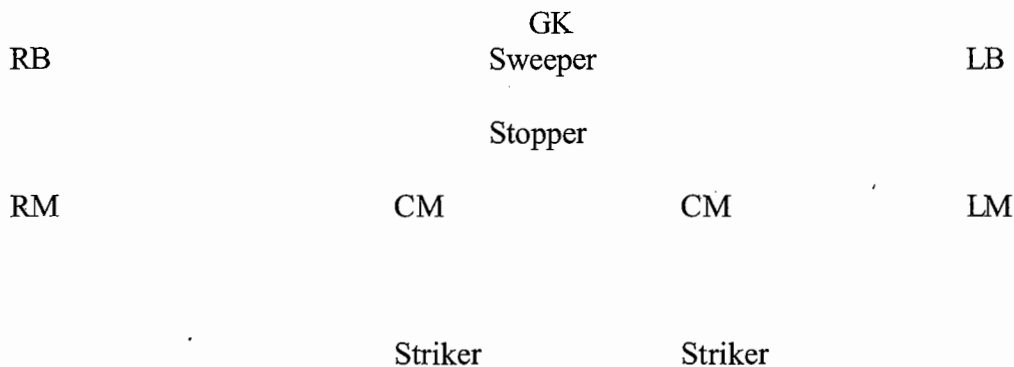


Formations and Systems of Play

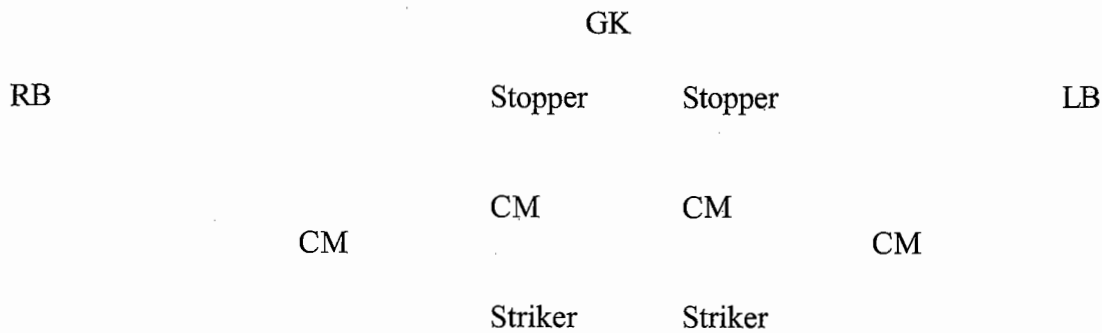
The 4-4-2 system of play as shown below is probably the most frequently used formation in soccer.



- 2 wide defenders (left & right)
- 1 sweeper
- 1 central defender (stopper)
- 2 wide midfielders (left & right)
- 2 central midfielders (left & right)
- 2 strikers (centrally located together)

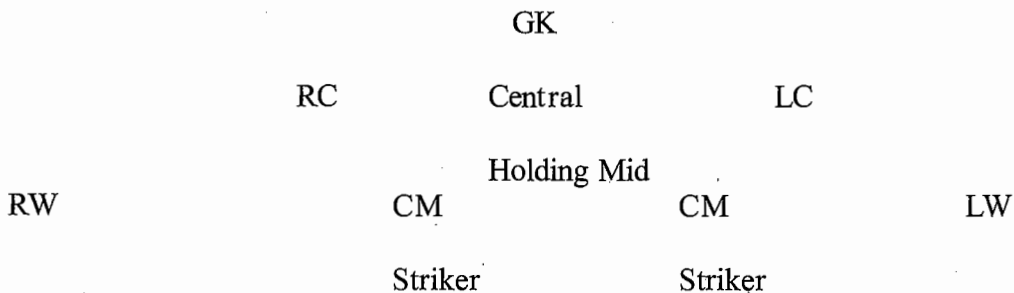
This system of play is favored by many teams as it provides many different options. The main reason it is so popular is that it can provide both a well balanced defense and a well balanced attack. For example, when your team has possession of the ball it allows the team to attack with a block of eight players, using the two wide defenders, midfield four and two forwards. The advantage when attacking with this system is that it can be used as a springboard to attack quickly, create space in which players can exploit. This in turn increases the chance of success exploiting the possibilities of playing with numbers up e.g. 2 attackers v 1 defender or 4 attackers v 2 defenders. Alternatively when your team does not have the ball it allows the team to make a block of eight players (defenders and midfielders) and challenges the other team to break you down, creating less scoring opportunities.

Different variations of the 4-4-2 exist. For example some teams play a flat back four instead of a sweeper, some play a holding central midfield player and an attacking midfield player, instead of two centrally located together. A variation that is commonly used in the 4-4-2 is to tuck the four midfield players into a more centrally located position. This allows you to congest the central midfield area when defending and when attacking allows your wide defenders to exploit the space going forward in front of them. To follow is a second example of the 4-4-2



- 2 wide defenders
- 2 central defenders
- 4 central placed midfield players
- 2 strikers

A second system which is commonly used is the 3-5-2. This system if played properly can offer both good attacking possibilities and a good defensive platform. Below is a formation of the 3-5-2



- 3 central defenders
- 1 holding mid in front of central defender
- 1 wide right wing back & 1 left wing back
- 2 attacking central midfield players
- 2 strikers

This formation can be again considered good for both defending and attacking. The formation usually lines up with three defenders, five midfield players and two forwards. In this system one of the three central midfield players acts as a defensive midfielder who protects the back three. The player is affectionately known as (911). He/she breaks down all the attacks from the opposition and begins to create attacking possibilities for his/her team.

Wide midfield players in this system have a very tough position as they have the responsibility of providing width in attack, but also need to provide cover for the back three when their team is defending. The system can look different when defending. The

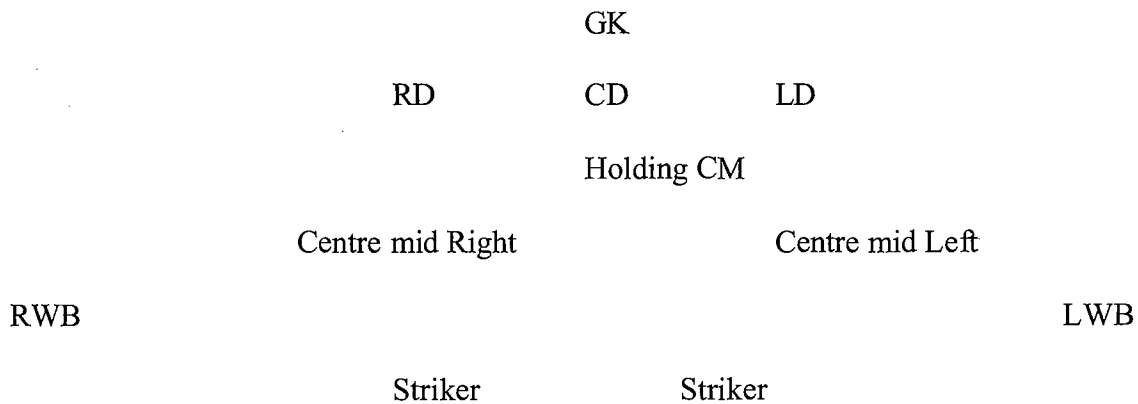
two diagrams below show how the shape of the team can change when defending and attacking.

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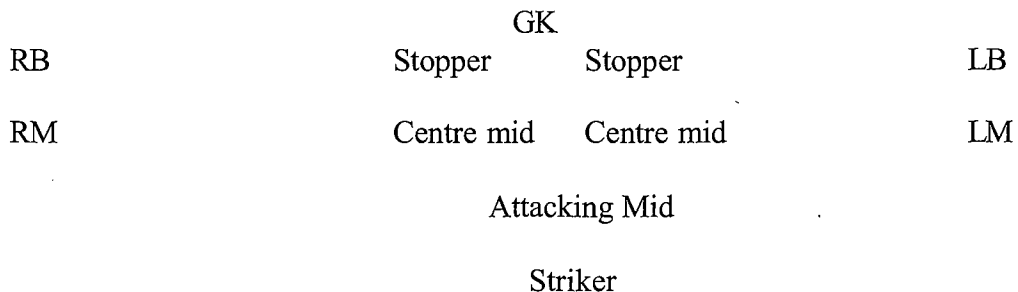
The Team shape when defending



The Team shape when attacking



The final system that we look at is the 4-5-1. This system has been adopted and used by many teams in the last couple of years. It is known more as a defensive formation and is used a lot when teams are playing away in hostile environments against opponents who usually have superior teams. The formation looks something similar to below.



While defending this system of play allows for a greater number of players to get behind the ball. This in turn makes it harder for opponents to breakdown the defense, which leads to players having less goal scoring opportunities. This is a system that does not give players time and space so that they are unable to punch holes and limit penetration on the defending goal. For the defending team it is a case of battling for the ball and trying to catch the opponents on the break.

In attack this formation is conducive to the use of counter attacking. It allows the opposition to maintain possession for large periods of the game. When the ball is won back the team must push players forward into attack quickly exploiting the space. For this method of attack to work effectively, the play must be quick with a high level of athletic ability and mobility to support the lone forward.

These are just a few systems of play which a team may use on match day. This will be expanded on in future publications, showing how different scenarios that happen in a game can affect the system and shape which your team need to adapt to. This then allows you the maximum opportunities of scoring a goal and minimum chance of conceding a goal.