

# CREATING AN OVERLOAD AND ATTACKING THROUGH THE CENTRE

## 1a. Wide Midfielder Creates an Overload by Moving into the Centre of the Pitch to Receive



The central positioning of Atlético's wide midfielders helps create overloads in specific areas. Attacking through the centre is a popular tactic for Diego Simeone's team.

The wide midfielder moves towards the centre in between the opposition's midfield and defensive lines and enters the zone of responsibility of the opposing centre back, who then has 2 players to deal with (see highlighted area).

This prevents the opposing centre back (white No.4 in diagram) from moving forward to press Atlético's left midfielder **Koke (6)**.

As soon as central midfielder **Gabi (14)** receives from the centre back **Giménez (24)** in this example, the left midfielder **Koke (6)** moves towards the centre and creates a 2v1 overload in a crucial area, as shown.

## 1b. Opposing Centre Back Retains Position and the Wide Midfielder is Able to Receive, Turn and Look for a Final Pass



This situation enables the left midfielder **Koke (6)** to receive free of marking and turn facing the opponent's goal.

As soon as the turn is carried out, the 2 forwards **Griezmann (7)** and **Torres (9)** move to receive a potential final pass, as do both full backs **F. Luis (3)** and **Juanfran (20)**, who are positioned near the side-lines to retain width.

The forward movement of both full backs triggers the central midfielder **Saúl (8)** to drop back and help retain a numerical advantage at the back.



## 2. Opposing Centre Back Tracks the Wide Midfielder's Movement, who Plays First-time Pass in Behind



In a similar situation to the previous one, **Koke (6)** receives a forward pass from **Gabi (14)**, but the reaction from the white defenders is different.

Specifically, the white centre back No.4 decides to step forward and put **Koke (6)** under pressure, which leaves **Griezmann (7)** free of marking. **Griezmann (7)** opens up to receive a first-time pass from **Koke (6)**.

## 3. Opposing Centre Back Tracks the Wide Midfielder's Movement, who Uses a Link Player to Pass in Behind



This shows another option for how Atlético deal with the same situation using a passing combination.

As soon as **Koke (6)** receives under pressure from the white centre back No.4, the ball is directed to **Griezmann (7)** via the other forward **Torres (9)**, who moves close to **Koke (6)** to offer him a passing option.

## PROGRESSION

### 2. Creating an Overload and Attacking Through the Centre in a Dynamic Zonal Practice



#### Description

- The practice starts within the marked-out low zone and the reds play 4v2 with the aim of moving the ball to a central midfielder unmarked beyond the white forwards.
- As soon as this happens, the wide midfielder on that side (6) moves towards the centre to create an overload and receive from the central midfielder (14).
- The wide midfielder (6) must decide whether to play a first-time pass in behind or receive and turn, depending on the white centre back's reaction.
- Please **see the previous practices and analysis pages** in this section for the correct decision making for the red wide midfielder.
- In this example, the opposing centre back No.4 moves forward to press the wide midfielder (6), so he uses the weak side forward (9) as a link player to pass to the other forward (7) in the space created behind No.4.
- If the white centre backs win the ball, they move the ball to the forwards and try to score in the mini goals within 12-15 seconds. If the white forwards win the ball within the low zone, they try and score within 6 seconds.



# COUNTER ATTACK-MINDED POSITIONING OF THE FORWARDS

## 1a. Counter Attack-minded Positioning of Forwards with Ball in Centre



Over Diego Simeone's time at Atlético Madrid, they have mainly used defensive-minded positioning of the forwards during the defensive phase. However, they have used counter attack-minded positioning of the forwards in many matches, especially when **D. Costa (19)** plays.

Atlético have 1 forward in a very advanced position and there is more space for the opposition to exploit between the forward and midfield lines.

## 1b. Counter Attack-minded Positioning of Forwards with Ball Wide



When using defensive-minded positioning of the forwards ([see last 3 pages](#)), both forwards are able to contribute in the defensive phase.

When using counter attack-minded positioning, only 1 forward contributes in the defensive phase, which is **Griezmann (7)**.

The other forward **D. Costa (19)** is in a dangerous position to exploit a potential direct counter attack if the ball is won.

## 2a. Available Spaces to Exploit After Winning Possession in a Wide Area (Counter Attack-minded Positioning of Forwards)



Despite the available space between the forward and midfield lines which can be exploited by the opposition, this positioning of the forwards provides benefits for the transition from defence to attack.

The main target player **D. Costa (19)** is close to the opponent's goal and the available space that can be exploited is in the central area. However, taking advantage of this after winning the ball in a wide area is not easy. It is far easier when the ball is won in the centre, which we show on **pages 162-164**.

In this example, the Atlético left back **F. Luis (3)** intercepts the pass to white No.7.

When winning the ball in a wide area, it is more likely that the space out wide and behind the opposing full back No.2 can be exploited.

However, with this counter attack-minded positioning of the forwards, **Griezmann (7)** is in a relatively deep position compared to the previous situation (normal defensive positioning of forwards) and the white full back No.2 can recover in time and fill the gap.

In addition, moving the ball into the available space in the centre for **D. Costa (19)** to exploit is not easy, as a perfectly accurate pass is needed.



## PROGRESSION

### 3. Positioning of the Forwards and Counter Attack After Winning the Ball Out Wide in a Functional Game



#### Description

- The 2 teams play a 9v10 game in 2/3 of the pitch.
- The game starts with the white GK and the white team must move the ball into one of the wide areas and then try to move the ball to the forward No.9 in the yellow central area to score against the GK.
- The reds try to win the ball in a 3v3 situation within the wide area and then launch a counter attack. Please see the analysis pages in this section for the correct decision making.

As they are in a wide area, the player that wins the ball can:

1. Pass to the forward on the strong side (7) to create an **Indirect Threat**.
2. Pass directly to the advanced forward (19) to create a **Direct Threat** (difficult pass).
3. Pass inside to the central midfielder (5), who then passes to the advanced forward (19) to create a **Direct Threat**.

**Restriction:** Any pass towards white No.9 should be played from within the wide area.

If the opposing centre back breaks through the pressure of the forwards and moves forward with the ball, the front block should work in collaboration to deal with the situation.

Torres (9) moves towards ball area and creates a strong side

Midfielders drop back to retain a safety distance and get compact

Created using SoccerTutor.com Tactics Manager

The second forward **Torres (9)** drops back and across towards the ball area. This action creates a strong side for Atlético Madrid and makes the opposition's attacking play predictable.



## 1b. The Compact Atlético Midfield with a Good Safety Distance is Able to Intercept Attempted Through Passes



This tactical example follows on from the previous page, with the Atlético front block having dropped back (safety distance), converged to be compact and having created a strong side.

If a through pass is attempted, the Atlético midfielders have a very good chance of intercepting the ball, as they have more time to react.

In the diagram example, the right midfielder **Koke (6)** and the central midfielder **Gabi (14)** both have time to converge and close the gap between them and block the pass towards white No.8.

**Gabi (14)** easily intercepts white No.4's pass.

## PROGRESSION

### 2. Block Through Passes with the Front Block in a Functional Practice (6 v 8 +GK)

#### Scenario A: Narrow Passing Lanes and Limit Space Between Lines



#### Description (Scenario A)

- This is a progression of the previous practice with 2 white central midfielders (6 and 8) added, who can be used as link players to move the ball to the 2 forwards inside the yellow area.
- The red forwards and midfielders (front block) shift collectively according to the position of the ball and retain narrow passing lanes to block any potential through passes.
- They must also keep the space between the lines limited and prevent the white midfielders from turning if they receive.
- Please **see analysis pages 100-109** for the correct defensive reactions in the different tactical situations.
- As soon as the reds win the ball, they launch a quick direct counter attack, trying to score past the GK within 8-10 seconds.



## PROGRESSION

### 2. Block Through Passes with the Front Block in a Functional Practice (6 v 8 + GK)

#### Scenario A: Narrow Passing Lanes and Limit Space Between Lines



#### Description (Scenario A)

- This is a progression of the previous practice with 2 white central midfielders (6 and 8) added, who can be used as link players to move the ball to the 2 forwards inside the yellow area.
- The red forwards and midfielders (front block) shift collectively according to the position of the ball and retain narrow passing lanes to block any potential through passes.
- They must also keep the space between the lines limited and prevent the white midfielders from turning if they receive.
- Please **see analysis pages 100-109** for the correct defensive reactions in the different tactical situations.
- As soon as the reds win the ball, they launch a quick direct counter attack, trying to score past the GK within 8-10 seconds.

## Scenario B: Centre Back Dribbling Forward (Breaks Through Pressure)



### Description (Scenario B)

- In this second scenario, we practice what happens when the opposing centre back breaks through the forward's pressure and moves forward with the ball.
- For this practice, the Coach tells the forwards to let the white centre back (No.5 in diagram) dribble forward without pressure so this situation can be replicated.
- The red forwards and midfielders (front block) have to adapt to the situation.
- As shown in this example, the red midfielders drop back to retain a good safety distance from the ball carrier, so they will still have time to react and block any attempted through passes.

- Please **see the analysis on pages 110-112** for the correct defensive reactions in this tactical situation.

### Coaching Points

1. Shift according to the position of the ball.
2. Read the tactical situation.
3. Retain the correct horizontal distances (between the players in the midfield line).
4. Retain the correct vertical distances (between the forward and midfield lines).



## COUNTER-PRESSING AFTER LOSING POSSESSION DURING COMBINATION PLAY IN THE CENTRE

### **a. Creating Triangle Shapes and Maintaining Short Distances Between Players During the Attacking Phase**



For Atlético Madrid to use short combination play, specific elements must first exist. The distances between the players need to be short and there should be triangle shapes set up. If an opponent wins the ball, they can then be immediately pressed.

When Atlético use combination play in tight spaces, the distance between the players is short. If there are also triangle shapes, there are good conditions for Simeone's team to use counter-pressing to win the ball back immediately.

In this example, the forward **D. Costa (9)** drops back to receive or create space and the white centre back No.5 follows him, thus creating space for **Saúl (8)** to exploit in behind via a pass from **Koke (6)**.

However, the pass towards **Koke (6)** is intercepted by the white central midfielder No.6 and the Atlético players have to react in the appropriate way for the transition from attack to defence to be successful. The description of this situation continues on the next page...

## b. Applying Counter-Pressing Immediately After Losing the Ball to Win it Back as Quickly as Possible



The reaction of the players is immediate, and the new ball carrier is pressed by 3 Atlético players from different directions, who create a pressing triangle.

The aim for **Rodri (14)**, who is at the base of the triangle, is to apply pressure immediately and prevent the ball carrier from having any time and space on the ball.

The other 2 players in the triangle are the left midfielder **Koke (6)** and the forward **D. Costa (19)**. They move to press from behind and win the ball if white No.6 hesitates or tries to change direction.

Most of the white players are eliminated as passing options because the passing lanes towards them are blocked.

In addition, potential receivers white No.8 and No.10 are marked by the central midfielder **Thomas (5)** and centre back **Giménez (24)** respectively.

At the same time, there is safety with a 3 v 2 numerical advantage at the back. Atlético have their two centre backs **Godín (2)** and **Giménez (24)**, and right back **Juanfran (20)** against the two white forwards No.9 and No.10.



## PRACTICE FOR THIS TACTICAL SITUATION

### Counter-Pressing After Losing Possession During Short Combination Play in a Conditioned Game



#### Description

- The 2 teams play an 11v11 game in 2/3 of a full pitch and there is a 30 yard low zone for the red's build up play
- The practice starts with the red team's GK and the reds attack by using passes no longer than 10-15 yards. If this is difficult to apply, you can divide the pitch into small areas as shown.
- The red players are only allowed to pass to team-mates in neighbouring areas. They try to create triangle shapes and score using short combination play. The white players try to win the ball and then score with a counter attack.

- If the reds lose the ball, they should have players close enough to the ball to apply counter-pressing immediately.
- Please **see the analysis pages in this section** for the correct defensive reactions.

#### Coaching Points

1. Good off the ball movement is essential to create triangle shapes.
2. Synchronisation is needed for the players movements and good communication.