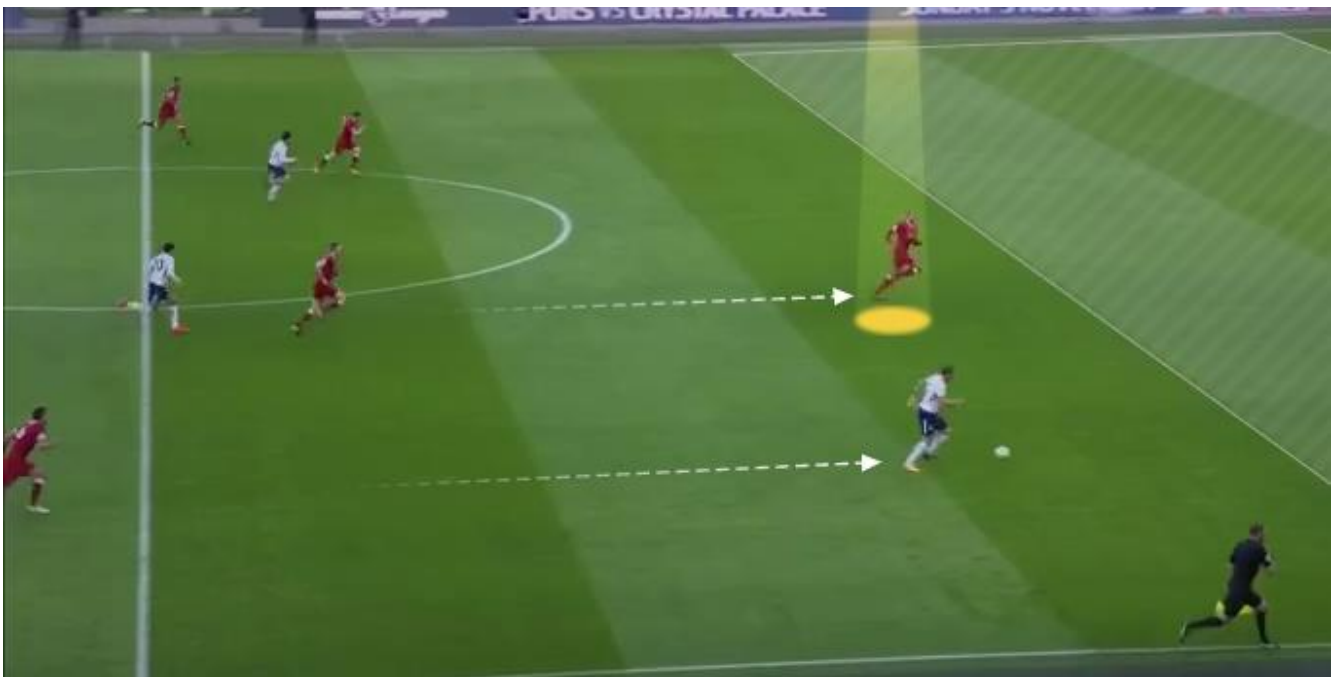
… The space is too large for the only defender who is retreating; along the opposite side, Lovren and Henderson are trying to retreat back to cover the space toward the goal].

[The ball carrier has time and space in front of the opposition's goal to play a crossed diagonal pass to meet the teammate's run; the receiver can finish facing the goalkeeper in a 1 v 1 duel].

One of the center backs usually moved out of the line and mark the ball carrier, but the space in between the lines was usually too large for him to be successful, and the line didn't follow him properly].

[Liverpool left fullback Lovren has shifted wide toward the left defensive side, to mark the opposition forward, overloading the ball area together with the left fullback Moreno; the right center back Matip has moved out of position to try to counter the ball carrier and to double team him together with the center midfielder Henderson. Gomez, the right fullback, is providing cover on the right weak side, but a gap appear in the center of the defensive line. Moreno has moved forward standing close to the next opponent in front of him. The ball carrier can play the ball quickly, and all the defenders are out of position].

The wide midfielders were used to follow the opponents while moving wide from the center, but they didn't mark them preventively not to isolate the center midfielder. When 3 of the back 4 shifted wide and the opposite fullback covered the width along the weak side, gaps appeared along the flank when the fullback moved to help the center back. Furthermore, the basic speed of the back four was not the required one to cover the space.

[The left midfielder Emre Can and the center one Henderson try to counter the opposition's combination of play, but they are both late; as the left fullback Moreno moves up along the flank and toward the ball, he creates another gap along the flank between him and the side line. Lovren is not marking the opposition center forward, as well as Matip, who is not aligned nor with the right fullback, neither with the right center back. Gomez is still standing along the weak side and he doesn't shift across the center to close the gap in front of the goal].

At this point, the fullbacks had to decide if to run up in the field, leaving just 2/3 teammates at the back and along the flanks also, or if to stay in line, conceding gaps at the back of the wide midfielders and being catched in 1 v 1 or 1 v 2 duels.

[The 2 v 2 duel forces the ball carrier to play a back pass, but Coutinho, the left forward, is too far from the receiver to be able to counter him, and again, Moreno is out of position like Lovren; the left fullback decides to press the ball carrier and the left center back doesn't shift across. The opposition's center forward is not marked properly and the back 4 are not covering the depth in front of the goal].

[Liverpool back four defenders are not aligned and the opposition center forward can stand at the back of the left fullback free from a real pressure; the distance from Lovren to the forward allows him to turn and to receive at the back of the defensive line].

[The opposition forward can receive the through pass sideward Lovren and the Matip retreats to cover the depth but he is too far from the ball to prevent the opponent from dribbling the ball toward the goal. Lovren turns toward the wrong side and he finds himself backward to the opponent and he can't counter him].

[The goalkeeper Mignolet runs out of the goal line despite there could be a potential 2 v 1 duel against the ball carrier and his save attempt avoids Matip to try to cross the opponent's run direction; this way, the center back is now on the other side of the ball's line. The opposition's forward the finds the space to overcome the defenders with 1 touch and he can score].

The fullbacks were not at the top level about headers and for this reason Liverpool suffered cross passes toward the far post and goals were conceded.
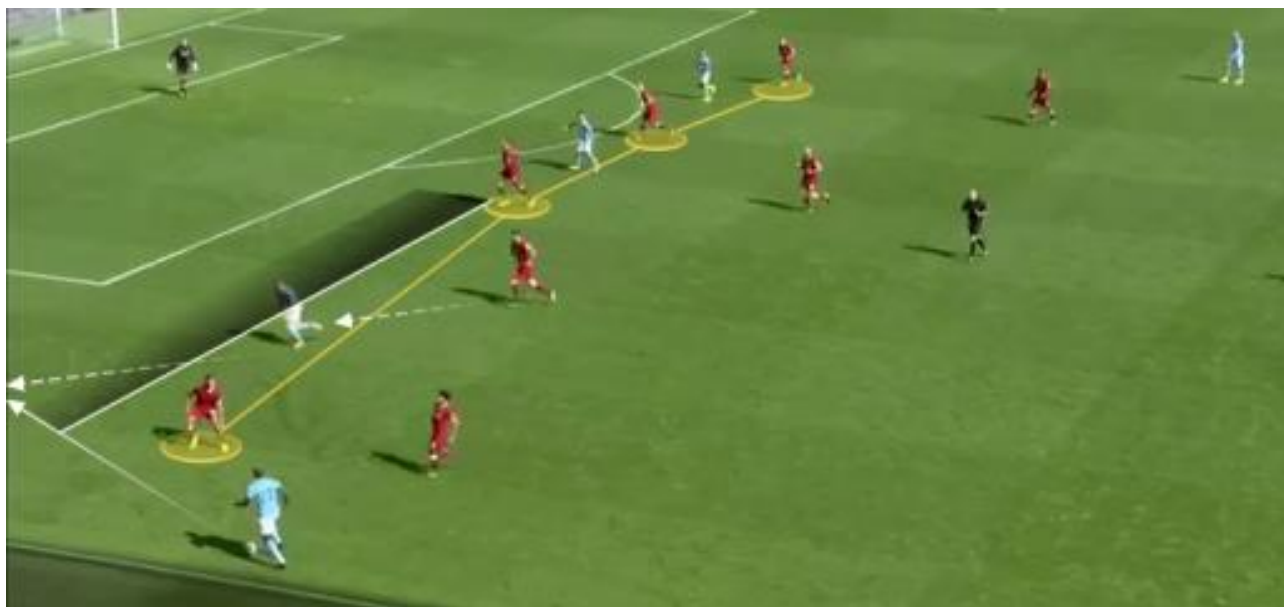
[Mendy has the possession down the flank, and Liverpool's right fullback has shifted wide, breaking the defensive line, to counter the opponent in front of him; the right winger Salah retreats his position, but he is not fully active against the ball carrier. To create a 3 v 2 due in the center of the first third, the Reds create a large gap between the center defenders and the right fullback, where De Bruyne can run onto, exploiting the space and the spread positioning of the Reds' middle third trio; Emre Can, the right midfielders try to track the opponent, but he is too far from him].

[This way, De Bruyne has the chance to receive, turn and play a cross pass into the opposition's box, where the 3 v 2 duel, at the beginning, has become a 4 v 4; nor the right fullback Arnold, neither Salah are able to counter the opposition's ball carrier, due to a passive defensive action].

The defensive mistake inside the box is very clear; the center backs, Lovren and Matip both counter the opponent on the near post and 2 opponents are then free in center of the goal and the left fullback Moreno doesn't position himself in front of the goal, but he stands still only looking at the ball. Man City forward Gabriel Jesus can header the ball to score for Man City.

The flank's coverage has been a tactical issue for Liverpool through the years that Klopp could solve with exchange of positions between the fullback and the midfielder and the arrival of Van Dijk*

When the midfield trio were not narrow enough to close down the passing paths toward the final third, the spread out shape of Liverpool conceded chances to the opposition.

[In this sequence, Lallana, Henderson and Milner are shaping the 3 man midfield sector, but they nor close the passing lanes, neither they are marking the opposition's midfielders De Bruyne and Silva. Mangalà can play a through pass to De Bruyne in between the lines without any chances of interception].

[Liverpool shows the same issue along the back 4 line; the midfielder can't counter De Bruyne, who receives, turns and play a through pass for Sanè. The right fullback Arnold and the center back Lovren are not close enough to prevent the opponent from receiving on the run; furthermore, the other center back Klavan and the left fullback Moreno are not near enough to cover the depth].

[Sanè receives and Mendy is supporting the move along the left flank; the defensive shape of Liverpool is totally unbalanced, as the right center back is forced to move wide to try to cover the opponent while receiving; Klavan and Moreno are both late to cover the 18 yds. box, and a clear gap appears throughout the penalty area].

[Mendy can play a short ground cross pass inside the box, and Sanè can receive and shot on goal, exploiting the space that Lovren has been forced to create by shifting wide, without being able to counter the opposition's fullback].

The impact of January's signing Virgil Van Dijk has been crucial for Liverpool, despite the team finished 4th in the EPL's table and lost to Real Madrid the Champions League final (3-1); it shouldn't be forgotten that the goalkeeper had big responsibilities on the final score of that match.

Virgil van Dijk: Tackle success rate
(Accumulated Premier League and Champions League stats)

		Failed tackles	Tackle success %
2015/16	Southampton	9	86.7%
2016/17	Southampton	7	84.7%
2017/18	Southampton	1	90.9%
2017/18	Liverpool	2	90.9%
2018/19	Liverpool	0	100%

During the 2018/2019 none of the forwards all around Europe could beat Van Dijk in 1 v 1 duels.

Furthermore, the general stats are among the highest ones since 2015/2016.

1. Aerial duels won.
2. Offensive duels won
3. Passes p90.
4. Passes accuracy.
5. Passes accuracy inside the opposition final third.
6. Goals p90.
7. Defensive actions won p90.
8. Aerial duels p90.
9. Defensive duels p90.
10. Interceptions p90.
11. Passes inside the opposition's final third p90.
12. Opposition's shots intercepted.
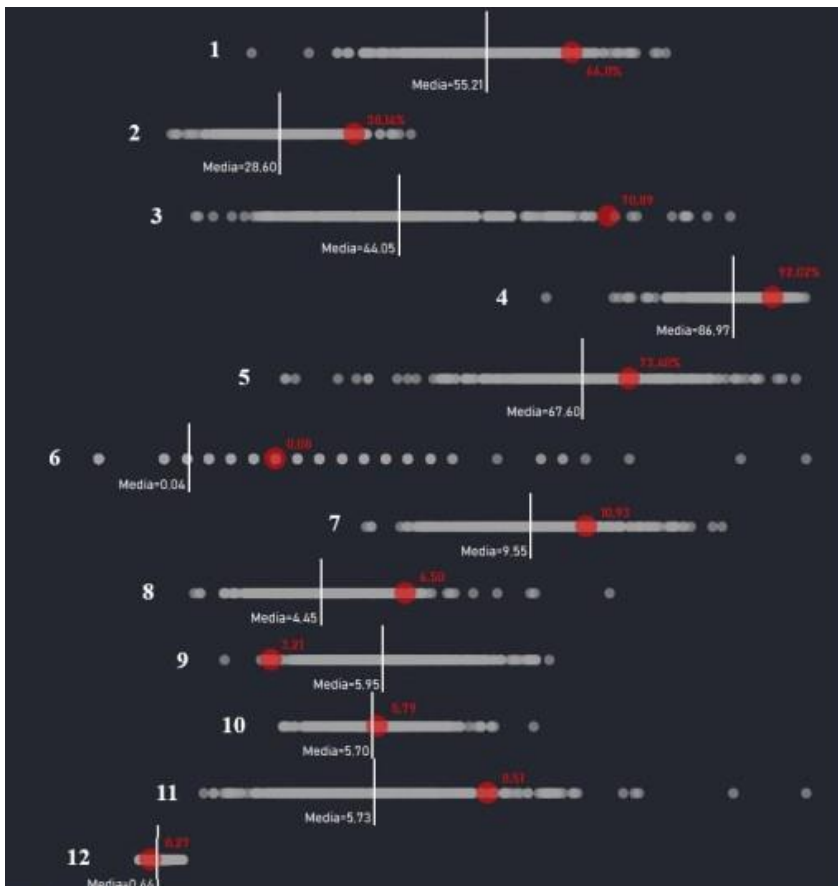
The grey line shows the average of performance of the other center backs and the red points represents Virgil Van Dijk average of performance during the first season and a half as Reds' player.

- Manchester City 2017/2018

Despite appearing as one of the cleanest team in Premier League about committed fouls (344 total and 8,46 per game), as the first in this specific rank was Everton with 452 (11,18 per game), looking at the non-possession percentage 30,27% of playing time, 1105,2' out of possession, it is possible to find out that the fouls per minutes have a high average, 0,31 (9,5 per match). Man City seems now a bit more strong and "dirty" team.

Possession has been always the first defensive weapon for Guardiola, but the typical City's attacking shape can expose the team to opposition's counter attacks along the flanks, if the fullbacks are playing as inverted fullbacks in the middle third, or through the channels in the center, if the fullbacks are acting wide along the flanks:

[In this situation, Fernandinho has the ball, the center backs Laporte and Stones stand behind him; the right fullback Walker is acting as inverted fullback on the right and Delph is moving wide along the left flank; if City lost possession, the spaces to counter attack would be along the left defensive half space or along the right flank].

[In this second example, City has just lost the ball along the right flank; De Bryne is trying to counter the ball carrier, Walker is high the flank, so he couldn't cover a quick inside/outside passing combination; for this reason, Fernandinho shifts wide to break the opposition's defensive action].

[City's holding midfielder commits a tactical foul to break the opposition move, as the the direct opponent receives a pass].

This is a third example, where the fullbacks stand wide (Danilo and Mendy) and De Bruyne has dropped back to receive, acting as second center midfielder beside Fernandinho; again, the center backs, Stones and Laporte are placed behind the holding midfielder.

[De Bruyne attempts an aerial cross pass to switch the side toward the attacking line; the highlighted area shows the available space that the opposition may exploit in case of ball's recovery inside the final third].

When City uses fullbacks in a more classic way, asking them to move up and down the flanks, the coverage of the center spaces in the middle third becomes crucial to prevent through balls toward the first third. If the holding midfielder is force to press out wide and he can't be placed in front of the back 2, one of the fullbacks is asked to become the third defender, allowing a teammate to move out of the line to break the opposition's counter-attack.

[The opposition recovers the ball and tries to exploit the center space, after a quick distribution at the back; as De Bruyne has pushed up in the field to support the forward's pressure action, Fernandinho has been forced to shift wide to mark the nearest potential receiver of a pass that could overcome the first line of pressure].

[Mendy shifts across and drops deeper to cover the space behind Laporte, who has moved out to commit the tactical foul against the opposition's forward, who is acting as target player inside the middle third cycle. Meanwhile, Stones stand diagonally in relation to the opposition's left winger to mark him goal side and prevent him from running in between the defensive line].

Tactical fouls are also committed to stop the opposition's counterattacks om their tracks or at the beginning, rather than try prevent the opponents from shooting; these fouls prevent the center backs from retreating backward too deep and the goalkeeper from moving out of the goal area.

[Sterling and Mahrez try to combine deep along the right flank and the fullback Danilo is supporting them at the back; Mahrez runs in behind and receives from Sterling].

[The opposition creates a 2 v 1 duels around the ball and dispossess the ball carrier; as it's happen, Sterling moves toward the ball and Danilo runs backward to provide cover at the back, if the counter-pressing phase isn't effective].

Tactical fouls are systematic and clever to stop any attacking attempt of the opposition, and furthermore far away from the goal to avoid yellow or red cards as much as possible. They could not place so many players along the attacking line in the final third if they were unable to stop counter-attacks.

[Confirming what we have just stated, Sterling breaks the opposition's possession with a foul against the ball carrier].

By the way, the defensive shape in case pressure was not effective, allowed Man City to conceded only 27 goals during the winning campaign (0,66 p90), sitting very closed to the 24,77 Xga. During summer 2017 City spent a lot for fullbacks, signing Mendy, Walker and Danilo (Fabian Delph was already in the squad). Inverting the fullbacks Guardiola had the chance to shape his team at the best both from attacking and defending points of view.

Starting from the attacking shape 2-3-2-3 from the 1-4-1-4-1, the idea behind was to have 6 players ready to defend simply asking the attacking midfielders to retreat and having the center space well covered thanks to the numerical advantage.

Sanè along the left flank, Gabriel Jesus in the center and Sterling at the right side shape the attacking line of 3; David Silva and Kevin De Bruyne at the back complete the attacking formation and act as link and creative players.

[The advanced line put pressure against the opposition's back 4 lines and force a long ball after a quick distribution. David Silva and Kevin De Bruyne stand behind the first pressure line, and they are ready to support the phase against the opponents along the same line, or to retreat the positions behind the opponents].

[Kevin De Bruyne shifts wide along the flank, after retreating his position to header the ball, countering the nearest opponent; Gundogan, the holding midfielder follow his movement to create a strong side and the left fullback Delph runs inside acting as inverted fullback to provide cover in the center].

[In this following situation, the right fullback pushes higher in the field, to header the ball and De Bruyne drops backward behind him and the ball line to provide balance and cover].

When City used the 1-4-3-3, the fullbacks were used to pushed high along the forwards' line and Fernandinho dropping back in between the center backs.

[Danilo has the possession, in this example and he dribbling the ball high the field closed to the forwards line (Aguero, Bernardo and Sterling); the same is doing the left fullback Mendy along the opposite flanks, shaping the same line of 5 attackers, which is the main offensive principle of play since Guardiola's took in charge the Citizens first team.

As David Silva and Kevin De Bruyne are free to play all over the middle third, when City shapes this formation, Fernandinho is the only defensive midfielder, apart the never ending running skills of the Belgian teammate; his positioning is crucial, for Manchester City, as the 3 men defense at the back must always to be shaped, whatever is the situation of play.

[Fernandinho has move out of the back three line to counter the opponent in between the lines, committing a tactical foul to brake the possession phase].

[Waiting for the fullbacks to retreat their positions, Fernandinho usually drops between the center backs (Kompany and Otamendi) to shape the back 3 and to allow them to shift slightly wider beside him. De Bruyne and David Silva stand in the center positions to protect the back 3; this way the center spaces are overload and counter-attacks are prevented].

Alternately, when one fullback remained along the defenders line, he allowed the opposite advanced midfielder to push up, playing as No.10, and the other one who stands in the midfield, helps to maintain the 1-3-2-5 (1-4 ahead of the ball).

[Danilo is standing high up in the field along the right flank, and the opposition's goalkeeper kicks the ball toward Citizens' defensive half].

[Mendy, the left fullback is already standing along the back line; Fernandinho exchanges the position with Otamendi, who moves forward to header the ball, anticipating the direct opponent, by dropping back from his position as center midfielder beside De Bruyne. David Silva runs backward beside De Bruyne to shape the line in the middle third again].

This last situation is the an essential example of "defensive positional play" to overload the ball's area:
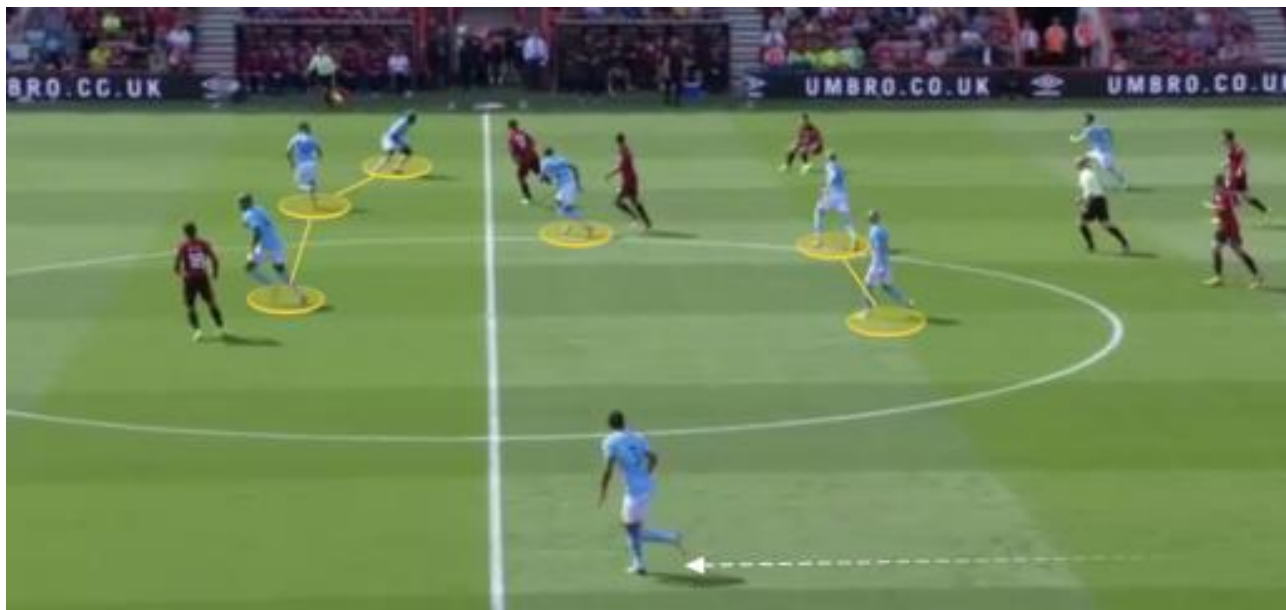
- 3 at the back (center backs, Kompany and Otamendi + the left fullback Mendy.
- Fernandinho as holding midfielder in front of them.
- David Silva and Kevin the Bruyne in the middle and Bernardo Silva who is retreating back.
- 6 v 3 defensive duel around the ball.

- **Liverpool and Manchester City 2018/2019**

After signing Van Dijk in Janaury, Alisson, Keità, Fabinho and Shaqiri arrived at Anfield and some others went away (Emre Can, Coutinho (January), Flanagan and Klavan); there is no doubt about the contribution of the new defenders (center backs and goalkeeper), but the tactical strength of the reds, from this seasons to the current one, have been the team's skills to decide when to drop back and when to counter-press in case of loss of possession (apart from the fullbacks pushing high along the flanks and the similar shape to Pep's City (1-2-3-5). The Ppda comparison shows how Reds have started to be more balanced behind the ball's line.

2017/2018	Defensive duels	won	%	Challenge Intensity	Ppda
Average	66,32	42,39	63,9	6,5	9,51

2018/2019	Defensive duels	won	%	Challenge Intensity	Ppda
Average	61,34	39,82	64,9	6,5	10,8

Basically the back four have been a crucial weapon to win the Champions League, but not enough yet to win the EPL (2nd place, 1 point behind Manchester City); anyway the defensive stats in relation to the previous seasons started to be those required for a team aiming the a season campaign title:

EPL 2017/2018
Goal conceded – 38
Goal conceded p90' – 0,94
Goal conceded per game – 1
Xga – 33,42
Xg per shot against – 0,125
Pts – 75
Xpts – 74,6

EPL 2018/2019
Goal conceded – 22
Goal conceded p90'– 0,54
Goal concede per game – 0,58
Xga – 30.69
Xg per shot against – 0,109
Pts – 97
Xpts – 77,6

The better goalkeeping performances and the poor shooting of the opposition made the difference for Liverpool, in relation to Man City stats for this seasons that expect them to concede less chance to the opposition, looking at the expected goals against.

	Conceded goals			Shot against		Leaving line
Alisson 2018/2019	Total	22	Total		98	Total
	p90'	0,54	p90'		2,43	35
	From head shots p90'	0,02	**Saves**			
	From penalties	0	Total		76	p90'
	From free kicks	0	p90'		1,88	0,87
	From outside area p90'	0,02	With reflexes % accurate		52.63	

	Conceded goals			Shot against		Leaving line
Ederson 2018/2019	Total	23	Total		84	Total
	p90'	0,57	per 90		2,08	40
	From head shots p90'	0,2	**Saves**			
	From penalties	4	Total		61	p90'
	From free kicks	1	Per 90 mins		1,51	0,99
	From outside area p90'	0,07	With reflexes % accurate		47,54	

Furthermore, Manchester City conceded 3 goals in their last 13 league's games and they won 5 times 1-0.

City could limit their weakness points: counter-attacks (0 from counter-attacks) and set-pieces against (8 goals from head shot and 1 from direct free kicks, against the only for Liverpool.

Apart from the better performances on preventing the opponents creating chances, Man City had the best average of passes Pg in the its first third (13 passes less than Liverpool)

Passes per game in PL teams' final third 2018/19
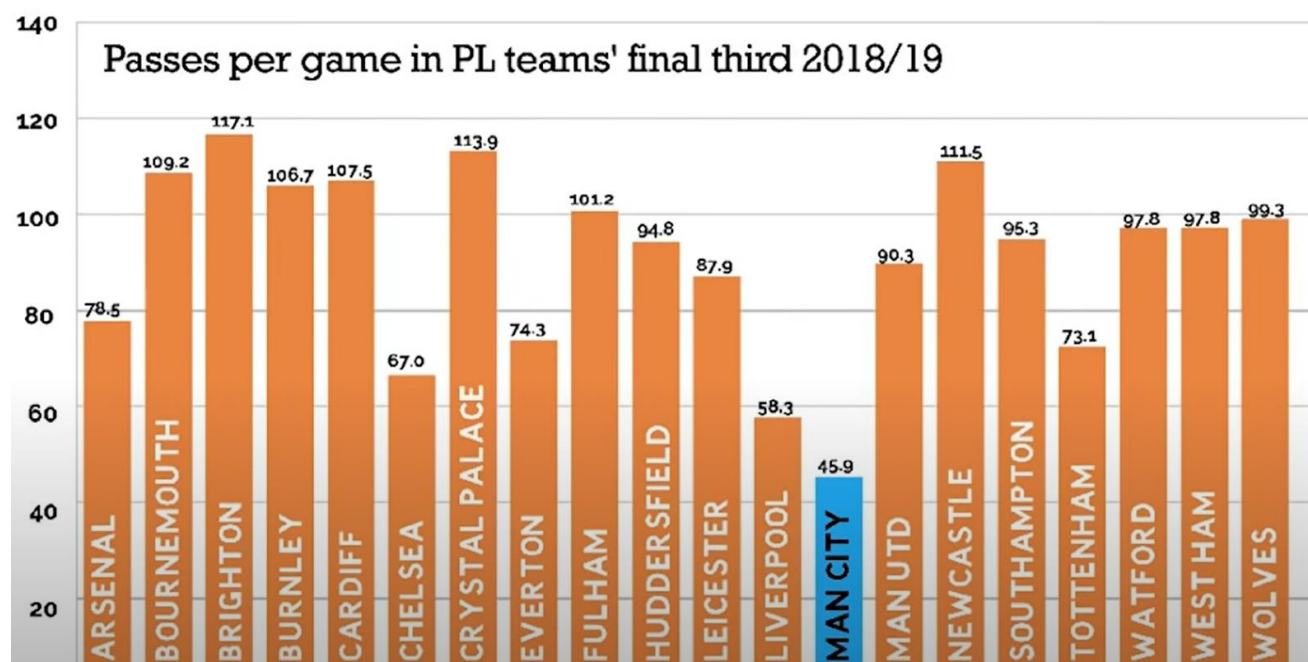
This will be the main issue of the next season (2019/2020), as the opponents has now understood how to overcome the first pressure quickly, and City's tactical fouls; counter-attacks conceded and goals from counter-attacks are higher than all the previous seasons.

Meanwhile, City was better in ball's recovery in the opposition's half (14 per game against 12 for Liverpool / 876 throughout the seasons against Reds' 773 recoveries); City has recovered the ball inside the opposition's final third 203 times.

[David Silva and Mendy are pressing the opponents 1 v 1, as the opposition's goalkeeper plays the ball out, overcoming the pressure of the striker Aguero. The inverted right winger Sanè is standing along the same line of the pressing teammates.]

[The left fullback wins the ball back and he can dribble it up along the field, and Aguero and Sanè support the counter-attacking move through the open field, together with Aguero.]

[Mendy can play a cross pass between the defenders and the goalkeeper and Sanè can score free from markers, exploiting the unbalanced shape of the opponents due the loos of the ball while moving up in the field.]

	Team	Pts	W	D	L	goals for	conceded	g. diff.
1	**Man City**	**98**	**32**	**2**	**4**	**95**	**23**	**72**
2	**Liverpool**	**97**	**30**	**7**	**1**	**89**	**22**	**67**
3	Chelsea	72	21	9	8	63	39	24
4	Tottenham	71	23	2	13	67	39	28
5	Arsenal	70	21	7	10	73	51	22
6	Man Utd	66	19	9	10	65	54	11
7	Wolverhampton	57	16	9	13	47	46	1
8	Everton	54	15	9	14	54	46	8
9	Leicester	52	15	7	16	51	48	3
10	West Ham	52	15	7	16	52	55	-3
11	Watford	50	14	8	16	52	59	-7
12	Crystal Palace	49	14	7	17	51	53	-2
13	Newcastle Utd	45	12	9	17	42	48	-6
14	Bournemouth	45	13	6	19	56	70	-14
15	Burnley	40	11	7	20	45	68	-23
16	Southampton	39	9	12	17	45	65	-20
17	Brighton	36	9	9	20	35	60	-25
18	Cardiff	34	10	4	24	34	69	-35
19	Fulham	26	7	5	26	34	81	-47
20	Huddersfield	16	3	7	28	22	76	-54

Apart from the stats, and results, the real difference between Man City and Liverpool have been the first and second legs, as Man City won 4 point against the only 1 for Liverpool:
1) Liverpool – Manchester City: 0 – 0 (Premier League, Anfield Road - 07/10/2018)
2) Manchester City – Liverpool: 2 – 1 (Premier League, Ethiad Stadium - 03/01/2019)

1)

Liverpool's high pressure during the first 25', looking for interceptions, but few players were inside the box when the ball was recovered..

[The front three is pressing high up in the field; Firmino is screening the pass toward the holding midfielder, Salah is standing between the opposition's center back and Manè is standing along the same opposite left side line. Despite the first aim is always the recovery of the ball, when it's not possible, Liverpool aims to press in the middle third. Ederson can't play short, as the passing paths to Fernandinho, Stones and Laporte are closed, and he is forced long.]

[Wijnaldum wins the ball in the middle third against David Silva; Sterling is too far from the ball to double team the duel and to create numerical advantage 2 v 1.]

[Wjinaldum passes forward and out wide to Salah, who receives under the left center back Laporte's pressure; Firmino and Manè are too far to the potential passing options and they aren't even standing inside the penalty box to receive a cross pass. Manchester City can stop the attacking move closing down Salah along the side line.]

This was a recurrent issue for Liverpool during the whole match.

The front 3 played in the center spaces to leave space along the flanks for the fullbacks to push up; but without overloading the box, due to the narrow and as high up as possible City's defensive lines, crosses were not efficient.

[Firmino and Manè are combining in the center to create space along the left flank for Robertson to push up; Wijnaldum is standing at the back of the fullback to cover his position. The same does Alexander Arnold along the right flank, as Salah has shifted across the center to stand between the left center back and fullback (Laporte and Mendy).]

Liverpool's front 3 were double teamed easily and which missed some chances as well; the usual direct style off play with switches of side and quick vertical combinations was frustrated by the defensive shape of the Citizens (1-4-4-2).

[Robertson couldn't play the cross pass, so Liverpool tries to distribute in the center, but the double deep defensive line of City prevents any decisive pass, both outside, as Sterling is screening the Reds' fullback, and in the center, as Bernardo Silva is marking Manè, Salah is yet double-teamed and the rest of the defensive shape avoids any through pass attempts.]

Furthermore the spaces for the usual runs off the ball by Salah and Manè were not enough for them to be decisive.

[Robertson has the ball and Wijnaldum and Henderson are the only passing options (backward passes); Firmino shifts widerì, but Mahrez screens the passing path, Fernandinho is looking after to Manè and Mendy man marks Salah (Laporte and Sterling can press him, as well).]

Another Liverpool's issue was to find a support 3rd man for the receiver of the switch of side, already in itself very hard.

[Wijnaldum tries to switch the wide from the center toward Firmino under Mahrez's pressure, and Firmino passes out wide to Salah; but City defensive shape can track the ball and every Reds' receiver must face an opponent just few yards away; Fernandinho screens Firmino and Mendy can counter Salah just after the ball's reception. Furtehrmore, Bernardo Silva covers a potential through pass toward Manè.]

[When the ball arrives to Salah on the right, he controls it toward the center and Gomez overlaps along the flank, but City's offensive shape closes the passing paths and the defenders can face 1 v 1 all the potential passing options, such as Firmino, Manè and Henderson.]

When City had the possession, 2 midfielders (Fernandinho and Bernardo Silva) acted as link players for the defensive line and the attacking midfielder Silva and the wingers (Mahrez and Sterling) or as tricks to invite the pressure and open passing path out wide.

[Stones and Laporte are aligned at the back on the center-left side of the penalty area, allowing Mendy to push up along the left flank; as usual, Firmino is pressing the opposition's center back with the ball and screening the holding midfielder Fernandinho. Salah is standing between the center back and left fullback; Manè and Wijnaldum are shifting across the center to equalize the 5 v 5 duel near the ball. Milner if shifting wide to counter the fullback when he receives.]

The Citizens winger operated very wide to stretch Liverpool defensive shape (1-4-3-3, without variations of system). The way City started the move opened up spaces along the right flank to advance in the field.

Mahrez and Sterling try to stretch the Reds' back 4, but they stand shaped, as the midfield trio shifts across the field to close the spaces, as Milner, Henderson are screening the ball carrier and Wijnaldum is acting as center midfielder (this is one of the biggest Liverpool's improvements through the seasons with Jürgen Klopp.)]

On the other side, City forwards pressed 1 v 1 the Reds' center backs and fullbacks and Henderson, who acted as center midfielder during building up phases.

As Liverpool has the numerical advantage near the ball, Aguero and Mahrez force the opposition's building up phase along the left flank, as the center forward screens the second center back Lovren, Mahrez is marking Robertson and David Silva is pressing Henderson in the center of the building up shape.

Manchester City were very good at forcing long balls from the first third to Liverpool's front 3.

[Van Dijk passes to Milner who can only play a long pass for the front 3 which are isolated due to the high pressure of the opposition, which forced the midfield trio to stand deep to support the starting phase of the move.]

When Manchester City had the possession, Liverpool's pressure was not efficient enough to counter the building up phase, so Guardiola's team could place the formation high up the field. As City looked to press high against the opposition's playing out phase, placing players in numbers, the same did while building up from the goalkeeper.

[Salah and Firmino are pressing inside the opposition's penalty area, Milner and Manè are moving to counter the passing options along the defensive left flank high up in the field and the goalkeeper goes long at the back of the condensed area.] In this situation, the goalkeeper decided to go long and he wasn't forced to do it; this means that he could find a suitable passing option at the back of the pressure area.

[Laporte dribbles the ball up in the field, after a passing combination with Mendy, who has pushed up in the field; Henderson and Wijnaldum are screening through passes. Milner is forced to shift across the center to counter Silva, and a gap along the Reds' defensive left flank is created thanks to the quick building up phase on the opposition's center left side and to Ederson, who decided to go long.]

The only real tactical change for Guardiola's side was to ask Bernardo Silva to play deeper as No.10 to support David Silva, and for this reason, Liverpool started to defend deeper with the front 3 too.

[Bernardo Silva as the possession on the center right, the back 4 are man marking the opponents inside the penalty area (Van Dijk, Lovren, and Gomez), Robertson is tracking the ball carrier and Henderson pushes up from the back line to double team him (take into account that midfielders cover the fullbacks once they pushes up in the field to ensure a complete back 4 line, as in this situation. Milner and Wijnaldum are standing in front the defensive line and Firmino and Manè drops deep inside the first third to create numerical advantage near the ball and to overload the first third.

On the other side, Liverpool could defend the box from City attacking phase, as David Silva was not supported by Kevin De Bruyne, who has been his sector partner since Guardiola's arrival.

[As Bernardo Silva is able to combine with Mahrez, who dribbles the ball inside the penalty area, Milner drops deeper inside the penalty box to mark David Silva and to allow Van Dijk to look for the ball without marking tasks.]

Due to the forced deep defensive shape, Liverpool created gaps in the center, that the front 3 had to cover retreating back in front of the penalty area.

Citizens were also able to defuse Liverpool's power to score from corner kicks and free kicks.

2) Manchester City – Liverpool: 2 – 1 (Premier League, Ethiad Stadium - 03/01/2019)

- **(Liverpool with a 1-4-2-3-1 formation in the second half)**

The pressure phase of City had the same objectives since Guardiola's arrival, looking to force long balls and mistakes to organize the attacking phase. In this second leg, the wingers, Sterling and Sanè could stretch the opposition back 4 better than during the first match, exploiting Reds' change of system of play during the second half, as the center midfielders Henderson and Milner had to mark Citizens advanced midfielders David and Bernardo Silva or the players which were close the half spaces.
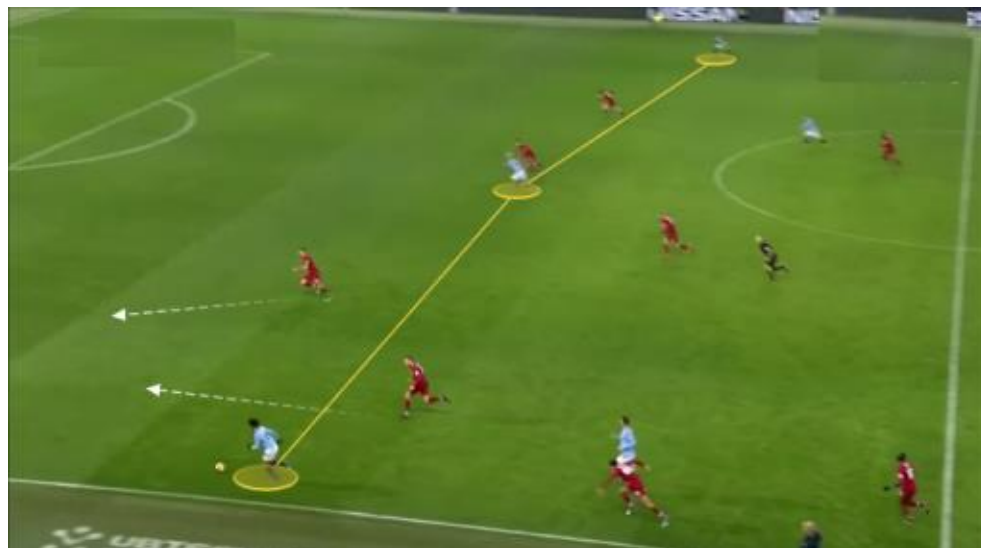
Sanè along the left, Aguero in the center, Sterling along the right flank, stretch Liverpool's defense which has to spread out the field's width; Sanè is dribbling the ball up in the field, Henderson is tracking him and Lovren is trying to close the space in front of the ball carrier.

[As Sanè doesn't play to play a cross pass due to the 2 v 1 and the empty penalty area (Lovren is closing the space along the flank), Henderson places his body in front of the penalty area, forcing the ball carrier backward and closing the space toward the half space.]

On the other side, during the first half, Klopp asked the midfielders to stand close to the defensive line and the fullbacks, Arnold and Robertson could move out to press the wingers, as Wijnaldum, Milner and Henderson dropped deeper to support Van Dijk and Lovren (first half), covering the half spaces. And it worked better thinking about the result and the goals' sequences.

Arnold moves out of the defensive line to counter the opposition's winger Sanè, who has the ball at his feet; Wijnaldum moves toward the ball carrier to double team him, and Henderson is closing down the path toward the half space, where Lovren is already standing. Reds' aim is clearly to create numerical advantage inside the half spaces, which are one of the main attacking weapons of Citizens.

The choice to change the system of play during the second half (1-4-2-3-1) resulted decisive, as Liverpool conceded the second goal due to a missing covering action (Henderson) and late retreating run (Manè).

[Sterling has the ball in between the lines ad he can play thought the couple of midfielders (Henderson and Fabinho); the space in front of the back four is now missing a third covering player, as Wijnaldum and Milner acted during the first half. Sanè can run forward free from markers, as Manè retreating run is late and Aguero is standing along the right fullback Arnold. The center are not moving toward the same direction, as Van Dijk is moving back looking at the ball direction, but Lovren is turned toward the opposite side. Sterling passes to Sanè.]
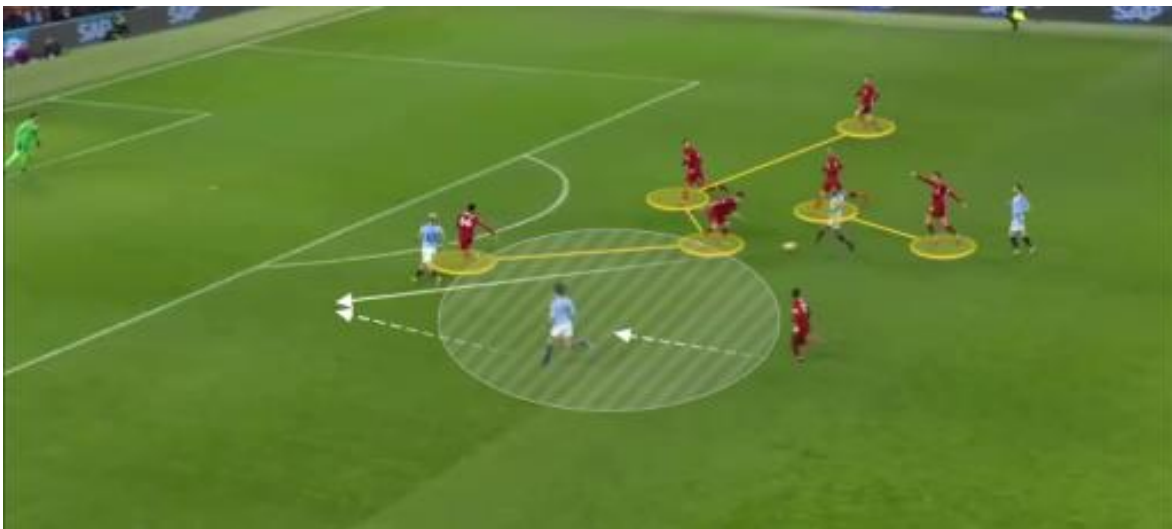
[Lovren moves out of the defensive line being late due to his wrong position, trying to face Sterling, who passes before being under pressure. Again, the space coverage of the third midfielder is missing (furthermore Manè is late against City's winger), and Sanè can receive ailing the left half space.] If Liverpool was forced to spread out in the field, to counter the wingers, and the midfielders were tasked with half space coverage, the 1-4-2-3-1 opened the space in the half spaces, when the Reds' wingers (Manè or Shaqiri) didn't move back in time to be aligned with the center midfielders).

[Sanè can receive inside the penalty area, control the ball and shoot on goal, beating the right fullback on time to the far post.]

From Guardiola's point of view, Liverpool could create issues to City thanks to Firmino, Manè and Salah standing along the back line (which had to stand narrow in the center), forcing the defenders (and the wingers along the flanks) to make quick recovery runs, and with fast passing combinations during transition phases.

Apart from these troubles, Man City conceded the equalizer due to one of the most powerful attacking weapons of the Reds which the narrow front 3 allowed to use: the fullbacks high up in the field. City's tendency to cover the center channels rather than shifting across with the defensive shape required the wingers to retreat and counter the fullbacks, Fernandinho passed the main part of the match in front of the back 4 (or 3) to provide numerical advantage against the front 3.

[Sanè jumps in front of Arnold, while he is feinting toward the center, giving time and space to the opponent for a cross pass; meanwhile, City's back 4 and Fernandinho are creating a 5 v 3 duel in the center of the penalty area. At the same time, the opposite (Reds' attacking left flank) side is free for Robertson to push up.]

City 1-4-1-4 is not defensively active, as both fullbacks can play without a real pressure and thee defenders in the middle of the penalty area are marking the opponent only till the switch of side.
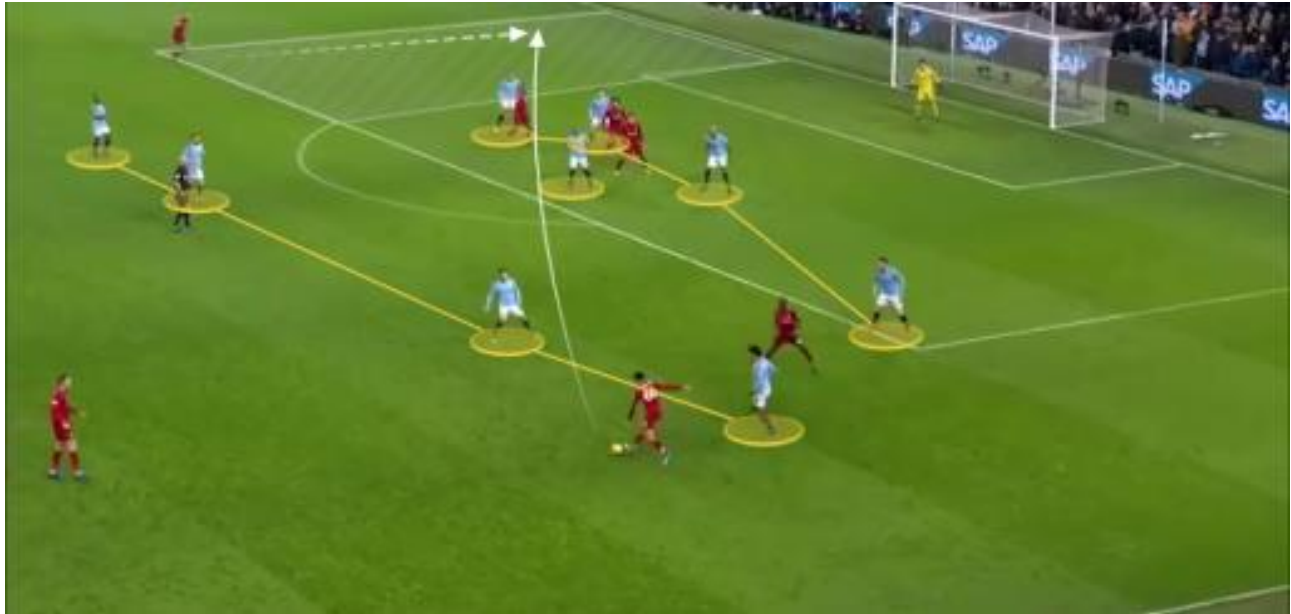
[City defensive line stands narrow in the center and the 4 players line in front is aligned but passive; Arnold can cross the ball toward the left half space meeting the run of the opposite fullback (Robertson).]

[Manè stands still and he is keeping the left fullback Laporte busy; the rest of the back 4 line retreats back toward the goal, but Fernandinho. Robertson plays another cross pass inside the opposition's 6 yds. box in the space between the defensive line and the goalkeeper, where Firmino can score the equalizer, exploiting the 4 v 4 (3 + goalkeeper) duel. City's right fullback is late and he jumps to header the ball out of time, the center backs are only looking at the ball and they miss to mark Reds' center forward at the back on the second post.]

- **Liverpool 2019/2020**

This season, as of last May 2020, Liverpool had the best EPL points projection in history: despite some defeats after winning the EPL title, the league's season has been outstanding.

Iconic Teams			
Season	Team	Points PG	Points/Projected
2019/20	Liverpool	2.82	107.00
2017/18	City	2.63	100.00
2003/04	Arsenal	2.37	90.00
1998/99	United	2.08	79.00
2004/05	Chelsea	2.50	95.00

The pressing system which is similar to the previous seasons, as the forwards stand always in the space between the opposition's center backs and fullbacks, and Firmino put pressure pagans the opponents throughout the center space of the final third.

[Salah is pressing the opposition center back, Oxlade Chamberlain is shifting wide to counter the opposition fullback, Wijnaldum is close to the advanced midfielder and Firmino is shifting toward the near holding midfielder].

This pressing organization is very similar to the 1 v 1 duel creation of Pep's Manchester City, but the aim is different, as the Reds' objective is to recover the ball as high up in the as possible, rather than re-organizing the attacking phase, as Man City usually does.

This picture represent one of the main improvement from the previous seasons; the compact midfield shape triangle that shifts across or wide as a unit.

[The right fullback Arnold is pressing high the field the opposition's winger, and the other midfielders (Fabinho and Wijnaldum) are shifting wide to close down the space along the flank and in the center.]

[Arnold forces the opposition's winger backward, meanwhile the other 3 defenders Gomez, Van Dijk and Robertson are shifting across to create strong side around the ball. Fabinho ensures coverage in the center and Wijnaldum is retreating back to stay linked to the teammates.]

This next sequence shows how Liverpool 2019/2020 can act mixed defensive actions with 1 v 1 pressure and defensive organization and balance.

[Fabinho is pressing the opposition's forward just out of the penalty area; Robertson and Wijnaldum are retreating to cover the space beside Fabinho.]

[Fabinho tracks the ball carrier out wide and Robertson retreats deeper in the field to cover the space behind the teammate, providing balance.]

[Fabinho tracks the wide pass along the sideline and Robertson is placed to ensure cover at the back; meanwhile, the forwards have shaped the defensive triangle in the middle of the final third (Firmino, Salah up front and Manè at the back].

Even the balanced system and exchange of positions which are already given up to speed in the past 2 seasons are almost the same:

[Robertson is dribbling the ball up along the flank and the middle third triangle is supporting his action; Fabinho as holding midfielder, Wijnaldum as left midfielder and Oxlade-Chamberlain as right midfielder. The center backs Van Dijk and Gomez are covering the depth at the back].

[The left fullback dribbles the ball deeper along the flank under the pressure of the opposition's right winger; the attacking shape is the usual one (Firmino drops back, Salah and Manè keep busy 2 defenders of the opposition's back 4, and Arnold is pushing up off the ball along the right flank.]

The main defensive tactical innovation of this last winning season that worked well even the past one, but that has been automatized with the fixed 1-4-3-3, is the exchange of positions between the fullbacks and the related outer midfielder during the attacking phases.

[Robertson looks to combine with Manè and Wijnaldum shifts wide along the flank to cover the fullback.] This exchange of positions allowed Liverpool to prevent all the counter-attacking situations that we have analyzed through the pages of this book.

In this situation Liverpool has just lost the possession along the left flank, Wijnaldum is covering the fullback position at the back, delaying the opposition's attacking action and the 1 v 2 duel at the beginning.

[Manè drops back quickly and he wins the ball, he passes it to Fabinho, and he places himself as left fullback.] This is an explicative sequence of the defensive chain that allowed Liverpool reduce the conceded goals from counter-attacks; despite this season Liverpool conceded 11 goals more than the past one, Liverpool has just one the EPL after 31 matches (29 conceded goals and 70 scored goals - +41 difference). Last season, when the Liverpool finished at the second seat of the table, after 31 matches, the score was the following one (19 goals conceded and 72 scored goals - + 53 goals difference, after 31 matches). After the same number of matches of the previous season,

Liverpool has improved his defensive shape behind the ball line, when the team is forced to defend deeper and in the first third; usually the line of 3 becomes a line of 4, with Manè who drops back along the left flank to shape a double line of 4 in front of the penalty area and the goal. Firmino usually stands in the center and very closed the the opposition's center back and Salah stands at the right of the teammate, ready to attack the depth. Mane, usually moves forward with the ball along the left flank and he is the first passing option that Liverpool starts to use.

**Liverpool with and without
Virgil van Dijk and Joe Gomez**

(Since the start of 2018/19 Premier League season, as of 7 July 2020)

When van Dijk and Gomez start		When van Dijk and Gomez don't start
2.7	Points per game	2.5
1.1	Games per win	1.2
29	Games per loss	21
0.5	Avg goals against	0.8
86.20%	Win rate	81%

Crystal Palace touches vs. Liverpool

(24 June 2020, Liverpool 4-0 Crystal Palace)

0 touches inside opposition box
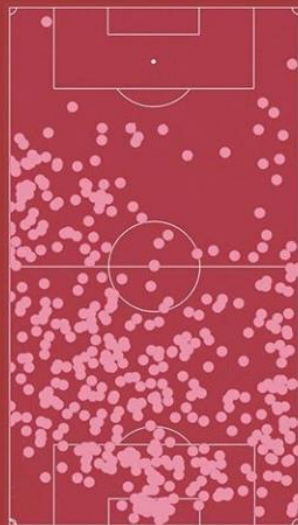
Reds now use also the 1 v 1 pressing system we have already analyzed about Manchester City (not to force the opposition going long, but to recover the ball as high up in the field as possible). Guardiola is used to define himself as "Ideas Thief", but Jürgen Klopp has become the same, since the Catalan arrival in Premier League. First of all, Liverpool's front 5 (front 3 + fullbacks) is a very closed idea to the Citizens 5 (striker, wingers and advanced midfielders) that Pep usually shapes with a striker, with the fullbacks and the advanced midfielder, apart from the inverted fullbacks tactics use.

In this match against Arsenal, Liverpool put pressure very high up in the field, with the front 3 and the outer midfielders, asking the holding midfielder to provide balance behind the pressure area, but standing high up in the field.

[Manè and Salah are pressing the center backs, Firmino in standing near the holding midfielder and the Reds' outer midfielder along the same side where Liverpool is trying to create the pressure trick counters the fullback. Fabinho provide balance first and then mark the potential receiver out of the condensed area; the opposite right midfielder Oxlade-Chamberlain is moving toward the second center midfielder.]

As the opposition's fullback receives, Wijnaldum close him down the sideline and Liverpool wins the ball back.

High pressing forwards: Premier League

(2019/20 season stats, as of 25 July)

	Possession won in final third
Roberto Firmino	37
Nathan Redmond	35
Danny Ings	31
Dwight McNeil	31

COUNTER ATTACK GOALS
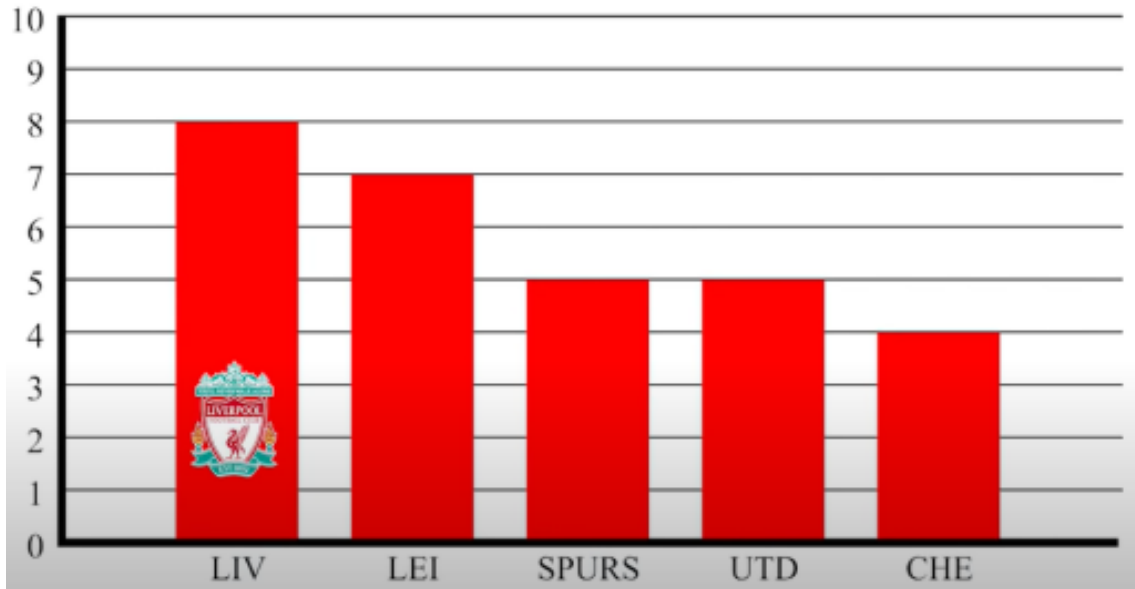
The high 1 v 1 pressure is the reason behind the 1st place in the rank for the most scored goals from counter-attacks of the last 2019/2020 season (139 counter-attacks this season, 49 with shot in 38 games, 3,66 per game, 1,29 counter-attacks with shot per game. The average of total counter-attacks with shots is 35,25%).

COUNTER ATTACK SHOTS/90
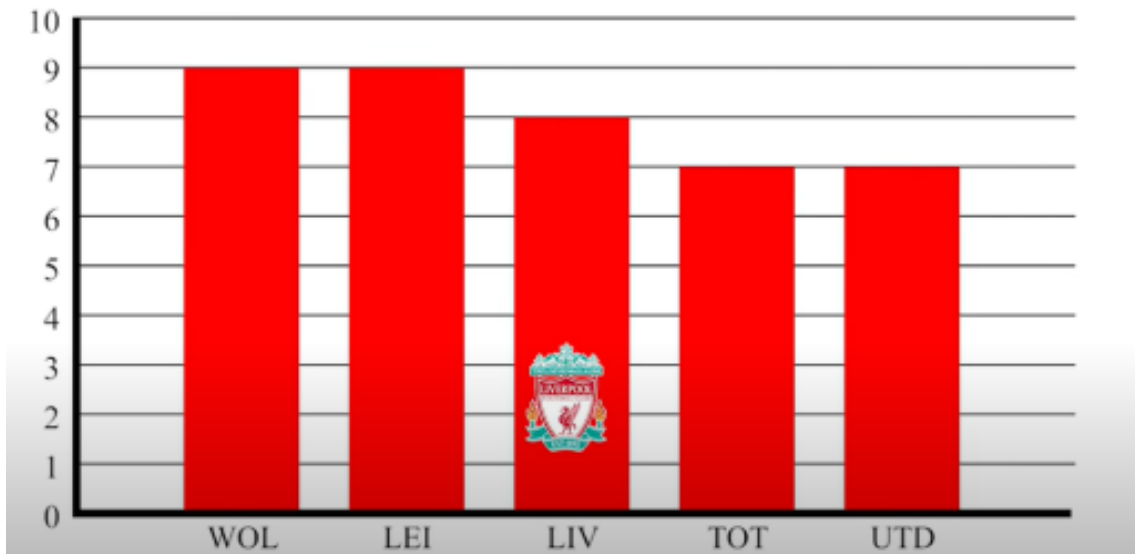
and 3rd placed for shots from counter-attacks p90 (1,29 counter-attacks with shot per game, 35,25% this season).

Klopp's gegen-pressing is anyway always part of the tactical know-how of the Reds, furthermore against "right side of the table" teams:

[Robertson passes a diagonal forward pass from the left flank in the middle third.]

Wijnaldum loses the ball to the opposition's midfielder and he passes back to the defensive line; Firmino, Manè, Robertson and Johnes press all the opponents around the ball, preventing them from playing out of the condensed area.

Robertson wins the ball down the wing and he passes back to johns to make the possession safe.

When counter-attacks are not possible just after the ball's recovery, the main difference with the past Klopp's season, is that counter-attacks are not forced, if there's no space available, but the possession phase has also defensive aims, as it allows the team to place the players in their right positions and roles. This was one of the main issues Liverpool had to face during the first seasons with Klopp as head coach.

This is a similar situation that Liverpool is facing; Van Dijk, the left center back receives at the back and out of the condensed area, to allow Reds to re-shape the team in the field before building-up a new attacking phase.

The following data prove the Reds' improvement year after year since Jürgen Klopp arrival; the success of the last 2 seasons and the status of all major trophies holders at the moment (Champions League, Uefa Super Cup, and Fifa World Cup 2019 and now Premier League 2020) is not a coincidence (from the left to the right of the line: 2015/2016 – 2019/2020):
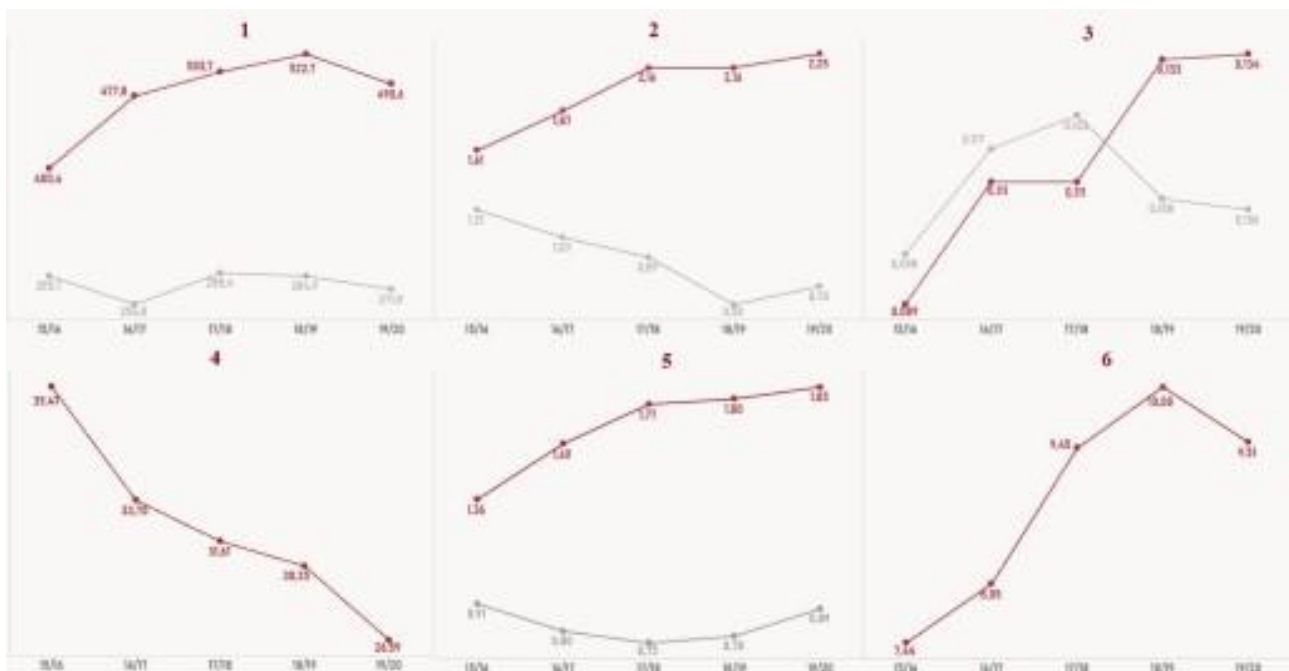
1) **Passes:** completed (400,4 > 490,6) vs conceded (285,1 > 271); 2) **Non penalty goals:** scored (1,61 > 2,25) vs conceded (1,21 > 0,70); 3) **Xg per shot:** for (0,089 > 0,134) vs against (0,098 > 0,106); 4) **passes conceded in the first third** (39,47 > 26,59); 5) **Xg per goals:** for (1,36 > 1,85) vs against (0,91 > 0,89); 6) **Ppda** (7,44 > 9,28).

- **Manchester City 2019/2020**

Just after 19 Epl games, it was clear that the situation was going to change for City during this current season. The Ppg are falled down to 2,04 from the 2,63 (2017/2018) and 2,58 (2018/2019).
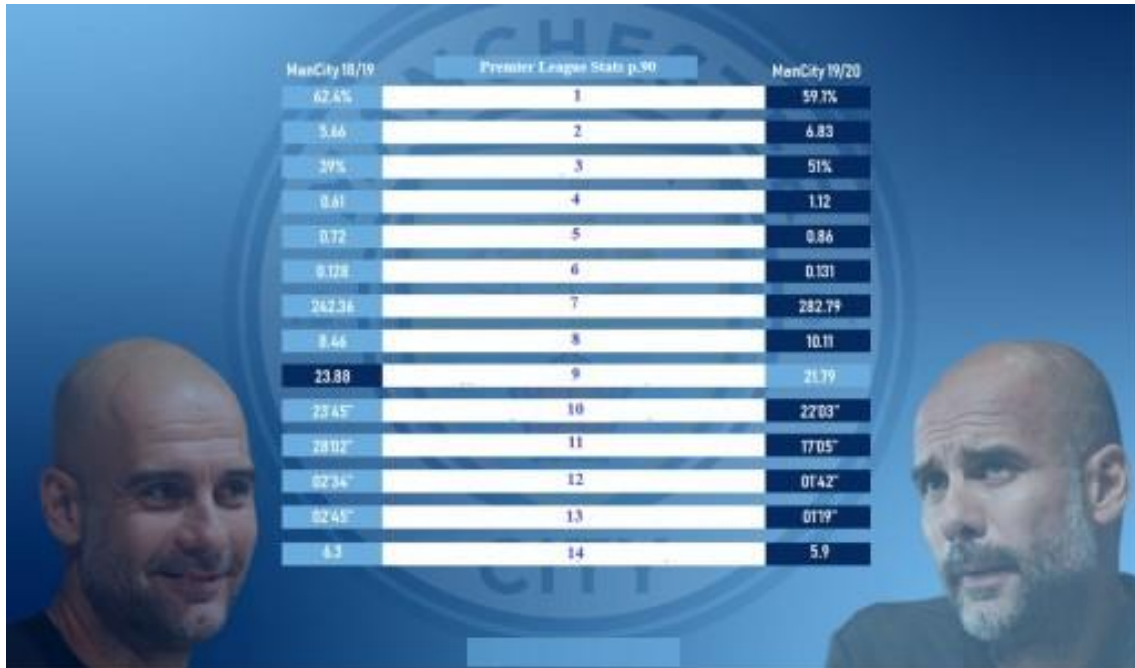
1. Defensive duels
2. Conceded shots
3. % conceded shots on target
4. Conceded goals
5. Xg conceded
6. Xg for shot conceded
7. Conceded passes
8. Ppda
9. Conceded passes in the defensive third
10. Opponent possession minutes pXg
11. Opponent possession per goal
12. Opponent minutes in the defensive third pXg
13. Opponent minutes in the defensive third pg
14. Duels, tackles, interceptions per minute of opposition's possession

Manchester City's defensive openness under Pep Guardiola
(Premier League stats per game)

	Chances conceded from fast breaks	Expected goals conceded
2016/17	0.2	0.76
2017/18	0.2	0.63
2018/19	0.2	0.66
*2019/20	0.5	1.04

*As of 12 December
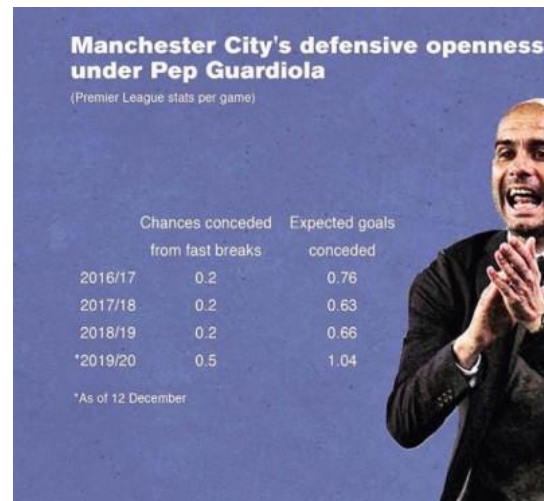
Stats decrease is evident from the past season; City is conceding more shots (shots on target), more goals and even more passes to the opposition, despite the high pressure is always a recurrent tactic. The opponents need less minutes to score a goal, they overcome Citizens' pressure with a fewer number of passes than before and they spend less time inside their first third in relation to 2018/2019 season; this means that the pressure phase hasn't the same efficacy than the prior seasons. In general (point 14), the 2019/2020 defensive phase and the actions are decisively less efficient than 2018/2019.

The very first reasons for these issues are the change of the holding/defensive midfielder and the new role for Fernandinho, who often acts as center back (in the fir games, after Corona Virus brake, Garcia, a new signing is making appearances in the starting XI).

	Lost balls	Lost balls in own half	Ball recoveries	Ball recoveries in opponent's half	Defensive challenges	Challenges in defense won
	4.4	0.85	5.7	1.49	10	0,57
Fernandinho 208/2019	**Ball interceptions**	**Free ball pick ups**	**Defensive challenges won**	**Defensive xG per shot**	**Defensive xG (xG of shots made by guarded player)**	
	5.1	6	5.8	0.02	0.03	

	Lost balls	Lost balls in own half	Ball recoveries	Ball recoveries in opponent's half	Defensive challenges	Challenges in defense won
	2.4	0.51	5.6	1.95	8	0,59
Rodri 2019/2020	**Ball interceptions**	**Free ball pick ups**	**Defensive challenges won**	**Defensive xG per shot**	**Defensive xG (xG of shots made by guarded player)**	
	3.7	7	4.6	0.02	0.03	

Pressures PG
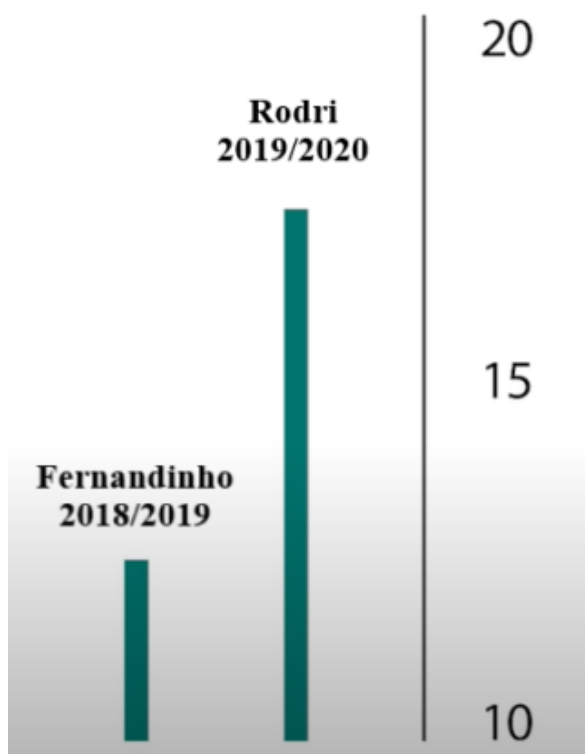
Rodri has increased the pressure stats per game, in relation to Fernandinho last season, when he was playing as holding midfielder, but pressure actions are often performed in wrong scenarios.

Rodri was used to press with a covering teammate (Thomas) as Atletico Madrid midfielder; but at Man City De Bruyne and Silva, more than Gundogan are offensive midfielders and when De Bruyne is coupled with the Spaniard in the middle third, if he finds himself alone in the center in front of the defensive line and or he hasn't retreated his position, the back four haven't any protection.

Fernandinho 2019/2020 as center back hasn't the same skills in relation to Laporte 2018/2019 (44% win against 55%), despite attempting more actions.

The holding midfielder positioning is the main tactical issue from defensive point of view for Manchester City; this is the reason why City has come back conceding goals due to counter-attacks and assists' passes inside opposition's zone 5.

[Rodri has replaced Fernandinho as holding midfielder in front of the back defensive line; but he doesn't play with the same "positional intelligence"; in this example, he runs out of the position and he presses higher up in the field above the other midfielders and this create a gap in the center and in front of the back 4.]

[As the opposition develops the move along the flank, the pressure action is not effective; the back 3 must cover the space inside the box and 2 opponents attack the defensive line. The defensive sequence of the back 3 could be right from a tactical point of view, but the holding midfielder is missing and he should have been the marker of the opposition's center forward. The center back are forced to close down the space inside the box and toward the goal, but they can't mark the incoming opponents.]

[As the center backs are covering the space in front of the goal and the holding midfielder is out of position, the opposition's forward can score heading the ball to the far post.]

Here again, the same issue during a building up phase:

The center back is dribbling the ball high in the field from the back 4 line, but Rodri is standing along the same line of the left outer midfielder.

City loses the possession in front of the back 3, but Rodri is out of position, standing along the same line of the center back who has just lost the possession.

He tries to win the ball back with a late tackle from this side of the opponent, who can face City's goal.

[As the holding midfielder is out of position, the center backs must face a 2 v 2 duel; the opponents can dribble the ball up along the final third, and the defenders are forced to retreat backward rather than being already placed in front of the ball carriers. They can't force them out wide but only try to delay their attacking action.]

If Rodri were standing in the right position, he should have been the upper vertex of the defensive triangle; the center back could have stand in their related positions, and the pass that leads to concede the goal could have been covered by the left center back or the holding midfielder, simply shifting across.

City is experiencing issued about the team's defensive shape, as now the opponents try to combine with short passes rather than going long to the final third to overcome the pressure phase..

[The opponents play a triangle passing combination to overcome Mahrez's pressure, and the 4-2 defensive shape is to far from the ball position to be effective. 2 opponents are even free in between the line.]

De Bruyne runs out to press the ball carrier with wrong timing, and the second midfielder doesn't provide cover at the back and in front of the back 3; the defensive line is retreating back toward the goal, but the distances among the players of the line is too long to counter the runs off the ball of the opposition's forwards.


The 2 v 2 duel in front of the opposition's goal leads to concede an goal to the opposition; the distance between the defensive line and the center midfielder is too large to allow any attempts of numerical advantage creation.

Other issues for City this season, are the over 30 key players and the conceded goal data which are much higher than the previous 2 seasons.
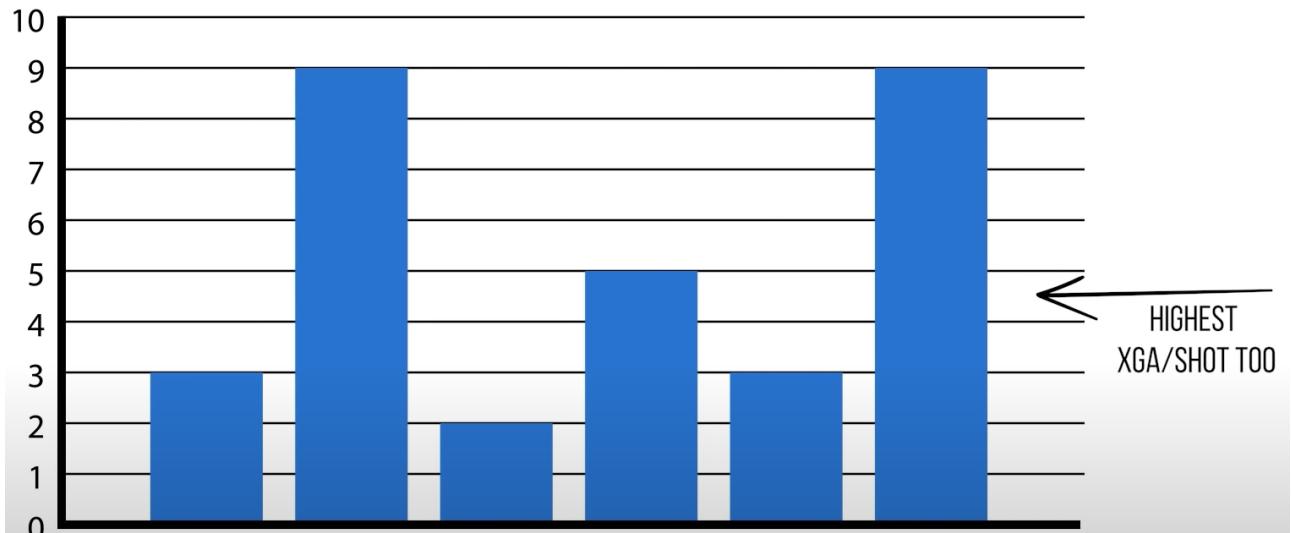
In addition, Liverpool has been lucky during the key moments of the season, scoring many 3 points' goals during the last 15' of the matches or even during recovery times after 90'.


SLOPPINESS/UNLUCKY
UNDER PERFORMING BOTH METRICS
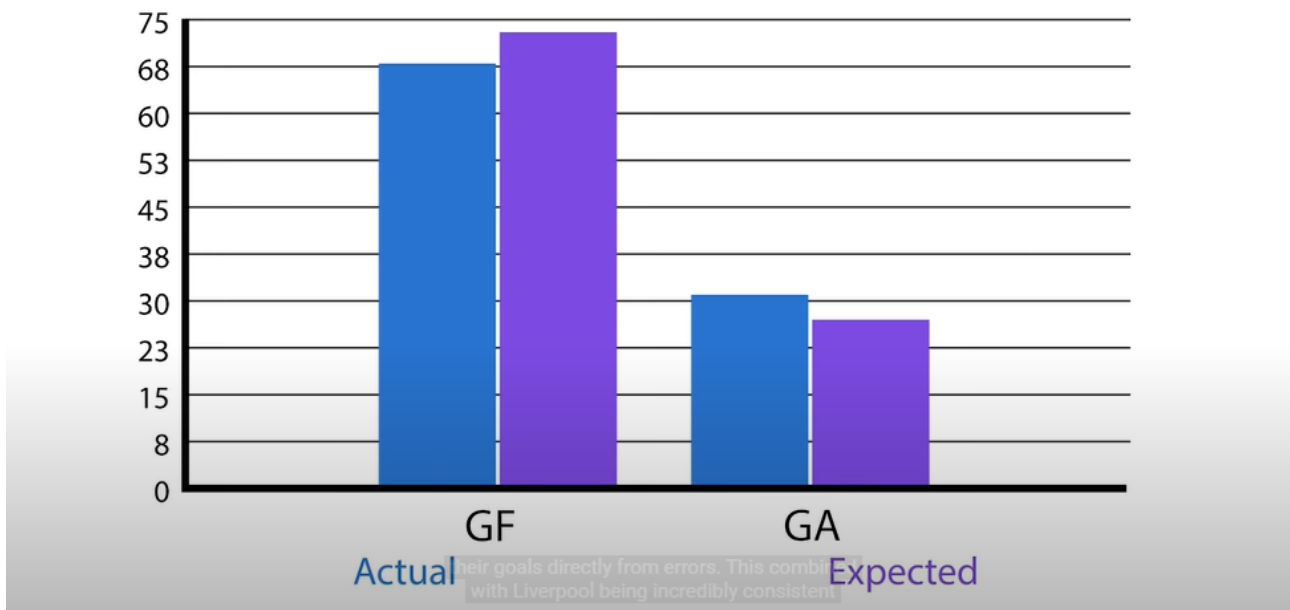
To confirm what we have just showed, Man City have had 0,43 more expected goals and have allowed 0,6 shots more per game.

This last data is even more crucial; during the past 2018/2019 winning season, City didn't concede a single counter-attack during the whole Premier League season.
Looking at this season, City has conceded the highest average percentage of counter-attacks of the past 4 seasons with Pep Guardiola as head coach.
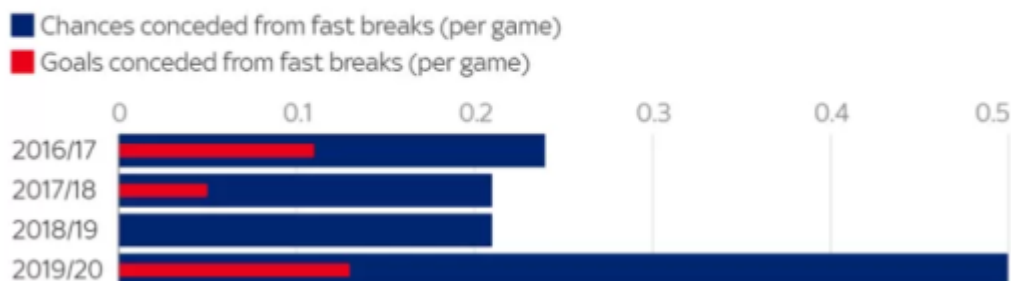
Summary:

This book aims to sum up the last 4 Premier League seasons, with Klopp and Guardiola as head coaches of Liverpool and Manchester City. The analysis has the goal to overview the trends of the teams from defensive point of view, the raising of Citizens as main domestic winning team (2017/2018 and 2018/2019) and the slow, but constant development of the under dogs, of the damned team at home that arrives to be Champions of England and of everything (Uefa Champions League, Uefa Super Cup and Fifa World Club Cup).

The past 4 seasons have been the most exciting of the last decade from tactical point of view, but also from show point of view. The positional play that becomes Champions twice in a row and then the counter-pressing coach who wins the League with some Pep's ideas, developing a counter-attacking team in possession and balanced team that can play in either way, changing face many times in the same match.

Before talking about defending phases season by season, the books include a chapter about the pressure phases of both teams during the seasons, the common points and the differences.

This book contains:
- Introduction: Quotes
- Liverpool and Manchester City defensive stats comparison (2016 – 2020) season by season.
- Pressure phase and counter-attacks (Liverpool) or attacking organization (Manchester City); the difference through the seasons and between the Reds and Citizens.
- Liverpool and Manchester City defensive phases (2016 – 2020) season by season.