

# Soccer through Soccer Letter

By Diana Groth, Assistant Technical Director

## Game Model

### Why do we need a game model and how to create one?



Age group: 14-18

#### *What is the game model?*

In the world of soccer there are many different interpretations of “game model” or “playing style”. The common theme within each model definition is that they essentially represent the coaches’ vision or idea on how they want the team to play the game (or sport) from a tactical perspective. “The GAME model is how a coach wants the team to play soccer, a conception of the game. Given the high unpredictability that exists during a match, a coach tries to create predictability through preparation, planning and training”. (DELGADO-BORDONAU & MÉNDEZ-VILLANUEVA, 2012). With a game model and a unique strategy, the player will have a consistent plan which helps harmonize their actions on the field, and the players will be able to recognize a teammate’s decision/execution early which again makes the game fast and unpredictable for the opponent. If there is no plan or a team strategy, every player will make their own decisions which are not conform or do not align with the teammate’s decision process. It will cause confusion on the field between the players which then could end in losing the ball easier. For instance: a group of 3 players are pressing the player with the ball in the midfield, as soon as the defender regains possession of the ball he wants to play a quick vertical pass behind the opponent’s defensive line because the opponent is out of shape defensively. But the forward did not recognize the situation and did not expect a vertical pass, so he did not react fast enough to receive the ball in time.

#### *How do I create a game model for my team?*

For creating a game model, we must consider the four game phases of the game: possession, transition from offense to defense, out of possession, transition from defense to offense.



Every phase can be executed differently depending on the playing idea, strategy, and the opponent. For instance the height and the intensity of pressing can vary in different locations on the field when the opponent is in possession of the ball; in the attacking phase the team prefers to attack over the flanks than through the center; or the team prefers a fast and vertical build up play rather than a ball circulation in their own half to create gaps in the opponents half; in the transition phase from offense to defense the team prefers to counter-press at the spot where they just lost possession or it prefers to drop; in the transition from defense to offense the team wants to counterattack after regaining the ball to take advantage of the opponent's disorganization in the defense, or they may secure ball possession to move the ball in the opponent's half in a controlled way. All these moments can vary during the game: time of the game, result, opponent, etc. All these different variations have different pros and cons and require different conditions: technically, tactically, mentally, and physically. For instance: if a team prefers to build up fast and vertically it will require the players to think and move fast, it will require good passing and receiving skills as the passes are vertically and more difficult to control. It also harbors the risk to lose the ball more often which requires the team to master the transition from offense to defense mentally and physically. All these details should be part of your game model and practice sessions so that the players are prepared and know what to do in these different situations.

For creating a game model, it is important to know the strengths and weaknesses of the team and each player, which advantages do I want to use, and which disadvantages can I accept and put up with.

In the end the most important factor are your players and to create a suitable system for your players. Where do players have their weaknesses and strengths, how do the synergies between the players and groups look like and where? Could they occur better or more often in other situations? Can we create these situations consistently? Which aspects of their play I am realistically able to coach and enhance, and what is their ability to learn and apply regarding their development stage? Choosing a game model also influences the player's and team's mentality. If a team plays vertically and with counter-pressing it will require a more aggressive mentality than a team that prefers to control the game and ball through positional play which requires patience and a calm mind.

Of course, it is also important to have a playing philosophy that suits the coach's philosophy because at the end, the players must buy in the coach's playing philosophy which will only happen if the coach shows a passion for

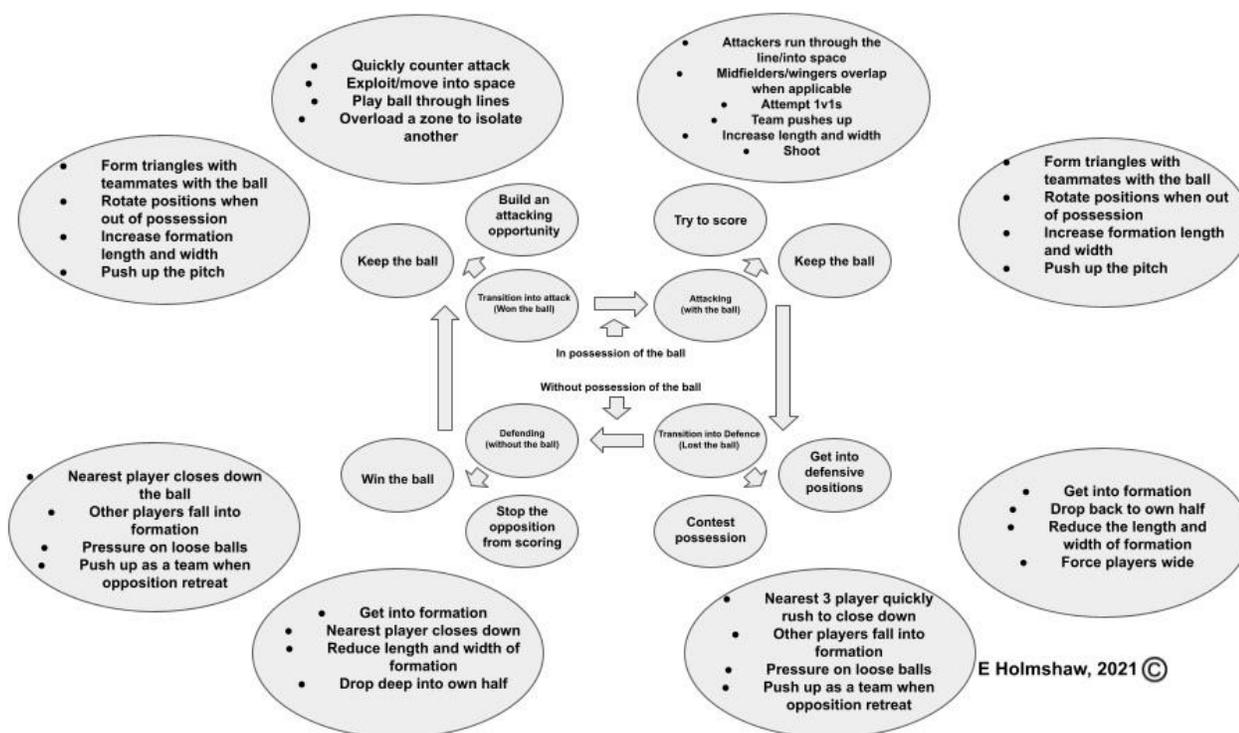
the philosophy and knows and understands what he is teaching. Otherwise, it will be difficult for a team to execute these certain strategies on the field.

If you found a playing style that suits your team and you, then we need to make sure that we create training situations that mirrors that style. You need to pick methods that master the requirements of the style: mentally, physically, technically, and tactically. The playing style/philosophy should influence the planning the practice sessions and the style of coaching and should never be in contradiction. For instance: if a team likes to play fast and vertically it would be counterproductive if every player must touch the ball before finishing.

Below you will find a couple of samples of a game model. From my own experience: creating a long-term game model takes a lot of work and diligence, but it is definitely worth the reward. Be consistent and patient, your game model does not guarantee your next win, but you may win the championship!

If you are interested in other topics, please check our website: [Soccer through Soccer Newsletter](http://Soccer through Soccer Newsletter).

As always, email me with questions, feedback, or if you have a specific topic for us to cover: [dgroth@nyswysa.org](mailto:dgroth@nyswysa.org).



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Game Phases		In Possession	Out of Possession	Set Plays
Sub-phases	Phase 0	<b>Seconds before and after stealing the ball.</b>	<b>Seconds before and after loosing the ball.</b>	<b>Offensive</b>
		1. Penetration; 2. Safe pass.	1. Regain; 2. Create balance.	
	Phase 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Head start counter-attack.</li> <li>- From tight to space.</li> <li>- Enhance and exploit imbalance.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Press to regain when possible.</li> <li>- 1D sprint to press/delay.</li> <li>- Retreat when we have to.</li> </ul>	<p>We have a plan and stick to it.</p> <p>Set piece taker signalise where the ball will land before he runs to take it.</p> <p>Get in positions to win 2<sup>nd</sup> balls.</p>
		<b>When opposition is in balance.</b>	<b>When we are in balance.</b>	
		Create imbalance and establish defensive mechanisms.	Make pitch small/Press on triggers.	
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Big pitch.</li> <li>- Create superiority behind the line.</li> <li>- Patient but ruthless.</li> <li>- Threaten multiple spaces.</li> <li>- Create and exploit 2v1's.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Communication from behind.</li> <li>- Triggers.</li> <li>- Small pitch (predictable)</li> <li>- We are good ball winners.</li> </ul>	
	Phase 2	<b>When opposition is in imbalance.</b>	<b>When we are in imbalance.</b>	<b>Defensive</b>
		Create chances and maintain defensive mechanisms.	Create balance, delay ball carrier and steal the ball.	
	Phase 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Move together.</li> <li>- Play through gaps.</li> <li>- Switch play when we must.</li> <li>- Exploit 1v1's.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Lead away from goal.</li> <li>- Establish lines from behind and central.</li> <li>- Deny threats behind lines.</li> <li>- Dominate 1v1's (win the ball or delay).</li> </ul>	<p>Some players occupy areas where most goals are conceded. Other mark opposition.</p> <p>"I will win my duel."</p>
		<b>When we can create goal.</b>	<b>When they can score.</b>	
		Arrive in scoring areas, prepare to counter press.	Priority ball, threats (man + space) in scoring areas.	
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Threaten different spaces.</li> <li>- Opposite movement.</li> <li>- Defensive mechanisms.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Block shots and crosses.</li> <li>- Deny access to threats.</li> <li>- Lead away from goal.</li> </ul>	