

Wanted: New ideas for attacking soccer

Technical-tactical insights from the 2006 World Cup and their consequences for youth training by **Klaus Pabst**, German youth coach and youth coordinator, 1. FC Köln

Playing styles in the 2006 World Cup were clearly shaped by the 2002 World Cup and the 2004 European Championship. In 2002, in Japan and South Korea, most of the favorites were eliminated surprisingly early. In 2004, in Portugal, the winner was Greece, the team with the best defense.

As a result, many teams have shifted their focus to safety, compact defense and avoiding risks. And with Italy's victory, the team with the best-organized defense took the title once again.

Despite this defensive trend and the frequently unattractive matches it results in, the 2006 World Cup represents a challenge to all coaches: It's time to develop some new ideas for attacking play. We need new tactical solutions to get past good defense formations. So rather than spending too much time on defense, let's move on to the positive offensive trends we've observed.

Dual roles, turning points and link players

The following group and team tactics stood out:

- The most commonly observed game formations were the 4-4-2 and the 4-2-3-1. Germany was the only team using a 4-4-2 in the semifinals. Italy, Portugal and France all played 4-2-3-1.
- Teams using the 4-4-2 either had a diamond formation in the midfield (e.g. Argentina, Ghana, Switzerland, Serbia and Montenegro, Paraguay) or a flat four (e.g. Germany, Ecuador, England, Japan, Poland, Sweden, Ukraine, USA).
- Both formations typically had two defensive midfielders (sometimes called "double sixes") in front of the defensive line in order to help close down the center in front of their goal.

- Some positions played dual roles. Outside defenders participated in the defensive line, but when their team won the ball they immediately moved up to the midfield, sometimes even becoming outside forwards. When the opposition won the ball, the outside midfielders dropped back to join the defense. Central midfielders often did so as well.

Examples:

- Outside defenders with offensive drive: Lahm (Germany), Boka (Ivory Coast), Sorin (Argentina), van Bronckhorst (Netherlands), R. Carlos and Cafu (Brazil), Abidal (France), Miguel (Portugal)
- Midfielders on defense: Sorin (Argentina), Emerson (Brazil)
- As a result, there was often a "turning point" in the central midfield, in front of the defensive line. When the opposition had the ball, two central midfielders





formed a compact unit securing the center. When their team won the ball, one player rotated forward to a position behind the forward(s) and played the role of a play-maker. If they lost the ball, this player immediately dropped back.

Examples:

- Frings/Kehl and Ballack/Borowski (Germany), Lampard and Gerrard/Hargreaves (England), Maniche and Petit/Costinha (Portugal), Makelele and Vieira (France), Emerson and Ze Roberto (Brazil)
- The rotating midfielder forms a link between offense and defense. This dual role requires a solid tactical understanding of the game, a great readiness to run and excellent physical condition. A midfielder without link players frequently takes the form of an inverted triangle.

Example:

- In Portugal's 4-2-3-1 formation, either Costinha or Petit played central midfield defense while Deco played central offense. Link player Maniche played between them, somewhat off to one side.
- An unusual tactic was Brazil's 4-2-2-2 formation. Three pairs in front of the defensive line shared roles. Emerson and Ze Roberto played central defense in front of the back four. Emerson's role was exclusively defensive, sometimes even dropping back into the back four. During building phases, he was usually the first receiver. When Brazil won the ball, Ze Roberto immediately moved up to join the offense. Ronaldinho and Kaka acted as playmakers on the wings. Adriano and Ronaldo were the target players. Both are similar, very powerful player types and rarely moved back.

Fast-paced play

Almost every team was capable of suddenly switching from relaxed, safe passing in the opposition's attacking third to a fast attack. On attacks up the middle, speed was the only way to get past or outplay compact ball-oriented defense formations. Options for faster play included:

- One- or two-touch combination play
- Combinations of passes on the ground
- Passing precisely into a receiver's path, allowing players to receive without slowing down
- Combinations involving no-look passes
- Open receivers ready for the ball, with a view of the entire field, including ball carrier and other potential receivers
- Actively running down passes
- Receiving on the ground, ready to pass

immediately

- Immediately taking the ball forward into open space
- Through passes up open lanes to the goal
- Quick orientation, recognizing potential receivers even before receiving the ball

Examples:

- Argentina playing against Serbia and Montenegro (6:0).
- Spain in the quarterfinal against France (0:1).

Consequences for training:

- Practice games (on goals or keep-away) with limited touches (e.g. two touches)

Long-range shooting

This tournament trend began with the very first game, with long-range goals scored by Lahm and Frings for Germany. The large number of goals scored on long-distance shots was striking. Attackers took advantage of the flight characteristics of the new World Cup ball, which proved to be almost completely unpredictable for goalkeepers. Remarkably, virtually no goals were scored on direct free kicks.

Examples:

- Germany v. Costa Rica: 1:0 Lahm, 4:2 Frings
- Italy v. Ghana: 1:0 Pirlo
- Brazil v. Croatia: 1:0 Kaka
- Portugal v. Iran: 1:0 Deco
- England v. Sweden: 1:0 J. Cole
- Argentina v. Mexico (round of 16): 2:1 Rodriguez
- Italy v. Ukraine (quarterfinal): 1:0 Zambrotta
- Germany v. Portugal (third-place match): 1:0, 3:0 Schweinsteiger

Consequences for training:

- Combine technique training with precise finishes, including long-range shots.

Strong game on the wings

The 2006 World Cup was, in a sense, the renaissance of the wing attack. Against all the perfect ball-oriented defenses, attackers had their best chance for success on the wings. Therefore teams tried to use the entire width of the field whenever they had the ball. A typical attacking pattern involved an outside defender overlapping the outside midfielder and calling for a diagonal pass up an open lane. In addition to a direct cross, this player also had the option of dribbling parallel to the 18-yard-line and taking a long-range shot from an inside position.

Examples:

- Lahm and Schweinsteiger (Germany)

- Sagnol and Ribery (France)
- Cafu and Kaka (Brazil)

Consequences for training:

- Use combination exercises to help players internalize wing attack tactics (overlapping, wall pass, rebound pass, three-player combination).
- Play games with wing zones in which the attacking team always plays numbers-up (1 v. 0, 2 v. 1, 3 v. 2).

Energetic high-speed dribbling

Solo plays can be an effective way to set up scoring opportunities against a compact, ball-oriented defense. Through determined, energetic dribbling, attackers can get past defenders and outnumber them.

Examples:

- Schweinsteiger (Germany)
- Drogba (Ivory Coast)
- Robben (Netherlands) against Serbia and Montenegro

Consequences for training:

- Provoke dribbling in practice games with special rules: Players can only dribble forward, or the ball can only be played forward.

Indirect set plays

Set plays, such as corner kicks and free kicks from the wings, were used indirectly as another scoring opportunity. Kickers played hard, precise crosses to the near post; from there the ball was relayed in front of the goal. The short trajectories made it hard for goalkeepers and defenders to predict where the ball would go and what the resulting situation would be. Meanwhile, hardly any goals were scored after direct free kicks near the goal.

Examples:

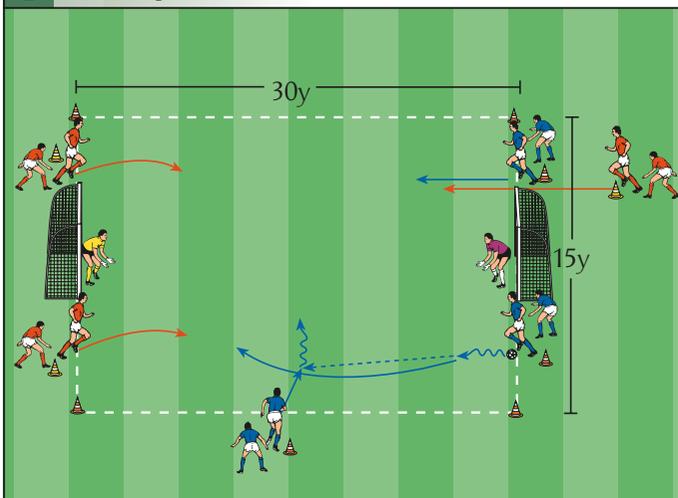
- England v. Paraguay: 1:0 cross on free kick (Beckham) and own goal (Gamarra)
- Italy v. USA: 1:0 cross on free kick and header (Gilardino), 1:1 cross on free kick and own goal (Zaccharo)
- Corner kicks by Schweinsteiger (Germany) and Ronaldinho (Brazil)
- Headers by Materazzi on corner kicks (1:0 against Czech Republic, 1:1 in final against France)

Consequences for training:

- Set special rules for practice games: All set plays must be played as corner kicks or free kicks from the wings.

SAMPLE EXERCISES: FAST-PACED PLAY

1 3 v. 2 plus 1



Setup

- Mark out a 15 x 30-yard field.
- Set up a goal with goalkeeper on each endline.
- Place three attacker cones and three defender cones around the field as shown.
- Divide players into two teams, attackers and defenders.
- Attackers stand at the attacker cones, defenders at the defender cones.
- One attacker has a ball.

Sequence

- The first three attackers take the field.
- Defenders take the field at the same time.
- The attackers first try to outnumber defenders 3 v. 2 and finish quickly, before the defense can get organized.
- If the ball goes out of the field, the next set of players starts a new round.
- Teams switch roles after 10 rounds.

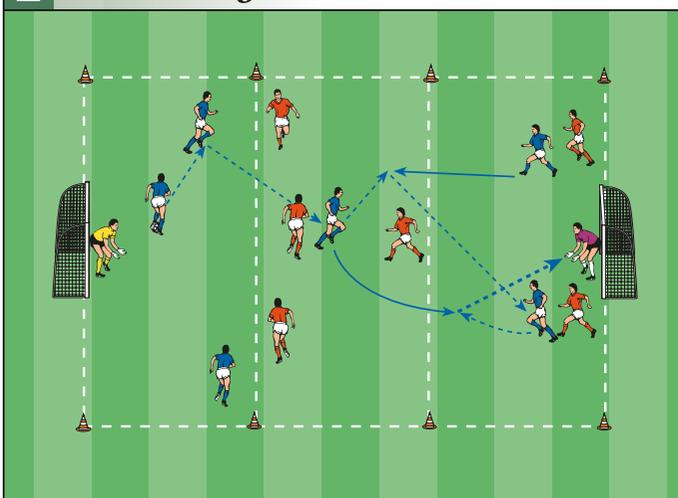
Variations

- Teams play 2 v. 1 plus 1.
- Teams play 4 v. 3 plus 1.
- If the ball goes out of the field, pass another ball in and continue play.
- Place attacker and defender cones in different locations.

Coaching points:

- Teams should not switch roles too soon, so you have plenty of time to make corrections.
- The center player should start with the ball, so that there are two potential receivers.
- Pass forward as fast as possible in order to pick up yardage quickly.
- After a pass onto the wing, overlap the ball carrier, putting the ball back in the center.

2 Three-zone game



Setup

- Mark out a sufficiently large field.
- Set up a goal with goalkeeper on each endline.
- Using cones, divide the field into three zones: defensive, midfield and attacking.
- Divide players into two teams.

Sequence

- Teams play on two goals with goalkeepers.
- Players have unlimited touches in their defensive zone. They are limited to two touches in the midfield and one in their attacking zone.

Variations:

- Change the touch limitations for the various zones.
- Divide the field into two zones with touch limitations.
- Divide the field into four zones with touch limitations.

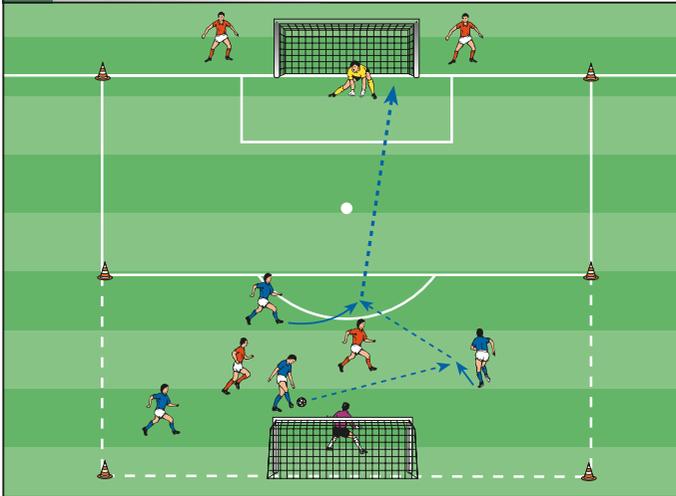
Coaching points:

- Start with safe attack-building in the defensive zone.
- Begin to take more risks in the midfield.
- In the attacking zone, attack decisively regardless of risk.
- With limited touches, players need to get oriented and look for potential receivers before receiving the ball.



LONG-RANGE SHOOTING

4 v. 2 with long-range shooting



Setup

- Mark out a field twice the size of the penalty box.
- Set up a goal with goalkeeper on each endline.
- Using cones, mark out a centerline.
- Divide players into two teams, A and B.

Sequence

- Team A plays 4 v. 2 to score against Team B.
- Attackers may only shoot from their own half.
- If a goal is scored or the ball goes out, Team B attacks 4 v. 2.

Variations

- Teams play 3 v. 2.
- Teams play 4 v. 4.

Coaching points:

- Attackers should make the most of their superior numbers with fast combinations.
- Take advantage of every chance for a long-range shot.
- Dribble diagonally to the penalty box, turn and shoot.

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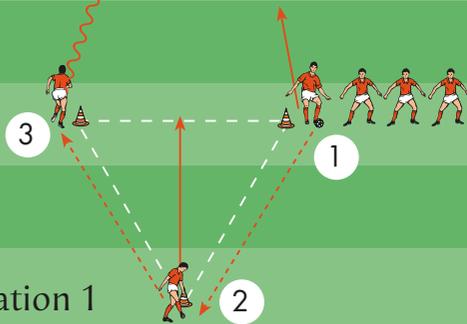
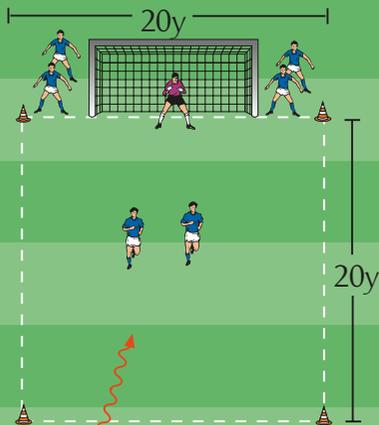
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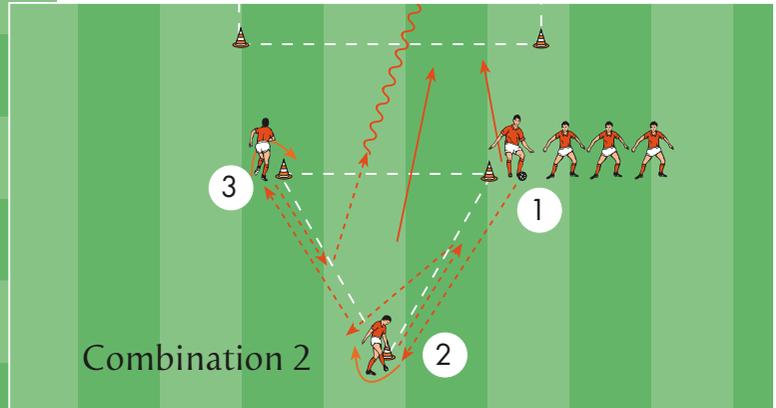
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STRONG GAME ON THE WINGS

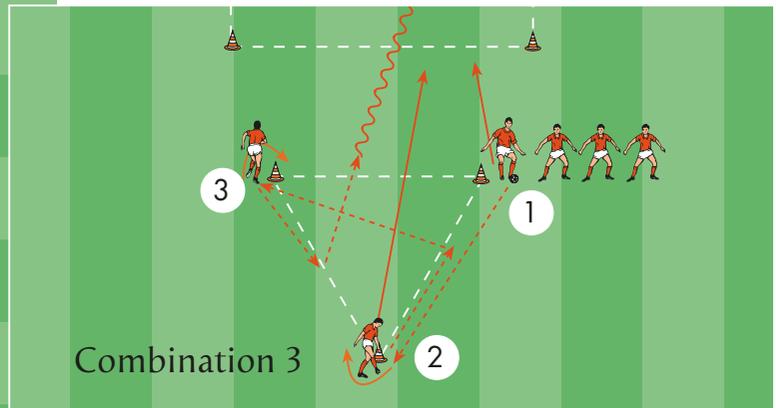
Numbers-up triangle passing



Combination 1



Combination 2



Combination 3

Setup

- Mark out a 20 x 20-yard field.
- Set up a goal with goalkeeper on one endline.
- Outside the field, place three cones in a triangle in front of the goal (10 yards on each side).
- Divide players into two teams, attackers (A) and defenders (B).
- Two defenders stand in the field; the rest stand next to the goal.
- Attackers line up at one corner of the triangle, except for two, who stand at the other two corners.

Sequence

- Attackers play various passing combinations inside the triangle:
 - Combination 1: A1 passes to A2, A2 to A3.
 - Combination 2: A1 passes to A2, who drops the ball back to A1 and overlaps his cone; A1 passes into A2's path; A2 passes directly to A3, who drops the ball back to A2 and overlaps his cone; A2 passes into A3's path.
 - Combination 3: A1 passes to A2, who drops the ball back to A1 and overlaps his cone; A1 passes to A3, who lays the ball off to A2 and overlaps his cone; A2 passes into A3's path.
- A3 takes the ball into the field in front of the goal and tries to finish, together with A1 and A2.

- Afterwards, the next three attackers start a new round against the next two defenders.
- Teams switch roles and positions after 10 rounds.

Variations

- Teams play 4 v. 3.
- Teams play 4 v. 4.
- Limit playing time to five to 10 seconds.
- Limit attackers to a total of five to 10 touches before shooting.
- Limit each attacker to two touches.

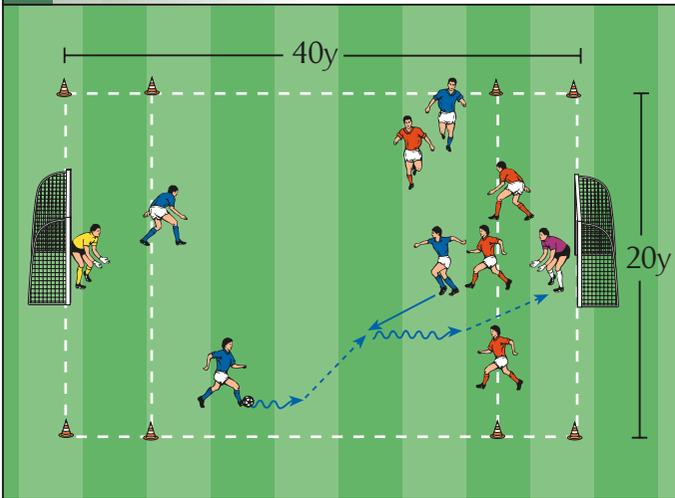
Coaching points:

- Use triangle passing to internalize standard combinations (wall pass, rebound pass, overlapping).
- In numbers-up situations, pass the ball to the player in the middle.
- The ball carrier should dribble toward an opponent and engage him. This creates a 2 v. 1 situation:
 - Pass to teammate and show for wall pass.
 - Start a solo run.
 - After the pass, overlap teammate, who moves inward.



ENERGETIC HIGH-SPEED DRIBBLING

Forward dribbling



Setup

- Mark out a 20 x 40-yard field.
- Set up a goal with goalkeeper on each endline.
- Using cones, mark out a five-yard back pass zone in front of each goal.
- Divide players into two teams.

Sequence

- Teams play 4 v. 4.
- Special rule 1: Players may only move forward while dribbling, except in the back pass zone, where they may dribble back.
- If this rule is broken, the other team gets the ball.

Variations

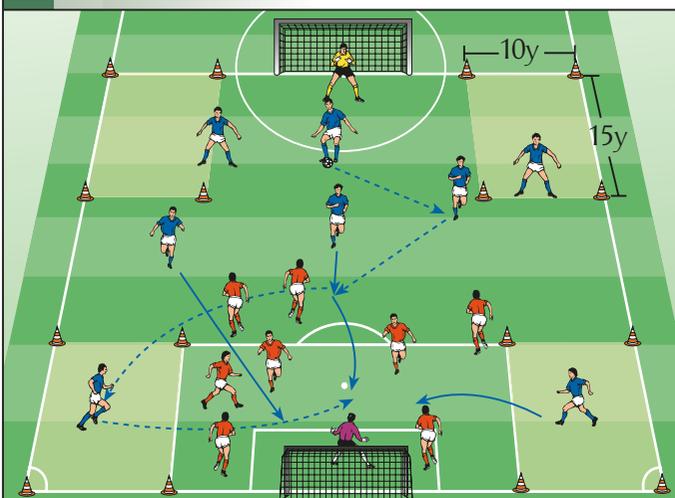
- Special rule 2: Players may only pass the ball forward.
- Special rule 3: Players may only move the ball forward, whether by dribbling or by passing.
- Special rule 4: Each player must have at least five touches before passing (but not before shooting).
- Mark a centerline across the field; special rules apply only in the opposition's half.

Coaching points:

- Special rules force players to move the ball forward boldly and decisively to the opposition's goal.
- Get open and show for passes.
- Create passing stations ahead of the ball.

INDIRECT SET PLAYS

Game with corner zones



Setup

- Field is half a standard field.
- Set up a goal with goalkeeper on each endline.
- Mark out 10 x 15-yard corner zones flanking each goal.
- Divide players into two teams.

Sequence

- Teams play on two goals with goalkeepers.
- Receivers inside a corner zone by the opposition's goal may not be attacked; they may control the ball and play it without interference.
- Make all set plays (free kicks and throw-ins) corner kicks.
- Goals following set plays or passes out of the corner zones count double.

Variations

- Make the zones larger or smaller.
- Receivers inside corner zones may be blocked.
- Receivers inside corner zones may be attacked (creating pressure).

Coaching points:

- Passes out of the corner zones should cross in front of the goal.
- Crosses should be precisely aimed (and announced beforehand). Accuracy is key.
- Play crosses to the near post and relay them from there to in front of the goal.



FIG. 1 SUCCESS IN SOCCER'S WORLD CUP DREAM TEAM





CANAVARO AND PIRLO CALL THE SHOTS

THE WORLD CHAMPIONS FIELD THE BEST DEFENSE

Italy in 4-4-2 formation



Italy in 4-2-3-1 formation



Flexible but always compact

During the preliminary round, Italy primarily played a 4-4-2 formation. Pirlo (21), Perrotta (20), de Rossi (4) and Totti (10) formed a diamond in the midfield. Totti, freshly recovered from a broken fibula, was usually relieved in the second half by Camoranesi (16; offensive formation against Ghana) or Gattuso (8; defensive formation against USA). The midfield formation then changed into a flat four, with Pirlo and de Rossi or Gattuso as the central defensive midfielders. Camoranesi (right) and Perrotta (left) stepped up the attacks on the wings. Zambrotta (19) was injured early on but later replaced Zaccharo (2) as right defender or Grosso (3) as left defender. On the attack, second-stringers laquinta (15) and del Piero (7) saw regular action.

Starting with the round of 16, Coach Lippi switched the team over to a 4-2-3-1 formation and continued with it through the championship game. On defense, the injured Nesta (13) was replaced by Materazzi (23). In the quarterfinal, Barzagli (6) played inside defender after

Materazzi's ejection. Pirlo and Gattuso played as defensive midfielders. Camoranesi and Perrotta supported lone forward Toni (9) on the wings while Totti played central attacking midfielder.

Defense led by Cannavaro

The central defensive midfielders formed a compact block together with the inside defenders, with Cannavaro (5) directing players to follow the ball. The two offensive outside players also participated in defense in the midfield. An outstanding defensive player, Cannavaro resolved almost every game situation without the use of slide tackles or fouls. He was also excellent on headers. Gattuso's sole function was to steal the ball and immediately pass it safely on (usually to Pirlo). There was a clear defense strategy: It was impossible to mount an attack in the middle, in front of Italy's goal. Starting in the midfield, the opposition's attacks were quickly redirected outward into dead zones in the corners, where the Italians outnumbered their opponents and forced them to commit errors. As a rule, fouls were avoided.

Attack-building led by Pirlo

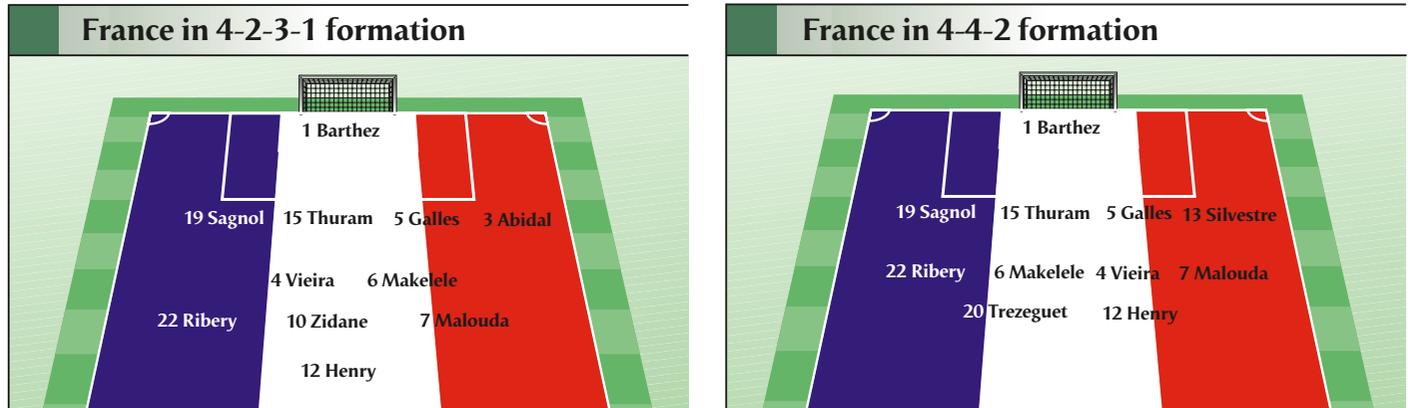
Pirlo was the defensive playmaker and initiated each attack. He was the first receiver and therefore a part of every attack. Zambrotta and Grosso concentrated primarily on defense, only driving the attack forward on rare occasions. Offensive playmaker Totti tried to pick up the pace with direct through passes up the middle. Attacks frequently ended with long-range shots by Pirlo, Totti and Zambrotta. The only negative was Italy's lack of scoring ability in the penalty box. There were only a few opportunities, but most of them were ruthlessly exploited. Forwards Toni, Gilardino and laquinta played as classic strikers.

FIG. 2 ITALY AT THE 2006 WORLD CUP

Preliminary round, Group E		
Italy v. Ghana	2:0	(goals: Pirlo, laquinta)
Italy v. USA	1:1	(goal: Gilardino)
Czech Republic v. Italy	0:2	(goals: Materazzi, Inzaghi)
<i>first in group</i>		
Round of 16		
Italy v. Australia	1:0	(goal: Totti on penalty shot)
Quarterfinal		
Italy v. Ukraine	3:0	(goals: Zambrotta, Toni x2)
Semifinal		
Germany v. Italy	0:2 OT	(goals: Grosso, del Piero)
Final		
Italy v. France	1:1, 1:1 OT, 5:3 tiebreaker	(goals: Materazzi)

ZIDANE BACK IN THE CENTER

FRANCE PLAYS A COMPACT, WORLD-CLASS GAME



Domenech builds on consistency

France played most games in a 4-2-3-1 formation with barely any personnel changes. This reflected Coach Domenech's choice to use the formation that best fit the available player types. Above all, it provided an effective platform for Zidane's (10) skills as an offensive playmaker. In the last preliminary match, against Togo, Domenech adapted his formation to prevailing conditions. With the ejection of his central attacker, he switched to a 4-4-2. Defensive player Makelele (6) and offensive player Vieira (4) took slightly staggered positions to form the center of a "flat" four in the midfield. Trezeguet (20) supported primary forward Henry (12) on the attack. Silvestre (13) stepped in as left defender after the ejection of Abidal (3).

Vieira, Makelele, Thuram and Galles hold the line

Domenech kept the core of the defense the same for all seven World Cup games. Powerful inside defenders Thuram (15) and Galles (5) formed a compact unit together with defensive midfielders Vieira and Makelele. All four players played brutal defense and moved the ball safely forward if they won it. Makelele stood out for his great readiness to run, while Vieira displayed outstanding 1 v. 1 skills, positional play and defensive heading. Ribery (22) and Malouda (7) dropped back when the opposition won the ball, creating a "flat" midfield four with Vieira and Makelele. Together with outside defenders Sagnol (19) and Abidal, they were able to close down space on the wings.

Zidane the playmaker

Unlike recent tournaments, Zidane did not play left midfield; instead he played as a central attacker, as he had during France's 1998 World Cup win. He got lots of touches and directed every attack. Ribery, Malouda and Henry formed the attacking trio in the 4-2-3-1 formation and frequently traded positions. Ribery and Malouda played as outside forwards when France had the ball. Link player Vieira supported Zidane, leaving Makelele to move forward. Sagnol was strong on offense, playing lots of hard, well-aimed crosses from inside positions. Henry was usually on his own in the center of the offense. As a result, despite plenty of possession time and solid combination play, good scoring opportunities were rare.

FIG. 3 FRANCE AT THE 2006 WORLD CUP

Preliminary round, Group G		
France v. Switzerland	0:0	
France v. South Korea	1:1	(goal: Henry)
Togo v. France	0:2	(goals: Vieira, Henry)
second in group		
Round of 16		
Spain v. France	1:3	(goals: Ribery, Vieira, Zidane)
Quarterfinal		
Brazil v. France	0:1	(goal: Henry)
Semifinal		
Portugal v. France	0:1	(goal: Zidane on penalty shot)
Final		
Italy v. France	1:1, 1:1 OT, 5:3 tiebreaker	(goal: Zidane on penalty shot)



ENTHUSIASTIC ATTACKERS

GERMANY BETS EVERYTHING ON OFFENSE

Germany in 4-4-2 formation



Klinsmann relies on two flat fours

Germany's Coach Klinsmann chose a 4-4-2 formation and maintained it throughout the entire tournament. In front of the defensive flat four was another flat four in the midfield, with Frings (8) and Ballack (13) playing side by side as a defensive "double six." Winning the ball created a "turning point" in the midfield: Ballack immediately rotated into the center of the offense, creating a sort of midfield diamond. Top substitutes for the central midfielders were Kehl (5) and Borowski (18). Borowski replaced the injured Ballack in the opening game against Costa Rica. During the semifinal, Borowski played left midfield for Schweinsteiger (7) while Kehl replaced the ejected Frings. Due to his dynamic play and strong long-range shooting, Borowski mainly played offense. Kehl, more of a defensive player, was strong in 1 v. 1 situations and built attacks safely and flawlessly. The top offensive substitute was Odonkor (21), a pure wing attacker whose speed frequently enabled him to dribble past defenders. Against Poland, he dribbled to the endline and crossed to set up the 1:0. In the center of the offense, Neuville (10) was the top alternative to Klose (11) and Podolski (20).

Continuous improvements in communication

During the opening game against Costa Rica, both goals against Germany were the result of less than ideal coordination between defensive midfielders Frings and Borowski and inside defenders Mertesacker (17) and Metz-

elder (21). Openings for through passes past defenders up the middle to Costa Rica's forward Wanchope were noticed too late and not closed decisively. However, by the second game, against Poland, these problems had been carefully analyzed and resolved via focused training. By the last preliminary game, against Ecuador, the team was playing a very compact, controlled game. This was especially apparent in the quarterfinal against Argentina.

Pressure on the wings

The German team's attack began with goalkeeper Lehmann (1). Every ball he stopped was immediately put back into play with a well-aimed throw. Germany also stood out for the way it used the width of the field in building its attacks, including outside defenders Friedrich (3) and Lahm (16) as well as outside midfielders Schneider (19) and Schweinsteiger. When Germany had the ball,

Schneider and Schweinsteiger moved almost all the way out to the sidelines to create wide passing stations. During attack-building on the wings, they were often overlapped by Friedrich and Lahm, respectively. Lahm stood out for his great offensive drive, either pushing up the wing to finish with a cross (with either foot) or dribbling along the penalty box into the middle to finish from a distance with his strong right foot (1:0 against Costa Rica). Schneider was the playmaker on the wing, notable for his versatile forward play. Schweinsteiger used his dribbling skills to get the ball near the goal, and also finished with long-range shots. Front runners Klose (dynamic play, good heading) and Podolski (who tended to come from the back) played combinations and complemented each other nicely (1:0, 2:0 against Sweden). Scoring opportunities were especially well utilized against Sweden and Ecuador.

FIG. 4 GERMANY AT THE 2006 WORLD CUP

Preliminary round, Group A		
Germany v. Costa Rica	4:2	(goals: Lahm, Klose x2, Frings)
Germany v. Poland	1:0	(goal: Neuville)
Ecuador v. Germany	0:3	(goals: Klose x2, Podolski)
<i>first in group</i>		
Round of 16		
Germany v. Sweden	1:3	(goals: Podolski x2)
Quarterfinal		
Germany v. Argentina	1:1, 1:1 OT, 4:2 tiebreaker	(goal: Klose)
Semifinal		
Germany v. Italy	0:2	
Third-place game		
Germany v. Portugal	3:1	(goals: Schweinsteiger x2, Petit own goal)

EFFICIENCY OVER PASSION

COACH SCOLARI TURNS INDIVIDUALISTS INTO A TEAM

Portugal in 4-2-3-1 formation



Heart of the game: The midfield triangle

Portugal's midfield game was characteristic of its formation. Costinha (6), Maniche (18) and Deco (20) formed a "flat triangle" when the opposition had the ball and a more offense-oriented "rotated triangle" when Portugal had it. Maniche was a classic link player: When Portugal won the ball, he immediately moved up (usually to the left) behind Deco. He was a great runner on both offense and defense. On the attack, he stayed forward until he finished (1:0 against the Netherlands in the round of 16), while on defense he was half of the "double six." He constantly sought out diagonal running paths in order to get open. In the event of injuries or ejections, Coach Scolari put in Petit (8) for Costinha and the more attack-oriented Tiago (19) for Maniche. Figo (7) replaced injured playmaker Deco against Angola and Mexico;

C. Ronaldo (17) and Tiago played the right wing and Simao (11) played the left. In the quarterfinal against England, Tiago came in after Deco's ejection. The lone forward was Pauleta (9) or his alternate H. Postiga (23). The team's style was characterized by lots of ball circulation and very solid combination play. Scolari used the 4-2-3-1 formation consistently; only switching to a 4-3-2 after Costinha's ejection in the round of 16. Figo and Simao played as forwards while Petit replaced Pauleta and played midfield defense with Maniche behind Deco.

A well-oiled defensive machine

Coach Scolari almost always used the same defense formation. In the back, Portugal had the solid quartet of Miguel (13), Meira (5), R. Carvalho (16) and N. Valente (14). In the meaningless preliminary game against Mexi-

co, Scolari put in Caneira (3) to let N. Valente rest. After Miguel's injury in the semifinal against France, he was replaced on the right wing by Ferreira (2). In the third-place game against Germany, Costa (4) took over for Carvalho. In every case, the back four was well organized and absolutely disciplined. The leader and director of the defense was the uncompromising R. Carvalho, with his solid ball handling and good heading skills.

Versatile on the attack

At the core of Portugal's attacking game was another quartet of creative players: the two outside midfielders, the central playmaker and the forwards. Figo, C. Ronaldo, Deco and Pauleta tried lots of solo plays (dynamic dribbling runs, surprising fakes) and stayed unpredictable by constantly trading positions within the system. Deco's shooting skills made him even more dangerous. In the midfield, the game was directed by Maniche (great assertiveness) and Deco (creativity, great all-around player). Wing attacks were carried all the way to the goal, where they concluded with hard passes into the center. Outside defenders N. Valente and Miguel supported these wing attacks, pushing forward when Portugal had the ball and showing for through and diagonal passes. Although this team has gotten better at utilizing scoring opportunities, it still has room to improve in this area.

FIG. 5 PORTUGAL AT THE 2006 WORLD CUP

Preliminary round, Group D		
Angola v. Portugal	0:1	(goal: Pauleta)
Portugal v. Iran	2:0	(goals: Deco, C. Ronaldo on penalty shot)
Portugal v. Mexico	2:1	(goals: Maniche, Simao on penalty shot)
<i>first in group</i>		
Round of 16		
Portugal v. Netherlands	1:0	(goal: Maniche)
Quarterfinal		
England v. Portugal	0:0, 0:0 OT, 1:3 tiebreaker	
Semifinal		
Portugal v. France	0:1	
Third-place game		
Germany v. Portugal	3:1	(goal: Nuno Gomes)