

## **4-4-2 SYSTEM OF PLAY**

### **INTRODUCTION**

The 4-4-2 system is the most popular in today's game. It consists of four defenders, four midfielders, and two forwards. At first glance one might think that this system would limit scoring due to the lack of forward power. This is not always true. In this system, the midfielders and outside defenders are much more active in the offensive attack, thus resulting in goals.

### **DEFENDERS**

Defenders in this system can play in many different ways. They can play in the diamond formation, much like they would in the 4-3-3 system. They can play flat across the back of the field in a line (flat back four). They can play in an arc shape, eliminating the stopper position and forming a double sweeper. They can also play three flat across the field with the sweeper hanging behind in the middle ready to clean up any mistakes. Which way you want to set up your players depends a little bit on personnel and comfort. As far as responsibilities go, they are very similar to the responsibilities the defenders have in the 4-3-3. The only difference occurs when you play in the arc with a double sweeper or if you play the flat back four. In these cases the position of stopper is eliminated and you are left with two players that fulfill the role of sweeper. Generally you will use one of your sweepers as a strictly man marker. You pick the opposing teams best attacker and have your extra sweeper mark him all game long. Other than that, the defensive roles are all the same.

### **MIDFIELDERS**

Midfielders of the 4-4-2 consist of four athletes: The right and left midfielders still exist and carry out the same duties as with the 4-3-3 but a new member of the midfield moves in. This addition to the midfield plays in the middle of the field along side the center midfielder. The two become an offensive/defensive duo and do their best to hold the middle of the field and control the game. Often one player will take the role of the attacking midfielder and the other the role of the defensive midfielder, although those labels are not branded in stone. These two midfielders may swap roles as long as they communicate and let the other know when a switching is going to occur. These four midfielders start looking a bit like the defensive diamond mentioned in the 4-3-3. Because the middle of the field is now occupied with two central players, the defense can afford to eliminate the stopper position, due to the excess help in the central midfield. The attacking midfielder is expected to also step up the other way and help produce some offensive scoring power, though now that the extra forward slot has been removed.

## **FORWARDS**

Forwards in this system consist of only two athletes. These two athletes have a very unique job. They must work together the entire game, rarely separating themselves by 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 important that these two players be in fairly good shape. Now that there are only two of them up front, they must pick up some of the slack for the missing third forward. The attacking midfielder, as mentioned above, should also help pick up some of the slack but the responsibility of scoring goals is still that of the forward so they must really work hard and work together to accomplish their goal.