

## Topic: Defending in a 4-3-3 like Liverpool vs. Manchester City, 3 January 2019

### Video Link:

<https://hdmatches.com/2019/01/03/video-manchester-city-vs-liverpool-highlights-full-match-3-january-2019/#2>

### Overall strategy

- Front 3
  - Behind the ball
    - In a line, on a string
    - Ball-side winger
      - Press CB when he has the ball.
      - Arc run to eliminate the FB.
    - #9
      - Drops in to cover the pressing winger.
      - Front the #6.
    - Weak-side winger
      - Drop below the #9
      - Find a space where you are connected to both the opposition's CB and FB. You should be able to either challenge a bad pass intended for his CB, or, in the case of his CB receiving the ball under control, press his CB while taking away his FB.
  - If they break the line...
    - Press from behind, forcing wide when possible.
    - Can you be quick enough to prevent their pass to the third man?
    - Recover/retreat to get behind the ball line
  - Common individual traits/actions
    - Pressing while fronting
      - Firmino (#9) consistently contains the CB on the ball while fronting/eliminating their #6
      - The ball-side winger presses the CB with the ball from an angle that eliminates the pass to the FB
      - When the forward line is broken by the FB, Mane does a good job of pressing from behind and inside to take away the #6 while forcing the FB wide or into a trap with Robertson
- Midfield 3
  - As a unit, they must...
    - Mark the opposition midfielders well.
    - Be vigilance: Knowing where everyone--opponents and teammates--is
    - Communicate (to ensure shifting, recognizing pressing cues, dealing with opposition rotations, etc.)
  - Vs. double pivots: Assuming that the #9 is marking/fronting one pivot, one CM comes out to mark the second.
  - Common individual traits/actions
    - Lots of pressing opposition midfielders from behind who receive the ball with their backs to goal.
    - Follow an opposition midfielder when he checks to receive the ball.
  - Near-side CM
    - Track opposition #8 dropping to receive ball if necessary.
    - Press FB if he breaks our forward line.
    - Step to and challenge a CM receiving the ball
  - Central CM:
    - Cover the near-side CM
    - Front their #9

- Be mindful of and give yourself good access to their #6 if they try to pass to him.
  - Weak-side CM: ?
- Back 4
- Other trends/observations
  - All units (forward, midfield, defense) are “in a line, on a string.”
  - Good horizontal shifting and compactness
  - Leave, but don’t forget about, weak-side wide players. (A switch of play to them will take time, during which we can shift our block.)
  - When in doubt, defend the middle and force the opposition wide.
- If they break our forward line... (see above)
- If they break our midfield and/or defensive line...
  - Delay, forcing wide
  - Recover
- Pressing cues
  - Slow, bas, easily interceptable pass
  - Backwards pass
- When our mid block turns into a high press...
  - Trigger: A backwards pass triggers a press, but we don’t get the ball right away.
  - Led by winger... Keep pressing with an arched run that takes away your FB.
  - Led by #9... Cut off the CB-to-CB pass and force the opposition wide.
  - The rest of the team...
    - Get the block up.
    - CM’s: Put yourself in a good position to challenge for or recover the ball.

### **Individual traits we want to develop**

- Pressing while fronting (forwards)
- Stepping out of line to press an opposition player receiving with his back to goal (CM’s and defenders)
- Timing your press: Going when the pass is made (everyone)
- Tracking opposition CM’s (CM’s)
- Vigilance: Actively monitoring in a space with access to multiple opponents, communicating, and knowing where to go and what to do based on a variety of possible outcomes (everyone)
- Anticipating, receiving, and challenging aerial, 50-50, and second balls. (CM’s and defenders)

### **My game notes**

- Winger arcs run to cut off outside back when pressing center back, #9 drops in to cover and front the #6
- Pressing cue: Bad/slow pass from CB to CB
- Our CMs need to mark their CM’s well. Communicate with each other to make sure that you mark them regardless of their rotations, etc.
- If they play with double pivots, one of the CM’s will have to come out to Mark the second #6.
- When they break through, we have to delay, retreat, and recover. Drop the lines, keep retreating while marking players until the rest of the team gets reorganized.
- We may leave vertical passing lanes open. We have to press hard against our mark when he is receiving a vertical pass with his back to goal.
- Area of vulnerability: Third man combos. How to defend the combo from their 4 to 8 to 6?
- When in doubt: Protect the middle and leave the players outside, but accessible. When it turns into a high press, the near side winger and #9 front the pivots. The 8 and 10 come high too. They leave the opposite FB as a free man but press him as soon as he receives the ball. The weak side winger drops

deep into the midfield because a direct ball to his side of the field is unlikely and would take so much time that he could easily press it.

- We always have to be ready to pounce on a player who could receive the ball with his back to goal. Our shifts may not always be perfect and when the opposition move us around a bit, we have to adapt, improvise, rely on some basics/rules of thumb.
- Mane is quick to run at Stones when Stones receives the ball. He doesn't often get the ball, but he helps us bring our block higher. Naturally, what may come next? Long ball, sloppy pass, second ball, etc.
- When Mane doesn't cut off his winger, Milner (the near side CM) is always ready to pounce.
- We must always be ready to pounce!
- The near side CM always follows his mark when he drops in to receive a ball.
- The midfield line is defending like a dynamic flat three.
- We don't really mark their wide guys. We just know they are there and are always prepared to press them upon receiving the ball.
- They break our press by finding a free FB. Everyone recovers. The near side CM runs to defend the FB and cut off his forward progress down the wing with the #6 covering. When we move horizontally, the second defender needs to run to cover the first defender.
- Stopped at 15:23
- Often three forwards high, even above the ball
- At least one CM tracks mark forward
- CB steps out of line until he forces man on ball backwards, partner covers
- Back pass = first presser keep running and bring the block forward
- Leave wide players
- Midfielder steps, but first line broken, so Salah races to get back and chase the ball
- When opp CBs have the ball, Firmino is the highest defender
- Henderson sneaks out of his line to put himself in position to press the 6, but forgets to also front the other CM
- When opp has the ball attacking down flank, near side FB steps (shows outside or allows him to go backwards), near side CM shifts to cover FB inside, while near side CB covers behind
- Firmino presses a backpass, but doesn't get the ball, so now we look to force to and trap in a wide area. They play to the FB, Mane presses the FB while taking away other CM options, Firmino waits in the space between the FB, 6, and CB, waiting to move to front the 6 or press the CB. Also, I see here that the midfield line is pretty flat. Should Hendo (middle Cm) be covering the near side CM, or is he in a higher position to prepare himself to press their 6 or 8?
- Good 1v1 down the wing by Robertson. He forces Aguero wide and to turn around.
- Again, Salah presses upon pass to CB.
- Lots of refusal to lose 1v1s.
- Firmino does a really good job of defending/containing the CB on the ball while fronting the 6. Because he does this so well, we now have a 3v2 in midfield and our CMs can come out with their 8 or 10 who drop in to receive the ball.
- Winger chases down FB with ball forcing outside.
- Again, CM following the 8 in the middle, wingers stays wide.
- For the winger, whenever his FB gets the ball, he should get behind the ball and force the FB wide.
- Wingers reference points: FB and CB
- Always vigilant
- Quick to 50-50 balls
- When a line is beat, the player closest to the ball is quick to press from behind while everyone else either gets behind the ball or reorganizes

### **My questions**

- When does the #9 come out and force the CB wide?
- How does the winger press when their outside back has the ball?
- What is the weak side winger's point of reference? The other CB? Can't that leave him split pretty far?
- How does the midfield line defend? Flat line or diamond with a 6 sitting?