This article deals with the means of attack and how to organize them in order to design the offensive play of the team. At first, we have listed and sorted means of tactical offence, in the second part we have introduced rules and guidelines to lead the training process.

In both parts of the article we chose the most useful ideas and explain them. We hope that the organization and the used terms will help coaches to understand the essential properties of the process.

1. OFFENSIVE TACTICAL MEANS. GROUPS AND CLASSIFICATION.

If we want to use properly the offensive tactical means, we have to organize them. A picture of the relations structure is very useful for a coach’s work. The used terms have to help coaches to create this picture.

If we think of a building, we’ll understand it is necessary to have foundations, columns and the completion (roof and decorations). Team play is like a building, before the completion it needs good foundations and column structure. There are two important differences: the team needs a basic play soon, bit by bit it will be increased, and this play is constantly varying because the performance is not stable.

We have sorted the means of tactical offence in three categories: basic factors, target situations and teamwork.

1.1. BASIC FACTORS.

Ball movement and shooting efficiency are the attacking foundations. The final offensive design depends on them. We need a minimum level to build the offensive play. But both of them have two essential characteristics: they always can be improved and they are unstable.

Age and the level of players determine the way, the speed and the amount of the play improvement. Mr. Laguna, M.\textsuperscript{1} writes: “we have a double mission: to organise the group and to make powerful players.”

The skill performance depends on the physical and psychological fitness, so we have to train them based on the training principles. Single and collective fitness depend on each other.

\textsuperscript{1} Laguna, M. (2006).
A. SHOOTING EFFICIENCY

If we know the places and the conditions to be efficient on our team, we make its efficiency map. Statistical study is not enough to know our team. Previous courses and actions, opposition level, type of opponent actions and throwing techniques of our players are necessary for drawing this plan.

An essential tactical principle is to balance the plan. To vary and to stagger are important principles too.

Coaches need a performance target. It must be based on their own championship. It has to be hard but achievable. The playing style might be consistent with it.

B. COLLECTIVE BALL MOVEMENT

Team ball movement and players passing technique depend on each other, they are consistent. We believe that a right ball movement may be enough to build a suitable shooting situation, at least to make a dynamic advantage for the attacking players.

Individual technical and tactical training has three purposes: the player has to make fast\(^2\) and accurate passes, to play moving his defender but avoiding stopping fouls, to be able to change the movement whenever he observes a right situation to throw at goal or breakthrough. We need to wonder “does our players’ passing technique achieve these aims?"

Collective ball movement makes tactical sense, observing the principles of balance, variety and staggering. Those principles mean varying the pass directions and trajectories, to pass into the defensive system, to pass over the nearby team-mate position.

We have to train in collective ball movement frequently with short but efficient drills. This idea is consistent with matches, team ball movement takes less than a minute without stopping.\(^3\)

Technique and tactics change when the defensive system is different. We have to train against different defences.

1. Different ball movements depending on the type of defensive system.

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\(^2\) The pass movement lasts from the beginning of the action, sometimes it means when a player catches the ball, until the ball leaves the hand.

\(^3\) Read the studies by Ávila, F.M. (1997) and Antón, J.L. (2005).
Against one line defences
(Closed system)

- Speeding up is an important factor.
- Players’ movements point to goal with the throwing arm braced for shooting.
- The attacker adjusts the distance to the defender.
- Passes and ball catches help to brace the throwing arm.

Against two or more line defences
(Open system)

- Keeping ball movement avoiding fouls.
- Players need less movement to fix the opponent.
- Defenders frequently vary places and distances.
- Passes and ball catches avoid free throw and attacking fouls.

The different offensive systems (3:3, 2:4) vary the pass distances. This is another factor to train.

The previous action to a “target situation” has different alternatives: to widen the space, to attack the place shared by two defenders, to get maximum closeness to the defender. It’s different when the previous pass has changed the direction or is a distant pass.

1.2 Target situations.

We mean that “target situations” are advantage situations for the attack, in which attackers can immediately get a right shooting situation by a unique action. They are the first offensive goal, because of this, we named them “target situation”.

The team must identify them during the match, having the tactical and technical means to look for them and take advantage. It’s essential that all the team-mates agree on the best methods and actions to achieve the aims. Both of those reasons make a common language, a collective sight.

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4 We explain these situations in the following section.
5 We remind the reader that it depends on the team performance in those situations.
To master these situations we have to train three probable defensive answers:

- **To anticipate breaking the foreseeable action.** The defence tries to obstruct the right offensive action adjustment by pressing the direct opponent or/and indirect one.

- **To increase the density by connecting players.** At the same time the defenders predisposition to help is increased by the side way movements.

- **Defensive sweeper.** Defenders act as a block helping the goalkeeper and obstructing the pass trajectories to pivot. It’s advisable to fake and try to lead opponents’ manoeuvres.

If we want to describe a target situation, we have to explain their attributes. Player places and numerical relations are not enough. We explain them as follows:

- **Simple numerical advantages with enough space and efficient distance** (4-on-3, 3-on-2, 2-on-1). Without these attributes we can’t define a situation. These depend on the players’ characteristics, attackers and defenders, and the previous actions.

- **Simple equal numbers with wider space than the 6-on-6 play started up** (3-on-3, 2-on-2, 1-on-1). To connect players in a zone increasing free spaces away is an offensive principle.

  **We believe that the 3-on-3 is a working unit.** We often see play situations resolved by three strong and reciprocal players connected. It’s a stronger relationship than in a 2-on-2 plus a feeder. We have to train them as a unit. Some examples are presented in the following figures:
Pivot and center-back play 2-on-2 widening the space. If they get that defenders focus on help turning to them, they use the aerial space.

C.B. makes a screen by crossing with R.B. and blocks the outside defender. Others usual actions are: to place the pivot between 2nd and 3rd defenders or blocking the 3rd one. These actions try to delay the defenders’ actions.

Playing 2-on-2 with pivot with pass trajectory delaying defensive help. Nearby defenders are placed far away or they have just played.

Right distance shooting situations. It means a place where the thrower is efficient, he gets a well balanced position, has dynamic advantage and the defenders are obstructed to go out.

We believe that shooting situations depend on four factors: distance, shooting angle, motor control and opposition level.
1.3. TACTICAL TEAMWORK.

Tactical teamwork is the completion of our play building. At first there is the leading idea of the process. We create it based on studying our team, opponents and tournament. But at the end, teamwork depends on our team means: the ball movement, shooting efficiency and mastering target situations.

To train them we can’t forget some practical thoughts based on our coaching experience:

- **The goals scored by using team-works are around the third part.** We wonder about the reasons we train them over this rate instead of basic means and individual techniques.

- **Many times different teams use similar team-works.** Do we copy them without studying our teams? How to do them, technicalities and tactical adjustments make the difference.

- **In competition we often use a few of the team-works we have trained and forget the others,** many times without a logical reason, even if they get a low performance. We lose parts of training sessions. It’s because in stressing moments people choose automatic processes, looking for safety. We have to study our team’s design, the matches’ strategies and the tactical decisions in competition.

- We have to coordinate five or six players, who are playing under stress and acting in a short time. They need to have allocated roles, who decides and what the message means. **We have to explain clearly the aims, roles, playing tasks and demands that the players follow the strategies we agree-upon.**

- **Team-works must be organized in an easy structure.** This organization helps the learning process and lets the players recall team-works in competition. Players have to focus on playing without being afraid of forgetting them. This structure must respect the tactical principles: to stagger and fake the opponents.

- **An organized play helps players’ creativity.** To decide in a short time is an intuitive action, it’s not a conscious process. It’s based on self confidence, cognitive strategies and perceptive skills. Players focus on the useful playing factors, but there are too many elements moving around, and they have a lot of possibilities to choose from, so they need organization to act in time.
• Training drills have to be translated to the playing principles. The training method tries to make exercises with specific perceptive factors, a variable repetition and demand players to act fast.

2. TACTICAL PRINCIPLE LEADERS.

Tactical principles lead to tactical and technical means we choose and the team play design. We deal with the most essential ones in the following lines:

• Being certain of playing and to make opponents hesitate. The essence of tactical conduct is faking, hiding and surprising⁶.

We should not give defenders signs to foresee our actions – gestures, movements or speed changes-, we might use different actions with a same perceptive sign – a set off movement-, figure 8, even to deceive opponents by individual actions or collective movements, figure 9.

A team is more certain when players know their playmates, use the same playing language and the same playing idea. We need a long time to achieve it by putting in action the contents in the team learning process.

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⁶ RIERA, J. (1999)
• **Reducing the number of mistakes.** The learning process of a technique or a tactics end when the team gets the right performance of using them in competition. The way to reduce the number of mistakes is to balance our team level, the amount and difficulty of the contents, and the time we take to train them. We are also thinking about working principles, attitude and performance manners of players.

• **Synchronizing places and times in movements.** This is a long process; players have different inclinations, individual rhythms and moving patterns. They need to know one another through many training sessions.

• **Helping one another.** Every action has to create an advantage for team-mates. Players are wrong if they don’t fix, move or delay the defenders. Actions are not separate movements, it’s very important to coordinate incoming actions and concurrent ones, also the ball handler has to choose the right pass.

• **Respecting the team tactical discipline.** We split the teamwork into three levels of organization: free play, led play and prefabricated play. All of them require that players and coaches agree before playing. All of them have to respect their roles and the rules.
• **Balancing the play.** To transfer this playing principle we have to keep some factors:
  o We need to study and consider our team characteristics and the one of the opponent. It’s not an exact balance.
  o We have to determine the unit of reference: an attack, a match, or a period of competition.
  o We need to be especially careful about symmetrical placement.
    ▪ Width. To play towards both directions: strong side and weak side. We think of using frequency and efficiency; individual and team works.
    ▪ Depth. Team needs to be efficient at distance shots and getting six meter shooting situations, both possibilities help one another,

• **Varying and alternating.** To change tactical and technical means, players, places, times and speed. To use an advantage just before the opponent has adapted. A predictable team becomes a weak team. The strategy is adjusted to the play changes.

• **Adjusting.** Teamwork must train enough variants to adjust the strategies to every match. We can’t make new tasks every week, those that have been mastered are adjusted. Every task has two or three possible actions for going on, players adjust them.

![Basic teamwork against 6:0. Slovenia to Germany. European Championship 2008](image1)

![The wing options:](image2)

3. **PIVOT PLACEMENT.**

Pivot placement is an essential reference to design the offensive play. It leads to team distribution, free spaces and pairs of players. So it leads to play options. We call the pivot “play’s axle”. We can play around or from him, using a direct or indirect play. We explain it in the chart below:
Chart II: play options depending on the pivot placement.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>AROUND PIVOT</th>
<th>FROM PIVOT</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DIRECT PLAY</td>
<td>Strong movements at his side, usually crosses. Based on an expected advantage.</td>
<td>Pivot obstructs or delays defender actions by dynamic blocks, screens or breaking away movements.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INDIRECT PLAY</td>
<td>A fixing movement at the away side turns the defenders. It makes free spaces for playing 2-on-2 or facilitating blocks.</td>
<td>Movements at pivot side making free spaces at the weak side.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the figure below we translate the chart II, a movement varies depending on the pivot placement and play purpose.

In the following chart we study the effects of the pivot placement on a simple task. It leads to the play purposes.
3. BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REFERENCES.


