

Midfield 3 Rondo: Part 2

Written by The Coaching Manual

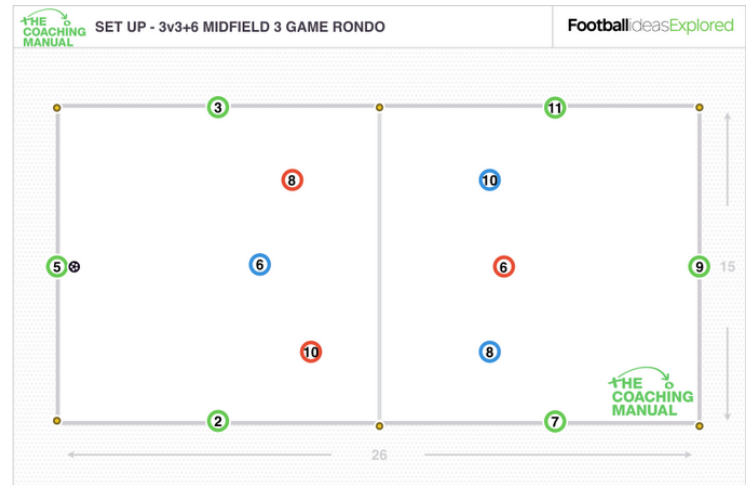
"Midfield 3" Game Rondo - 3v3+6

Set Up

Area 26x15 divided in half to provide the Pivot (Blue/Red 6) and Centre Midfielders (Blue/Red 8 and 10) with reference points for when, where and how they can take up positions to dominate possession and advance forwards.

6 x Support Players (Green) positioned along the lines of the area with a 3v3 (Reds v Blues) inside the area. The Midfield 3 for both the Red and Blue teams can play anywhere in the 26x15 area.

Centre Back (Green 5) and Centre Forward (Green 9) can play along the length of their 15 yard designated line. Full Backs (Green 2 and 3) and Wide Forwards (Green 7 and 11) can play along the length of their 13 yard line.



Task

Green Team (Support Players): Maintain positions and possession of the ball with the Midfield 3 in possession, with emphasis on taking up shapes to offer passing options around, ahead and behind the ball.

Blue/Red Team - In Possession: Maintain positions and possession of the ball with the emphasis on playing vertically through the Pivot (Blue 6) and Central Midfielders (Blue 8 and 10), combining with the Support Players to create passing line and shapes to advance forwards, using the 3rd man and spare man concepts.

Blue/Red Team - Out of Possession: Compact space and recognise pressing cues to prevent opposition Midfield 3 advancing forwards, whilst looking for opportunities to regain possession.

Key Coaching Points

Midfield shape and positioning to create numerical and positional superiority in central areas

Midfield angles, distances and areas of structure to penetrate effectively and patiently

Support play to provide opportunities to switch play and stretch opposition

Detail

Decision making of player in possession - penetrate, play around or retain possession

Body angle to receive the pass and play forwards

Receiving areas of foot or body

Understanding slow and quick play through the area to exploit space on opposite side

Timing of passes - "La Pausa"

Use the 3 passing lines (in front of Defenders, around the Defenders and through the Defenders) to create opportunities to penetrate the opposition and advance forwards utilising the Midfielders

Passing options around, behind and ahead of the ball

React quickly to negative transition and attempt to regain possession before opposition are in an attacking shape

Communication

Focus - Creating Shapes to Advance Forwards

Much like the initial 9v4 "Midfield 3" Rondo, this practice aims to coach players to understand and apply concepts when maintaining positions and possession of the ball to advance forwards. However, the practice design now becomes more competitive and incorporates a 3v3 Midfield with outside Support Players combining with the team in possession.

Both the Blue and Red teams can be coached in this practice and for the purpose of this article we will demonstrate concepts when the Blue team are in possession.

The Midfield 3 units and Support Players should be encouraged to take up positions offering passing options through triangle shapes. These co-ordinated movements allow the team to maintain possession and advance forwards through numerical and positional superiority. They are also vital to exploring the concepts of the 3rd man and spare man.

3rd Man and Spare Man Concepts

Many coaches in the game are aware of the notion of "3rd man runs" to off-balance opposition defenders and utilise movement to exploit space when the team is in possession. This concept has been around since the inception of the game and links into the attacking principles of penetration, support and mobility.

In Johan Cruyff's recently released autobiography "My Turn", the Dutch innovator talks about the relationships of shape, movement and the 3rd man in positional football.

In Spain, these concepts have specific terminology and are actively taught to players as methods of Juego de Posicion; to keep the ball circulating and moving whilst shifting the opposition, waiting for moments to penetrate and progress up the pitch to create goalscoring chances.

Focus - The 3rd Man Concept

The 3rd man is the 3rd player to receive possession of the ball, in front of the line of pressure, as it is circulated. With the Pivot (Blue 6) in possession of the ball, Red 8 has cut off the passing option directly to Blue 8. The 2nd man, Blue 10, moves to receive the ball and draws across the opposition player (Red 6) creating space for Blue 8 to receive and then advance forwards.

The timing of the movements and passes must be co-ordinated in order to be effective at penetrating the opposition, and this concept can be trained within the 3v3+6 Rondo as demonstrated above.

Focus - The Spare Man Concept

A player becomes a spare man, also referred to as a free man, when they receive the ball unopposed and in a position to create the next phase of the attack.

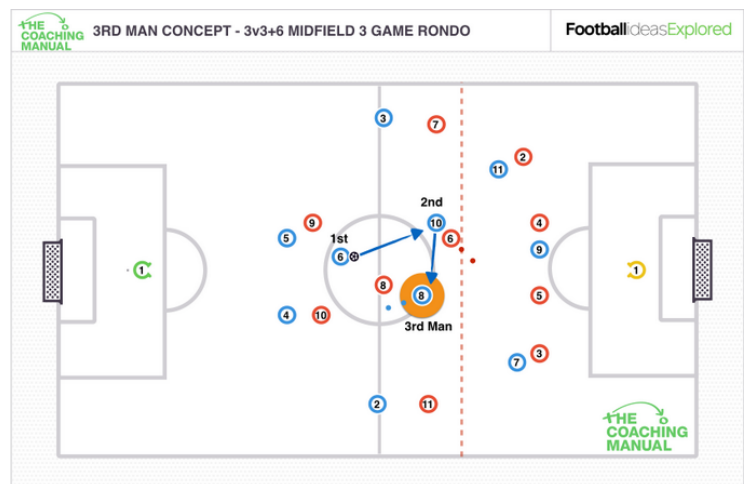
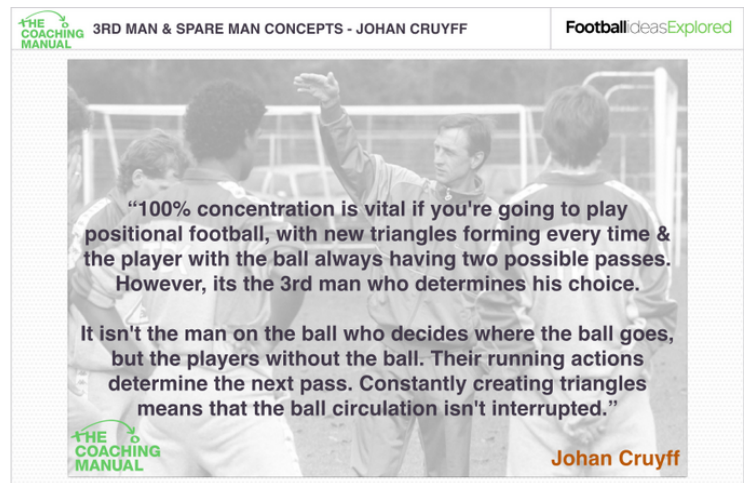
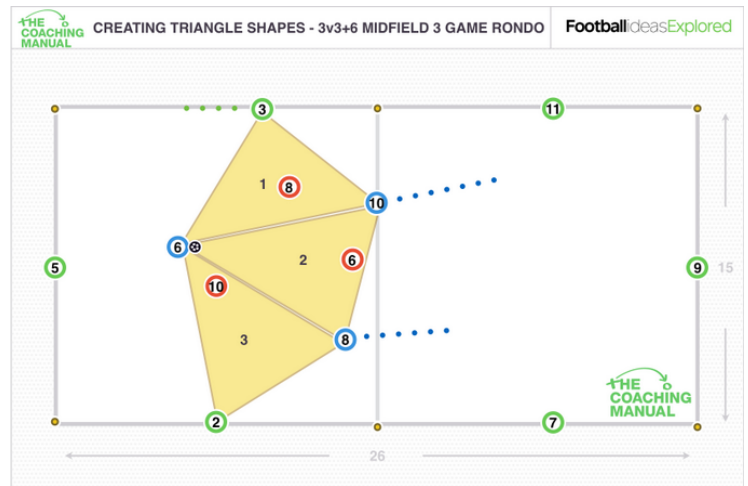
A key feature of positional play is to find a spare man behind the oppositions defensive press. The movement of players and the ball is designed to create space and passing options for the team to have superiority behind the line of pressure.

Again, the concept of finding the spare man can be coached within the 3v3+6 Rondo, as Blue 10 moves into a position to receive behind the line of pressure as Red 6 and Red 10 are drawn towards the ball circulated between Green 7 and Blue 6.

A key feature within creating the spare man is the movement of the players who will not receive the ball. For example, in the above scenario Blue 8 moves wide as the ball is passed inside to the Pivot (Blue 6).

This draws across Red 8 and creates a penetrating passing line on to the run of Blue 10. If Red 8 decides to stay compact and defend centrally, then Blue 8 continues to advance and becomes the spare man.

Focus - The 3rd man can also be the Spare Man



It is also possible for the 3rd man to be the spare man, meaning the ball is deliberately circulated between players to create opportunities for the 3rd receiver to gain possession in a position to create the next phase of the attack, normally between the lines of opposition pressure.

In the above scenario, the press of Red 10 restricts the passing options of the Pivot (Blue 6), therefore Blue 8 drops on to the same horizontal line to receive.

Whilst a component of the Midfield 3 is generally not to play on the same horizontal lines, this movement changes the angle of the attack and the Blue 8 receives knowing that a 1-touch pass will find Blue 10 in space and in between the lines of pressure, as Blue 10 becomes the 3rd man and spare man.

3rd Man Concept Video

The following youtube video created by Valencia and Levante Coach Enric Soriano and presented in Spanish, provides visual detail relating to a number of the 3rd man concepts discussed within this feature. [here \(https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d37F3nh2sOY\)](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d37F3nh2sOY).

To Conclude...

The Midfield 3 can utilise quick passing and movements to create superiority behind the oppositions press and ultimately penetrate to advance towards the goal through central areas.

The key to this is the understanding of when to move, where to move to and why that movement will support the player on the ball.

As a result, the concepts of 3rd man/spare man are coached in detail at Spanish clubs and the Rondo set up allows coaches to focus on that particular component of game play.

Next up...

In our final part of the Midfield 3 Rondo, we will explore how to connect the Midfield 3 to the defensive and attacking units in the team and also provide video footage of this being delivered at a professional Spanish club.

