

Playing Between The Lines: Part 2

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In the introduction we looked at the high, medium and low block. In this article, we focus on the role that central Midfielders take in playing between the lines.

As mentioned, Central Midfielders are often players that look to occupy, in this case, both lines in between the units of the defensive team. These kind of players have to be highly technical as well as having a great game understanding. A good example would be Xavi and Iniesta, with that said, many players are created in this manner in Spain.

The CM will look to constantly play on the half turn or 180 degrees. this allows them to not only play in between the lines of defensive units but also play on the line.

Playing on the line helps the CM to move forward quicker than usual when playing on the half turn, as they can receive the ball and with their first touch move into the next phase (in between the midfield and defensive units).

How the Rondo helps - Receiving on the half turn

One advantage of training with a Rondo would be, it encourages players to naturally receive on the half turn.

The natural shape of the Rondo allows all players to experience receiving on the half turn. This is especially true in the side areas (Blue 2 & 3 in the above example), as the Rondo will often be directional. However, you can change the Rondo to suit which players you wish to work on.

Also, with allowing players to play in the middle of the Rondo, you give players the opportunity to play 360 degrees, and consistently play on the half turn in different positions and parts of the field.

The half turn is a very important technical part of the Rondo and also the game.

When in possession of the ball (in this case Blue 2), even if the player is tight (Red 10), a player can either move beyond the player with one touch or can protect the ball by going back the way he came. This can also be the same with the a pass, bypassing the defender with a pass (to Blue 6) or can maintain possession with a pass back to Blue 5.

This can also be the case for a central player when receiving.

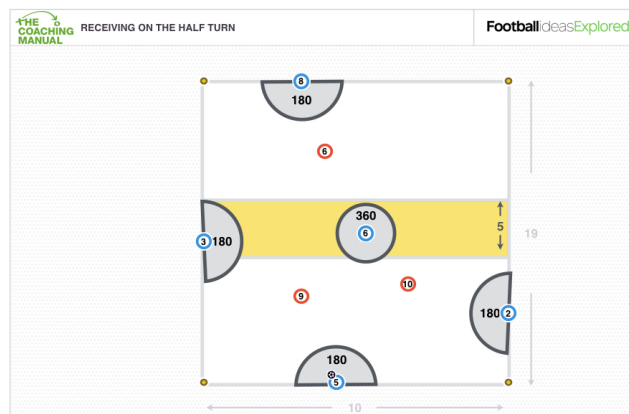
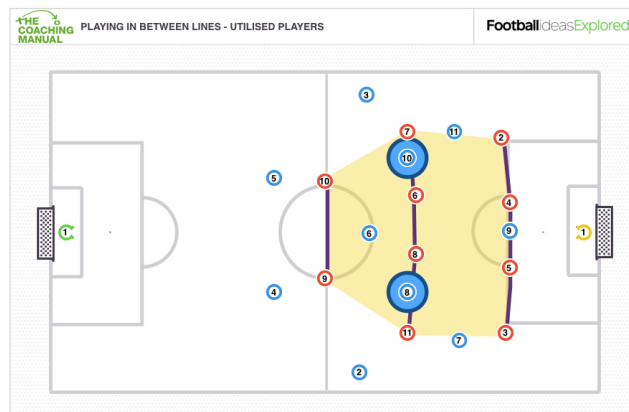
Players in the central area should play the game on the half turn but would also be encouraged to play 360 degrees. This means that the player will look to move in any direction when receiving the ball on half turn even going in the same direction as the ball came. If, for example, a defender is tighter than usual (Red 6), then the central player (Blue 6) would protect the ball by getting his body in between the ball and the defender. The Blue 6 would then turn away from the defender (Red 6) into space and continue to protect/shield the ball away from the defender (Red 6) and into a space where they can affect the game.

5 v 3 Rondo with space between the lines

Set Up

The area is 19x10 with a horizontal space between the lines (5x10) to reference playing in between the lines. The Rondo has 5 x Attackers (Blue) positioned with the ball, always starting with the Centre Backs on the end line when out of play. 3 x Defenders (Red) in the central area to prevent the Blue team playing from Centre Backs to Centre Forward. The game has 3 Defenders (Red) in the centre.

Centre Back (Blue 5), Full Backs (Blue 2 & 3) and Centre Forward (Blue 8) can move along their designated lines only. Centre Midfielder Pivot (Blue 6) can move anywhere in the Rondo including the central (yellow) zone. However, they can only stay in the zone for a maximum of 3 seconds and have a maximum of 2 touches (change depending on age and ability of your players). The Red teams can



have 2 defenders (Reds 9 & 10) in one zone where the ball is positioned and 1 defender (Red 6) in the zone behind in a realist defensive shape. The defending team are not allowed in the yellow zone.

Task

Blue Team (Attackers): Maintain positions and possession of the ball with the emphasis on playing forward from Centre Backs (Blue 5) to Centre Midfielder (Blue 8) through the Pivot receiving in the central zone (in between the lines zone).

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 and 9 press.

Key Coaching Points

1. Co-ordinated movements to take up positions to receive the ball
2. Quality, weight and decision of the pass (play in front, play around or penetrate)
3. Quality of Pivot run to receive in between the lines
4. Effective movement of the ball to find the best possible point of attack to the central zone.

Detail

- Body angle to receive the pass and play forwards - emphasis on the half turn (can the player see both cones)
- Receiving areas of foot or body - back foot receiving
- Quick combinations and limiting touches to think quickly
- Angles, distances and areas of structure to release the Pivot when necessary
- 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 or release the Full Back
- Passing options around and ahead of the ball
- Triggers to move forward - passing the press
- Communication

