



Playing Formations and Player's Roles in various 9 vs. 9 Formation

Colorado Soccer Association

Which is the best formation to use?

There is not one formation that is better than the other. Formations should be selected based on the talent pool of the players or the next system of play that the team will move in to at 11 vs 11.

Coaches should teach positional play to players opposed to positions. (Positions show players where to stand on the field; however positional play teaches players how to play the game.)

The number system comes from US Soccer and is used to standardize positions for communication purposes.

Check with your club to see if they have a preferred system and style of play.

9 vs 9 Formations for
the 11U and 12U age
groups

Strengths and Weaknesses of a 1-3-3-2

Strengths of Formation

- Easier formation for players to understand
- Midfield shape can be played as a triangle or flat
- Two central strikers can occupy the opposing teams central defender, forwards must learn to make diagonal
- Can allow for two very solid defensive lines and be compact for the opposition to break

Weaknesses of Formation

- Requires the Center Midfielder (#6) to be very mobile and could be vulnerable if wide players don't pinch in defensively
- Players can be very ridged with their movement in the attack. Long runs up and back for #7 & 11
- Requires coordinated movement between forwards to defend.
- If defensive shape is not found early the gaps in the midfield can be exploited very quickly



Player's Roles in the 1-3-3-2 formation

Players Roles

#1 Goalkeeper: Be patient in the build up, look to play out of the back, but can play direct.

#2 & #3 Outside Backs: Get wide in the build up and look to move forward with the ball. When not in possession get compact and force play wide

#4/5 Center Back: Stays deep during buildup to allow the ball to be played back to switch the point of attack. Attempts to remain in central areas and must organize and may have to step in to the central midfield areas to support

#6/8 Center Mid: Needs to be very mobile and requires a very good fitness level to be able to move around. Have to maintain possession and requires a good range of passing (short and long passes)

#7 & #11 Wingers: Need to stay wide when in possession of the ball to create 1v1 situations. Squeeze in centrally when not in possession. Runs have to be dynamic

#10 Striker: Should try to drop in between the oppositions back line and midfield to receive the ball. Needs to be creative on the ball and drops back when not in possession

#9 Striker: Runs need to be timed well and should try to play on the shoulder of the last defender



Strengths and Weaknesses of a 1-3-2-3

Strengths of the formation:

- Option of building up out of the back with the 3 Defenders and 2 Midfielders
- Allows the outside backs to push on, overlap or underlap
- Numbers up in the attack allows for a quick counter attack
- With three forwards it should allow for a high pressing game and winning the ball back immediately upon losing possession

Weakness of the formation:

- Could be outnumbered in the midfield and be vulnerable in wide areas
- Requires the wide players to work in conjunction with each other and have a high work rate. Wide players must recover into the midfield
- Midfielders need to be disciplined in when to join the attack versus when to stay and keep shape
- Can leave a lot of passing lanes open if team does not transition and become compact upon losing possession



Players Roles in the 1-3-2-3 formation

Players Roles

#1 Goalkeeper: Be patient in the build up, look to play out of the back with the defenders or midfielders.

#2 & #3 Outside Backs: Get wide in the build up and look to move forward with the ball. When not in possession get compact and force play wide

#4/5 Center Back: Stays deep during buildup to allow the ball to be played back to switch the point of attack. Attempts to remain in central areas and communicates with #6 of when to drop in.

#6 Defensive Mid: Create angles that split the oppositions strikers and try to shape up to play forward. Protects the back line and doubles up with outside backs when needed

#8 Center Mid: Looks to switch the point of attack and keep the ball moving. Should look to be the covering/ balancing defender when defending in the attacking third

#7 & #11 Wingers: Need to stay wide when in possession of the ball to create 1v1 situations. Squeeze over side when opponents are building up on the other side.

#9/#10 Striker: Should try to play in between the oppositions lines and defenders. Dictates when to press and when to hold



Strengths and Weaknesses of a 1-2-4-2

Strengths of the formation:

- Creates lots of natural triangles to play in the midfield
- Can create over loads in central areas and allow for combinations
- Two central strikers can occupy the opposing teams central defender or go wide allowing the attacking midfielder to make deep lying runs
- Midfield set up can allow for the team to play on more than three lines

Weakness of the formation:

- Requires the Defenders to be comfortable defending 1v1
- Can leave spaces in wide areas to be exploited if the outside backs or defensive midfielder over commits
- Vulnerable to the counter attack
- Can require players to play numerous positions include the two Center Backs, Wingers/Wing Backs and the Defensive Midfielder



Players Roles in the 1-2-4-2 formation

Players Roles

#1 Goalkeeper: Have a good range of passing and be comfortable playing a sweeper role.

#4/5 Center Back: May have to go wide during the build initial buildup, must have good speed and strength in defending during 1v1 situations.

#6 Defensive Mid: Needs to be comfortable on the ball and dictate the tempo of the play. Willing to step back in between the two CB's in possession and when defending

#2/7 & #3/11 Wing Backs: Need to have a high level of energy and endurance as may cover a lot of space. Comfortable in both attacking & defending 1v1

#8 Center Mid: Should possess a decent range of passing, needs to be willing to make runs out of the midfield as well as move the ball to maintain possession

#10 Striker: Should try to drop in between the oppositions back line and midfield to receive the ball. Needs to be creative on the ball and dynamic with the movement

#9 Striker: Runs need to be timed well and should try to play on the shoulder of the last defender, should look to stretch the field wide at times to then drift into the back post area.



Strengths and Weaknesses of a 1-2-3-3

Strengths of Formation

- Allows the team to be very direct and play higher up the field
- Can help the team press higher and win the ball back in the attacking third
- Good formation for teams that have quality wide players with speed that like to cross the ball and combined
- Provides a lot of options to always penetrate

Weaknesses of Formation

- Requires the Defenders to be comfortable defending 1v1
- Vulnerable to the counter attack
- Can be open in central areas, especially in the midfield as they may be required sit and be disciplined
- Maintaining possession to move the opponents may be difficult.



Players Roles in the 1-2-3-3 formation

Players Roles

- #1 Goal-Keeper:** Have a good range of passing and be comfortable playing a sweeper role. Plays a little more direct
- #4/5 Center Back:** May have to go wide during the build initial buildup, must have good speed and strength in defending during 1v1 situations.
- #6/8 Midfield:** Needs to be comfortable on the ball and dictate the tempo of the play. Willing to step back in between the two CB's in possession and when defending. Needs to be willing to make runs out of the midfield as well as move the ball to maintain possession
- #2 & #3 Outside backs:** Need to always provide an option for the wingers in front. Should drop back to defend far side when the opposition and building on the opposite flank
- #9/10 Striker:** Needs to be able to play with their back to goal and bring others into the game. Show a willingness to get on the end of crosses.
- #7/#11 Wingers:** Must stay wide when in possession and take on their defenders, have a good range of crossing. Squeeze over and back when ball is not on their side.



Strengths and Weaknesses of a 1-4-3-1

Strengths of Formation

- Provides numbers up defensively and allows the coach to teach zonal defending
- Can maintain possession in the center midfield with good angle and support play
- Outside backs can step forward to create an overload in the midfield
- A Center Back can step in to the midfield which allows one of the Centre Midfielders to support the Striker

Weaknesses of Formation

- Can be difficult to generate attacks as it requires a lot of the single striker
- Allows the opponents the opportunity to play out of the back without much pressure
- Not a lot of width in the attacking third, unless the outside backs push forward.
- Need to be patient in the build up as options to play forward are very limited, but when played forward the supporting players need to move forward quickly



Players Roles in the 1-4-3-1 formation

Players Roles

#1 Goalkeeper: Be patient in the build up, look to play out of the back with the defenders or midfielders.

#2 & #3 Outside Backs: Should look to step into the midfield when in possession and even progress to the attacking third, by getting high and wide.

#4 & #5 Center Backs: Mark the opposition strikers and organize the back line to remain compact. Look to step into the midfield when possible to create numbers up.

#6 Defensive Midfield: Keeps the ball circulating and looks to penetrate by playing ball to target player or into spaces. Protects the back line by shielding in front denying the opposition opportunities to penetrate

#8 Center Midfield: Needs to have good stamina, seen as a box to box player that supports on both sides of the ball

#10 Attacking Midfield: Looks to play in between the lines of the opponents and provide good support to the striker.

#9 Striker: Prefer that the player stays in central areas, needs to be good with their back to goal so they can bring others into the game or have the speed to get in behind

