

Playing Out From The Back

Written by Lee Fletcher

In this article, we explore the benefits of playing out from the back and why it is effective for your team's build up play.

Playing out from the back is a fundamental part of the game and is becoming an increasingly important tactic in the build up play of many teams.

When learning to play out from the back it is important to remember the positions which your team will take up, whilst also focusing on helping your players to be more technically confident when building from the back.

A key benefit which playing out from the back holds over goalkeepers playing directly into the middle or final third of the pitch is that it allows the team in possession to make the pitch big.

Playing out from the back isn't done just to maintain possession or "keep the ball" it's done in order to create space for our players further up the pitch. Every player has an important role in building from the back including the Goalkeeper. Traditionally, Centre Backs play on the edge of the box, while Full Backs stay out wide, almost on the sideline, to make the pitch as wide as possible in the defensive third of the pitch.

Full Backs

The role of Full Backs is constantly evolving, their attacking responsibilities are becoming almost as important as their defensive duties in some cases. However within the build up of playing from the back, their responsibilities are critical. The wide players, and especially Full Backs look to "stretch" the pitch horizontally to its maximum width. This is to try to force the defensive team to defend in wide areas, which then creates space in the middle.

If the defensive team don't go out wide, they potentially leave space for the Full Backs or wide players to attack the wide channels.

In this example, we can see the issue for the defensive team to either go or stay in their positions, creating potential options for the attacking team centrally or in wide areas, as they have stretched the pitch horizontally.

Centre Backs/Central Defenders and Pivot

The Centre Backs should try to stretch the opposition vertically. With the Centre Backs dropping deeper (generally to the edge of the area), this almost forces the defenders to go with them, creating space centrally. This allows the Pivot (Blue 6) to drop in between the 2 defenders and receive the ball. If the opposition strikers do press (Blue 9 and 10), then the Centre Backs can drop deeper to receive the ball, making the central zone even bigger, something that we have seen with FC Barcelona many times.

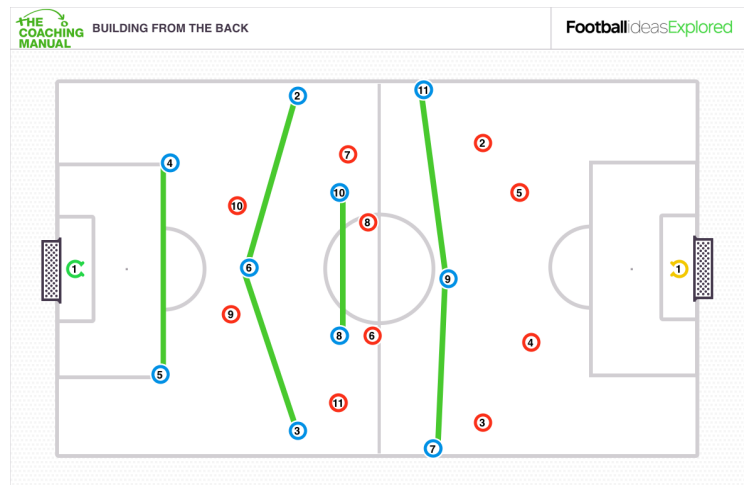
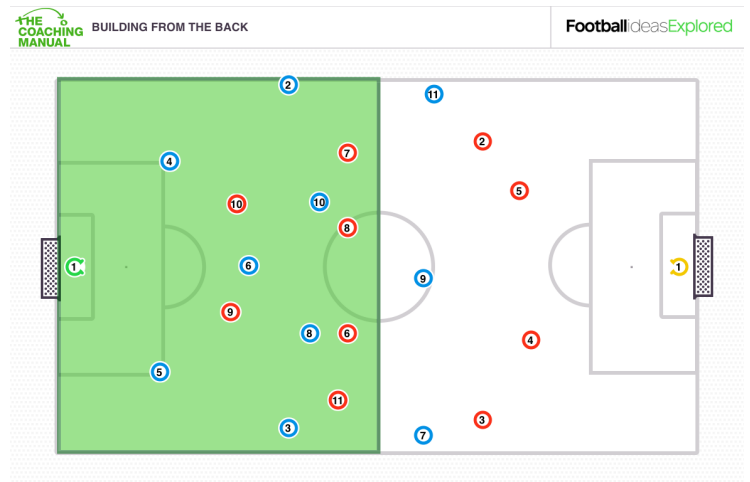
The Pivot also has a critical role as he has to have the technical ability to receive the ball with his back to play or one the half turn to move the play forward. [We can see this in our Rondo for Pivot players.](https://www.thecoachingmanual.com/Content/5105057353695232) (<https://www.thecoachingmanual.com/Content/5105057353695232>)

Team Shape

Though the Full Back, Centre Backs and Pivot would generally have the most important role to play in playing out from the back, it's a team tactic, so every player has a part to play.

A good way of looking at team shape is with a Pentagon, connecting the Centre Backs with Full Backs up to the Striker. Though this doesn't include all the players, it is a great base to start your build of play. As the Centre Backs (and Goalkeeper) provide Depth, Full Backs provide Width, and the Striker provides Length as a centre forward, trying to stretch the opposition by pinning them back. We can also see a diamond shape provided in the central area of the field adding the same, depth, width and length, internally.

Rayo Vallecano and Roberto Trashorras



[Rayo Vallecano and Roberto Trashorras have been mentioned before in our articles on Rondos \(https://www.thecoachingmanual.com/Content/4812811001659392\)](https://www.thecoachingmanual.com/Content/4812811001659392). From my experience, and not the obvious Barcelona, they were one of the best teams in playing out of the back to move forward when under the tutelage of Paco Jémez.

Trashorras was one of the best passers in La Liga (when Rayo were in the first division), competing in the top 5 of the best passers in La Liga for 4 consecutive seasons with the likes of Xavi and Iniesta.

Trashorras and Rayo had a unique way of playing out from the back and working their way up channels effectively to create numerical superiority, positional superiority and also effective field positions. This was an action that wasn't common in traditional Spanish Positional Play as it implies too much rotation and leaving spaces.

However, it was extremely effective as it imbalanced the opposition as they overloaded one side of the pitch. Rayo often had more possession of the ball than their opposition, coming in the top 5 of total possession retained for the last 4 years before their relegation in 2016, averaging 53% possession over that time.

There are lots ways of playing out from the back for you to explore. It has now become an integral part of play in the game. If the construction from the back isn't clear and effective then the play can become slow, pedantic and predictable. So, it's important that your players are given lots of opportunities to make decisions about when to use different tactics. Coaching players how to play out of the back can be implemented from a young age.

An excellent way of doing this is to use Rondos. Rondo games are unique ways of practising Micro (small) pictures and implementing them into a Macro (big) picture. With the playing out of the back Rondo, we can practise specific scenarios for your players to understand how to construct play from the back. You can then add your own twist on them to cater for your players ability and age.