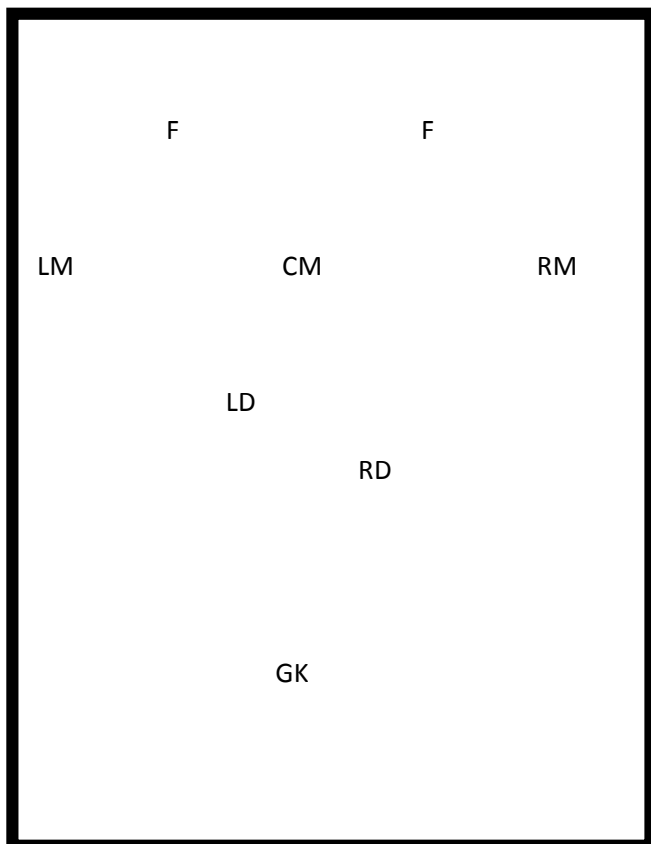


BFSC U11-U12 Systems of Play: 1-2-3-2

As teams at these age groups play with a goalkeeper and seven field players, coaches need to consider which tactical system or systems suit their players and style of play. This link provides an overview of the 1-2-3-2, one of the most common systems of play.

2-3-2



Key Considerations

This system deploys a goalkeeper, two defenders, three midfielders and two forwards.

Advantages:

1. Two forwards provide both balance and many more opportunities in attack.
2. Transition is aided by the presence to two target players.
3. It is easier to apply defensive pressure further from one's goal with two strikers.
4. The flank players have a lot of room to run forward.
5. The central midfielder most often is not required to retreat deep into the defensive zone and has many good options going forward in transition.

Disadvantages:

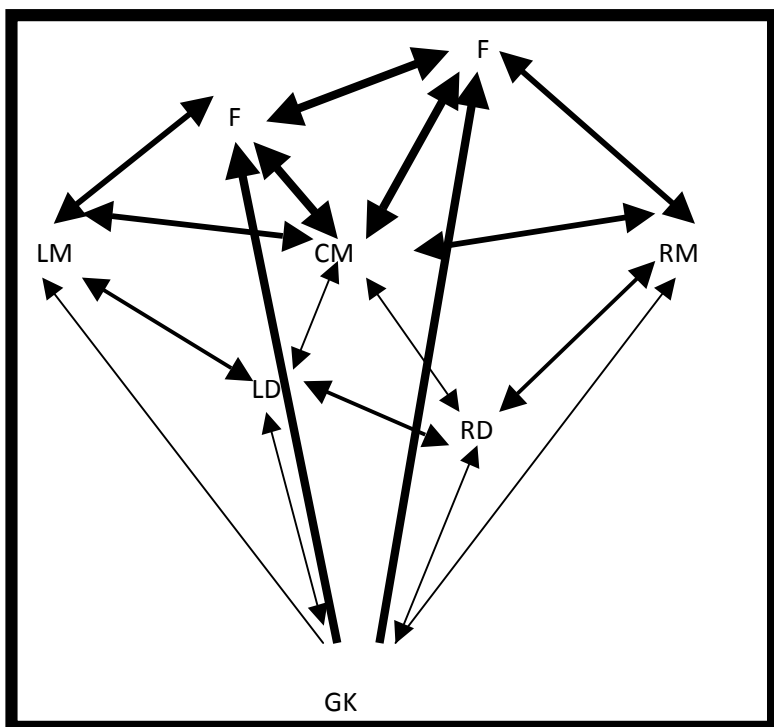
1. The team is set up to defend with only 5 players (defenders and midfielders). If a team can not get transition, the backs and midfielders will be worn down playing extensively in the back third.
2. The use of only two defenders is the most perilous characteristic of this arrangement. The two backs have to be very quick and have a very good understanding to deal with attackers from any area.
3. Central attacks can cause considerable disruption in that the central midfielder may be dragged back to the goal to help deal with a crisis and the backs may make a mistake as to who is responsible for a runner (runs that aim to split them may cause problems).
4. Consistent flank attacks against this system will tear apart its shape as either the near-side outside midfielder or the backside outside midfielder must be dragged in to track runners or provide cover. This loss of shape puts physical pressure on the flank players to run endline to endline and makes transition very difficult.
5. Finally, it may be difficult to organize possession on the back line with only two backs.

Training Considerations

This system is well-suited to a team that expects to do a great deal of attacking. The coach must be confident that the goalkeeper and the two backs will be able to close down transition and attacking by the opponent. In addition, the flank players will need regular rest and consistent encouragement to work endline-to-endline. On the other hand, the opportunity to train the midfielders to link with the forwards and to train the strikers to work together makes this a lively arrangement to train and watch.

Patterns of Play

The diagram below highlights key patterns of play, with the heavier arrows indicating the most common passing relationships. Although each team and set of players will ultimately develop their own key patterns, the diagram outlines those most common in a 1-2-3-2.



Player Characteristics and Positional Skill Requirements

As the passing spine indicates, specialized technical and physical skills and tactical understanding are necessary for players to perform well within the 1-2-3-2.

Goalkeeper: The goalkeeper position often becomes specialized at U11 and U12, as qualified candidates are identified. Among the critical skills to be developed at this age are: Basic and consistent handling and footwork; safe and effective diving; distribution (both throwing and kicking/punting); knowledge of angle play; punting; dealing with set-pieces; organizing the defense; and the mentality of shot-stopping.

Defenders: If the team will play only two defenders, these players must be quick, and be able to make good decisions under pressure. Their ability to close down and tackle, as well as cover, will likely determine whether the team can be successful in a 1-2-3-2. They need to learn to play well in the air and they need to be vocal in organizing the defense. The ability to long pass is also essential.

Wing midfielders: These players are typically quick, hard-working players who can get forward to attack flank space behind opposing defenses. Outside midfielders also need to be able to cross the ball well, combine with the central midfielder, forwards and even the outside back on their side, and they need to be able to finish crosses from the far side of the field. In a 2-3-2, outside midfielders also need to be able to defend well on the flank and be willing to make long defensive runs in particular.

Central midfielder: This player must possess the ability to see the field well (distribute intelligently) and her ability to connect with all of the other field players is critical in transition, organizing possession, changing fields and pushing the attack. Her ability to shoot from distance can provide considerable attacking potential as well. Finally, central midfielders are typically strong 1v1 players as well.

Forwards: These players must have a very consistent work rate as they must cover a lot of ground both on defense and in the attack. A sharp change of speed will get the striker behind the defense on occasion, and strikers need to become talented finishers. The striker's ability to receive (both on the ground and in the air) is critical for the team's transition. These players must also possess the willingness to take on defenders to create both space and attacking opportunities. They should know how to combine well with the other striker and the midfielders.

In summary, while players will only perhaps possess some of the above characteristics, this information should be helpful in aiding coaches to both place players and also design training.