

PEP GUARDIOLA



**Coaching
High Pressing
Tactics & Sessions
Against Different
Formations**

Terzis Athanasios

PEP GUARDIOLA

Coaching High Pressing Tactics &
Sessions Against Different Formations

Written by
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Published by



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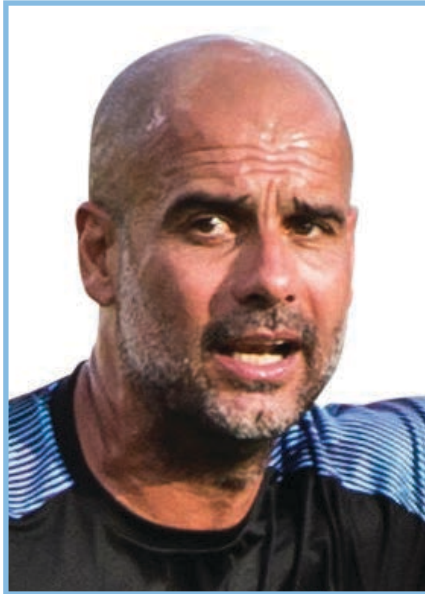


- **UEFA 'A' Coaching Licence**
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- **Former Coach of Professional Teams in Greece**
- **Former Technical Director of DOXA Dramas Academy (Greek 2nd division)**
- **Former Professional Football Player**

Athanasios Terzis is a football tactics expert and instructor for many coaching seminars and workshops around the world. Athanasios has written many best selling football coaching books published by **SoccerTutor.com** in multiple languages (English, Spanish, German, Italian, Greek, Japanese, Korean and Chinese):

- **Marcelo Bielsa Attacking Tactics and Sessions**
- **Diego Simeone Attacking and Defending Tactics from Atlético Madrid's 4-4-2**
- **Pep Guardiola's Attacking Tactics - Tactical Analysis and Sessions from Manchester City's 4-3-3**
- **Creative Attacking Play - From the Tactics of Conte, Allegri, Simeone, Mourinho, Wenger & Klopp**
- **Marcelo Bielsa - Coaching Build Up Play Against High Pressing Teams**
- **Coaching the Juventus 3-5-2 - Tactical Analysis and Sessions: Attacking and Defending**
- **Jürgen Klopp's Attacking and Defending Tactics from Borussia Dortmund's 4-2-3-1**
- **FC Barcelona Training Sessions: 160 Practices from 34 Tactical Situations**
- **Jose Mourinho's Real Madrid - A Tactical Analysis: Attacking and Defending in the 4-2-3-1**
- **FC Barcelona - A Tactical Analysis: Attacking and Defending**

PEP GUARDIOLA'S ACHIEVEMENTS



COACHING ROLES

- **Manchester City** (2016 - Present)
- **Bayern Munich** (2013 - 2016)
- **Barcelona** (2008 - 2012)
- **Barcelona B** (2007 - 2008)

HONOURS (Europe / World)

- **UEFA Champions League x 3** (2009, 2011)
- **UEFA Champions League Final *** (2021, 2023)
* 2023 Result unknown at time of publication
- **FIFA Club World Cup x 3** (2009, 2011, 2013)
- **UEFA Super Cup x 3** (2009, 2011, 2013)

HONOURS (Domestic Leagues)

- **English Premier League x 5**
(2018, 2019, 2021, 2022, 2023)
- **German Bundesliga x 3** (2014, 2015, 2016)
- **Spanish La Liga x 3** (2009, 2010, 2011)
- **Spanish Tercera (2nd) División** (2008)

HONOURS (Domestic Cups)

- **English FA Cup** (2019)
- **English FA Cup Final *** (2023)
* 2023 Result unknown at time of publication
- **German DFB-Pokal x 2** (2014, 2016)
- **Spanish Copa del Rey x 2** (2009, 2012)
- **English EFL Cup x 4** (2018, 2019, 2020, 2021)
- **Supercopa de España x 3** (2009, 2010, 2011)

INDIVIDUAL AWARDS

- **Globe Soccer Awards Coach of Century** (2020)
- **FIFA World Coach of the Year** (2011)
- **UEFA Best Coach of the Year x 2** (2009, 2011)
- **Premier League Manager of the Season x 3**
(2018, 2019, 2021)
- **La Liga Coach of Year x 4** (2009, 2010, 2011, 2012)

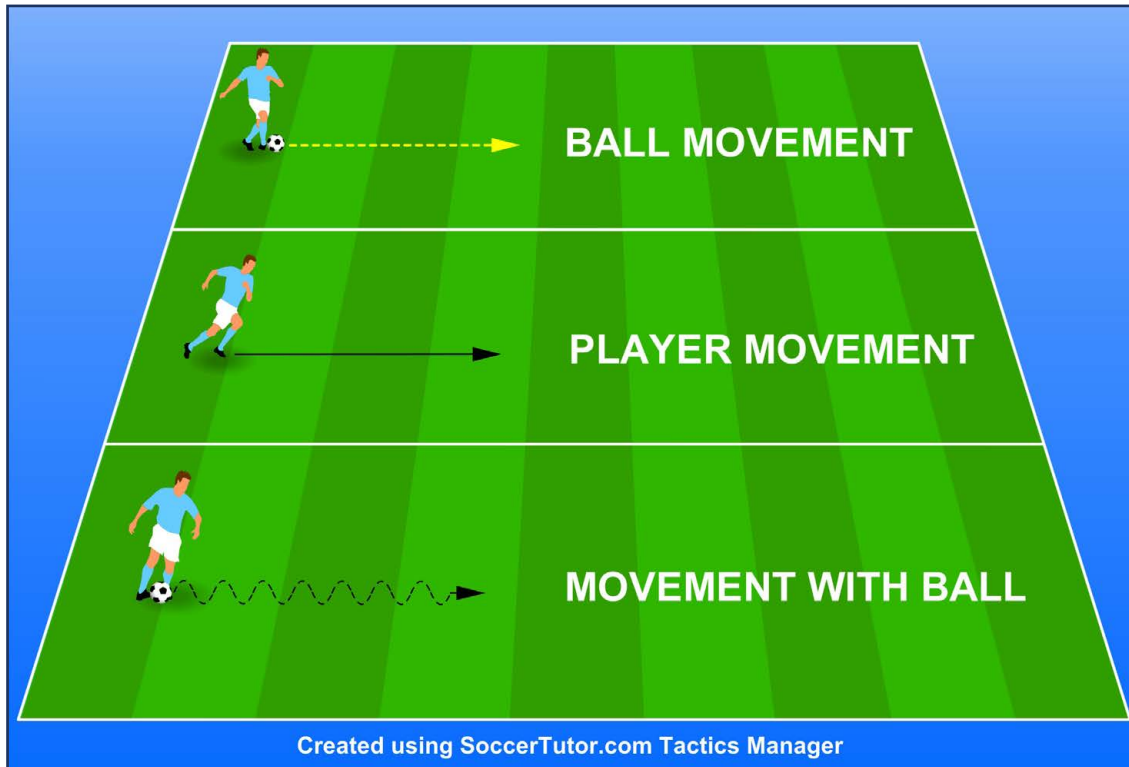
PEP GUARDIOLA'S MANCHESTER CITY PLAYERS (4-3-3)



Notable players such as **Stones (5)**, **Zinchenko (11)**, **Foden (47)**, and **Mahrez (26)** also played many games but for the simplicity of this book, the analysis included is formed with the following players only:

- Goalkeeper: **Ederson (31)**
- Left Centre Back: **Laporte (14)**
- Right Centre Back: **Dias (3)**
- Left Back: **Cancelo (27)**
- Right Back: **Walker (2)**
- Defensive Midfielder: **Rodri (16)**
- Attacking Midfielder 1: **Gündoğan (8)**
- Attacking Midfielder 2: **De Bruyne (17)**
- Left Winger: **Sterling (7)**
- Right Winger: **Bernardo (20)**
- Centre Forward: **Jesus (9)**

DIAGRAM KEY & COACHING FORMAT



TACTICAL SITUATION AND ANALYSIS

- The analysis is based on recurring patterns of play observed within **Pep Guardiola's Manchester City** team. Once the same phase of play is observed multiple times across many matches, the tactics are seen as a pattern.
- 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 with a full description.

TRAINING SESSIONS BASED ON THE TACTICS OF PEP GUARDIOLA

- Functional and Tactical Practices
- Functional Games / Conditioned Games
- Name/Objective and Full Description
- Conditions, Progressions, Variations & Coaching Points (if applicable)

PRINCIPLES APPLIED WHEN DEFENDING NEAR THE BALL AREA



TACTICAL SITUATION 5



Principles Applied when Defending Near the Ball Area

Content from Analysis of Manchester City during the 2020/2021 and 2021/2022 Premier League winning seasons.

The analysis is based on recurring patterns of play observed within Pep Guardiola's Manchester City team. Once the same phase of play is observed multiple times across many matches, the tactics are seen as a pattern. The analysis included is built from examples of the team's tactics being used effectively, taken from specific matches.

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 full progressive session to coach this specific tactical situation.

The 3 Principles Applied for Pep Guardiola's High Pressing Philosophy

When defending, the Manchester City players near the ball area apply 3 specific principles (and sub-principles) which facilitate Pep Guardiola's high pressing philosophy.

First Principle

Limiting the time and space for the player in possession

When an **opponent receives facing the goal**, it is key for Pep's players to close them down to a short distance. The **player closest to the ball carrier (first defender) runs quickly to press** and stops his run when he is very close to the player. This action **restricts the available time and space for the opponent to think and act**. It also **creates a wide shadow behind the first defender** which drastically limits the opponent's range and options for a forward pass.

When the **opponent receives with his back to goal**, limiting his available time and space quickly means **putting immediate pressure on him and preventing him from turning** with the ball and passing forward. If he receives on the half-turn, then he should be prevented from fully turning. Therefore, the only option left would be passing horizontally or backwards. If the first defender is able to apply this first principle, a pressing situation is created.

Second Principle

Narrowing through passing lanes while marking direct opponents

This second principle is applied by the players who are positioned diagonally

behind the first defender on his right and left and we will call them **second defenders**. The positioning of these players keeps the **through passing lanes narrow**, keeps the **space behind the first defender limited**, and **facilitates double marking**. Even if preventing the through pass is not possible, it may still lead to restricting space for the potential receiver. This can only be carried out in conjunction with the appropriate positioning and reaction of the third defender (explained in the third principle).

Sub-principle: Focusing on blocking the pass rather than getting close to direct opponent

Sometimes the second defenders have to make the passing lanes very narrow to block the potential through passes at any cost. This sub-principle is applied when a specific situation is created behind the second defender.

Specifically, if there is a free opponent behind the second defender who is a potential receiver of a through pass, the second defender has to make sure that the pass towards him is definitely prevented. If the opponent behind the second defender is marked by a teammate, the second defender should keep the passing lane narrow enough to be able to intercept it if the pass is not very accurate. At the same time, he should stay as close as possible to his direct opponent, to be able to apply the first principle if he receives. This will enable him to create a new pressing situation.

To be able to apply the second principle and sub-principle, the second defenders have to be aware of the positioning of their

Second Principle: Narrowing Through Passing Lanes while Marking Direct Opponents

As soon as the first defender moves to put pressure on the player with the ball, the player/s who are positioned diagonally behind him (second defenders) should apply the second principle.

According to this, the second defender/s have to move into a position which keeps the through passing lane narrow enough, while making the distance from their direct opponent as short as possible.

Narrowing the passing lane does not mean that a potential through pass will definitely be blocked but that a potential through pass becomes a risky choice because there is a high chance it can be blocked. The passing lane cannot be completely blocked because the second defender also has to get as close as possible to his direct opponent (second aim).

The decreased distance from the direct opponent enables the defender to secure a short closing down distance if the ball is directed to him and helps create a new pressing situation.

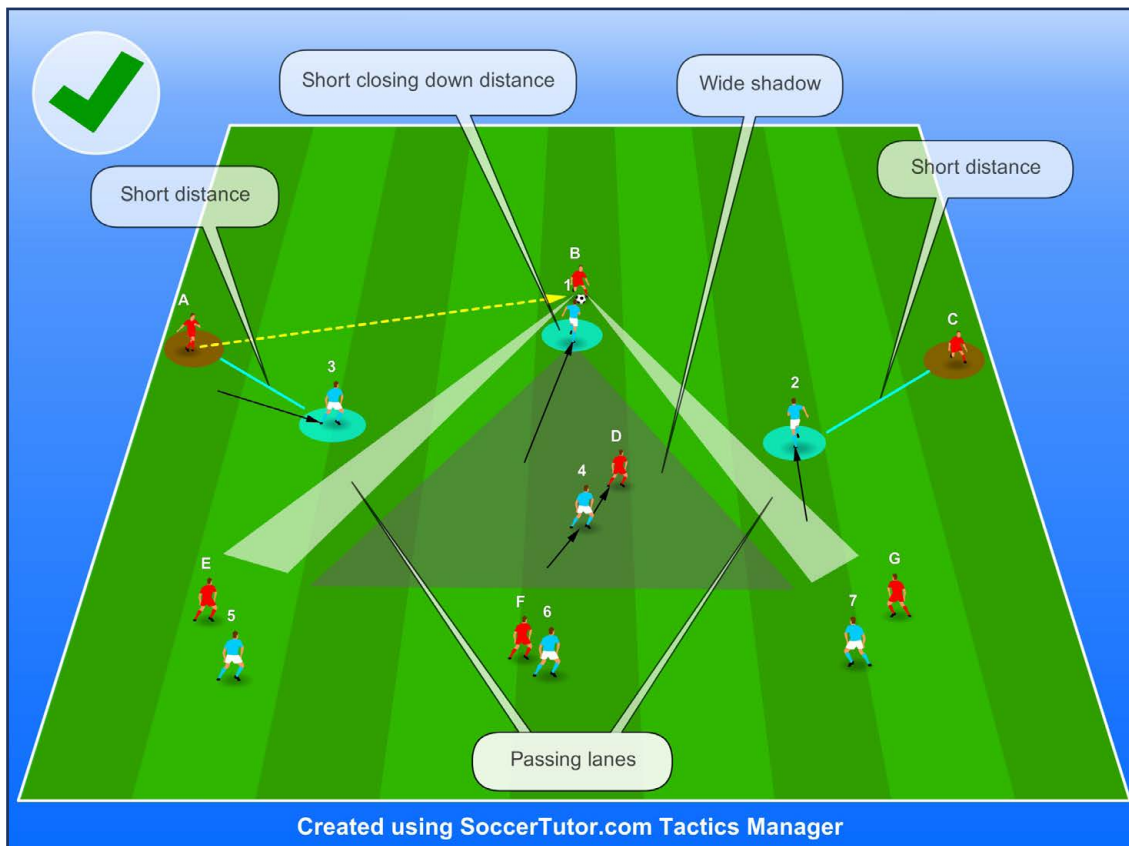
The attempt of the second defender/s to keep the passing lanes narrow also helps the team to keep the space behind the first defender limited and enable them to provide help to teammates positioned behind the first defender by applying double marking.

The positioning of the second defenders is strongly related to the closing down distance of the first defender.

If the closing down distance is short, a wide shadow is created. The second defenders can then take up wider positions and get closer to their opponents.

If the closing down distance of the first defender is longer, then the shadow created is narrower and the second defenders, to narrow the through passing lane, have to take up narrower positions. This means that they will be further away from their direct opponents and unable to create a new pressing situation.

1. Short Closing Down Distance Enables the Second Defenders to Take Up Advanced and Wide Positions



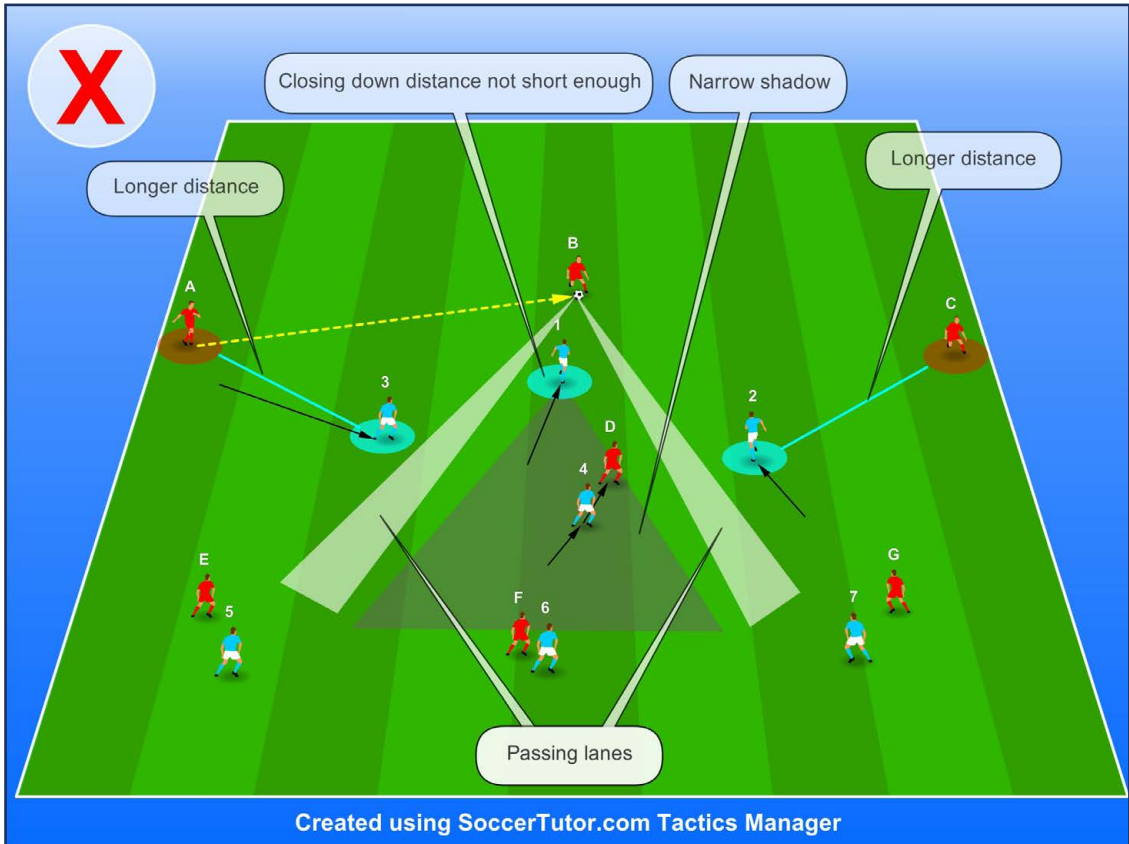
We use a 7v7 situation to analyse the principles applied by Pep Guardiola's Manchester City players. As soon as the pass is played to Red B, Blue No1 moves to secure a short closing down distance. This creates a wide shadow behind him which limits the possibility for a forward pass. This is achieved because of Blue No1's good starting position and taking advantage of the transmission phase properly.

Blue No2 and No3 (second defenders) move simultaneously with No1. They notice the short closing down distance and the wide shadow created behind No1. This

enables them to take up positions close to their direct opponents (Red A & C), while keeping the through passing lanes narrow enough at the same time.

The potential passes towards the central areas have a high chance of being blocked. If the ball is directed to the wide players A or C, the second defenders (No2 & No3) will be able to secure a short closing down distance to them, limiting their time and space on the ball drastically, and consequently creating a new pressing situation.

2. How a Longer Closing Down Distance Affects the Second Defenders' Positioning



If the closing down distance of the first defender is not as short as the example on the previous page, then the shadow created behind him is narrower.

This forces the second defenders No2 and No3 to take up narrower positions to make sure the potential passing lanes are not too wide. By taking up these positions which are more central, they will still have the potential to block attempted through passes.

There is now a longer distance between the second defenders (No2 and No3) and their direct opponents (Red A & C). This means that it is not possible to create a new pressing situation if either of these wide red players receives a pass.

SESSION 5 BASED ON THE TACTICS OF PEP GUARDIOLA

Principles Applied when Defending Near the Ball Area



SESSION FOR THIS TACTICAL SITUATION (7 PRACTICES)

1. Defending and Pressing Near the Ball Area in a Conditioned 3 Team Possession Game



Objective: Applying first and second principles when defending near the ball area (see analysis pages 80-88).

Description

- In a 20 x 20m area (adjust according to player level), there are 3 teams of 4 players. Two teams (8 players) start by keeping possession together using a maximum of 2 touches. Their aim is to move the ball to a central player (1 Point).
- The 4 defending players (blues) try to win the ball and then score in any of the 4 small goals. **They defend with the focus on applying the first and second principles correctly, which are fully outlined on analysis pages 80-88.**

- After a set amount of time, change the team roles with 4 new defending players.

Coaching Points

- The main focus is on blocking through passes, especially to the central players
- Take advantage of the transmission phase to secure a short closing down distance and create a wide shadow.
- The correct positioning of the second defender is determined by the first defender's closing down distance.
- You need to scan to be aware of the positioning of the central players to prevent passes being played to them.
- Play at match speed (high tempo).

POSITIONING AND MOVEMENTS OF FRONT BLOCK



TACTICAL SITUATION 7



Pressing High on Attacking Midfielder's Side Against Formations with 4 Defenders

Content from Analysis of Manchester City during the 2020/2021 and 2021/2022 Premier League winning seasons.

The analysis is based on recurring patterns of play observed within Pep Guardiola's Manchester City team. Once the same phase of play is observed multiple times across many matches, the tactics are seen as a pattern. The analysis included is built from examples of the team's tactics being used effectively, taken from specific matches.

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 full progressive session to coach this specific tactical situation.

Pressing High on Attacking Midfielder's Side Against Formations with 4 Defenders

If the opposing goalkeeper chooses to pass to the centre back on the other side where Manchester City's most advanced attacking midfielder is positioned, then the players shift according to the new position of the ball.

It is now the attacking midfielder who presses the ball and not the forward.

This saves energy for the forward and allows for the receiving centre back to be pressed quicker because the attacking midfielder is closer to the centre back than the forward is.

The shifting of the rest of the players is affected by the formation used by the opposition and/or the positioning of their central midfielders.

However, the same principles are still applied as they are when Manchester City play against all different formations:

- **First Principle:** Limiting the time and space for the player in possession
- **Second Principle:** Narrowing through passing lanes while marking direct opponents
- **Sub-principle:** Focusing on Blocking the Pass Rather than Getting Close to Direct Opponent
- **Third Principle:** Marking the opposing player/s behind the first defender

Obtaining a short closing down distance (pressing right up to the player in possession's feet), narrowing the passing lanes, and marking the player/s behind the first defender is necessary in every single pressing situation.

As we have clarified, this section of the book focuses on when the attacking midfielder leads the press to become the first defender.

The positioning of the opponent behind the first defender and how this player can be marked in the best possible way (third principle) determines how the shifting of the other Manchester City players is carried out.

There are 2 main options which split the tactical analysis to follow in this section:

- **Option 1:** The defensive midfielder marks the player behind the first defender
- **Option 2:** The weak side attacking midfielder marks the player behind the first defender

Option 1: The Defensive Midfielder Marks the Player Behind the First Defender

1. Narrowing the Through Passing Lanes After the Att. Midfielder Obtains a Short Closing Down Distance Against 4-4-2 or 4-2-3-1



When playing against 4 defenders and 2 central midfielders, the strong side attacking midfielder **Gündoğan (8)** moves to press the centre back in possession (No4), and City are left with 2 players in midfield. The weak side attacking midfielder **De Bruyne (17)** has to control 2 red central midfield players (No6 & No10).

If we take into account **De Bruyne's (17)** starting position in this situation, we realise

it is impossible to move close to and mark No8 who is positioned on the strong side, especially if this player moves towards the strong side.

As soon as the pass from the GK is played, **Gündoğan (8)** takes advantage of the transmission phase to obtain a short closing down distance. This limits the available time/space for the receiver and creates a wide shadow behind him.

The strong side winger **Sterling (7)** gets closer to his direct opponent (red right back No2) after scanning the space behind him. He keeps the passing lane narrow enough, as red No7 is marked by City's left back **Cancelo (27)**.

The red central midfielder No8 positioned behind the first defender **Gündoğan (8)** is marked by the closest player, defensive midfielder **Rodri (16)**. **De Bruyne (17)** is too far away to shift across in time.

De Bruyne (17) focuses on marking the other red central midfielder No6, who is also a potential receiver within the space behind **Gündoğan (8)**.

On the other side, the forward **Jesus (9)** scans the area behind him and adjusts his positioning accordingly. As **De Bruyne (17)** is close to red No6, he focuses on keeping the through passing lane towards No6 narrow, while also controlling No5.

The positioning of Manchester City's midfielders in this situation makes the team's formation look like a 4-4-2.

This switch of the formation and especially the forward movement of the defensive midfielder **Rodri (16)** enables City to mark the player behind the first defender (third principle), but his advanced positioning leaves space between the midfield and defensive lines unoccupied.

Pep Guardiola's team have mechanisms to deal with this situation which are triggered as soon as their opponents play the next pass.



NOTE

- As already mentioned, the closing down distance Manchester City's attacking midfielder (*Gündoğan in diagram example*) obtains from the player in possession significantly affects the positioning of the winger on that side (*Sterling*) and the forward (*Jesus*).
- The shorter the closing down distance (pressing as close as possible), the wider these 2 players can position themselves and the more likely it is that a new pressing situation can be created.

2. The Central Midfielder Drops Back to Receive



If the red central midfielder No8 moves outside of the first defender's shadow to receive, City's defensive midfielder **Rodri (16)** stays in his position and leaves him under the supervision of the forward **Jesus (9)**.

As red No8 drops deeper to get out of the shadow, **Jesus (9)** sees and shifts closer to No8 to control him in case he receives.

3. The Forward Closes Down the Deep Central Midfielder



As soon as the red centre back No4 plays the pass towards red central midfielder No8, Manchester City's forward **Jesus (9)** takes over the role of closing him down.

The strong side attacking midfielder **Gündoğan (8)** drops back to limit No8's time and space and helps apply double mark if possible.

SESSION 7 BASED ON THE TACTICS OF PEP GUARDIOLA

Pressing High on Att. Midfielder's Side Against Formations with 4 Defenders



SESSION FOR THIS TACTICAL SITUATION (3 PRACTICES)

1. Pressing High on the Attacking Midfielder's Side in Simultaneous Functional Practices (Option 1)



Objective (Option 1)

Pressing high when the attacking midfielder puts first pressure on the ball and the weak side attacking midfielder is too far away to mark the opponent behind (defensive midfielder takes over).

Description

- We split the pitch vertically and have 2 practices running at the same time (5v5).
- There are 5 red players (centre back, full back, central midfielder, attacking midfielder, and winger) + GK.
- There are also 5 blue players (centre back, full back, defensive midfielder, attacking midfielder, and winger).
- We practice **Option 1 with the attacking midfielder too far away** to mark the opponent behind the first defender. The **defensive midfielder (16) takes over the role of marking the red No6 or No8**, and the centre backs help the blues to defend effectively.
- The reds try to score in the small goals. The blues apply the relevant defensive principles (**see analysis pages 151-163**), try to win the ball, and then score on the counter attack within 10-12 seconds.
- After each attempt, the players move back to their starting positions as we restart from the GK. The red team can use various formations.

TACTICAL SITUATION 8



Pressing High Against Formations with 3 Defenders

Content from Analysis of Manchester City during the 2020/2021 and 2021/2022 Premier League winning seasons.

The analysis is based on recurring patterns of play observed within Pep Guardiola's Manchester City team. Once the same phase of play is observed multiple times across many matches, the tactics are seen as a pattern. The analysis included is built from examples of the team's tactics being used effectively, taken from specific matches.

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 full progressive session to coach this specific tactical situation.

2 Options when Pressing High Against Formations with 3 Defenders

With Manchester City using the 4-3-3 formation against a team with 3 defenders (3-4-3, 3-4-1-3, 3-5-2, etc.), there were 2 options to in the pressing/defensive phase:

- **Option 1: Pressing High with a 4-3-3 Defensive Shape**
- **Option 2: Pressing High with a 4-2-3-1 Defensive Shape (one of the attacking midfielders has a more advanced position)**

When the first option was used, the forward was in a central and advanced position, while the attacking midfielders were positioned deeper in goal-side positions against their direct opponents.

To control the left and right centre backs, the City wingers moved into advanced and balanced positions. Their aim was to control their opponents and narrow the through passing lanes.

This basic form was used to control all 3 defenders and restrict their available time and space immediately after receiving. To achieve this, the chain reaction of the Manchester defenders was frequently used.

To keep the defensive line balanced during this defensive action, the defensive midfielder **Rodri (16)** took a deeper position than his usual one to be able to join and support the defenders more quickly if necessary.

The same principles are still applied as they are when Manchester City play against all different formations:

- **First Principle: Limiting the time and space for the player in possession**
- **Second Principle: Narrowing through passing lanes while marking direct opponents**
- **Sub-principle: Focusing on Blocking the Pass Rather than Getting Close to Direct Opponent**
- **Third Principle: Marking the opposing player/s behind the first defender**

Obtaining a short closing down distance (pressing right up to the player in possession's feet), narrowing the passing lanes, and marking the player/s behind the first defender is necessary in every single pressing situation.

Pressing High Against the 3-4-3 with a 4-3-3 Defensive Shape (Option 1)

1. Defensive Shape and Positioning Against the 3-4-3



To apply Pep Guardiola's high pressing philosophy, all 3 opposing centre backs need to be under control. When the ball is in with red No4, the forward **Jesus (9)** presses him to become the first defender.

The 2 wingers **Sterling (7)** and **Bernardo (20)** have the role of second defenders. They move into advanced and balanced positions to limit their distances to the wide centre backs (No2 and No5), and keep the passing lanes narrow enough to also control the wing backs (No7 and No3).

The Manchester City attacking midfielders **Gündoğan (8)** and **De Bruyne (17)** mark the red central midfielders (No8 and No6).

As the wingers are advanced, the full backs **Cancelo (27)** and **Walker (2)** are forced into wider positions so they can quickly close down the red wing backs (No7 and No2) if the ball is directed towards one of them. However, their main priority remains to control the wingers (No10 and No11), who are the most dangerous players.

2. Pressing the Wide Centre Back & Blocking Off Wide Area



As soon as the pass is played, the winger **Bernardo (20)** moves to press red centre back No5 in a way that puts the wing back No3 in his shadow (blocking the pass). The full back **Walker (2)** moves into a more advanced position to control No3 and provide extra safety, as the ball could still be moved to him via a link player (No6).

The attacking midfielder **De Bruyne (17)** is the third defender with a double aim to mark red No6 and prevent him from moving the ball to No3, while narrowing the through passing lane.

If the ball is successfully played to the wing back No3, the Manchester City defenders have to shift in the form of a chain reaction.

As **Bernardo (20)** presses the ball, the centre forward and second defender **Jesus (9)** scans the space behind him and notices that blue **Gündoğan (8)** is marking the red No8, so drops back to keep the inside passing lane narrow. He also stays as close as possible to his direct opponent No4.

The defensive midfielder **Rodri (16)** shifts across to block a potential through pass towards the red forward No9.

The centre back **Dias (3)** has to be in a deeper position than red winger No11. He must retain an advantage to reach the ball first if a long pass is played into the space behind the defensive line for No11, as the right back **Walker (2)** is not marking him.

3. Defensive Reactions for the Pass to the Wing Back



If the red centre back No5 finds a way to move the ball to the wing back No3 on the strong side, then City's full back **Walker (2)** immediately moves to press him.

The other 3 defenders shift in the form of chain reaction towards the strong side while retaining short distances between each other. The centre back **Dias (3)** has to mark the red winger No11, who is now behind the first defender.

The defensive midfielder **Rodri (16)** drops back into the defensive line to retain balance and retain a numerical advantage at the back. If this action is not carried out, a 3v3 situation will be created. Equal numbers at the back is not something that creates problems for Pep's City as

long as the player in possession is under heavy pressure. However, the defensive midfielder provides extra safety.

The forward **Jesus (9)** drops back to keep the formation compact, while the winger **Bernardo (20)** drops back to stay involved and narrow the passing lane towards red No6, together with the attacking midfielder **De Bruyne (17)** who narrows the passing lane towards the key passing area.

NOTE: The big challenge against the 3-4-3 is dealing with the wing backs and limiting their available time and space immediately without losing balance at the back. Rodri (16) dropping back during the chain reaction is carried out as there is no opponent midfielder near the ball area.

SESSION 8 BASED ON THE TACTICS OF PEP GUARDIOLA

Pressing High Against Formations with 3 Defenders



SESSION FOR THIS TACTICAL SITUATION (3 PRACTICES)

1. Pressing High Against Formations with 3 Defenders in a Functional Practice with Full Back Starting Zones

1a. Against the 3-4-3 with a 4-3-3 Defensive Shape (Option 1)



Description

- There are 2 areas which determine the starting positions of the blue full backs (27 & 2), as shown. The red team play with a 3-4 formation (from the 3-4-3) or with a 3-4-1 (from the 3-4-1-2).
- The GK starts by passing to one of the red defenders and the red team aim to score in one of the 2 small goals.
- The blue team have to defend using the options fully described on the analysis pages in this section of the book.
- **In Diagram 1a, we show City's Option 1 against the 3-4-3, which uses the 4-3-3 defensive shape in its basic form - see pages 172-175 for full details.**
- In this example (Option 1), the winger (20) presses red No5 from his advanced position, the attacking midfielder (17) marks the opponent behind the first defender (red No6), and the full back (2) moves to control the wing back No3.

PRESSING HIGH UP THE PITCH (GOALKEEPER IN POSSESSION)



TACTICAL SITUATION 9



Pressing High Up to the Goalkeeper Against Formations with 4 Defenders

Content from Analysis of Manchester City during the 2020/2021 and 2021/2022 Premier League winning seasons.

The analysis is based on recurring patterns of play observed within Pep Guardiola's Manchester City team. Once the same phase of play is observed multiple times across many matches, the tactics are seen as a pattern. The analysis included is built from examples of the team's tactics being used effectively, taken from specific matches.

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 full progressive session to coach this specific tactical situation.

Pressing High Up to the Goalkeeper Against Formations with 4 Defenders

3v2 / 8v6 Situation in the Opposition's Half Against the 4-2-3-1



When the opposing goalkeeper has possession of the ball and he cannot use his hands, pressure can be applied directly to him. As the 2 red centre backs are in wide positions, the 2 most advanced Manchester City players control them. They are the forward **Jesus (9)** and the left attacking midfielder **Gündoğan (8)**.

When the objective of the advanced players is to press the GK, there is a limitation in the team's compactness. This is because the halfway line offside rule prevents the defensive line from staying close to the midfielders.

If the red forwards are positioned just inside their own half, they can avoid being offside and also stop the Manchester City defenders from moving further forward to try and keep the team more compact.

Another important element to take into account is which formation the opposition are using. If they use a 4-2-3-1 or 4-3-3, there will be 3 advanced red attackers (No7, No9, and No11 in diagram). City have to retain 4 defenders at the back (4v3) to defend with safety. This leaves only 6 players in advanced positions to deal with 8 red players (including the GK).

This means that there will be 2 opponents unmarked. One of them is the GK who is always the extra player for the attacking team when building up play from the back (3v2 situation in the high part of the pitch, as highlighted in the diagram). If the GK is pressed by **Jesus (9)** or **Gündoğan (8)**, a red player will get free of marking.

NOTE: The main aim when pressing the GK is to put at least one of the free players in your shadow to block him from receiving.

The 2 Different Options to Block Potential Passes to Unmarked Players

Option 1

Blocking 2 free players from receiving

The perfect situation is to put both free players in your shadow, as then every player will be marked or blocked from receiving, while Manchester City retain a 4v3 numerical advantage at the back. However, succeeding in this depends mainly on the positioning of the opposing players.

Option 2

Blocking 1 free player from receiving

If only 1 free player is blocked from receiving, the Manchester City players have to deal with the other free player.

Therefore, 1 defending player (usually one of the wingers) has to mark 2 attacking players at the same time. This means that he takes up a balanced position between the 2 and marks them from a longer distance than usual.

In addition, this player has to adjust his distance from each of the 2 opponents under his control according to their

distance from the player in possession. He has to be closer to the opponent nearest to the ball as a pass to him will take a short time, while the other one is marked from a longer distance as the pass will take more time to reach him.

Additionally, the closest defending player to the opponent who is furthest from the ball (out of the 2 players we are describing) is usually the full back on that side, and he is ready to leave his direct opponent and move quickly to close this player down if needed to.

This action is part of the chain reaction of Manchester City defenders which can lead to the numerical advantage at the back being reduced to equal numbers (3v3).

Pressing the GK Against the 4-2-3-1 with 2 Free Players Blocked from Receiving

1. The Attacking Midfielder in a Wider Defensive Position as the Forward Presses the Back Pass to the GK



In this example, **Jesus (9)** presses the GK in a way that blocks the pass to both free red players (No5 & No10). This means the **defensive midfielder Rodri (16) can leave No10 unmarked to move forward** and mark the red central midfielder No8.

If the attacking midfielder **Gündoğan (8)** sees his direct opponent (No8) is marked behind him, he stays close to centre back No4 to control him. He still tries to keep the passing lane to No8 narrow and is in position to intervene if needed.

The positioning of **Gündoğan (8)** forces the winger **Sterling (7)** to stay low and shift wide to get close to the red right back No2.

Manchester City's defenders take advantage of the back pass to move forward in synchronisation, leaving the red attackers offside.

The left back **Cancelo (27)** does not have to move wide to control red No2, so he stays in a central position.

2. The Attacking Midfielder Presses Centre Back After GK's Pass



If the GK passes to the red centre back No4, Manchester City's **attacking midfielder Gündoğan (8)** is able to obtain a **short closing down distance** by pressing him immediately. This creates a favourable new pressing situation.

It is very important that the left winger **Sterling (7)**, who is the second defender, has already scanned the positioning of the players behind him before the pass towards red No4 is played.

Sterling (7) sees left back **Cancelo (27)** is in the correct position to mark the opposing winger (red No7), so he moves closer to his direct opponent No2 while also keeping the passing lane narrow. **Cancelo (27)** marks No7 closely as he moves back.

The **defensive midfielder Rodri (16)** marks the **red central midfielder No8** even though he is inside the shadow of the first defender **Gündoğan (8)**.

The weak side attacking midfielder **De Bruyne (17)** notices the positioning of **Jesus (9)** keeping the passing lane towards red No6 narrow, so he drops back to keep the formation balanced instead of moving to mark him. However, he does not move too deep in case of a back pass to the GK, where he would have to then move forward quickly to mark No6.

Jesus (9) also controls the pass back to the GK and blocks the pass to the other centre back No5.

SESSION 9 BASED ON THE TACTICS OF PEP GUARDIOLA

Pressing High Up to the GK Against Formations with 4 Defenders



SESSION FOR THIS TACTICAL SITUATION (3 PRACTICES)

1. Pressing High Up to the GK Against 4 Defenders in a 6v6 (+GK) Functional Practice

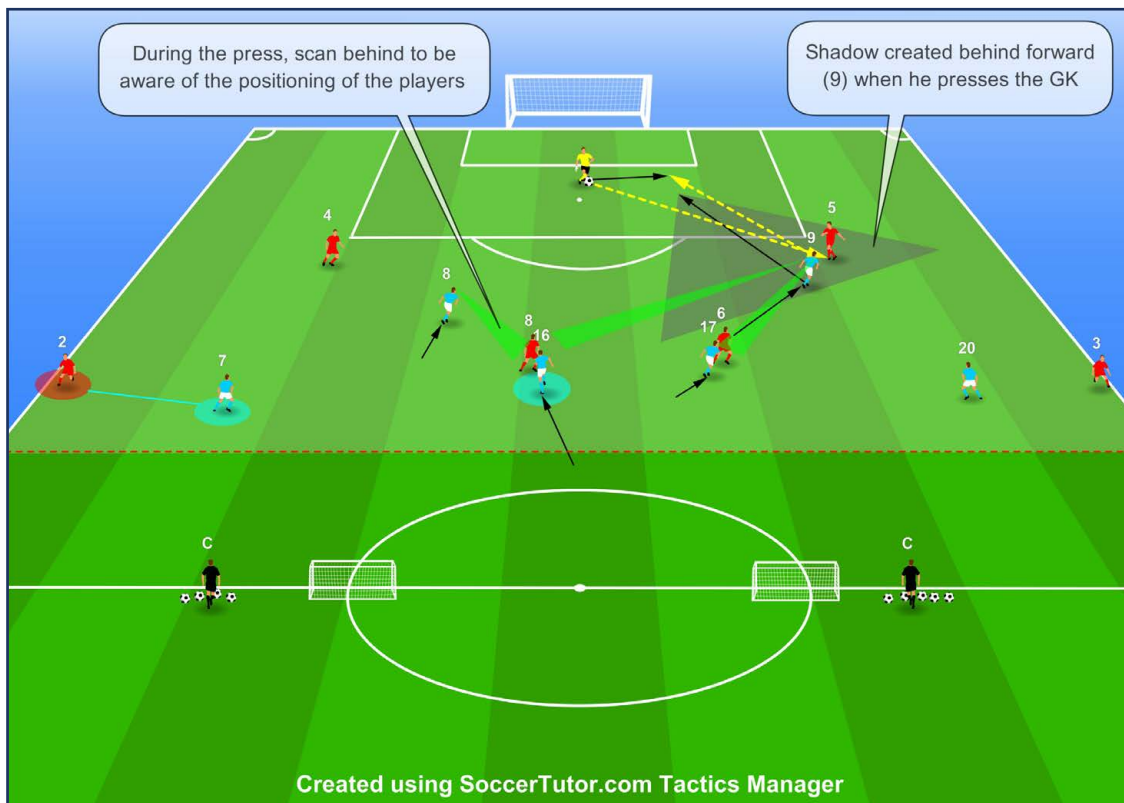
1a. Blocking 2 Free Players from Receiving (Option 1)



Description

- The blue defensive midfielder (16) starts outside the playing area and enters when he decides to. The other blue players have to scan behind them when pressing to find out the positioning of the blue defensive midfielder and act accordingly.
- The practice starts with the red GK's pass to one of the centre backs. The blues press the ball to force the red player to play a bad pass or go backwards. The red try to score in either small goal. **The blue team defend effectively using the tactics fully described on the analysis pages 202-203 in this section of the book.**
- If the blues win the ball, they counter to score within 10-12 seconds. If the reds kick the ball out of play, the nearest Coach plays a new ball to the blues for a counter attack.
- **Option 1:** If the **blue defensive midfielder (16) is outside of the playing area** and the reds pass back to the GK, the **situation is 5v6 (+GK), which is effectively 5v7**. The first defender and forward (9) tries to block the 2 free opponents (red No5 and No3) from receiving. If this is not possible, the winger (20) takes a more balanced position to control 2 players.

1b. Blocking 1 Free Player from Receiving (Option 2)



- **Option 2:** This second diagram shows the same practice but with Option 2 being used. This time, the **blue defensive midfielder (16) is inside the playing area**, so he can mark one of the opposing red central midfielders (No8 in diagram).
- Therefore, the **situation is now 6 v 7 (including the GK)**, so the blue team only need to block 1 free player from receiving.
- After the back pass to the GK, the forward (9) presses the GK in a way that blocks the pass to the unmarked red centre back No5.
- **NOTE:** As this practice is very physically demanding, you can have another team of 6 waiting on the sideline who switch

roles with the defending team after a set period of time.

Coaching Points

1. The players need to be scanning to be fully aware of the situation behind them, especially to see the positioning of the defensive midfielder (16) which determines how they apply their defensive movements and tactics.
2. The closest player must press the GK immediately after a back pass (forward or attacking midfielder).
3. Fast reactions are needed throughout this high tempo high pressing practice.



PEP GUARDIOLA

Coaching High Pressing Tactics & Sessions Against Different Formations



This book is the first to finally provide a step-by-step tactical analysis of **Pep Guardiola's High Pressing Tactics (126 Tactical Examples)**. Take your chance to learn how Manchester City use their innovative pressing tactics to play against all different formations (4-3-3, 4-2-3-1, 4-4-2, 4-3-1-2, 3-4-3, and 3-4-1-2), so you can coach Pep's high pressing game against various systems of play.

Manchester City dictate the game with the ball and without the ball. The aim of the book is for you to learn and apply Pep Guardiola's tactical approach and strategic positional play to **dominate your opponents with a relentless pressing game**.

All of the Manchester City players have **specific roles and responsibilities to ensure they know when and where to press with coordinated movements**. The high intensity pressing style extends throughout the team, with the forwards, midfielders and even defenders aggressively closing down opponents.

Athanasios Terzis is a **UEFA 'A' Licence Coach and Football Tactics Expert** and has used this analysis of **Pep Guardiola's Tactics at Manchester City to create 10 Sessions (33 Practices)**, which you can easily implement into your team's training.

Pep Guardiola and Manchester City's High Pressing Philosophy:

- Apply intense pressure on the ball carrier and create a wide shadow behind
- Identify specific moments or triggers to initiate the press
- Close down space rapidly, narrow passing lanes and limit passing options
- Force the opposition into making mistakes or playing long balls
- Win possession quickly and launch counter attacks!

Tactical Analysis and Training Session Topic Examples:

- Retaining a Compact Formation at the Back
- Defensive Line's Movement in Relation to the Game Situation
- Principles Applied when Defending Near the Ball Area
- Pressing High Against Formations with 3 Defenders
- Pressing High Up to the Goalkeeper Against Formations with 4 Defenders



"We have to press the opponents all over the pitch. The best way to defend is to attack."

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