

DEFENSIVE REACTIONS OF THE FRONT BLOCK WHEN THE OPPOSITION BREAK THROUGH PRESSURE

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.

1a. Drop Back to Retain a Safety Distance, Converge to Be Compact and Create a Strong Side (Opposing Centre Back Dribbling Forward)



In this tactical example, the opposing white centre back No.4 breaks through the pressure of **Griezmann (7)** and moves forward with the ball.

The reaction of the Atlético midfielders is to drop back collectively and reduce the distance between one another, retain a safety distance

from the ball carrier and become more compact.

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.