

# TACTICAL SITUATION 13



## How the Centre Backs Defend the Forwards' Movements (Rear Block)

**The content in this section is from analysis of Diego Simeone's Atlético Madrid teams during the 2017/2018 and 2018/2019 seasons.**

The analysis is based on recurring patterns of play observed within the Atlético Madrid team. Once the same phase of play occurred several times (at least 10), the tactics would be seen as a pattern. The analysis on the following pages are examples of the team's tactics being used effectively.

Each action, pass, individual movement with or without the ball, and the positioning of each player on the pitch including their body shape, are presented.

The analysis is then used to create a session to coach this specific tactical situation.

## Defending the "Crucial Central Area" when the Opposition Play a Through Pass



However, during a 90 minute match, there will be situations when successful through passes are played into the **Crucial Central Area**. A player receiving a pass unmarked and turning within this area can cause problems to any team and Atlético Madrid's defending tactics focus on preventing this.

The distance between the 2 lines should be no more than 12 yards, so opponents between the lines can be more easily controlled.

This space is further restricted by the central midfielder on the weak side **Saúl (8)** dropping back. This also enables him to apply double marking easier and fill potential gaps in the defensive line.

The distance between the centre backs and the most advanced central midfielder **Gabi (14)** is divided into 2 equal 6 yard areas.

The yellow area is the Atlético midfield's zone of responsibility. The opposing forwards or whoever enters it should be closed down by Atlético midfielders. The white area is the Atlético defence's zone of responsibility. The opposing forwards or whoever enters it should be closed down by Atlético defenders.

**NOTE:** During a competitive match, these boundaries can be altered by 1-2 yards.

## Solution 1: Opposing Forward Drops Back and the Centre Back Moves Forward into a Balanced Position



**NOTE:** When an opposing forward who is positioned between the lines of the rear block is unable to receive a through pass, there is no need for the centre backs to move forward to follow him if he drops back.

However, when there is an available passing lane towards the forward, the centre backs need to act.

In this example, the white central midfielder No.8 receives and turns. It is highly likely that he will be able to make a forward pass through the wide available passing lane (yellow highlighted area).

The white forward No.9 moves to receive and the closest centre back **Godín (2)** has to read the

tactical situation, then react accordingly. In this situation, **Godín (2)** steps forward only 2-3 yards in order to control the forward. This way, he avoids creating space behind him which white No.10 can exploit.

A very important element in this situation is the deeper positioning of the Atlético central midfielder on the weak side **Saúl (8)**, as he is the player who controls the space between the lines and provides support to the defenders.



## ASSESSMENT

In the diagram on the previous page, Atlético are playing against the 4-2-3-1 formation and it is the attacking midfielder (white No.10) who moves to exploit the potential free space behind the centre back. The same situation can take place against the 4-3-3 and the 4-4-2, where it might be the second forward.

## Solution 2: Opposing Forward Drops Back and the Centre Back Presses Him while Team-mates Provide Cover



As soon as the pass is played towards the white forward No.9, the centre back **Godín (2)** moves to put press him and prevent the turn.

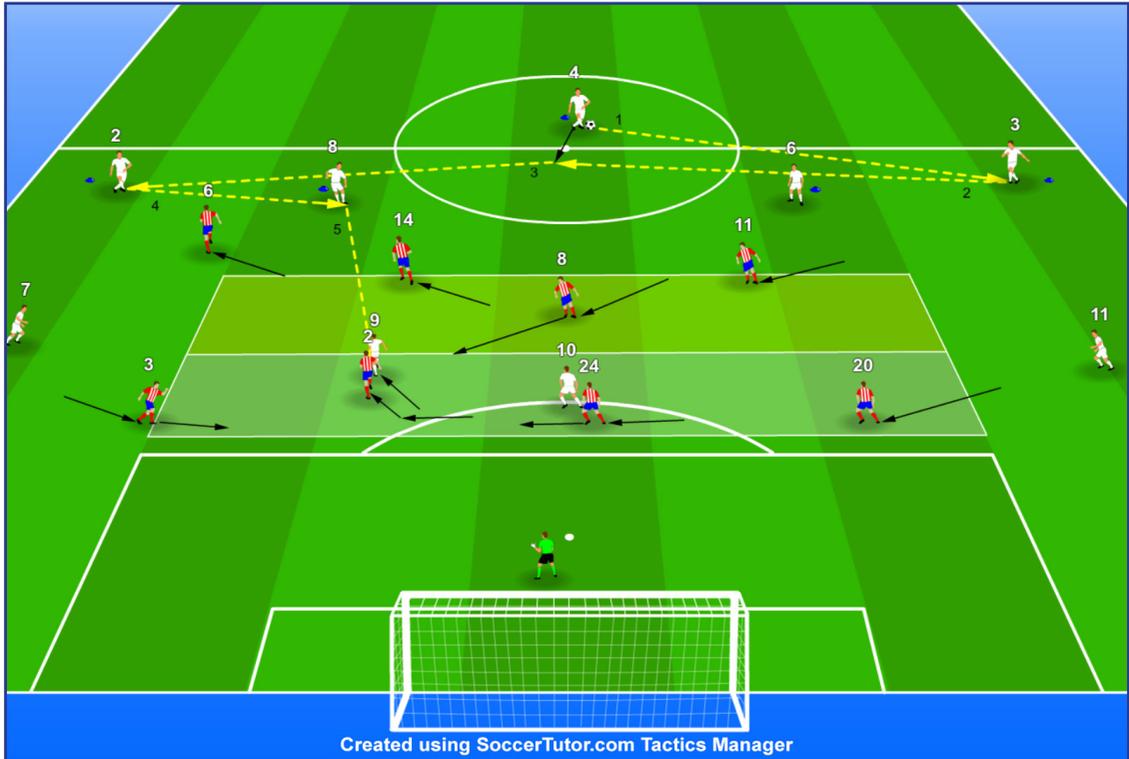
At the same time, the left back **F. Luis (3)** and the other centre back **Giménez (24)** create a defensive triangle to provide support and cover.

The weak side central midfielder **Saúl (8)** moves to apply double marking and stop No.9 turning towards the centre, as well as block the potential pass to white No.10. So, No.9 only has one option, which is to move towards the outside where there is less danger and it is easier to defend.

**SESSION (2 PRACTICES)  
FOR "HOW THE CENTRE  
BACKS DEFEND THE  
FORWARDS' MOVEMENTS  
(REAR BLOCK)"**

## SESSION FOR THIS TACTICAL SITUATION (2 PRACTICES)

### 1. The Centre Backs Defend the Forwards' Movements in a Structured Functional Practice



#### Description

- There are 2 areas that are the width of the box and 6 yards long, which help the centre backs read the positioning of the forwards.
- The 4 white defenders pass the ball between each other, while the red players shift according to the ball position.
- As soon as the ball is passed to the central midfielder (No.8 in diagram), a through pass can be played.
- The white forward on the strong side (No.9) moves to receive either in an advanced position (within the white area) or in a deep position (yellow area).
- The respective red centre back (No.2 in diagram) has to read the tactical situation to react accordingly and the reds try to prevent the whites from scoring.
- Please **see the analysis pages** for how the red centre back and other players should react.
- The key points are whether the first white forward is high or deep and if the second forward is close enough to exploit space in behind the red centre back or not.

**Restriction:** The red midfielders do not block the through pass to the white forward.

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