

3-5-2 SYSTEM OF PLAY

INTRODUCTION

This formation is often used by higher levels of competitors such as collegiate or professional teams. To be successful with this formation you must have exactly the right amount of talent. Because the talent is so precise to fit this formation, youth teams who randomly select players, often don't have the luxury and talent to use this formation.

DEFENDERS

Defenders in this system consist of three athletes: a left fullback, right fullback, and a sweeper (center fullback). These defenders must stay tightly together, no more than 10-25 yards apart from each other at all times. They form a slight triangle in shape with the sweeper nearest his own goal. That means, from left fullback to right fullback the distance should be no more than 50 yards. These three fullbacks must work together, sliding back and forth across the field supporting each other and making sure that all attackers are accounted for. Generally, the two outside fullbacks will mark the two opposing forwards "man to man" all game long, leaving the sweeper free to help out whenever necessary. Because there are only three defenders, they are much less likely to make offensive runs. Only if they are absolutely sure that they will score or assist in a goal should they make an offensive run and leave the man their marking. Again, this defensive strategy is only for the most skilled of teams and very confident defenders.

MIDFIELDERS

Midfielders in this system consist of five athletes. This formation allows for three central midfielders and two outside midfielders. Again, skill levels come into play here. This formation cannot be run by a team unless the skill level is excellent. With three players in the middle it is critical that they all have tight ball skills as well as communication skills. They must all work together in attacking, defending, maintaining possession, winning 50/50 balls, and controlling the overall pace of the game. These five midfielders can be murder on the opposing team if skilled, but they can also ruin a team's chemistry and ability if not trained properly. It takes a very special group of individuals to create a successful five-person midfield.

FORWARDS

Forwards consist of two athletes. These two athletes have a very unique job. They must work together the entire game, rarely separating themselves more than 10-20 yards. Together they must work to close off angles and defenders from clearing the ball out of the defensive areas. These two forwards must become so comfortable with each other that they can predict where the others next move will be. It is very important for these players to be fast and agile. It is also important that these two players are in fairly good shape. Now that there are only two of them up there they have to pick up some of the slack for the missing third forward. With the additional fifth player in the midfield, the forwards receive a little bit more help than they would from the 4-4-2 formation but still need to work together to produce.

CONCLUSION

The 3-5-2 system is definitely not for everyone. In fact it is not for the majority. It is good however to be familiar with it. Picking a formation is simply up to the coaching staff. You want to pick the system that will best exploit your talents and support your less talented individuals. Keep an open mind though when picking formations and don't be afraid to try something totally new and unorthodox because who knows it could be the best formation yet.

