

# Rondo - Playing Through The Pivot: Part 1

Written by The Coaching Manual

## Pivot Defensive Midfielder

Teams that set up with a Pivot Defensive Midfielder understand that this role is key in offering defensive stability and breaking down opposition attacks out of possession. When the ball is regained this player should be able to secure and maintain possession, penetrate opposition lines and launch attacks from deep.

Positional understanding is vital for the Pivot and this series will help you coach your Pivot player within the 4-3-3, however these practices can be modified to suit any formation that incorporates the position.

As the No. 6 is a key component of play in both defence and attack this player must possess tactical awareness, vision, accurate passing, tackling skills and ability to read the game such as Barcelona's Sergio Busquets.

## 4-3-3 and role of the Pivot

If an opposition line up with a 4-4-2 (Reds) against a team playing 4-3-3 (Blues) this may leave the 2 Centre Backs (Blue 4 and 5) isolated in 1vs.1 situations as Red 9 and Red 10 press. If the opposition players screen off forward passes this may force them to play back to their Goalkeeper or a Centre Back may give possession away close to their own goal.

## Creating space and angles to receive

Sergio Busquets is a master at finding spaces and angles to receive and distribute passes. Also, he often takes up positions between the 2 Centre Backs, creating a back 3 line and allowing the Full Backs (Blue 2 and 3) to advance and provide width.

As the Pivot drops into the back line to receive, a 3vs.2 overload to play forwards is created (not included backwards pass to the Goalkeeper) with Blue 4 and 5 available for a 2nd line pass to change the angle of attack, or a 3rd line penetrating pass into the Midfielders (Blue 8 and 10).

## 6vs.2 Pivot Rondo

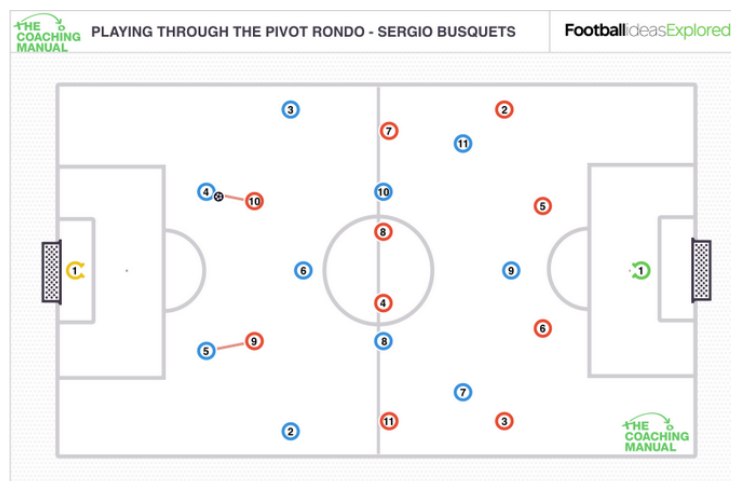
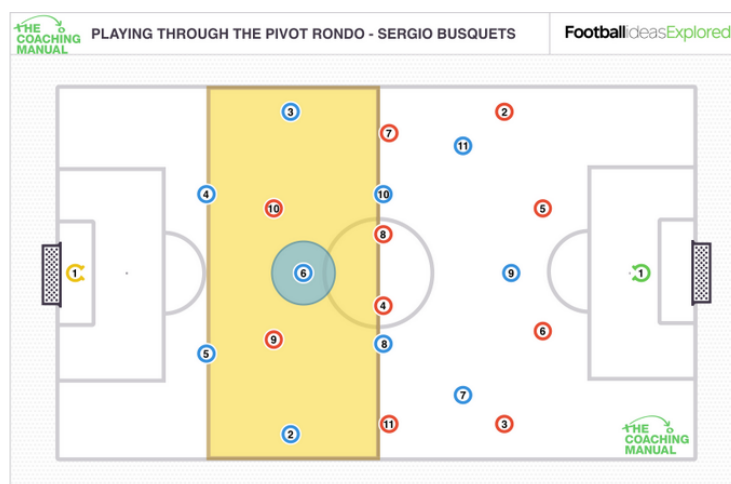
### Set Up

Area 16x12 with 6 x Attackers (Blue) positioned on lines of the Rondo and Pivot inside. The ball always starting with the Centre Backs on Line 1 when out of play. 2 x Defenders (Red) in the central area to prevent the Blue team playing from Centre Backs to Centre Forward.

Centre Backs (Blue 4 and 5), Centre Midfielders (Blue 8, and 10) and Centre Forward (Blue 9) can move along their designated lines only. The Pivot (Blue 6) can occupy positions inside the area or on Lines 1, 2 and 3. The Defenders (Red 8 and 10) can move anywhere but in a realistic shape of a defensive unit, as Red 9 is based behind Line 1 to receive the ball if Defenders regain possession.

### Task

Blue Team (Attackers): Maintain positions and possession of the ball with the emphasis on playing forward from Centre Backs (Blue 4 and 5) to Centre Forward (Blue 9) with the Pivot (Blue 6) dropping in between the Centre Backs to receive and pass forward.



Red Team (Defenders): If the ball is won, play directly to Red 9 to simulate a counter attack in a game, or maintain possession for 5 passes as the Blue 6 presses.

## Key Coaching Points

Pivot play - understanding when and where to drop in between the Centre Backs

Co-ordinated movements to take up positions to receive the ball

Quality, weight and decision of the pass (play in front, play around or penetrate)

## Detail

Body angle to receive the pass and play forwards

Receiving areas of foot or body

Quick combinations and limiting touches to think quickly

Angles, distances and areas of structure to penetrate effectively and patiently

Understanding slow and quick play through the areas

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 Pivot

Passing options around and ahead of the ball

Communication

## Focus - Pivot drops in between Centre Backs to receive

The focus of the 6vs.2 Pivot Rondo is to coach the Pivot player to understand when and where to drop into the back line to receive and play forwards.

In the above scenario, the Centre Backs (Blue 4 and 5) have split wide with Blue 4 in possession. This creates space for Pivot (Blue 6) to drop in and receive as the Defenders (Red 8 and 10) are drawn towards the ball and the Pivot player.

The Pivot then has the option to switch play to Blue 5 or play to Centre midfielder (Blue 10) who has dropped to create a passing line. Blue 8 and Blue 9 also move to create penetrating passing lines through the Defenders and to advance play forwards.

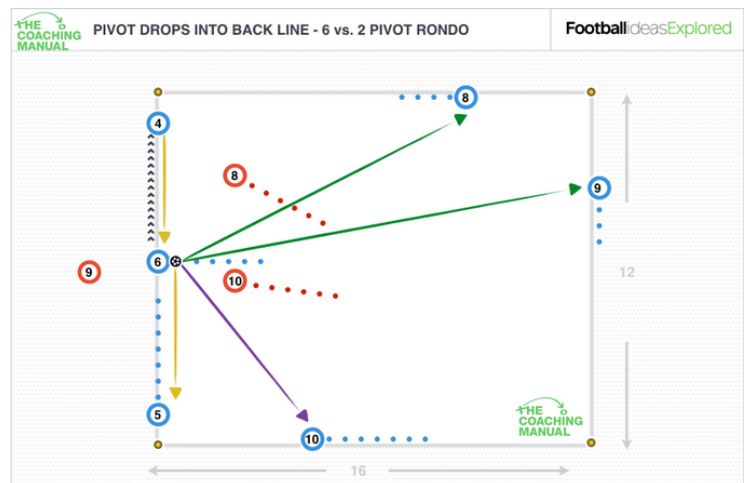
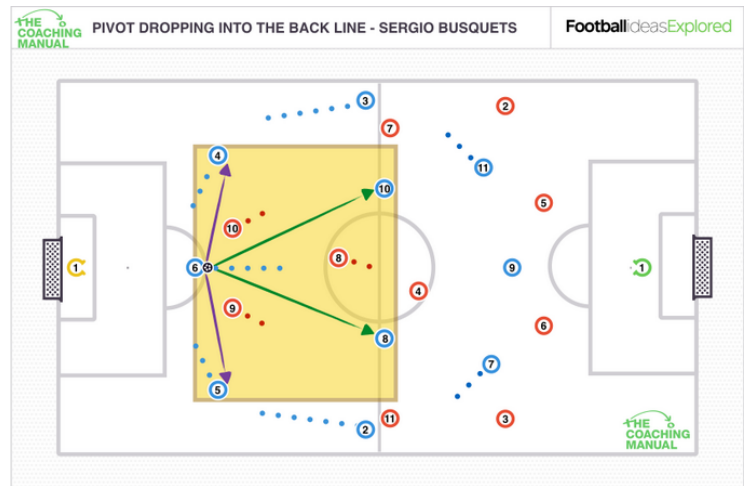
## Progression - 6vs.3 Pivot Rondo

When the Blue team become familiar and successful with the concept of splitting to allow the Pivot to drop into the back line and play forwards, the session can be progressed with Red 9 coming inside the area to create a 6vs.3 Rondo. The key coaching points and detail remains the same as the 6vs.2 practice.

Centre Backs (Blue 4 and 5) can now occupy positions on Lines 1, 2 and 3. Centre Midfielders (Blue 8, and 10) and Centre Forward (Blue 9) can move along their designated lines and move inside the area to receive. The Pivot (Blue 6) can occupy positions inside the area or on Lines 1, 2 and 3. The Defenders (Red 8, 9 and 10) can move anywhere but in a realistic shape of a defensive unit.

## Task

Blue Team (Attackers): Maintain positions and possession of the ball with the emphasis on playing forward from Centre Backs (Blue 4 and 5) to Centre Forward (Blue 9) with the Pivot (Blue 6) dropping in between the Centre Backs to receive and pass forward.



Red Team (Defenders): If the ball is won maintain possession for 5 passes as the Blue team presses, or dribble the ball over Line 1 to replicate a counter attack.

## Focus - Pivot drops in and Midfielders move infield

Here we can see the Pivot (B6) dropping into the back line (Line 1) as Blue 4 and Blue 5 move into wide positions on Line 2 and Line 3 respectively. This provides width to the attack and also allows the Centre Midfielders (Blue 8 and Blue 10) to come inside to provide penetrative passing options in central areas in order to play forwards to Blue 9.

## Focus - Playing on one side to attack the opposite side

This scenario demonstrates how the movement and positioning of the Blue players can draw the Defenders to one side of the playing area in order to attack the space on the opposite side.

Centre Back (Blue 4) passes to Blue 8 on Line 2, and then follows the pass as Pivot (Blue 6) drops to Line 1. Blue 8 plays the ball back to the Pivot, whose movement has released Blue 5, and combines again in-field before the ball is played from the Pivot to Blue 5 on Line 3.

Centre Midfielder (Blue 10) can also move infield and receive the pass from Blue 5 to play to the Centre Forward (Blue 9). Although this is a manufactured example, the key to the approach is quick, accurate passing, co-ordinated movements and the Pivot dropping on to Line 1 to provide balance and an option to switch play quickly to the "weak" side.

## Focus - Quick combinations and movement ahead of the Pivot

In order for your team to play through the Pivot it is also important that the Centre Backs and Centre Midfielders are aware of their roles to create and exploit space to penetrate and play forwards. An example of the positions and movements that can be taken up to support the Pivot are illustrated below.

Centre Back (Blue 4) plays to Pivot (Blue 6) who passes the ball on to the run of Blue 5 and the offers a passing option behind the ball to receive back. This combination play and movement unbalances the opposition Defenders as they continue to shift to track the ball and prevent penetrative passes to the Centre Forward (Blue 9).

Blue 4 becomes the overload player and receives from the Pivot to play to Blue 8 in-field. Blue 8 combines with his Centre Midfield team mate (Blue 10) to play to the Centre Forward.

Again, this is a created example and is dependent on the movements and press of the opposition Defenders. However, through quick play and positioning to create passing options, units can maintain possession and create opportunities to penetrate and play forwards through the Pivot.

## Coming next....

Part 2 of "Playing through the Pivot" will incorporate the role of the Full Backs in 8vs.4 and 8vs.5 Rondo set ups.

