

# Module 2: Collective analysis of the opponent

## 2.1 Collective and/or team reports

In this unit, our main aim is to describe aspects that any analyst should take into account when writing collective and/or team reports.

These four aspects should be agreed on and coordinated with the coach, together with the coaching staff:

- A. **Questions** that the report helps us give answers to.
- B. **Structure** that the reports should have – sections.
- C. **Format** that the reports should have – videos, photos, text, graphs, etc.
- D. **Deadlines** in which the reports must be handed in.

It is important to keep in mind at all times that our reports have to be adapted to our team's needs and possibilities. In this regard, the profound knowledge of the team we work with becomes essential, and will help us to carry out a much more effective job.

**Figure 1: A meeting of the coach, coaching staff and football analyst.**



Source: [Image without title about a meeting of the coach, coaching staff and football analyst.]. (s.f.). Retrieved from: [https://deportesimagenes.canalrcn.com/ImgDeportesNew/reunion\\_dts\\_.jpg](https://deportesimagenes.canalrcn.com/ImgDeportesNew/reunion_dts_.jpg)

### A. Questions

It is essential to keep in mind that our priority is to assist the coach and/ or the coaching staff to figure out all the inconsistencies that an opposing team may trigger in each match. For this reason, we present you with a guide of questions that a coach or coaching staff may ask an analyst.

## A.1. Attack Phase

In the opposing team's analysis, we will focus our attention on those situations that may be exploited so as to gain some strategic immediate advantage. In the same way, we will assess and take notice of those situations that are considered strengths – of the opposing team – and that should be taken into account to avoid negative consequences on our style of play. To reach these objectives, we will study the following:

- Styles of attack commonly used by the opposing team and the aspects from which we can take some competitive advantages.
- Evolution of the attack in the first, starting stage.
- Development of the attack in its creative process.
- Completion of the attack in its final definition.
- Set Pieces, if such considerations were not delegated to third parties.
- Among others.

In the study of the opposing team's collective play we need to clearly identify the team's weak areas or spaces, the collective repeated behaviour that have a negative impact on their performance and all the specific aspects that would be important to the coach so as to develop tasks to work on them during the weekly microcycle previous to the match.

## A.2. Defense phase

In the same way that we look for situations and repeated behaviour that may result in some kind of competitive advantage for our team, when it comes to analysing the opposing team from a perspective in which we try to attack their defense, we need to consider the following aspects:

- Spatial distribution of the opposing players – position.
- Type of defense that the team has.
- Defensive positioning chosen.
- The prioritized defensive objective. Ball recovery or ground giving and letting the opponent take the initiative.
- Tactical principles that shape the global defensive process.
- Tactical principles that shade the specific defensive process.
- Set Pieces, if such considerations were not delegated to third parties.
- Among others.

In the same way that we present reports to the coaching staff so that they prepare strategies to face the opponent's build-up process, it is also necessary to provide them with relevant information as regards the opponent's defense, so that they can design immediate responses on a strategic level during the micro cycle previous to

the match. The analyst in charge of developing the content – together with the chief analyst – should serve as a link with the technical team to consolidate an operative response that allows the players to face the match with the greatest degree of certainties possible.

In this sense, let us take a look at a practical example of the questions that can be posed in relation to the possession of the ball and the area of the field where the game is developed.

## **Attack**

### **Start of play** (1<sup>st</sup> third of the field, approximately, own pitch):

- In the face of a **high block** from the opposing team:
  - Start with pressure from the opponent – from the beginning, after the first pass, especially on some players or zones.
  - Free spaces – as from now on, referred to as FFSS – in behind, half-way, on the sides, etc.
  - Emergency plays (deep, change of orientation, goalkeeper).
- In the face of a **middle block** from the opposing team:
  - Progress until reaching that distance.
  - Engage the opponent to:
    - Divide block (intermediate FFSS within the field).
    - Engage block (FFSS in behind/on the sides of the opponent).

### **Progression of play** (2<sup>nd</sup> third of the field, approximately):

- In the face of a **high block** from the opposing team:
  - Opponent team's incentives based on pressure – to the ball, to all or some players, zones, etc.
  - FFSS - in behind, intermediate, on the sides, among others.
- In the face of a **middle block** from the opposing team:
  - Ball circulation and/ or change of orientation - FFSS on the sides.
  - Play within in order to “contract” the opponent and generate FFSS on the sides.
  - Both at the same time (ball circulation with “threat” within) transversal and longitudinal.
- In the face of a **low block** from the opposing team:
  - Progress until reaching that distance (“crushed” opponent).
  - Engage the opponent to play from “another” distance.

### **Finishing of play** (3<sup>rd</sup> third of the field, approximately, opponent's field):

- In the face of a **middle block** from the opposing team:
  - FFSS on the wing (complete shifting of the opponent, distance side-end, etc.)
  - Intermediate FFSS (on the sides of the pivot, side of the center mid-fielders, central-lateral gap, etc.)
  
- In the face of a **low block** from the opposing team:
  - FFSS on the wing - complete shifting of the opponent, distance side-end, etc.
  - intermediate FFSS - on the sides of the pivot, the midfielders, central-lateral gap, etc.
  - FFSS on the front (divided low block):
    - Front lateral (side away from the ball).
    - Front centered.

### **Defense**

#### **Low block** (1<sup>st</sup> third of the field, approximately, own pitch):

- Base positioning/s - structure.
- Functioning:
  - Dissuasions:
    - Wing (one or both of them), center, etc.
  - Movements:
    - Triggered by the possessor of the ball.
    - Triggered by possible receptors – If so, which ones?
  - 2vs1, change of opponent, dribbling, markings (zones and/or prioritized players to contain).
  - Communication (advancement of the line, markings, stop game, etc.).

#### **Middle block** (2<sup>nd</sup> third of the field, approximately):

- Base positioning/s - structure.
  - Reference of the position of the block.
- Functioning:
  - Dissuasions:
    - Wing (one or both of them), center, etc.
  - Movements:
    - Triggered by the possessor of the ball.
    - Triggered by possible receptors – If so, which ones?
  - 2vs1, change of opponent, dribbling, markings (zones and/or prioritized players to contain).
  - Communication (advancement/ turnback of the line, markings, stop game, etc.).

**High block** (3<sup>rd</sup> third of the field, approximately, almost all in the opponent's field):

- Base positioning/s - structure.
- Reference of the position of the block.
- Functioning:
  - Put pressure on the ball (engagements trigger high pressure).
    - Maximum/ minimum number of players?
    - How much time/ space?
  - Pressure the **opposing** receivers.
    - Anticipate / avoid progression / stop the play.
    - Monitoring
    - Who?

## Transition

### Build-up transition / Defense-attack transition (DAT)

- **Build-up transition (DAT) after** recovery during own **start**:
  - Conservation towards continuity.
  - Counterattack progressing from:
    - 1<sup>o</sup> pass to near team players (There is no pressure after loss (PAL) from the opponent).
    - 1<sup>o</sup> pass to intermediate players (divided with PAL).
    - 1<sup>o</sup> pass to distant players (weak monitoring of the opponent or own physical superiority).
  - Forward advancement of the team (up to where/ when?).
- **Build-up transition (DAT) after recovery from middle block**:
  - Continuity (conservation of the ball).
  - Continuity and finishing taking advantage of momentary FFSS (central-lateral, in behind, to the opposite side, etc.).
- **Build-up transition (DAT) after** recovery in finishing zone:
  - Quick finishing.
  - Continuity (conservation of the ball).

### Defensive transition / attack- defense transition (ADT)

- **Defensive transition (ADT) after** loss on own **start**:
  - Protect the box / avoid goal (come together on central axis).
- **Defensive transition (ADT) after loss during progression**:
  - Put pressure on the ball – possessor.
    - Maximum/ minimum number of players?
    - How much time/ space?
  - Pressure the opposing receivers.
    - Anticipate / avoid progression and/ or stop the play.

- **Defensive transition (ADT) after loss during finishing:**
  - Put pressure on the ball – possessor.
    - Maximum/ minimum number of players?
    - How much time/ space?
  - Pressure the opposing receivers.
    - Anticipate / avoid progression and/ or stop the play.
  - Previous monitoring.
    - Who?

### A.3. Set pieces

The specific set pieces are gradually becoming more important in the study of the own team as well as the opposing team. Because of this, the study of set pieces has become, in some institutions, a specialized sub department within the analysis department, where one or more performance analysts are in charge of studying, mainly, the strategic particularities of the most relevant set pieces.

The succession of set pieces in a competition match are a very rich source of information in the content there is to analyse.

Although it is true that it is a way to put the ball into play (re-start of play), some set pieces, due to their influence on scoring goals, require special attention – direct and indirect free kicks, corner kicks, throw-ins near our box or the opponent’s penalty kicks, etc.

Therefore, when it comes to assessing set pieces specifically, we need to separate our references towards the two specific moments of the *game continuum*, that is to say, attack (or build-up) and defense. (García Moreno, s.f.)

#### - **Build-up actions**

- Who performs them regularly (striker/s).
- Who have a relevant finishing role (finishers).
- Players who place themselves to gain control after a block.
- Players who monitor on the lookout for a possible loss of ball possession.
- Specific movements and spatial distribution of the players who participate in the match.
- Where the ball goes and who the first order assets and second order assets are.
- Deceitful movements.
- Direct and indirect actions.
- Percentage of goals and percentage of missed shots.
- Extraordinary responses.
- Among others

## - **Defensive actions**

- Type of defense chosen for each specific action.
- Who move towards the opponents (marking the man) and who move towards the space (marking in area).
- Players who are part of the barriers (number, order and behaviour)
- Spatial distribution of the participants (goalkeeper, near post, far post, short, advanced, etc.).
- Who and how many go to the block zone.
- Monitorings.
- Technical responses to each specific action.
- Extraordinary responses (assess if this information should be included or not).
- Specific movements or action or deceit.

## **B. Structure**

We will show a theoretical structure of reports that may serve as a basis on the development of your own, personal structure. Let us not forget that the structure depends on the context we are in. We will also display a practical example of the structure of a report.

### B.1. General data about the match:

- Teams.
- Competiton.
- Date.
- Location.
- Others.

### B.2 Background of the match:

- Forestate to the game: Events worthy of being mentioned, such as declarations, scandals, individual confrontations, etc.
- Playing field: dimensions, surface, etc.
- Weather conditions: Wind, rain, sun orientation as regards the field, etc.
- Spectators: Habitual characteristics and/ or circumstances. For example, it is possible that the supporters of a team often cheer effusively for their team, but they find themselves in a situation in which this does not happened, or even in a hostile situation, due to, for example, previous scores, declarations, players' behaviour, etc.
- Opposing team of our observed opponent: A short review about the opposing team's characteristic will help us to better contextualize the behaviour of our opponent.
- Others.

### B.3 Line-ups:

- Starting line-ups.
- Substitutions. Include the minutes, the score dashboard up to that moment, and the changes that the substitution causes on the team. It is possible that changes in the positions and/ or the general functioning of the team are produced. Charting these will help us predict habitual behaviour in relation to the circumstances of the match.
- Final line-up.

### B.4 Moments of play:

General behaviour (match plan).

Our objective is to pinpoint the match plan of the observed opponent. Although it is not easy to detect each and every component of that match plan, in the first minutes, the opponent's behaviour may show us, in a clearer way, which their general playing system is.

It is true that there are many factors that may produce a change in behaviour, especially the result of the game. For this reason it is necessary to identify if these factors have been previously taken into consideration in the opposing team's match plan, which will be a valuable resource for our analysis.

A simple description of the facts that took place during our observation of the opponent is not very useful. The information that we will include in the report must be:

- **Well structured**, that is to say, It should follow a certain logical order that allows for a clear and holistic view of the message we are trying to convey.
- There **must not** be any conceptual **contradictions**.

As a matter of fact, structuring information in a tidy way will prevent us from making such contradictions, and it will also enable us to produce a more coherent report.

Taking into account that the phases of play can be distinguished but cannot be separated, because one is part of the other, and they condition one another, in the following section we can see one way in which all this information can be put together.

- Attack.
- Defense.
- Transitions (DAT and ADT).
- Set pieces.

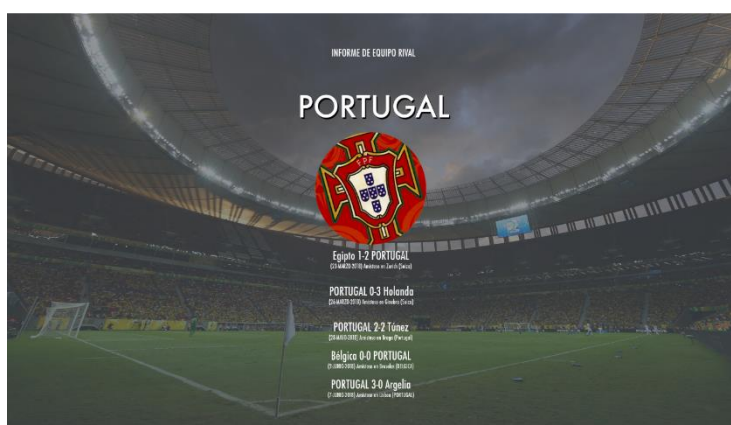
## B.5 Players (individual/ collective report):

- It is habitual to include this heading in the collective report, but it can also be recorded separately, as has been described in the previous module.
- Collective information of that team can also be included, that is to say, we can make reference to the defenders, midfielders, forwards or other groups or associations of players that may result significance for our analysis.

Next, we will take a look at an example of a report on an opponent team. There are some considerations that it is worth mentioning before observing this report:

- The figure presented depicts the descriptive part of a report.
- Some videos would pop up through hyperlinks.
- It is of utmost importance that the report be as graphic and visual as possible.
- It is also important to put together in each slide the information in an interrelated way, so its interpretation becomes easier:
  - Players.
  - Starting alignment, substitutions, finishing alignment.
  - Attack phase and attack-defense transition (ADT).
  - Defense phase and defense-attack transition (DAT).
  - Most habitual positions in the last matches.
  - Possible line-ups and frequent substitutions in relation to the result.

**Figure 2: Information on the observed matches (opponent team, final score, date, location and competition) to be used in a more encompassing report**



Source: author's production.

On Figure 3 we can see the opponent team's line-up with pictures of each one of the players, located in their most frequent position on the field. Also, the current team where each one plays is included (if we are writing a report of a given club, we can erase the club and include each player's nationality instead). The player's age is also

included (which could be substituted for the date of birth); their height (in this case, only those players who are above a given height are highlighted); and, in this case, the ones who tend to be left-footed have a yellow foot on the left side of their picture.

**Figure 3: Information about the opponent team's line-up.**

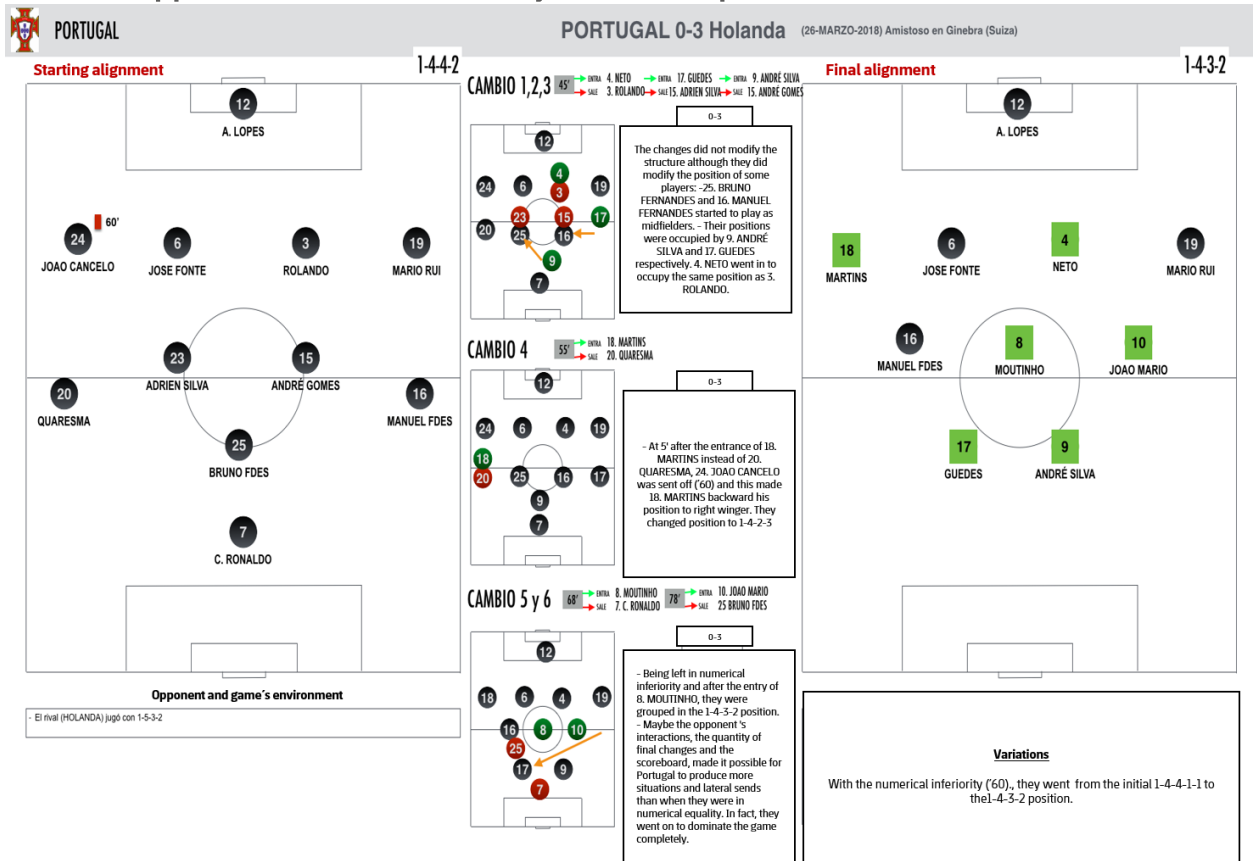


Source: author's production.

On Figure 4 we can see:

- Starting alignment.
- Substitutions that have taken place throughout the match.
- Changes produced by these substitutions of players.
- A section dedicated to the opponent our target opponent is facing, and the background of the match.
- Variables that may have taken place.

Figure 4: Starting alignment. Substitutions. Information about the opponent. Variables that may have taken place.

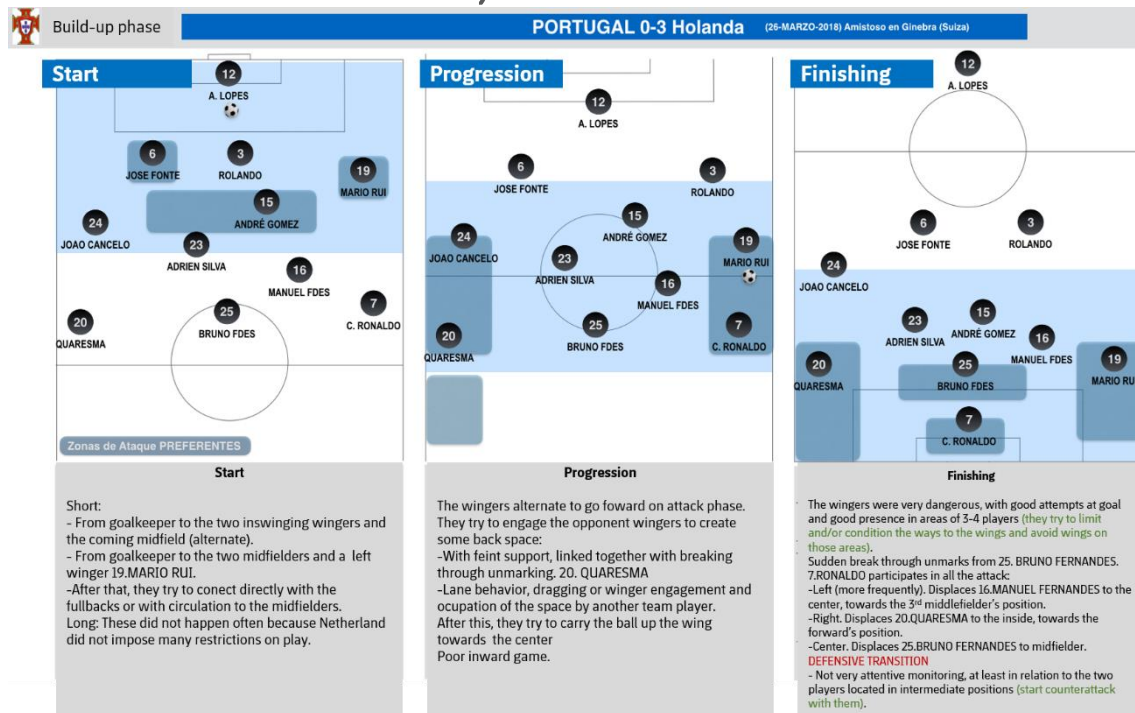


Source: author's production.

On the following Figure (5) the general characteristics of our opponent's attack are described:

- The player's positions for attack in relation to the movement and the position of the ball.
- The preferred zones of attack, that is to say, the places where players often start, progress and finish, should be marked.
- In each moment (start, progression and finish), we will write down the observed behaviours presented in a more general way (bottom gray chart).
- Some recommendation or suggestions are included (written in green).
- We can also monitor the players' behaviour after the loss of the ball.

Figure 5: General characteristics of the opponent's attack (including defensive transitions DAT in some moments)

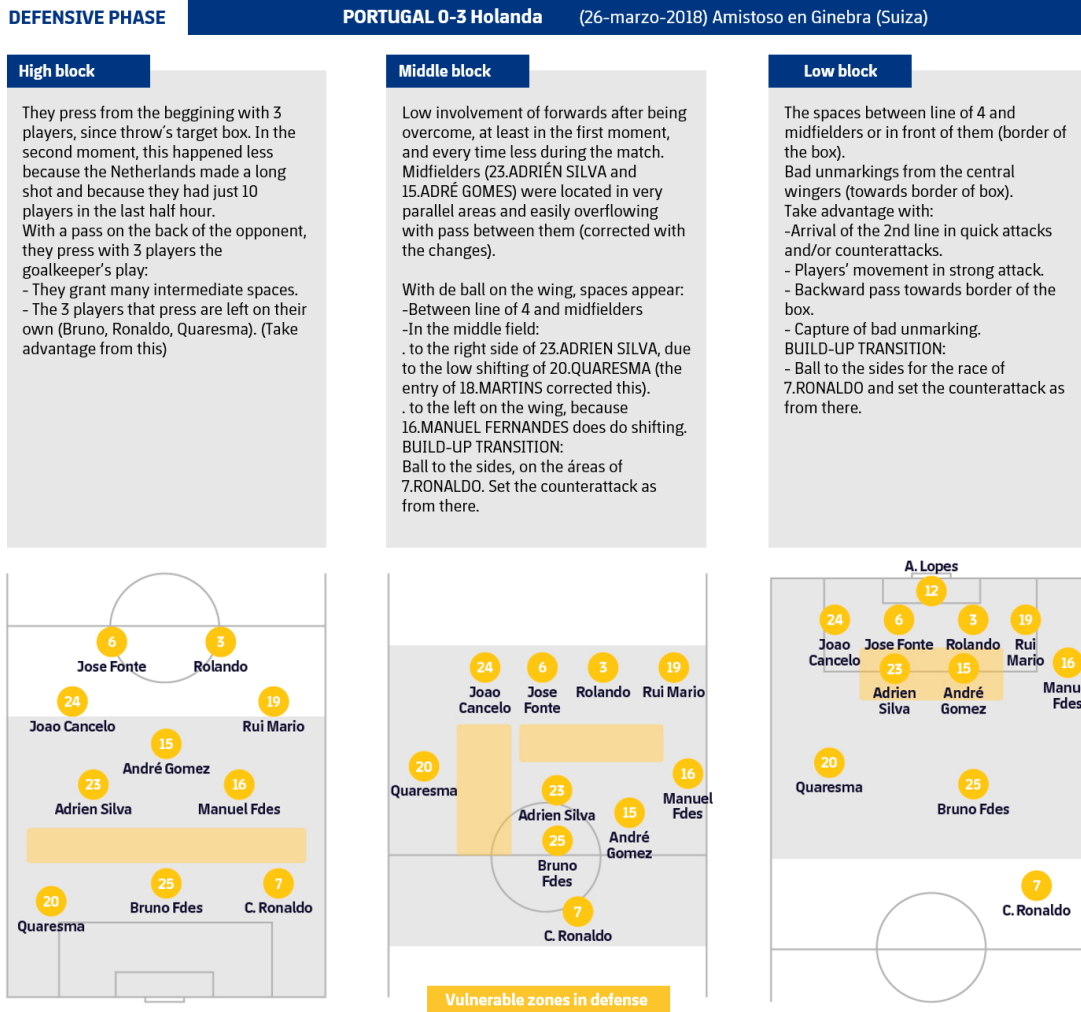


Source: author's production.

We will continue with the characteristics of our opponent's defense (Figure 6):

- The players' defensive position in relation to the moment and position of the ball.
- The vulnerable areas in defense should be marked, which implies marking each one of the positions – low block, middle block and high block – where free spaces tend to appear, or zones where it is easier to attack them.
- In each moment (low block, middle block and high block) we will write down the observed behaviours presented in a more general way.
- Some recommendation or suggestions are included (written in green).
- We can also monitor the behaviour after ball recovery (build-up transition ADT in some of those moments).

Figure 6: General characteristics of our opponent's defense (including build-up transition ADT in some moments).



**High block**

- IN KICK-OFF FROM THE BOX, making difficult the opponent's short play:  
The midfielders shorten the field until the central circle (referent):  
- Try a long pass to go deep or directly to the area (DE GEA against Argentina).  
PRESSURE with 5 players:  
- forward (7.CRISTIANO or 9. ANDRÉ SILVA if he plays)  
Second striker (10.JOAO MARIO more probable than 8.JOAO MOUTINHO)  
winger in the side of the ball (11.BERNARDO SILVA or 17.GUEDES):  
If the way out is on 11.BERNARDO SILVA's side:  
In the opposite wing there is space for 5x2 / 2x1 (with 20.QUARESMA happened, but with 17.GUEDES) with a complete circulation.  
with opponent winger located at width.  
winger marking 5. R. GUERREIRO (DID NOT make it on time for defence).  
- If the way out is on 17.GUEDES's side:  
11. BERNARDO SILVA tries to perform in intermediate zone.

With BEHIND PASS from the opponent to the goalkeeper or backward midfielders:  
Pressure with 5 players (forward, wingers and second strikers).  
The team breaks in 5+5 (take advantage of intermediate zones in front of the line of 4 + Pivot).

At least 3 out of the 5 that pressure are alone overcome (forward, wingers and/ or second strikers) (take advantage to attract and progress).



**Middle block**

POSITION:  
If the ball is on the opposing field:  
Start pressure block from the position of the ball.  
If the ball is on own field:  
Perform two lines of 4, leaving 7.CRISTIANO and, a little less, 17.GUEDES unmarked.  
FUNCTIONING:  
With CENTERED ball:  
Spaces at the back of the 2 Forwards in case the opponent circulates with 3 in the lowfield (3 midfielders or 2 holding midfielders +1 winger)  
Spaces at the back of the second strikers and sides of the pivot after attraction with the ball  
movement of 14.WILLIAN CARVALHO from right to left (Iniesta...).  
With ball on WING:  
Spaces between the line of 4 and 14. WILLIAN CARVALHO.  
Spaces for inward interaction:  
If 20.QUARESMA plays, take advantage that he does not shift with ball on the opposite wing  
When 14. WILLIAN CARVALHO marks on the left wing (after imbalance of the winger).  
With the passing of time and after circulating the ball because 8.JOAO MOUTINHO and 10.JOAO MARIO had a tough time.  
Excessive shifting of wingers, especially 15. RICARDO PEREIRA if he plays (take advantage of backs).  
LINE of 4:  
Laterales que saltan si su par viene a pedir (EELL a costados de Centrales)  
Centrales que siguen el desmarque de ruptura del punta (EELL delante de centrales, aprovechar con jugador cercano al que realiza el desmarque)  
BUILD-UP TRANSITION:  
Inward ball with 10. JOAO MARIO in a very vertical movement with the ball.  
Ball to intermediate spaces, usually to 17.GUEDES to set the counterattack.  
Ball to the sides to 7.RONALDO's race and finishing or setting the counterattack.  
Try to avoid it with:  
precision on inward interactions (do not lose balls)  
be attentive and take part in the PTP  
continuous and rigorous monitoring



**Low block**

FUNCTIONING:  
With ball on the MIDDLE FIELD. Space between line of 4 and Pivot. Doubt and incorrect distances between 14. WILLIAN CARVALHO and 8. MOUTINHO to defend and control their backs. Take advantage with:  
Wall or enabling a 3rd man.  
Mobility of players in combined attack on the sides of 14. WILLIAN CARVALHO.  
Advances of the 2nd line in quick attacks and/or counterattacks.  
With DEEP ball or on bottom line:  
Space between pivot and second strikers (BORDER OF THE BOX):  
Spaces in front of 14. WILLIAN CARVALHO, surprising players of 2nd line that ARE NOT marked in the box.  
Backward pass on the border of the box. The second strikers DO NOT reach.  
Bad unmarkings of center wingers (from borders of the box). Take advantage with:  
Capture of the bad unmarking.  
BUILD-UP TRANSITION:  
Inward ball with 10. JOAO MARIO in a very vertical movement with the ball.  
Ball to intermediate spaces, usually to 17.GUEDES to set the counterattack.  
Ball to the sides to 7.RONALDO's race and finishing or setting the counterattack.  
Try to avoid it with:  
precision on inward interactions (do not lose balls)  
be attentive and take part in the PTP  
continuous and rigorous monitoring.



Source: author's production.

As we have already seen in the previous Figures, the following one has been constructed from the observation of a determined match. Our objective as analysts is to elaborate a collective report of our team's opponent, which means that we need to put together all the general behaviour observed and written down during these specific matches to come up with an extensive report that reflects in a faithful and summarized way those aspects which are relevant for our team, coach and coaching staff.

One of the main objectives of devising a report on our opponent may be to predict the possible alignment and position of the players. To do this, it is necessary to know the alignment from the previous matches.

On Figure 7 we can see the alignments with the positions 1-4-4-2 (the most frequent one). We can also appreciate the position of the opponent they face, the date, competition and venue where the match will take place.



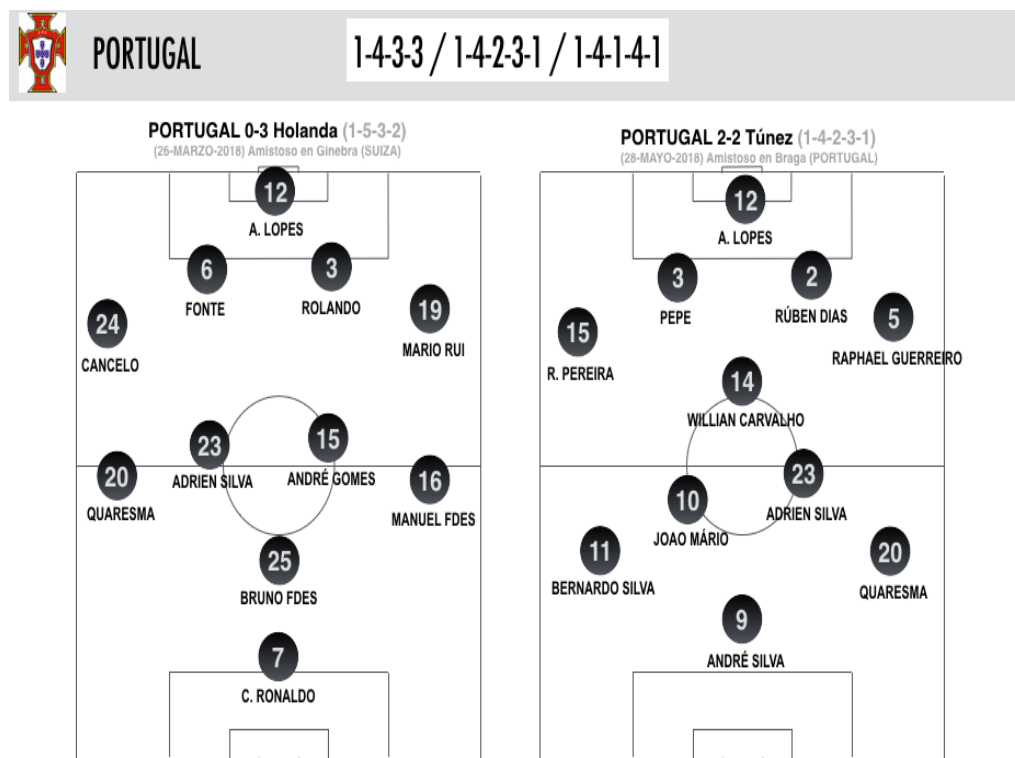
Figure 7: Alignments with the positions 1-4-4-2 (the most frequent one)



Source: author's production.

On the following Figure (n° 8) we can see the matches where the positions 1-4-3-3, 1-4-2-3-1 or 1-4-1-4-1 are adopted.

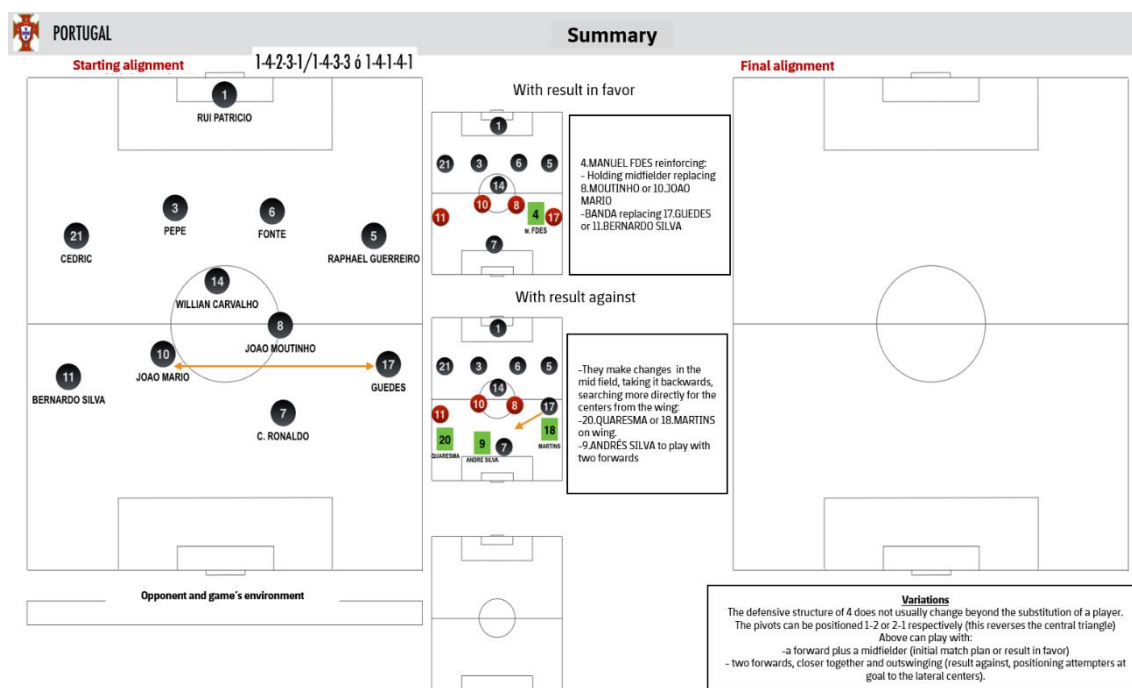
**Figure 8: Alignment with 1-4-3-3, 1-4-2-3-1 or 1-4-1-4-1 positions.**



Source: author's production.

The distinction or grouping of one or other position will depend on each team and on the criteria of observation of the opponent. With the gathered information we can come up with the possible starting alignment, as well as the habitual behaviour with result in favour or against.

**Figure 9: Elaboration of the possible starting alignment, as well as the habitual behaviour with result in favour or against of the opposing team.**



Source: author's production.

Lastly, we consider of great importance to include a section where the analyst proposes responses towards the behaviours observed on the opponent. The analyst should also have the chance to suggest training tasks. This imply a profound knowledge on the part of the analyst, in relation to the game as well as to their own team. For us, this opportunity may turn out to be a motivational, extra factor on their job.

### C. Format

There are many formats in which to make reports. It is usually demanded that they be as graphic as possible, that is to say, they should be visually appealing and simple to interpret. This will help the coach, coaching staff and team player's a lot to quickly understand the message you want to convey. Normally the report includes several formats at once (writing, video, photos, graphics, animations, audios, etc.).

In the previous section (B. Structure) we saw an example of the descriptive part of a report. We consider that the format that best helps the coach, coaching staff and players is the videographic one, that is, short videos where the aspects we want to highlight are emphasized. We can find many interesting examples on social networks.

Here are some examples published on websites, such as Twitter y Scribd:

- Everton FC (19/1/2019). Corner in favor:  
<https://twitter.com/Carter/status/1108327842721513472?s=20>
- Moment with ball positional play  
<https://spielverlagerung.com/2020/05/02/sassuolos-positional-play-system/>
- Moment without the ball in defense. Box defense  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P9xttU6NoRw>
- Houston Dynamo (2019). Here we see an example of a much thorough report, which includes statistics, videos, positions, etc. Perhaps this format is aimed more at the coach or coaching staff than at the players:  
<https://es.scribd.com/document/423407056/Houston-Dynamo-Report>

We have already talked about the importance of agreeing with the recipient of the report on all its aspects, but, at the same time, it will be essential to update and evolve our reports throughout the season taking these objectives into account:

- Adjust it more and more to the real needs of those to whom the report will be presented.
- Make it more attractive.
- Avoid being monotonous throughout the season.

#### D. Deadlines

*The deadlines for the presentation of the reports will depend on many circumstances:*

- **Competition** or competitions we are taking part on. A week in which we have 3 matches (for example, Sunday, league; Wednesday, champions; Saturday, league) is not the same as another where we play only two games (for example, Friday, league; Sunday, league) or if we take a break, for any reason.
- **Material and / or human resources** that we have. Coordinating all of them for a better performance will avoid unwanted burn outs and unnecessary delays.
- **The Coach's needs:**
  - There are some coaches who demand that information as soon as possible so as to design the weekly training situations or they may even need it well in advance to decide the alignment of the previous match;
  - others need it as from a certain day of the week.
- **Weekly dynamics** when it comes to using this information. In this sense, there are different ways of functioning:
  - there are coaches that show players aspects of the opponent since the beginning of the week;
  - others, only do it the day before or even in one of the meetings previous to the match day;

- some other times, various types of reports are delivered throughout the week.

Below, we can see an example of how the type of competition greatly conditions the preparation of reports on the opposing team. We find it interesting to present the schedule for live observation used by the analysis department of the Royal Spanish Football Federation (RFEF) during the group stage, in the last football world cup played in Russia 2018.

This selection will depend on many factors:

- Opposing teams (during the group stage).
- Probable opposing teams (during the following stages).
- Number of times a particular opponent has been observed.
- Possibility of observing two opponents in the same match.
- Distances for the analyst's commute.
- Number of analyst available.
- Time zones of the country.

**Figure 10: Schedule for live observation used by the analysis department of the Royal Spanish Football Federation (RFEF) Football World Cup played in Russia 2018. (groups stage)**

Fase de Grupos													
Fecha	Grupo	Partido	Sede	Distancia	Analista	Fecha	Grupo	Partido	Sede	Distancia	Analista	Equipo	Visto
Jueves 14-jun. 18:00	A	Rusia - A. Saudí	Moscú-L		A. Barea	Viernes 22-jun. 15:00	E	Brasil - Costa Rica	San Petersburgo		A. Barea	<b>Prioridad 1 (grupos)</b>	
						Viernes 22-jun. 17:00	D	Nigeria - Islandia	Volgograd			Portugal	+
						Viernes 22-jun. 20:00	E	Serbia - Suiza	Kaliningrado			Irán	+
Viernes 15-jun. 17:00	A	Egipto - Uruguay	Ekaterimburgo									Marruecos	++
Viernes 15-jun. 18:00	B	Marruecos - Irán	San Petersburgo		A. Barea								
<b>Viernes 15-jun. 21:00</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>Portugal - España</b>	<b>Sochí</b>			Sábado 23-jun. 15:00	G	Bélgica - Túnez	Moscú-S		A. Barea	<b>Prioridad 2 (octavos)</b>	
						Sábado 23-jun. 21:00	F	Alemania - Suecia	Sochí		Antolin	Rusia	+++
Sábado 16-jun. 13:00	C	Francia - Australia	Kazán			Sábado 23-jun. 18:00	F	Corea Sur - México	Rostov del Don			Egipto	+
Sábado 16-jun. 16:00	D	Argentina - Islandia	Moscú-S		A. Barea							Uruguay	+
Sábado 16-jun. 19:00	C	Perú - Dinamarca	Saransk			Domingo 24-jun. 15:00	G	Inglaterra - Panamá	Nizhni Novgorod			A. Saudí	+
Sábado 16-jun. 21:00	D	Croacia - Nigeria	Kaliningrado			Domingo 24-jun. 20:00	H	Japón - Senegal	Ekaterimburgo			<b>Prioridad 3 (cuartos)</b>	
						Domingo 24-jun. 21:00	H	Polonia - Colombia	Kazán			Francia	+
Domingo 17-jun. 16:00	E	Costa Rica - Serbia	Samara									Dinamarca	No
Domingo 17-jun. 18:00	F	Alemania - México	Moscú-L		A. Barea	Lunes 25-jun. 18:00	A	Uruguay - Rusia	Samara		A. Barea	Croacia	No
Domingo 17-jun. 21:00	E	Brasil - Suiza	Rostov del Don			Lunes 25-jun. 17:00	A	A. Saudí - Egipto	Volgograd			Argentina	+
						Lunes 25-jun. 21:00	B	Irán - Portugal	Saransk			<b>Prioridad 4 (cuartos)</b>	
Lunes 18-jun. 14:00	F	Suecia - Corea Sur	Nizhni Novgorod			<b>Lunes 25-jun. 20:00</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>España - Marruecos</b>	<b>Kaliningrado</b>			Perú	+
Lunes 18-jun. 17:00	G	Bélgica - Panamá	Sochí									Islandia	+
Lunes 18-jun. 20:00	G	Túnez - Inglaterra	Volgograd			Martes 26-jun. 17:00	C	Dinamarca - Francia	Moscú-L		A. Barea	Nigeria	No
						Martes 26-jun. 17:00	C	Australia - Perú	Sochí			Australia	No
Martes 19-jun. 18:00	H	Polonia - Senegal	Moscú-S			Martes 26-jun. 21:00	D	Nigeria - Argentina	San Petersburgo		A. Barea	<b>Otros</b>	
Martes 19-jun. 15:00	H	Colombia - Japón	Saransk			Martes 26-jun. 21:00	D	Islandia - Croacia	Rostov del Don		A. Barea	Alemania	++
Martes 19-jun. 21:00	A	Rusia - Egipto	San Petersburgo		A. Barea							Bélgica	++
						Miércoles 27-jun. 19:00	F	México - Suecia	Ekaterimburgo			Brasil	+
Miércoles 20-jun. 15:00	B	Portugal - Marruecos	Moscú-L		A. Barea	Miércoles 27-jun. 17:00	F	Corea Sur - Alemania	Kazán			Inglaterra	+
Miércoles 20-jun. 18:00	A	Uruguay - A. Saudí	Rostov del Don			Miércoles 27-jun. 21:00	E	Serbia - Brasil	Moscú-S		A. Barea	Suecia	+
<b>Miércoles 20-jun. 21:00</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>Irán - España</b>	<b>Kazán</b>			Miércoles 27-jun. 21:00	E	Suiza - Costa Rica	Nizhni Novgorod		A. Barea	México	+
												Costa Rica	+
Jueves 21-jun. 20:00	C	Francia - Perú	Ekaterimburgo		A. Barea	Jueves 28-jun. 16:00	H	Senegal - Colombia	Samara			Túnez	+
Jueves 21-jun. 17:00	C	Dinamarca - Australia	Samara			Jueves 28-jun. 16:00	H	Japón - Polonia	Volgograd				
Jueves 21-jun. 21:00	D	Argentina - Croacia	Nizhni Novgorod			Jueves 28-jun. 20:00	G	Inglaterra - Bélgica	Kaliningrado		A. Barea		
						Jueves 28-jun. 20:00	G	Panamá - Túnez	Saransk				

Source: the RFEF's Department of analysis, 2018. Inedit, own file.

## 2.2 Content selection and its influence on the match plan

In the previous unit of this module our main objective was to describe the basic structure of the models to write reports. Now that we have studied such models, we can focus on **selecting** the information, in order to come up with the **match plan**.

### 1. Content selection

We need to take into account both the quantitative and the qualitative factor.

A. **What** type of information should we aim at transmitting? (qualitative factor)

The information provided to our team and/ or player about the opposing team must be **useful**, which means that the receptors of that information have to feel like they can easily use it to respond to the opponent's defensive phases and neutralize their build-up phases.

In order to be useful, such information must fulfil at least the following guidelines:

- It has to be **true**. That is, it must be adjusted to suit reality. Nowadays, the amount of false information circulating through different means and channels is quite abundant. This may lead us to arrive at wrong conclusions during the process of our analysis. Because of this reason, proof-checking the information we gather for feasibility and truthfulness is the first step, and maybe the most important one, in the whole process.

**Figure 12: Feasibility or truthfulness of the information (part 1)**

**Half of the pieces news circulating in 2022 will be false**

Experts warn of the rise of misinformation and the problems to overcome it.

Source: [Image without title about feasibility and truthfulness of information]. (2017a). Retrieved from <https://www.elperiodico.com/es/sociedad/20171108/la-mitad-de-noticias-que-circulen-en-el-2022-seran-falsas-6411174>

Figure 13: Feasibility or truthfulness of the information (part 2)

## 85% of what is disseminated through social networks or the Internet is garbage: UP

Students of Communication of the Panamerican University explained that false news quickly invade these sites. People believe less in traditional media.

Source: [Image without title about feasibility and truthfulness of information. Part 2]. (2017b). Retrieved from <https://www.excelsior.com.mx/nacional/2017/11/30/1204786>

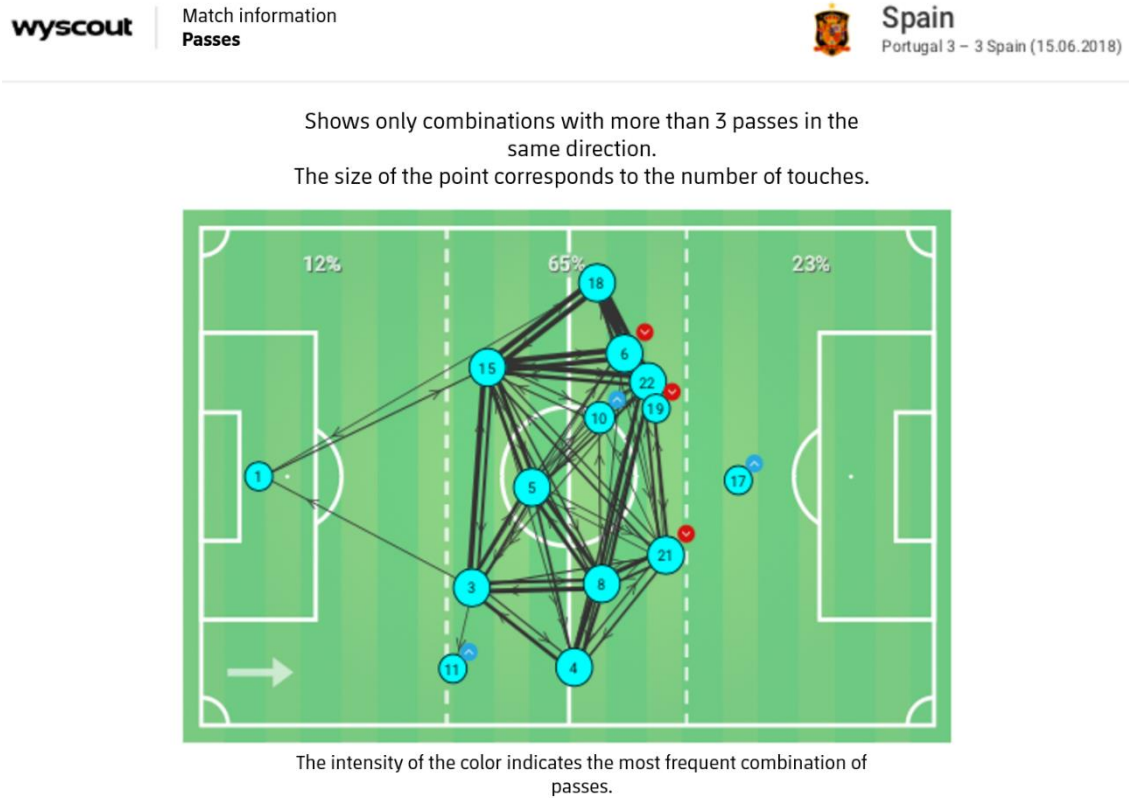
- It has to be **significant**. The information presented should be precise so it is easier to grasp. It should be important, as it should represent or mean something. This significance can be perceived in two planes:
  - Qualitative significance. It has to do with the relevance of the information.
  - Quantitative significance. It has to do with the frequency in which a given fact takes place. Namely, if that fact is habitual or not.

We should consider both aspects in order to decide which information to include and which to let aside. Let us look at some examples on this issue.

- Qualitative significance: During set pieces, it is very probable that successful situations are repeated. For example, a corner in favour where a goal has been scored recently. This is significant information because of the importance that the opposing team will give to the success achieved by its execution (probably with a different nuance).
- Quantitative significance: Let us imagine that the opponent has regularly executed a type of corner in favour throughout the season, and has only carried out another, once. In this case, we should prioritize the selection of the first and not the second, due to the quantitative factor.
- Quantitative and qualitative significance: An example of this would be the sequence of passes elaborated by different digital analysis

platforms. Below we can see a Figure corresponding to Wyscout, one of these platforms.

**Figure 14: Sequence of passes produced by a digital analysis platform.**



Source: Screenshot from Wyscout (Wyscout Spa, 2018).

- It has to be **trainable**. This entails that it can be used during training sessions, in the team, in other locations and with the resources available. Although it is true that there is information that is not for the purpose of training, and, nonetheless knowing it may help the players face the match, in some top category teams it is common that a lot of that information is not translated into the training. In such cases the information may be transmitted through different channels. This particular circumstance may take place because of two main reasons:
  - The player's and/ or the team's high level make it possible that some aspects of the opposing team are not necessarily trained.
  - The high demands of the competitions that the team is participating in sometimes have an influence on the time allotted for training of these aspects, which is shortened. For example, many times a team plays three matches in one week, and this situation can be extended through several weeks.

We can conclude then, that, the higher the professional level of the team and/ or the player, the more we can skip the training of some aspects of the opponent, and just mentioning them or explaining them will be enough for the players to act accordingly to that information.

**B. How much** of that information should be transmitted? (quantitative factor)

At this point it is clear that our objective is to know the opponent as much and deep as possible. However, transmitting that enormous amount of information to the coaching staff or to the players may result in a kind of information “overdose” with unwanted effects.

We should also take into account psychological factors when we assess the quantity of information that we will transmit about the opponent. The players’ perception as regard ‘how much’ they are adjusting to a future opponent is one of these psychological factors to take into consideration. We need to have clear which message should be transmitted in each moment. For example, if our team undergoes a phase where they lack confidence, it is not advisable that they perceive that we are greatly conditioned by our opponent. This could deepen that lack of confidence or self-esteem, since it would highlight the figure of the opponent by undermining our prominent role.

There are some strategies that we can incorporate in order to transmit this information without the player’s perceiving an excessive interest in the opponent. There are some teams that introduce changes in their training tasks according to their future opponent, but do not highlight too much the information that triggered those changes. One strategy, then, is to make knowledge about the opponent implicit instead of explicit.

## 2. Devising the match plan

When the moment comes to devise the match plan, the analyst or analysts may play a fundamental role through their previous selection of information described in the previous section. However, this task of ‘filtering’ is different in the context of each team and will greatly depend on the preferences and habits of the coach and the coaching staff. Analysts need to be prepared to adapt to these differences and to be as useful and proactive as possible.

To start with, we need to visit four main points:

- A.** The opponent’s strong and weak points:
  - Attack.
  - Defense.
  - Transitions (attack-defense - ADT - and defense-attack – DAT -).
  - Set pieces, in favour and against.

- Individual.
  - Collective.
- B.** Our own team's weak and strong points:
- In the same vein as the previous point (A). This is not generally explained openly, but it is necessary that they be present when we devise the match plan. We need to keep in mind that our team is constantly evolving throughout the season; there are moments when we are better and others when we are worse. Keep in mind that the alignment of one or another player may condition this to a great extent. Let us reflect upon:
    - What our team can and cannot do.
    - What our team wants or is willing to do and what it is not. This is mostly linked to emotional and volitional aspects.
- C.** Interrelation between both aspects (A and B), that is, our own and our opponent's strengths and weaknesses.
- Once we know all of them, we need to 'link' the characteristics of both teams so that we can work on them.
- When we talk about the opponent's strengths and how to overcome them, we can use several strategies:
- Avoid them and/ or minimize them.
  - Condition them.
  - Assume them.

Let us see an example. Imagine an opponent tends to pass the ball from the goalkeeper, who plays with the midfielders, wingers or holding midfielders located in a short or middle distance.

- Avoid and/ or minimize these situations. We would try to put a high, effective pressure with the intention of dissuading that action of minimizing the chances of performance.
- Condition them. We can condition a play to happen most of the times through one area or in a determined way, where an advantageous situation or challenge may arise. For example, offering a play with a midfielder that has less technical quality coupled with a player that marks really well or even generates numeric superiority.
- Assume them. In this case we can not return to defensive shape, in a studied way, and work on an effective attack after recovery of the ball.

We think in this point it is worth and relevant mentioning Ángel Vales Vázquez (2012).

		Team "B"		
		Build-up G.T.P.	Defensive G.T.P.	G.T.P. Movement
Team "A"	Build-up G.T.P.	Conceptual agreement and open format: - High rhythm of play. - Bidirectional orientation of game. - High frequency of finishing actions.	Total conceptual disagreement: - Clear imbalance. - Unidirectional orientation of game. - High frequency of finishing actions.	Partial conceptual disagreement and semi-open format: - Play predominantly in one direction. - Moderated frequency of finishing actions.
	Defensive G.T.P.	Total conceptual disagreement: - Clear imbalance. - Unidirectional orientation of game. - High frequency of finishing actions.	Conceptual agreement and close format: - Blocked play. - Frequent interruptions. - Low frequency of finishing actions.	Partial conceptual disagreement and semi-closed format: - Blocked play. - Frequent interruptions. - Moderate frequency of finishing actions.
	G.T.P. Movement	Partial conceptual disagreement and semi-open format: - Juego predominante en una sola dirección. - Moderate frequency of finishing actions.	Partial conceptual disagreement and semi-closed format: - Blocked play. - Frequent interruptions. - Moderate frequency of finishing actions.	Conceptual agreement and open format: - Blocked play. - Frequent interruptions. - Moderate frequency of finishing actions.

**Table 1: Proposal of characterization of matches in relation to the styles of play assumed by the intervening teams.**

Source: author's production based on Vales Vázquez, 2012.

When he makes reference to general tactical planning (G.T.P.) he establishes three types:

- Build-up general tactical planning: Build-up conception of the game, in which high degrees of risk are assumed.
- General tactical planning of Movement: Balanced conception of build-up play and defense, in which moderate degrees of risk are assumed.
- Defensive general tactical planning: Defensive conception of the game, in which low degrees of risk are assumed.

Apart from describing them, he establishes a relationship between the two teams in relation to their general tactical planning (G.T.P.). As we can appreciate in the previous table, each one of the teams (A and B) adopts a particular G.T.P. and due to this, certain situations are derived:

- Conceptual agreement (both teams manifest the same G.T.P.).
- Conceptual disagreement (both teams manifest different G.T.P.) that may be:
  - Total (if one adopts a defensive G.T.P. and the other, build-up G.T.P.).
  - Partial (if one adopts G.T.P. of movement).

Another naming that can be observed on the previous table is:

- Open format (both are build-up G.T.P.).
- Close format (both are defensive G.T.P.).
- Neutral format (both are G.T.P. of movement).
- Semi-open format (one is G.T.P. of movement and the other is build-up G.T.P.)
- Semi-closed format (one is G.T.P. of movement and the other is defensive G.T.P.)

#### D. Prevision of situations during the match:

- Score board. In favour or against. Need to manage these circumstances in a tactical way.
- Goal. In favour or against. Control and take advantage of the psychological factor.
- Minute or section of the match.
- Substitutions (our own or the opponent's).
- Possible tactical changes that such situations may trigger.
- Changes in position.
- Changes in functioning.
- Books. In favour or against. Factor to take into account to "orient" the game towards certain place protect or engage our own or the opposing team's players, respectively.
- Numerical superiority or inferiority. Prevision of behaviour and training of such behaviour, since when such situations happen, they tend to determine the final score of the game.
- The incidence of VAR (*Video Assistant Referee*). This new element affects players at an emotional level, to a lesser or greater extent, the behaviour of certain players and/ or teams. Take this in to account, prevent and foresee possible situations and work on this will help us manage those situations in the right way when they take place during the match. Let us imagine the level of frustration that a goal that is annulled after several minutes by the VAR can have on the team. In an opposite way, it looks like positive emotions tend to be minimized a little if, say, after scoring a goal, this action needs to be re-checked although it is later confirmed that it was a valid action.

We can see in the following Figure an example of a quick and very clear reminder of the match plan done a couple of minutes before entering the field.

Figure 15: Lucas Alcaráz González. Generalities of the match plan. Real Zaragoza-Cádiz (30 11-2018)

## Match plan

### First minutes

Cádiz pressure= Play for space  
(wingers and forwards)

### Intermediate phase

Cádiz fold= Play + Ball to the  
positions + Monitoring

### RZG winning

Cádiz with possession= Pressure +  
Shifting: Quick OT suffer

Source: author's production. Unpublished file.

# References

[The RFEF's ] (Real Federación Española de Fútbol) departament of analysis, 2018. Inedit, own file.

[García Moreno, C.] (s.f.). *¿Cómo analizar y sacar rendimiento a las Acciones a Balón Parado (ABP)?* Recuperado de <https://objetivoanalista.com/analizar-abp-futbol/>

[Image without title about a meeting of the coach, coaching staff and football analyst]. (s.f.). Retrieved from: [https://deportesimagenes.canalrcn.com/ImgDeportesNew/reunion\\_dts.jpg](https://deportesimagenes.canalrcn.com/ImgDeportesNew/reunion_dts.jpg)

[Image without title about feasibility and truthfulness of information]. (2017a). Retrieved from <https://www.elperiodico.com/es/sociedad/20171108/la-mitad-de-noticias-que-circulen-en-el-2022-seran-falsas-6411174>

[Image without title about feasibility and truthfulness of information. Part 2]. (2017b). Retrieved from <https://www.excelsior.com.mx/nacional/2017/11/30/1204786>

[Vales Vázquez, A.] (2012). *“Del análisis del juego a la edición de informes técnicos”*. Madrid: MC Sports.

[Wyscout Spa]. (2018). Screenshot from Wyscout. Chiavari.

[Figure 15]: Lucas Alcaráz González. Generalities of the match plan. Real Zaragoza-Cádiz (30 11-2018). Source: author's production. Unpublished file.