

3-5-2

ATTACKING



**FORMATION
SERIES**

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Attacking

By

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Introduction

Attacking penetration, wide options to maintain and to control the possession seem to be the very crucial feature of the 1-3-5-2. The players should always have several passing options open whenever and wherever they are on the ball and the 1+3+5 at the back and in the middle third fulfill the needs of ball control, as well as the center forwards create the chances to play in behind the opposition defense line.

It is one of the most used systems of play in soccer, despite being on the tongue of people as much as 1-4-3-3 or 1-4-2-3-1 are nowadays; the most important tactical variation is the 3 - 5 or 5 - 3 alternate formation of the defense and sectors with and without the ball, thanks to wingbacks (or the wide “fifths”) positioning. 1-3-5-2 is then equivalent to 1-5-3-2, as the first one is the basic attacking shape and the second one is the defending shape of the same system of play. The risk is to reduce all to the pace, the aerobic skills and to up/down runs of the wingbacks; this system of play deserves to be studied deeper and in details.

[The following picture and chart show the basic shape on the pitch of a 1-3-5-2 formation and the players numbers and roles we are going to use in this two books set (attacking and defending) about this system of play.]



5: Left center back
6: Middle center back
4: Right center back
3: Left wingback
2: Right wingback

8: Defensive midfielder
10: Left midfielder
7: Right midfielder
11: Second forward
9: Centre forward

It is possible to see these teams being shaped like a 1-3-5-2 (1-5-3-2) during many games in and out of possession intentionally or unintentionally; systems with four at the back often switch into a three back line as players leave their position during possession phases, as instance, to provide support and/or balance. As instance, this is the formations sheet of Manchester City vs Tottenham last Premier League match, where both formations seemed to be shaped with a 1-4-2-3-1.



Man City was shaped as follow while playing out from the back...



(Otamendi, Laporte and Zinchenko shaping a line of 3 at the back and Gündoğan as balance/holding midfielder in front of them).

...And like while this while distributing in the middle third.



(Walker, Otamendi and Laporte shaping a line of 3 at the back, Rodri as balance/holding midfielder in front of them and Gundogan who is pushing up the field inside the half space from the left side).



As we are going to analyze later in this introduction, this shape, despite being different from the one we will look at, it may be considered as an evolution of the 1-3-5-2 system of play, that develops in a 1-3-2-5 (Bernardo Silva, the right winger is hidden along the flank in this image). This is the case we are going to look at, where the opposition leaves only 1 center forward against the defenders of the possession team, from Guardiola point of view. 2 wide wingbacks on the left and on the right (Zinchenko and Mahrez), 2 players inside the upper parts of the half spaces, who are placed very closed to the center forward.

Even if it is a developments from the 1-4-2-3-1, the final shape recalls on mind very well a potential solution from the 1-3-5-2, with the 3 at the back.

The same 3-1 could be found in Tottenham shape when the team was forced backward by the opposition pressure...



(Sanchez has the possession, Alderweireld together with Walker-Peters shaped the back 3 line and Winks was dropping back to be placed as holding midfielder. Rose, the left fullback stayed placed higher on the flank as a potential receiver, but the ball carrier was forced backward by the direct pressure of the opposition attacking midfielder De Bruyne).



The same 3 c 1 situation can be also found in this second example, as the involuntary development of a momentary situation of play. Lloris has the possession and Sanchez, Alderweireld together with Walker-Peters shaped again the line of 3 at the back against the only opposition forward Agüero.

Winks was moving again to be placed as holding midfielder, escaping the opposition advanced midfielder at the back, to allow his team to cut out the pressure line and to progress the move into the middle third.

These 2 previous situations were different examples of 3+1 back shapes that were forced by the opposition pressure. As the distribution phase could be organized, the 4 at the back was the first

aim to ensure balance. Rose is moving into his position on the left side, while the ball carrier was slowed down the rhythm, as well as the center midfielder stay positioned in the middle, to ensure equality of players inside the defensive half. Only Eriksen, the left midfielder was placed deeper on the left side of the pitch, to create a general 7+Gk v 6 situation.



Apart from the 3+1 situations inside the first third, the different objective while building up is very clear; City always aim to overload the opposition half as soon as possible, Tottenham preventively saves the first third in case of loss of possession.



Tottenham 1-4-2-3-1 shape is very clear also when the possession phase can be developed higher on the field; the main differences from the defense phase are distances between the players. Anyway, the 1-3-1 is the same balance we can find when teams are shaped with 1-3-5-2 as basic formation, where the shaped lines are more than three.

In this example (white jerseys team Lazio, from Italian Serie A), 3 defenders shape the lower one...



...The defensive midfielder shapes the second one, the attacking midfielders and the wingers create the third one...



...And the attackers are the last one.



If all lines are filled with players, it gives confidence and balance to the team.

The center midfielder is the balance player par excellence, as for 1-4-3-3, being the low vertex of the middle third sector in front of the three defenders...



In this example of the last Conte's 1-3-5-2 version at Juventus Fc, Andrea Pirlo is positioned in front of the defenders (Barzagli on the right, Bonucci with possession in the center and Chiellini on the left side), and at the back of the Ac Milan pressing forwards. This position is the classic one, as stated, but it's also very interesting, as the center advanced midfielder of the opposition, that is shaped with a 1-4-2-3-1, is forced to move out of position to man-mark him, creating a potential 4+2 v 4+2 inside the attacking half, with the great opportunity to stretch the defense, thanks to wide wingbacks.



The center midfielder of the 1-3-5-2 is also tasked with the creation of all the possible triangles during possession phases in the middle.



In this situation, the right wingback is throwing the ball in against high pressing opponents. The nearest potential receiver (Pogba) is man-marked, as well as the second forward Tevez behind him. The passing path toward Pirlo is shadowed by 2 opponents.

The safer solution is to play to the nearest teammate who can count on physical superiority against the opponent, to save the possession and to move the opposition. The center defender Bonucci pushes up to support the move, condensing the space in the middle to counter 2 opponents in front of him. In these situations, the center midfielder becomes very important as a support player, to play out from the pressurized ball area.

Pogba has received the throw-in pass and Pirlo is positioned in front of him to receive the layoff pass, overcoming the opposition pressure on the ball.



The midfield “director” player has been rediscovered due to two important tactical factors that have changed formation positioning on the pitch: the first is the disappearance of the free player behind the defenders that allowed an extra man in the midfield line and the second one is the evolution of fullbacks’ tasks that make them added wings, to make the opposition defenses widen, when the team has the possession. Today he is the real "free player" of the team: he positions himself to protect defenders not behind but in front, with a double task: add a defender and organize team's attacking transitions, managing time and rhythm.

He must be the first one to support the defenders and other midfielders and the first one to cover the same space where he is placed, while playmaking and supporting the move; he must even run into the defense line, if necessary. Bonucci wins the ball here and Pirlo is placed as forwarding support in front of him and he is ready to receive a pass to manage the transition to attack phase.



While the team has the possession, 1-3-5-2 always ensure 3 defenders at the back against 2 opposition strikers...



...They can become 4 defenders if a wingback retreats the position against 3 opposition strikers...



...or if the center midfielder drops deeper to create a defensive center rhombus, providing cover

and balance, as we already stated.



When the opponents include only 1 center striker, the backline can be shaped with 2 center defenders, with the center midfielder as balance player, the third defender can push along the flank or inside the half-space, allowing the outer midfielders to stay higher on the field; split and play wide to be able to circulate the ball without any risk; wingbacks go in more advanced positions, so wide to touch the sidelines. This way, the opposition steps back and there should be more space for the defenders to change the point of attack.

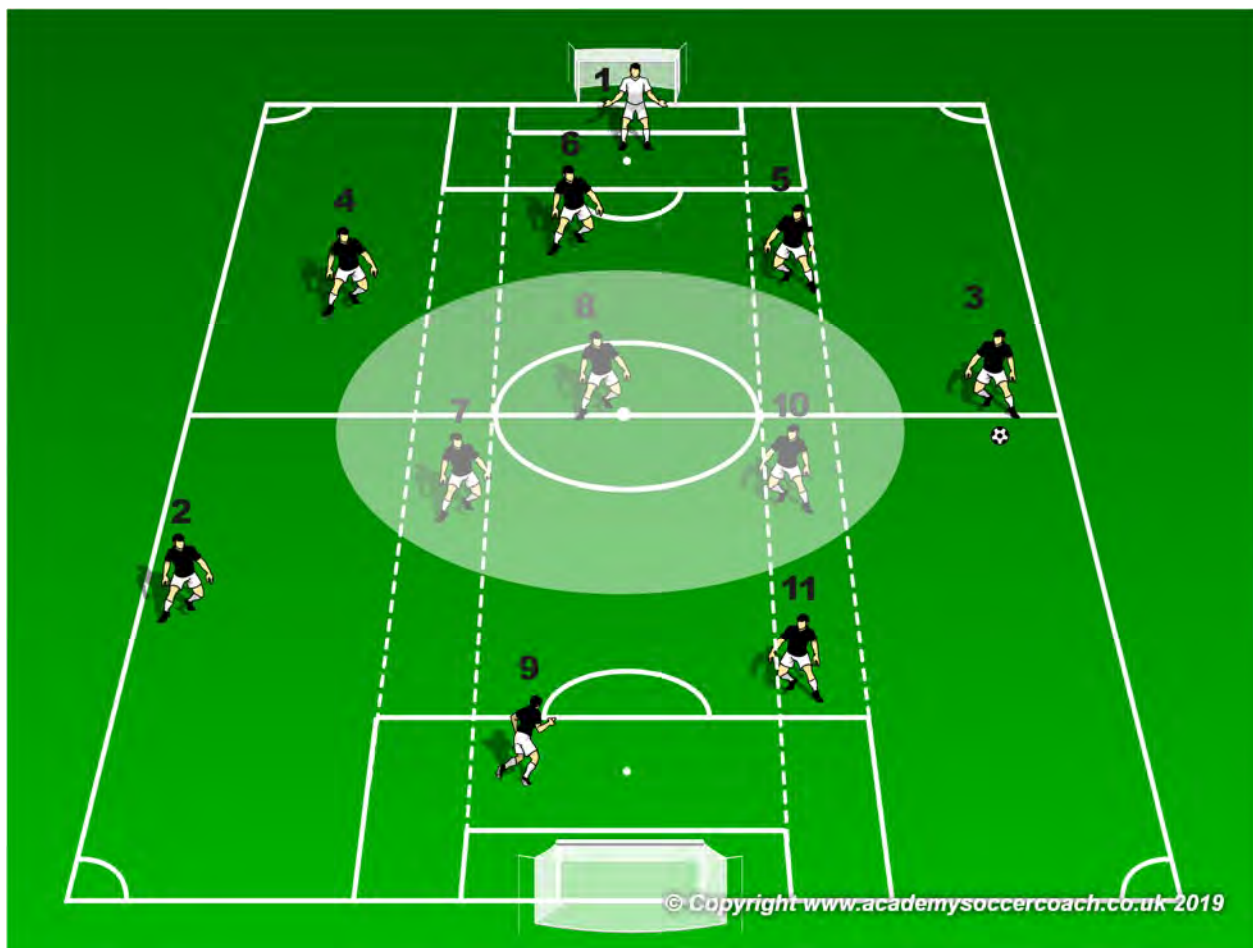


The five midfielders of this formation ensure various opportunities on the field thanks to the set of tactical potential variations. Width is always ensured by the wingbacks to maintain possession

and to be able to attack empty spaces on the flanks; these players can be tasked to overload the half-spaces as well.



The center zone is always overloaded because of the three players who are lined up with a 1-2...



... or a 2-1, depending on the style of play.



If the holding midfielder is placed in between 2 defenders, the middle third can be condensed anyway thanks to the third defender who pushed up and by the wingback inside the half-space.



The attacking strength of 1-3-5-2 is the central strikers, who always ensure forward support for

the ball carrier when the team has the possession and forward passing options when the team is involved in transitions to attack, as well as usual positioning inside zones 14 and 17.



The forwards can be basically placed on the same line or on 2 different lines (1-1), moreover during phases without possession.



Llorente and Tevez are placed along the same line, inside the defending half and under the ball line and, at the same time...



..., they can be potential forward passing solutions if the possession is won back.

The center forwards should be placed in front of each other in the opposition half and, even better, diagonally (one of them steps back into empty spaces), overloading the middle third and adding one more line to the team.



Tevez has dropped back in this situation and Llorente is placed along with the opposition last defense line.

The best solution, for possession phases could be to turn one of them toward the own goal, as upper vertex and the second one facing the opposition goal, who can attack the opposition defensive line in behind; to alternate the roles of first and second striker is a chance not to give the opposition any landmarks.



Antonio Conte's 1-3-5-2 is very famous for the well-timed movements of the forwards; one of them is always more positional and the other one more mobile; Llorente and Tevez have been the perfect example of this attacking mix.

As for all the other systems of play, the distances between the players should allow easy connections with each other, moreover in this kind of midfield sector that is made of 3 and that already create a center triangle. The same connections are very important for wide players and the defenders with the strikers; the risk is to create flat lines that don't allow to have useful passing options to progress the moves.

Basic principles of play with the ball, possession, key attacking principles, movements and variations of run without the ball from famous Antonio Conte's Juventus Fc 1-3-5-2 (2011-2014).

- 1. **MOBILITY:** players run into different areas of the field while being on and off the ball to invite defenders out of their positions, creating space and options for the ball carrier or where to dribble the ball through by creating gaps between the defense lines or among the players near the ball. In the 1-3-5-2 mobility is the key principle of play for the 3 middle third players and the wingbacks. The center forwards is asked to rotate to create more passing lanes during possession phases.

The center midfielder is the playmaker and the other 2 are supposed to be placed in more advanced positions along different lines to support the move as options to overcome opposition lines:



Pirlo has the possession but he is just half turned to the opposition goal, Marchisio, the left midfielder, is positioned a bit forward and Pogba, the right midfielder is placed further on and diagonally.



Marchisio drops back to allow Pirlo to play out and escape from the direct opponent's pressure and the ball carrier can now face the opposition goal and the third midfielder, Pogba, can play as

an advanced potential option.

Despite these are overrated movements, the up/down runs of the wingbacks are always very important:



In this example, the left wingback has the possession up the field and along the flank; Juventus has created a strong area around the ball, thanks to the second forward, Tevez, the left midfielder Marchisio and Llorente and Pogba are attacking the opposition goal in the center final third. Lichsteiner, the opposite right wingback, pushes up along the flank to exploit any potential chance to switch the side.



In this second example, the right center back has the possession in the middle third and the wingbacks are placed as much wide as possible to stretch the opposition backline and to invite the fullbacks to mark them both. The opposition center backs are forced to play 1 v 1 against Juventus forwards, the left fullback must pay attention to the right wingback Lichsteiner, Montolivo, a center midfielder has dropped deeper and wide to cover the fullback Abate, who is retreating to cover the position. Despite the defensive line seems to be well-positioned, the main and immediate risk comes from the long distances between the players, who are quite far away from each other, that may take to passes or runs in behind.

We have already talked about the reciprocal and alternate movements of the forwards between themselves, their mobility is very important for finishing stages of the moves and for transitions to attack.



Barzagli plays a long areal pass and the forwards move toward opposite directions to combine against the opposition forwards. The up/down runs of the wingbacks have forced the opposition fullbacks backward and allowed the center forwards to attack the depth and the center back. This way, the opposition defense lines lengthen and gaps are also opened in the middle third.



Llorente, who is a more positional forward cut toward the right to receive the pass, inviting the direct marker out of position to track him; this way a space toward the goal is now open. The second forward, Tevez, cuts toward the left, exploiting the created and the late cover run of the marker.



The distances between the opponents allowed Tevez to shoot on goal, as the direct marker has been overcome thanks to the prior movement, and the possible double-teaming actions are taken too late to be effective.

Transitions to attack: when the opposition was positioned inside Juventus defending half, the forwards were used to stay under the ball line, very close to each other to be forward options for a safe pass, if the possession was recovered, as well as far as possible from the center back who was distributing, to have space and time to control the ball toward the opposition goal as receivers.



Juventus is positioned in a narrow 1-5-3-2 inside the defending half; the center forwards Llorente and Tevez are closing the center passing paths; the possible line between them is covered behind them by Pirlo, who is shadowing the opposition center advanced midfielder.

For this reason Ac Milan center back is forced to play a forward pass...

Pirlo intercepts the ball, winning the duel against the right advanced midfielder who tried to drop back. Here we can find again the idea of center space coverage of the holding midfielder.



The center forwards are placed along different lines in front of the holding midfielder, creating passing options through the positional triangle. Llorente is half-turned at the right side of the ball carrier, free from any marker, ready to receive and to play forward to sector team-mate.



Tevez, the second, but more advanced forward is also half-turned and ready to receive, as he is facing Llorente; both they are moving inside the defending half because of the narrow shape of Juventus during the phases without possession.

In this transition to attack phase, Juventus is able to prevent the opposition counter-pressing exploiting the center numerical advantage 5 v 4 that is created by the narrow shape of the 3 midfielders and by the 2 center forwards.

This last picture represents the other downside of a narrow defensive shape that is the loneliness of the forwards once they have the ball.



Only the left midfielder Marchisio can follow the move and Milan's 3 midfielders can recover the space and close down all the passing options for Tevez, who is forced to dribble the ball toward the opposite direction from the running paths of the team-mates.

- 2. WIDTH: the team attempts to stretch the opponent's defensive shape, making the field as big as possible to create space, inviting the defenders out of the compact shape they have created to cover the dangerous areas in front of the goal.

The team in possession moves the ball to change the point of attack to create gaps between or behind the defense. Width is strictly connected to mobility in terms of sideways support for the ball carrier and with depth, and it's truer for 1-3-5-2, where wingbacks are responsible for the whole flank, till a teammate shift across and wide to help him. Width is crucial in stretching the opponent's defensive compactness and wingbacks are decisive from this point of view. If the defense remains compact in center area of the field, then there will be more opportunity to attack down the wings. Having 2 center forwards, the opposition center backs are supposed to be very busy; the opposition fullbacks should now decide if to be positioned near the center backs to double team the opponents, leaving space along the flanks for the wingbacks.



The only way to counter the wide wingbacks is to place a 5 defense line, with 3 in the center and 1 v 1 duels along the flanks...



...Or to run out to mark the wingbacks, leaving 1 v 1 duels against the forwards.



The only possible solution seems to be to place the back 4 defense in the center and to ask a winger to drop back and to run out to counter the opposition wingback, as Internazionale Milan does in this footage.



Using wingbacks as 5th wide players along the flanks allow to combine between them and the inside support players to progress the move.



[Tevez wins the ball in the middle third, in this situation and he plays out at his left side to Asamoah, anticipating the direct opponent while controlling the ball; the other two opponents are too far away from the ball carrier to have chances for a direct attempt of winning the ball back. They can only retreat and cover the space behind the ball line].

The opposition defender is forced to choose if to try to counter Tevez directly or if to leave him space, marking the outer left wingback. He chooses to counter the ball carrier, but he is late, opening up the space along the flank.

Asamoah, the left wingback, can now dribble the ball up the field, having enough space in front of him, before the defenders can close him down the sideline. Tevez, one of the forwards, is

acting as inside support, when his team-mate receives from him, at the beginning of the transition to attack.



Internazionale Milan's defenders have created a strong side around the ball (4 v 2), by recovering the space along the flank.



Tevez then invites them to close him down the sideline, opening up space for an inside dribble action of the left wingback.

Meanwhile, the center forward Llorente and the right midfielder Vidal are moving up from the middle third to support the attacking phase in the center and along the opposite right flank.

The left wingback is now facing two opponents in front of him, and he probably makes a wrong choice, turning toward the sideline, rather than playing toward the center to Llorente, who could receive free from markers and with suitable space in front of him or switch the side toward the right side for Vidal, who is pushing up, facing the goal.



But instead, he turns out toward the sideline again and he passes out to Tevez, who has made and underlap run to provide width, as the wingback has dribbled the inside the field.



This way the opposition is, on the other side, able to close the space toward the center final third and the goal, creating a strong side around the ball and a huge numerical advantage along the defensive right side (5 v 2).

At this point, the only possible solution to keep the possession and to go on with the attacking move is to switch the side and to try to exploit the opposition's first third weak side.

Tevez turns back and he passes again to the left wingback Asamoah, who can receive free from pressure, as the opposition defensive shape has been sent deep to save the penalty area and the goal.



In this next footage, the right midfielder and the right wingback have arrived to support the possession phase; this is the main point of strength of 1-3-5-2. The holding midfielder



The attacking team has always one back support in the center and two side supports along different lines through the opposition weak sides.

Vidal, the right midfielder, is placed deeper in the center when the opposite wingback receives and Lichsteiner, the right wingback, is running up from the middle third along the center right path of the field.

If the defense block creates strong wide areas near the ball down one wing, a weak side will be probably opened along the opposite side that could be exploited with a quick switch of side.



If the defense spreads out to counter the attacking team, then passing lanes are created, allowing penetration.



3. PENETRATION and DEPTH are the acts of breaking through the opposition defense lines to move the ball forward by dribbling, passing, combining between the lines with killer passes and finishing. Depth movements in the 1-3-5-2 usually involve the center forwards, one midfielder, who is moving in behind as 3rd man and the wingbacks along the flanks. There are 2 recurrent attacking situations with this system of play.

The first one is to involve the wingbacks in combinations along and down the flanks up the field with the outer midfielder on the same side and one of the forwards to arrive to play cross passes into the box, where the center forwards and the opposite outer and advanced midfielder usually try to penetrate the opposition defense...



Juventus center back Bonucci has the possession and Juventus 1-3-5-2 is placed inside the opposition half but the defensive trio and the holding midfielder Pirlo, at the beginning. Bonucci can dribble the ball up without pressure, as the opposition is trying to close the passing lanes inside the lower zone of the middle third through narrow lines. Both wingbacks, Lichsteiner on the right and Asamoah on the left provide wide options for ball carriers.



The second forward Tevez drops back to receive from the center back, inviting the direct marker out of position; he controls the ball, directing the opposition defensive movements toward him and forcing the nearest opponents to the ball to create a strong area around the ball.

A 4 v 2 situation is clear in this footage. The right wingback has provided a safe wide passing option for the forward in possession, who is under pressure now and he receives; the right midfielder Vidal is just back and out of the ball area.



Lichsteiner receives free from pressure while controlling the ball and he passes back to the support team-mate right midfielder Vidal, as dribbling the ball down the flank could be risky because of the numerical disadvantage.



Vidal receives the backward pass free from pressure and he can exploit time and space to make the right decision about the next pass; two opponents are trying to screen ground passes in front of him, the right wingback invite the opposition left fullback out of the defense line and Tevez's previous dropping back run has opened space at the back for him to run into after the layoff pass. Eventually the forward can receive inside the box in behind. The right wingback (Lichsteiner) wide support position has created a strong zone around that opened an in behind playing option for the forward after a 3 players quick combination.



The next and second sequence seems to be what all the coaches who shape their teams on the pitch with a 1-3-5-2 want to reach: to start a finishing sequence of an attacking phase from one wingback to take the opposite one to shot.



Juventus left wingback Asamoah has the possession down the flank and very close to the opposition box and he is involved in a 1 v 1 duel. The opposition defense is placed inside the box to create numerical advantage (4 v 2) against the center forward Llorente and the opposite right midfielder Vidal. Two more opponents are screening the diagonal passing paths toward zone 14 in front of the box and toward Tevez, the second forward. Pogba, the left midfielder support position is screened as well. Lichsteiner, the opposite right wingback is cutting inside from the right flank, with space in front of him.

In these kinds of situation, the back support role of the holding midfielder becomes crucial to switch the side, if the 1 v 1 duel can't be won, if the numerical disadvantage makes any progress impossible or if the most exploitable passing lanes are closed.



Pirlo receives in the middle third, out of the condensed defensive shape of the opposition and he invites the defenders to push up from the box; but they are misaligned and not compact. Two defenders are touching the box's front line, where the right wingback is running along and the other four of them are yet inside the box, keeping all Juventus players in play, while the center midfielder has the possession.



The right wingback can make a blind run at the back of the nearest opponent, avoiding the off-side trap and receiving the center midfielder Pirlo's aerial well-weighted pass to finish inside the box without markers, who are all on late, as well as the goalkeeper. This way the opposition defensive numerical advantage has been made worthless.

Lichsteiner can score anticipating the goalkeeper's save attempt. As it has been said, the wingbacks allow switching the sides, concentrating the opposition defense lines in the center through the center forwards and the outer midfielder in the final third and freeing the 5th opposite one from the ball area, as if the defense tries to cover all the width of the field, gaps are opened between the defenders' lines.



A third recurrent penetration and deep play solution are to ask the center forwards to combine with teammates to penetrate the opposition defense in behind. This example explains well what we have just talked about: Juventus opposition backline (As. Roma) is placed with large distances between the players as the right fullbacks are ready to counter the left wingback Asamoah and the center forwards are marked 1 v 1 only by the center backs.



Pogba, the left midfielder is dribbling the ball up the field in the middle third exploiting the space in front of him and the too much large positioning of the opposition midfield trio. The opposite Juventus wingback Lichsteiner and right midfielder Vidal are placed wide ready to receive a switch of side.

Tevez can receive in the space between Roma's right center back and right fullback, overcoming the marker sideward and dribbling the ball toward the box facing the opposition goal; the same does the second center forward Llorente while being marked by the left-center back.



The right center back is now out of position and the right fullback is recovering the space to counter the ball carrier. The center back who was marking Llorente before is now in trouble, as he must decide if to counter and double team Tevez to prevent him from dribbling toward the goal (as he seems to do in the picture), or if to go on marking Llorente but opening the space to the goal for the ball carrier.



He chooses to stay placed between Juventus's forwards, waiting for Tevez, who is arriving with the ball, but freeing Llorente in the middle.

Tevez has the possession inside the box against two Roma's defenders, but he has a time advantage and he can pass toward Llorente in the center. All defenders are on late and Llorente could shot easily.



Only the ready goalkeeper's save prevents Juventus from scoring.



Another solution is to create the space and to allow a 3rd man run off the ball in behind the last defense line.



Juventus right wingback Lichsteiner has the possession along the flank; a 2 v 2 duel is being played around the ball; Roma's left fullback is not placed properly, leaving space and a path in front of Lichsteiner for a pass toward the box.



Tevez, one of the center forwards receive in the box under pressure, but Roma's defense support midfielder Pjanic is not marking Juventus right midfielder Vidal, who is then free to run off the ball toward the box to act as support for the ball carrier.

The opposition defensive shape created a 2+1 v 2 duel outside the goal area, but it leaves space for passing combinations inside the 18y box and for runs off the ball for attacking support ball carrier's team-mates.

Tevez can control the ball and turn toward the goal, even if under the pressure of the center midfielder De Rossi who leaves space for him to position himself properly.



Llorente is trying to position himself in front of the goal just out of the 6y box and invite the marker deep near the goal, conceding Vidal, who is running at the back of the 3 defenders to be on side; Pjanic nor doesn't close the passing lane toward Vidal, neither double team the ball carrier.



Eventually, Vidal can face the goalkeeper, who can't move out from the goal line,

but even he doesn't close the first pole space and Juventus midfielder scores.



4. **SUPPORT:** all the ball carriers, in any situation of play need help to maintain possession or to progress the attacking move, creating space, options and passing angles forward, at the back or sideways the player in possession. 1-3-5-2 maybe recommended for support, moreover in the center area of the middle third, as the ball carrier always find side support by the wingbacks, forward support by the forwards.



In this potential building up, consolidation/possession and attacking developments through the center of a possession phase, with some basic established movements, these are the main support positions that teammates can take concerning the ball carrier.

Movements off the ball:

- The center defender shifts wide but yet inside the box.
- The left defender runs up the flank along the same line of the holding midfielder.
- The left wingback joins the upper part of the middle third.
- The right wingback does the same along the opposite flank when midfielders and forwards have the possession.

Support positions concerning the ball carrier:

- The goalkeeper has the possession > center defender as side support, right center back and center midfielder forward supports.
- Center midfielder has the possession > left center back as side support, all the other teammates over the ball line as forwarding support.
- The left midfielder has the possession > the second outer midfielder as side support, the center attackers as forwarding support, the left wingback as a side or forward support.
- Center forward has possession > the right wingback as side support and all the other team-mates behind the ball line as back support.

In this potential building up, consolidation/possession and attacking developments along the flank of a possession phase, with some basic established movements, these are the main support positions that teammates can take concerning the ball carrier.



Movements off the ball:

- The center defender shifts wide but yet inside the box.
- The left defender runs up the flank along the same line of the holding midfielder.
- The left wingback joins the upper part of the middle third.
- The right wingback cuts run toward the box, as the opposite wingback team-mate receives down the flank.
- The right midfielder cuts inside to support the finishing stage back to the forwards.

Support positions concerning the ball carrier:

- The goalkeeper has the possession > center defender as side support, right center back and center midfielder forward supports.
- Center defender has the possession > goalkeeper as side support and center midfielder, left midfielder and left center back as forward supports.
- The left-center back has the possession > the center midfielder as inside support, the left midfielder, the left wingback and the forwards as upper supports.
- The left midfielder has the possession > the left wingback and the right midfielder as side supports (left wingback as forwarding support) and the forwards as upper supports.
- The left wingback has the possession up the field > all players along the same ball line as side supports and all the teammates who are coming from behind the ball line as back support.

5. CREATIVITY: attackers try to break down defenses through surprise, individual actions or passing combination among advanced players in the attacking third of the field. 1-3-5-2 seems to be designed not to include a proper No.10 in between the opposition defense lines. Anyway, this potential lack of attacking power can be fixed with simple moves off the ball.

In this first example, the outer midfielder moves forward up the field behind the forwards. The left wingback is dribbling the ball up the field along the flanks to launch a counter-attack; he is tracked by one opponent and a second one is shifting wide to close him down the sideline. In this situation, the lack of an advanced center midfielder who could fulfill the space in the middle is very clear.



One forward is positioned on the right side and the second one is in more advanced (not included in the picture).



The left midfielder runs up the field off the ball to be a passing option behind the forwards' lines and to progress the move toward the opposition goal.

The positioning result, inside the final third, is to have an advanced midfielder as No.10 with possession and who is looking at the opposition goal and two forwards who can attack the defense line in behind.



The ball carrier is tracked by one opponent and a second one stopped covering the space toward the goal to try to counter him; both forwards, on the right and on the left are running toward the goal and the defenders are involved in 1 v 1s duels; the attacker on the right is positioned away from the marker and at his back, ready to receive with time and space to dribble the ball up.



The forward with possession can dribble into the penalty area and all the defenders are on late; his direct marker, who was previously positioned in the center and who was looking at the ball, can't cover the goal space properly, being sideward in relation with the opponent.

The left midfielder, who acted as No.10 invited two opponents near him and a third to turn toward the ball position, rather than marking the closest forward, causing a late space coverage inside the 18y box.

The forward is lucky, nutmegging the opponent while shooting, the defender can try a defensive action when the opponent with possession has just powered the shot.

Potential playing development could have been to pass back to the midfielder in center of the penalty area, who could have exploited the 3 v 1 duel around the ball and his freedom from markers.



The forward scores in the end.



Another solution to position a player as a No.10 in the 1-3-5-2 is to create a strong side on a flank, before freeing a man in the middle with space to dribble into after receiving a pass from the flank.



In this example, Internazionale Milan has previously positioned 4 players along the attacking left flank, inviting the opposition to shift wide on the right side; particularly, 3 players on the left force the opposition midfield and defense lines to be positioned deep to ensure at least a 3 v 3 duel and fourth player near the Internazionale's players, who could double team a potential receiver. The left wingback stay positioned along the left sideline to stretch the defense and the opposite right wingback is placed near the forwards to invite the left wingback to look after him. This way the forwards can be placed between the center defender and the center backs of a 5 defense line, near the penalty area and the holding midfielder can receive free form markers and with enough space and time to make the right pass.



One the center forward moves off the ball with right timing to escape the marker at his back and run toward the opposition goal.

He can receive the well weighted pass from the team-mate inside the penalty area and in behind the defense line with time and space to finish, as the defenders can't recover the space and the goalkeeper is on late.



The forward scores again in the end.



The next pictures show some other ways to manage the lack of a proper No.10 in the 1-3-5-2:

Building up phase with the 3 defenders (the center defender has the possession and the center back are wide beside him).



To place 3 attacking forwards very close to the opposition defenders to make them busy in the center, asking the wingbacks to be as wide as possible and supporting the consolidation phase of the move with as many players as possible (the left center back is joining the middle third along the flank to create a line of four behind the upper line of five).



The last and classic solution is to ask one forward to drop back in behind the defense line to act as a No.10:



This situation is very recurrent in the 1-3-5-2: the center midfielder has the possession and he passes between the lines, where the center forward drops back to receive as No.10 and to combine with one outer midfielder (the right one in the picture), who moves up the field, between the lines him too, to receive and to progress the move.

Players' roles and attacking responsibilities

Goalkeeper.

- The goalkeeper has important distribution responsibilities in the 1-3-5-2 as he is the back support for the three defenders with possession.
- Good technical skills are necessary to allow the team to build up and to play out properly and, in general, to retain possession.

Defenders:

- The three center-backs are responsible for protecting the goalkeeper and defending the goal and for building up from the back
- They must also protect the first third while the team has the possession
- The outer defenders can be asked to be back support for the wingbacks when they have the ball.
- They must be very good at cooperate with the holding midfielder, who is a kind of up vertex of a rhombus for them.

Wingbacks:

- Their positioning is so important in the formation, as, on paper, they are the only players standing along the flank all the time.
- Possession, attacking options and finishing chances depend on the wingbacks position.
- They must provide width during possession phases for the midfielders.
- They must be able to run in behind the defense line along the flank to create options to finish for the forwards, inviting the opposition fullbacks out of position
- They must create gaps for the incoming midfielders and attackers
- They must able to finish the moves as well.

Holding midfielder:

- The center midfielder must be comfortable on the ball, have good control, and be able to play well weighted passes.
- The holding midfielder can be more defensive-minded or more play-making minded
- A defensive-minded holding provides coverage at the back, with great positional skills to mark the opposition's players, who are running into space and leaving building up tasks to the outer center backs. In this case, the outer defenders are more responsible for building up from the phases
- A play-making holding midfielder is the kind of players who drops back or shift wide looking for the ball to progress the move.
- Whatever are the skills of an holding midfielder, he must be able to play in both ways in the 1-3-5-2.

Outer midfielders:

- The wider midfielder are usually box-to-box players and an attacking-minded players, who support the wingbacks and the forwards.
- They must create finishing opportunities together with the wingbacks.
- They have to be confident at moving between the opposition defense lines with good technical skills and vision.
- These midfielder must always be ready to move toward the opposition box with the right timing, moving off the ball while the wingbacks are creating options for crosses or in behind passes.

Strikers:

- As 1-3-5-2 is a system of play without a proper No.10, they must be very good at moving off the ball, dropping back, dragging the markers out of position or running at the back of the defense line, escaping the markers, depending on the ball position and the team-mate with possession.
- Both them must able to play as target players to help the team moving up the field, with good heading skills if there are chances to progress the moves or with good technical skills to keep the possession, helping the team-mates to move up the field.
- Both them must be able to provide depth to allow the team to create dangers to the opposition defense lines.
- They should make similar runs only to attack the goal to finish from cross passes, attacking different opposition goal's posts.
- When they drop back they must be good at combining with the midfielders.
- When they move in behind they must be good goal scorers.

1-3-5-2; history, lines up and applications

This system of play was developed in Italy at the beginning in the late 70s and it can be considered both as an evolution of the historic “Italian Catenaccio” and as a development of the “Mixed Zonal Defense” that was very popular team shape during that decade. 1-3-5-2 became so important thanks to its chances to quickly overturn the moves from defensive to offensive, a kind of anticipation of the modern transitions, surprising the opponents with the counter-attacks. The most famous 1-3-5-2 applications and lines up comes from Argentina National team 1986 and Germany National team 1990.

Argentina World Champions of Nations 1986



Bilardo, Argentina’s coach from 1983 to 1990 used this system of play during the 1984 European friendly matches tour in Switzerland, for the first time; the National team was coming from negative results (3 games won in the previous 15 only) and he needed to change the team shape. 1-3-5-2 worked immediately and allowed Argentina to beat both Switzerland and West Germany. From a tactical point of view, 3 systems were in vogue in Europe, at that time: the Italian mixed zonal defense, the German 1-5-3-2 and the English 1-4-4-2. The Italian way was a modern evolution of the Catenaccio which included the defensive “Libero”, a free defender together with and two markers (stopper and right-back), a left-back, who marked a man but who was used to push up the flank when the team had the possession, a midfielder in the center (with marking tasks), a right-winger, a right inside midfielder and a left half-winger. A center attacker and a No.10 completed the formation. The 1-5-3-2 was the German variation of this system that will arrive until the 2000s, and that included two fullbacks in the defense line instead of two

different types of wingbacks. These were the tactical styles that gave Bilardo the idea of shaping Argentina with a new shape, with a 5 players symmetrical midfield and 1 fixed forward and a free No.10 at his back. The two center defenders continued to mark the opponents while the third one was yet free to cover the spaces.

Germany World Champions of Nations 1990



The basic idea behind the German 1-3-5-2 was dynamism, but, anyway, it comes from the 1986 runner up National team. The team that won the 1996 European Championship with Berti Vogts as a coach still had the same tactical imprint. In the Italian World Cup of 1990, the three-man defense included a free defender (Augenthaler) and two markers (Kohler and Buchwald). The two wingbacks (Brehme and Berthold) were used to join the defense line during non-possession phases and they pushed up on the same line of the midfielders during possession phases. The center midfielder (Matthauss) was usually placed in front of the defense to provide order, while the two outer midfielders (Hassler and Littbarski) could enjoy tactical freedom. The two classic strikers (Klinsmann and Voller) completed the lineup. The 1-3-5-2 turned into a 1-5-3-2 and a 1-3-3-2-2, with Hassler and Littbarski behind the two strikers and the two wingbacks, Brehme and Berthold, alongside Matthauss building up phases. Germany was used to trying to gain field patiently with direct and precise passes and few long balls from the defenders.

Conte's Juventus (2011-2014) is a nowadays example of a 1-3-5-2 application that took the team to win the first three of eight Italian leagues in a row.



November 2011: Antonio Conte's 1-3-5-2 was born. Juventus had to play against Napoli. The usual 1-4-3-3 of Juventus of those first months was not clear; the team was lined up with a 1-3-5-2. Barzagli, Bonucci and Chiellini as defenders, Lichtsteiner and Estigarribia as wingbacks, Vucinić and Matri as forwards; the goal was to adapt Juventus to the opponent's characteristics. On January 24, 2012, Juventus faced Luis Enrique's Roma in a National Cup match, and the 1-3-5-2 came back as well as the next match against Udinese's 3-5-1-1. From that moment Antonio Conte alternated the 1-3-5-2 with 1-4-3-3. From the return match against Napoli, Juventus played always with 1-3-5-2. The entire 201/2013 season was played with the 3-5-2 as well as the following season, alternating new players, but with the same basic system of play.