Module 3. Macroplane analysis

Introduction to Collective Analysis

To be able to develop a good playing style, a team needs to strive for excellence on all planes: micro, meso and macro. The macroplane is the most general and the easiest to develop since we can quickly derive some organization from systems of play and training using deductive methods, but not many teams achieve excellence on this plane. Looking at it generally often hides huge deficiencies, as attention to detail is neglected.

Paying close attention to detail will bring us closer to excellence. We will develop this attention to detail if we address the meso and micro planes, and focus on the specifics, but also if we strive for close attention to detail at the macro level.

The macroplane serves as the context for the meso and micro planes, and it is from these two planes that we can leverage advantages, since they are more similar to the execution of game behaviors. The goal is for our team to able to solve game situations and find solutions to the problems that arise. In order to have all of these resources available, we need to pay close attention to detail in all three planes: micro, meso and macro.

After having striven for a high level of detail in the micro and meso plane modules, this module focuses on the macroplane. If our goal is to offer significant resources to players and teams, we can achieve it as long as we pay attention to the details, as they will give us the opportunity to leverage advantages of the game.

Unit 3.1 Collective play

The notion of collective play is fundamental. It's about considering the whole rather than the sum of its parts. In order to achieve this, we must pay attention to the players themselves and to the interactions between them. It is as important to empower players as is it to seek meaningful interactions. We have to articulate coherently and coordinate the actions of each player so that, together, they learn to play collectively.

However, for that collective play to be more decisive and allow us to leverage the advantages that are created, we need to enhance the resources that each player has at their disposal. We avoid a reductionist view that does not value the interactions between players, in the same way that we steer clear of holism that only focuses on the whole and on the interactions of the parts without paying attention to the resources and

abilities had by each one of those parts. Then, we will define a series of criteria that allows us to achieve collective play.

3.1.1 The *suprasuperiority* of playing as 11; everyone participates

"*Suprasuperiority* consists of playing as 11" (Rubén de la Barrera conversations, unpublished).

The game demands everyone's participation in each situation we may face. Regardless of their position or distance from the ball, every player has something to do during the game. It can be to help the team build, detect or leverage advantages, or anticipate, detect or compensate for errors.

The player must recognize the functional role they have in each situation of play. These functional roles change from moment to moment, so the player must have the ability to adapt to these variations. Based on the functional role that each player has in a given situation of play, they can adjust their tactical movements to collaborate in dealing with any advantages and errors that occur. The athlete, whenever possible, helps the team in some way, and that collaboration does not always imply contact with the ball.

Table 1: Functional Roles in moments with the ball (W/ ball) and moments without the ball (W/O ball)

Functional roles W/BALL (moments with the ball)		
w/ ball	Possessor	Player in possession of the ball (determines dimensioned stage spaces)
	Direct Receiver	Player available to receive the ball from the current possessor
	Indirect Receiver	Player who cannot receive from the possessor, but who is within reach of the play.
	Engager	Player who attempts to counter or delay the opponent's action on the advantage created.
	Possessor-engager	Player in possession of the ball with the tactical intention of engaging opponents
	Supporter	Player that does not directly intervene in the play, but who acts to balance out an eventual loss of possession.
Functional roles in moments without the ball (w/o ball)		
w/o ball	1st defender	Player in a position to defend the possessor (determines dimensioned stage spaces)
	2nd defender	Supporting player, provides cover to the 1st defender and defends direct receivers nearby
	3rd defender	Intermediate or distant player who provides collective coverage (to 2nd and 3rd) and keeps an eye on opponents.
	Beaten	Defender passed by the line of flight they are defending from downfield, who prepares the counterattack.

Source: prepared by the authors based on Soriano, 2019.

In order to play as 11, each player needs to maintain certain activity and remain connected to the play. Remaining connected to the play allows you to anticipate situations and take control of the game. In addition, based on that concentration, the relationships established between players is more significant. They attend to the needs and requests or demands of their teammates and can more frequently reproduce empathic situations (Guerrero, 2019), from which synergies emerge. Players identify the tactical intentions of their teammates, as well as their needs and demands, and adjust their actions according to what their teammates project. This complementary nature and coordination allows the team to take meaningful action and begin to develop collective play.

The socio-affective structure, understood in a specific way, takes on great importance. If we want to strengthen the interactions between the players on our team, we will not prioritize recreational exercises—non-specific, socio-affective ones—in our training sessions. Instead, we will focus on developing interactions that can be significant during the game. These may be more natural, between players with similar sensitivity to the game; or more constructed, based on specific experiences.

If we want the whole to be more than the just sum of its parts, then we have to get the players to empower each other using the connections that exist between them. To develop meaningful interactions, each player needs to remain connected to the most relevant aspects of the game. Players should know that they can always help the team in some way and that their actions should be coordinated with the needs and demands of their teammates—mainly those closest to them.

3.1.2 Dynamic organization and reorganization; uncertainty

Organization consists of having answers to different situations of play based on created interactions. Achieving certain order is not complicated and, taking the system of play as a reference, we can achieve significant balance in stable situations. However, the demands of soccer involve managing the implicit uncertainty of the sport. We won't differentiate between the organization we can achieve in low block situations, where none of our players are eliminated, or the structure we implement in restarts from kick off. These situations are very stable and achieving balance is very easy.

We have to think about organization with respect to the demands of soccer. Managing chaos collectively must be our goal. We try to dynamically organize ourselves in a way in which all players move seamlessly within changing situations of play that may occur. This organization requires that we adapt to each of the scenarios we may face. We need to be flexibly organized and adapt so as not to show structural weaknesses in the face of any unexpected game situation to which we do not have a response.

The term "organization" is often confused with "order" or "symmetry". Clearly identifying a team's system of play does not mean that the team is better organized. Maintaining equal distances between the elements of a line of play does not mean it is more balanced. The ideal organization is associated with all the players on the team interpreting a specific situation of play in the same way and intervening in a coordinated way. These interactions are developed in training and, when fine-tuned, significant synergies are achieved.

This organization, in addition to being flexible and adaptive, must recognize what kind of situations will make a difference in a competition. The more unstable the scenario, the

greater the impact it can have on the outcome, as teams have more difficulty responding.

Not only is team organization important, but also its ability to reorganize itself is key. Recovering balance quickly diminishes the longevity of the advantage the opponent may have gained in an unexpected event. Reorganizing is closely related to going back to playing as 11 as quickly as possible, and it is necessary that players take on new roles to respond to the emerging situation.

A team's dynamic organization and ability to reorganize depends on the interactions developed in training, but we must not forget the influence of natural interactions between athletes. We try to take advantage of a common sensibility towards the game and interactions that occur naturally so that, with criteria established in training, they have the effectiveness and efficiency required for competition. Natural and constructed interactions are two sides of the same coin and complement each other. If we look at the abilities of the players and the impact that their natural interactions can have, we see that the organization is flexible and adaptable.

The organization of each team is specific because the elements that compose it are different. The concept of order does not take into account the interactive properties of players and the need to deal with chaos, while the concept of organization does.

3.1.3 Positional reference points: system of play (organization by lines) and stage spaces (organization in relation to the ball)

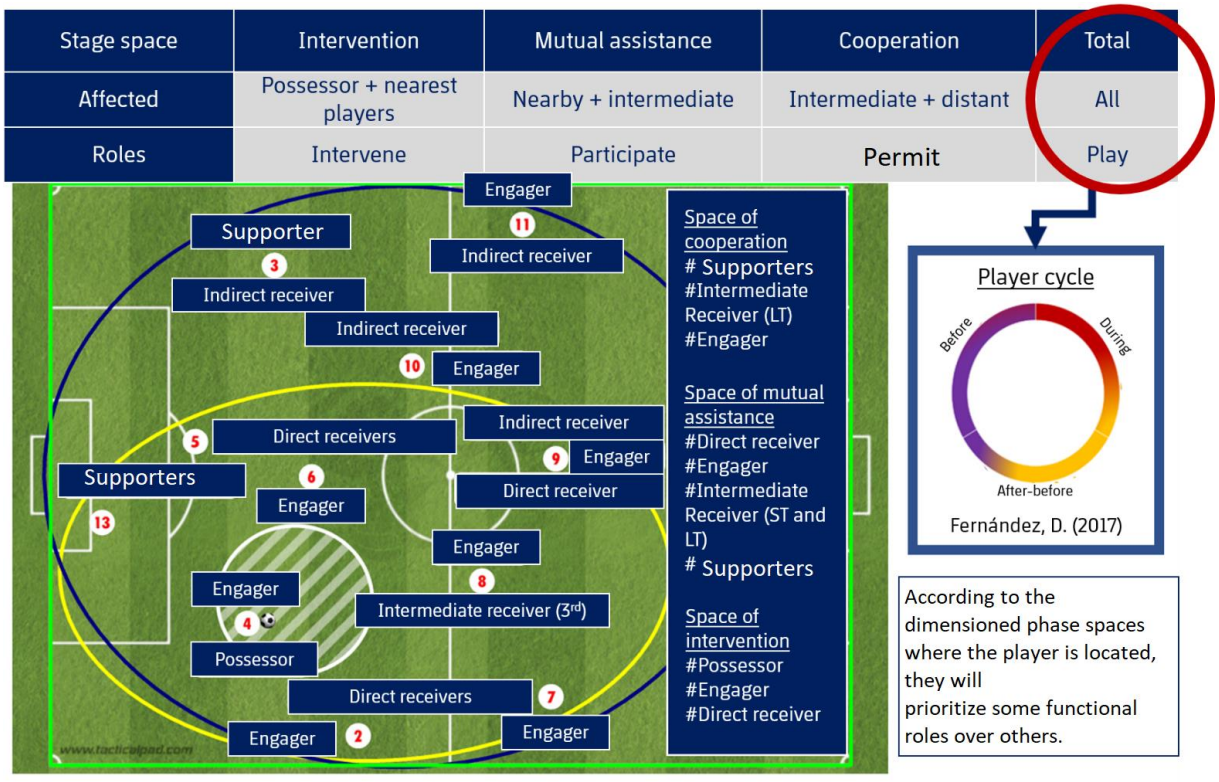
The appropriate location of each player will facilitate the development of the team's collective play. The term "location" implies the significant interaction between the location, space occupied; the position, how the space is occupied and what position is adopted; and the tactical intentions of a player, which contextualizes their location and position. Being in the right or wrong location only makes sense from a tactical point of view. We will define a number of positional references that will help the player be in the right location, with regards to their teammates and opponents.

Historically, the main reference point soccer players have used to choose the right location on the field is the system of play. This type of reference organizes in lines; with each player occupying a specific position which, in turn, belongs to a specific line of play. To achieve some flexibility in the organization using the system of play as a positional reference, players should play *from* their position and not *in* their position. Playing in their position generates rigidity in the structure and, in soccer, this type of behavior goes against the needs and demands of the game. Rigidity does not allow you to adapt to—or deal with—the changing, chaotic and unpredictable situations of the game that

frequently emerge. Playing in the position brings us closer to the fragile order that we want to avoid in order to respond to the requirements of this sport. However, we believe that an organization in lines where players intervene from their position, despite achieving some flexibility, is not enough to solve game situations due to their chaotic nature.

That is why Seirul·lo (2017) explains organization according to the ball using dimensioned stage spaces. These spaces are linked and the importance of the game *continuum* is considered here; before, during, and after. Between them, some unexpected element that emerges from the game is always added. That is why Lillo (2009) says that we cannot *read the game*, but rather *we interpret it*, since one can only read what is previously written. In which case, we would not pay attention to the unexpected elements that emerge in each new dimensioned stage space.

Figure 1: Dimensioned Stage Spaces and Functional Roles



Source: prepared by the authors based on Soriano, 2019.

If we want ball-based organization, the most important stage space is that of intervention, where the possessor and the first defender are located. The configuration of the mutual assistance stage space takes the needs of that possessor, their orientation, possibilities of interaction with those nearby—among others—into account. The farthest players, in the cooperation space adjust their locations and tactical intentions according to the demands of the players in mutual assistance.

Organization based on the ball that is sought through dimensioned stage spaces is closely related to the concept of *suprasuperiority*, playing as 11. Players in the space of intervention **intervene**; players in the space of mutual assistance **participate**; and players in the space of cooperation **permit**. Everyone plays and everyone contributes to leveraging advantages and correcting errors; everyone has something to do for the team. In addition, depending on the stage space that each player occupies, they can preferentially take on certain functional roles or others.

Organization by lines that we get from the systems of play values the polarity of soccer—there are spaces to claim and others to protect or defend and, depending on that, we organize ourselves. Having this system of play as a reference does not allow us to adjust to all the needs of this sport. Despite playing from our positions and not in them, our organization will not be flexible and adaptive enough to respond to the implicit elements of the game.

It is for this reason that ball-based organization was created, using the dimensioned stage spaces as reference points. Organization by lines and ball-based organization are complementary. Paying attention to both spatial references makes it easier for players to position themselves properly on the playing field and, from that location, they are able to help the team deal with the advantages and errors that occur in the game.

3.1.4 From the game model to the game as a model; the game demands everything

We often hide behind dogmas that state, for example, that soccer belongs to the players and that we must fully and completely adapt the team's playing style to the players' abilities. The needs of our team and the demands of soccer are variables that are independent of the characteristics of the players we have. It is the sport itself that raises the questions we must answer. For example, a team must have the ability to defend direct play, regardless of the abilities of its players.

The game demands everything. Our team must have responses ready for any existing substage or playing scenario within the game cycle. The fact that a team must have the ability to execute an effective and efficient short play does not mean that it does not have to master direct play. What a team **must master** does not depend on its players, but on the game itself.

The game requires everything at the game cycle level—mastering all stages, substages and general playing contexts—and, in addition, it requires responding to different situations of play from the point of view of the different structures and their functionalities. Structures and their functionalities are the framework from which

situations of play are resolved and, evidently, some of them are more suited to certain situations than to others.

If we are in a build-up play situation, the stage of play is a moment with the ball, the substage of play is the build-up play, the first level of contextual detail addresses whether or not that build-up play is up against high pressure or a middle block, and, finally, the second level of contextual specificity addresses the structure—the two first lines of pressure—the team faces in the build-up play; 2-4, 1-3, 3-3, among others. A team, regardless of its players' abilities, must be able to respond to build-up play situations in the face of high pressure and a middle block. In addition, a team must be able to execute it when there are different structures in terms of opponent pressure lines and different scenarios according to the team's own build-out lines.

A misinterpretation of the game model leads coaches to prioritize some substages of play over others. This reductionist view of the game model causes teams to be unable to play directly because they prioritize the build-up play. These teams are incomplete and are not able to respond to all the demands of the game, therefore, generating spaces in which these teams do not dominate, which facilitate the opponent's job. These are teams that know how to answer some questions that arise in the game, but not all of them.

We can compare these teams to students who, for a specific exam, study some of the material that will be on the exam; but not all of it. These students—in order to pass—do not depend on themselves, but on the nature of the exam. If they are lucky and are asked about the material studied, they are able to respond well and pass. However, if they are asked about different material, they have no chance. In the same way, these teams, in order to win, depend on the context of the particular game and not on their own resources; because they are incomplete.

So, our proposal is to avoid this reductionist view of the game model and use the game itself as a model. However, understanding that the game demands everything from us, regardless of the characteristics of our players, does not mean that we do not take into account the abilities and interactive properties of the athletes. The players define and configure the answers to the questions that the game raises. While the game tells us the "what", the players will tell us the "how".

Any team must know how to play directly head-to-head and within spaces, but it will depend on the abilities of the players how they occupy the different spaces of battle and, consequently, they'll change lengths and second balls. In addition, depending on who these advanced players are, direct play will be prioritized in spaces or while head-to-head. If the opponent's defensive line is low, although our players have a greater ability to attack the spaces when handling confrontations, we cannot attack the spaces behind

them. Trying to do it, simply because our players can, is useless when trying to win a competition.

Playing contexts emerge in competition and that's where we need to respond. The procedures used to solve game situations will depend on the abilities of our players. On the other hand, there will be contexts that we will prioritize whenever we take control of the game because our players will have a greater ability to solve these problems. The athletes will also offer us more favorable structures to resolve different situations of play. Regardless, we will have to master several structures and offer different functionalities to each one of them to obtain that flexible and adaptive organization to which we aspire. It is impossible to respond to all the demands of the game from a rigid structure. We need to have several structures and consider them with some flexibility.

Players are able to configure the procedures that help us solve certain problems and prioritize certain situations of play or contexts in which we have control, but they don't define which situations we should master as a team. It is the game that tells us what to master. This is why we use the game itself as a model rather than a game model that organizes principles and substages in a hierarchy, which is reductionist.

Unit 3.2 Game Cycle

The game is a whole, but it is not a homogeneous whole. Within it we can distinguish stages and substages that we cannot separate. Dividing the game into stages and substages implies breaking up those situations and recreating them in a non-specific way. All of them are linked and the player embodies them with a unique function, play.

We identify different substages that cannot be separated, nor can we recognize the borders between them. The game doesn't understand borders. Each situation depends on the previous one and conditions the following one. A transition does not begin at the moment possession is recovered or lost, but in everything that has transpired before, which conditions the situation that occurs during the change of possession. In this case, we can talk about the previous movement of the ball, the effectiveness of the previous defensive block, compensating movements, and others. Depending on how the previous game situation has evolved, that transition may transpire one way or another. We could consider the beginning of the transition in the previous game situation, since it conditions it enormously. The fact that we cannot establish borders between different substages of play within the same cycle is one of the reasons why we cannot separate one situation from another, we can only differentiate them. To speak of a transition without referring to everything that happened in the previous situation would be to totally break it up, decontextualize it and, therefore, prevent it from progressing adequately. This must be taken into account in the training process, in order to be able to develop each of the substages without disassociating them from the context to which they belong.

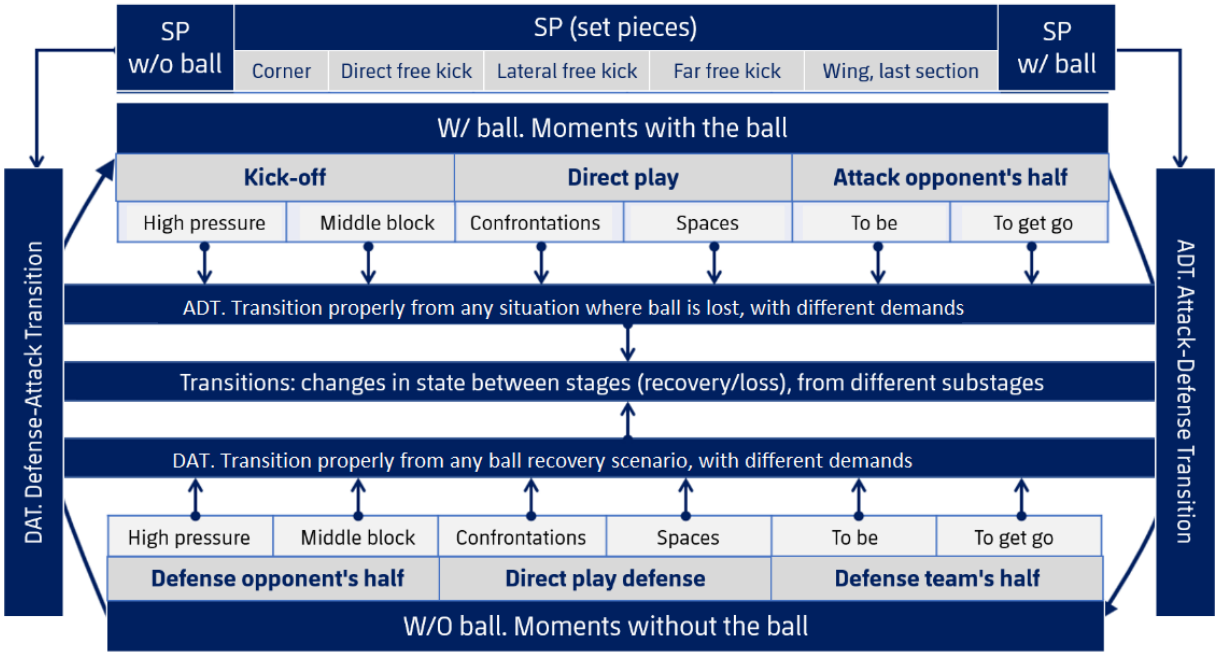
To achieve meaningful collective play, teams need to move seamlessly within the game cycle. The ability to articulate the different substages without losing effectiveness and efficiency results in an advantage over the opponent. In order to move seamlessly within the game cycle, it is important to master each of these substages, as well as to have the ability to transition and evolve from any playing context. As mentioned above, within the game cycle, we can talk about game stages, substages and contexts at a first level of detail. The second level of contextual detail addresses the structures that we face in a given situation of play.

3.2.1 Transitions, implying recovery or loss, from any substage and playing context; 1st level of specificity

We differentiate between transition and development depending on whether the ball is recovered or lost. It is common to talk about transitions, situations that arise from a recovery or loss, but it is spoken about in a very general way. In other words, we are

referring to **defense-offense** and **offense-defense** transitions, but without really paying attention to the playing contexts that precede a recovery or loss situation, and to what is triggered afterwards. An offense-defense transition resulting from a loss in the opponent's half of the field is very different from a situation facing a defensive line in a sprint. In the latter, there is a danger for the team to be divided and for the distant defensive line to disconnect. Also, if we attack the area with a center-back after having moved against an opponent's low block, an example of the importance of gaining possession of cleared balls and managing unmarked players; or if we have aimed for the space behind the defensive line, because of the opponent's orientation, in a recovery it is easier to pressure after a loss, but the team can be very long; among others.

Figure 2: Game cycle and its transitions



Source: prepared by the authors based on Soriano, 2019.

A team that really masters transitions is capable of providing adequate continuity to any recovery or loss situation, regardless of the playing context. When we talk about the fact that the game demands everything from us, we mean that it is imperative to master any substage and context—1st level of specificity—within the game cycle. Not only that, we must also master transitions from any substage or playing context.

The functional role of the supporters when we have the ball and of the beaten players when we do not have it is fundamental to be able to transition from any playing context. As each situation has different demands, it is important not to classify the behaviors of compensators and beaten players, but to adjust their locations and behaviors to the different situations of play where recoveries or losses may occur. Simply talking about defense-offense and offense-defense transitions without addressing higher levels of specificity generates excessively rigid behaviors from supporters and beaten players

and, therefore, an inability for the team to adequately transition from any playing context. They are only effective and efficient in situations that fit the closed behavior adopted by the players that have prepared for that particular recovery or loss. The balance structure of the players preparing for a possible loss must be flexible and adaptive to suit the conditions of the ball's trajectory. In the same way, the location of unmarked players must consider the opponent's play and the possible recovery opportunities that the team may have.

When addressing and analyzing our team's set pieces (SP), we not only focus on providing resources for those specific situations of play, but also on articulating them within the game cycle. It is fundamental to address the possible transitions that arise from SP situations. Isolating them from the rest of the game may result in designing situations that do not consider the possible transitions that can arise. The occupation of the clearing zones, the number and location of the supporting or beaten players, or the position of players in intermediate zones behind the clearing zone in order not to divide the team, are elements that need to be considered as much as the selection of throwers, blockers and strikers.

It is also essential to analyze the behaviors that occur during second balls, since they are situations where players disconnect from their previous roles; loss of marks, leaving clearing zones, among others. In addition, they are situations where striving for continuity or stability paradoxically generates a greater imbalance. In these offensive situations, it is advisable to generate a second situation in the area. This is because the players' locations, conditioned by the SP itself and the previous role of the players and the possibility of maintaining the role they had during the first action, unbalances the team less than looking for a safe pass in order to generate a moment with the ball.

The greater uncertainty generated in SPs is due to the fact that the locations and roles of the players change completely. Here, where players are far away from their positions, it is very difficult to quickly put together a meaningful structure for the possible transition. It is much simpler to link counter-offense situations than to respond effectively to possible recoveries of defensive shape. This happens because in offensive SPs, the center-backs, P4 and P5, tend to move up to the finishing zones. Meanwhile, in defensive SPs, the more forward players (P9, P7 and P11) generally adopt defensive roles when faced with a possible transition, unmarked players and clearing zones; among others. This facilitates the offensive play and allows them to get away from their direct opponent.

Faced with this, a good strategy is to train and analyze the restructuring of the team in defensive shape recovery or when initiating an offensive play with so many players away from their positions and an instability that forces them to assume unusual roles

and responsibilities. This will help enormously to gain an important advantage over the opponent not only in the SP itself, but in everything resulting from it.

3.2.2 Developments, which don't imply a recovery or loss, between any substage and playing context; 1st level of specificity

As mentioned earlier, the game is a non-homogenous whole in which we can distinguish different parts. This distinction not only refers to the stages or moments of the game, but also to greater levels of specificity; substages and contexts of the game. The game cycle allows us to differentiate between substages and contexts and move between them.

The connections between the substages and contexts of different stages of play, involving a recovery or loss, are transitions. However, there are often changes in substages and contexts within the same stage of play, without a recovery or loss. We have to respond to this other type of transition that we call **development** in order to distinguish it, since there is no change of stage.

Isolating the substages of play and separating them from the context to which they belong often makes it difficult to string together advantageous situations. If we want to train or analyze the build-up play, we have to understand the situation from which it arises, as well as what can be linked to it. On one hand, we have to understand what kind of transition can arise from losing the ball soon after kick off—close to one's own goal, with an open structure and few players behind the ball—for example. We need teams with the ability to move from any substage of play and playing context and not limit the behaviors to the stages of play, since, the game requires higher levels of specificity to be able to adapt the behaviors to its demands.

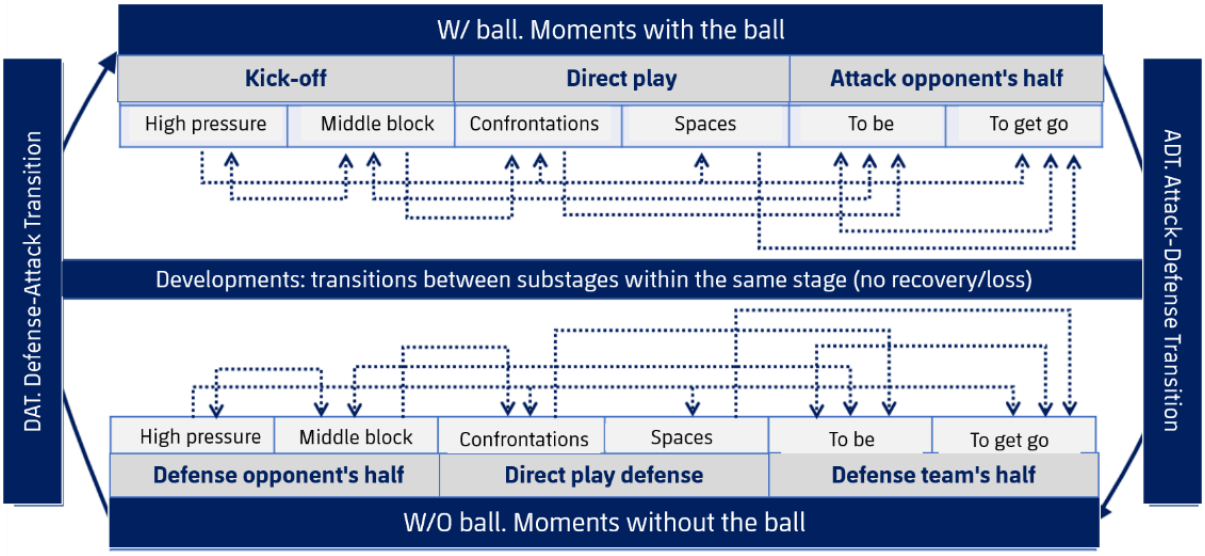
However, we also need to understand what kind of progression we can achieve based on the advantage created. If we get past the second line of pressure, it could be linked to an offensive situation in the opponent's half of the field, where we will accelerate the game to leverage our advantage before their defense recovers their shape. If we only get past the first line of pressure, we can build-up from there. Thus, eliminating the 2nd line and also playing to arrive. Alternatively, we can attack the back of the defensive line, reducing the distance with respect to the opponent line; known as direct game in spaces. If we are not able to get past the opposing lines of pressure, we will probably play direct when challenged, such as when we are too far from the opposing defensive line to seize the space behind.

These chain reactions between substages and contexts belonging to the same stage of play can be learned based on developments. It is useless to do high-pressure training if

we do not know how to return to our defensive shape when the first two lines of pressure are penetrated. We can't expect our team to apply high pressure if they don't know how to go back to their positions in the face of an error, or if they don't understand how to transition when the ball is recovered on the opposition's end of the field.

Both high-pressure training and analysis must address its link to the next situation, development or transition, and it is also the way to contextualize that next playing scenario when assessing the preceding situation.

Figure 3: Developments within the game cycle



Source: prepared by the authors based on Soriano, 2019.

In the previous table, we can see connections that can occur between substages of play and playing contexts (developments). The demands of these situations of play are different, therefore, if we want to move seamlessly within the game cycle and adjust to the needs of the game, we need to adapt and change some behaviors. For example, if we defend on the opponent's end of the field with a 1-4-4-2 formation in line and we progress with high pressure, we should modify our structure to a 1-4-1-3-2 formation by staggering the center midfielders to defend in greater depth.

These types of developments occur frequently in soccer, but teams do not respond adequately to them, so they do not flow smoothly within the game cycle and have difficulty linking different situations.

Maintaining certain behaviors when the playing context changes usually implies a lack of adaptation to the demands of the new situation of play, but when they lack a response to that development, teams give continuity to their behaviors, which become rigid.

3.2.3 Responding to and analyzing unstable situations

In addition to the inability of teams to evolve between substages of play and playing contexts, they also have to deal with many unstable situations where the level of uncertainty increases, as does the impact that these situations have on the final result. These include scenarios where some elements of one or more lines are eliminated and require an adjustment from their teammates, extreme situations where there is numerical inferiority, and others. During training, it is essential to give answers to our players for these unstable situations that are so decisive in the end result.

Not practicing how to handle unstable situations is usually due to a lack of analysis of those situations, considering that the level of uncertainty in this sport is very high and, consequently, it is difficult to draw meaningful conclusions from the analysis of what happened in games.

3.2.4 Game cycle problems in analysis

One of the problems that arises from the analysis of the game cycle is separating the different substages. In doing so, the focus is placed on the existing link between them, and behaviors demonstrated in developments of play are not recognized. When separating the substages, priority is given to the analysis of stable situations that make it possible to clearly identify a situation such as a build-up play or high pressure, for example. Unstable situations and the way in which teams adjust to them are also not analyzed in depth.

On the other hand, understanding the game cycle correctly implies understanding that the order in which the different substages and contexts emerge and are connected is not cyclical or sequential, but random. Game transitions and developments can occur between or from any playing context. If, within the game cycle, we do not pay attention to higher levels of specificity and we only value the stages or moments of the game, we can make the mistake of understanding the game cycle in a sequential way. However, when we use higher levels of specificity, it is easy to understand that the connection between situations is random. A playing scenario can be linked—both with respect to the previous and subsequent game situation—to different playing scenarios, and the before and after scenarios contextualize the present scenario.

Unit 3.3 The system of play and its structures

The system of play is a structural and functional reference point that relates all the players of the team to the objective of facilitating collective play. As we mentioned previously, the organization that is obtained from the system of play is an organization in lines that responds to the notion of the polarity of soccer; some spaces and a goal to defend and attack.

3.3.1 The system as a structural or functional reference and the structure as a photograph

The fact that the system of play is a functional reference implies understanding it as a living thing, which constantly adjusts to the demands of the game in terms of player locations. We differentiate between the concept of **system** and that of **structure** because, while the system of play is dynamic, we see the structure as a photograph.

For example, the height at which the fullbacks are located in a build-up play situation in a 1-4-3-3 formation can condition and alter the structure. For example, if they go higher, the wingers will probably appear inside and the inside forwards will approach the starting line, creating a different structure than if they remain lower; changing the vertical distribution. However, the system of play will always be a 1-4-3-3 formation and the line distribution will remain the same. Regardless of their location, the fullbacks will be elements of the defensive line.

This is why we speak of playing lines when we refer to system lines (defensive line, midfield line). When we refer to a vertical distribution within the structure, we speak of build-out lines, in moments with the ball; or lines of pressure, in moments without the ball.

From the same system of play, different structures can arise that are based on the functionality and variability that are offered to the system as a construct. However, the system of play is not only a functional reference that provides different structures from its built-in dynamic nature, but it is also a behavioral reference that helps players in their play.

This functionality can address system movements (Sans and Frattarola, 2012), as well as micro behaviors—outside assistance from the inside forwards P8 is not the same in a 1-4-3-3 formation than in a 1-4-4-2 diamond formation where the absence of wingers P7/P11 can condition them to pressure high receptions from their opposing fullbacks.

In our analysis, we must know how to differentiate the structures adopted according to each situation of play, vertical distribution; and the team's system of play, structural or functional reference, organization in lines.

3.3.2 Advantages and errors offered by the theoretical system

Each system of play is based on an initial positioning on the playing field that strives to be rational and adapt to the possibilities of the players themselves. In any case, if we understand it as a collective starting position, it offers certain theoretical advantages and errors.

These theoretical superiorities or inferiorities offered by the system (without considering the characteristics of the players) are not only numerical. In other words, they don't only depend on the presence or absence of elements in some lines or corridors. They can also be positional due to the presence of more or less usable spaces within the system itself.

Once we use proper names, the players that make up the system of play and its interactive properties, we can contextualize the existing advantages or errors because the team itself will try to take advantage of the superiorities or compensate for imbalances from the functionality of the system of play. The opponent, on the other hand, will try to balance their errors and exploit those our system offers. This leads to a discussion about advantages or errors *in situ*.

In addition, during the game, other types of superiorities emerge, such as qualitative and socio-affective superiorities, where we would need to consider specific players. Although these types of superiorities are not determined by the system itself, the system does condition its appearance because it is the framework that organizes the interactions of the game. Aligning certain players in certain positions and bringing elements together that can be related in a significant way is theoretically done according to the system of play, but they are possibilities that the system of play does not offer in and of itself.

3.3.3 Confrontation of structures: changing or adapting the system

According to the functionality that we give to the system of play, we have to address the confrontation of structures that is carried out with respect to the opponent in certain situations. In order to build superiorities from the players' locations, we necessarily have to "fit" our structure into that of the opponent in order to occupy the most significant spaces.

From a rigid system of play in which the lines are not flexible and the movements of our team's system are scarce, we are not able to face the structures of our opponents. Its possibilities are limited to the structures that the opponent employs that fit with the system we use.

Within the confrontation of structures, it is important to adapt our system of play using movements or, even, changing it. We can deduce that it is important for our team to master several systems and be able to offer functional variability within a single system. There are teams that master a single system and offer many resources within it, which allows them to respond to almost any situation or structure they face. They are very flexible and adaptive systems, which are constantly readjusted to the needs of the game. Conversely, there are teams that use different systems depending on the structures that arise in a game (and which players to align). They use systems that fit better into opponent structures, which facilitates readjustments. However, changing the structural or functional reference so often can make it difficult for players to interpret the game.

The ideal scenario is the most difficult: to be able to use different systems and offer a large amount of resources and variability in each of them. This way, adaptability is achieved and greater advantages are considered in the confrontation with opponent structures.

The confrontation of structures is fundamental within the operative strategy, game plan, and must address the most stable situations with open spaces: build-up play and pressure on the opponent's half of the field. In order to contextualize the confrontation of structures, we have to offer functionality to that "photo" by establishing possible engagers and receivers, players in intermediate areas, defensive correlations—who jumps to whom—and others.

This variability and adaptability, in terms of the resources of a system of play and the number of systems of play used, must be something that is built into the training. Its analysis will help us to take it to the field rather than being just a resource for audiovisual analysis.

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