

Roberto De Zerbi's Build-up Play and Attacking Philosophy



Roberto De Zerbi's Key Game Principles for Build-up Play from the Back

1

Bait the Press (Draw Opponents Forward)

- Deliberately **invite pressure with players positioned deep during build-up**. The GK acts as the third centre back.
- **Draw in opponents** with short passes and maximise space further up the pitch to exploit.
- Put foot on ball with the sole of the boot so you can play any way and are not limited to only playing to one side when pressed.

2

Technical Execution

- Control of the ball with precise first touches, quality of pass, and the correct weight of pass.
- Prevent duels as much as possible by **limiting long passes (maintain control)**.
- Wait for the correct forward pass to a link player, who can play a wall pass to a teammate in space facing the opposition's goal.

3

Control the Opposition and the Game

- Control the game with good tactical knowledge, reading the game situation, and making the correct decisions.
- **Possession-based football** to control the game.
- Defensive midfielder/s deep to control the build-up play. Wingers push up high and pin back opposition's defensive line.
- Move the ball to the forward or attacking midfielder in the open space in the centre.

Roberto De Zerbi's Tactical Shape for Build-up Play from Back in Open Play

1a. Build-up Shape with 2-4-4 Structure (Brighton 4-2-3-1)



- Roberto De Zerbi's team invite the opposition's press and draw them deep into their half. The **centre backs (CB)** often place their foot on the ball, leaving the option open to play passes in any direction. The 2 full backs are wide and in line with the **2 defensive midfielders (double pivot)**. The 4 attacking players are in advanced positions to pin the 4 opposing defenders back and away from disrupting the build-up.
- As the opponents are forced to commit players forward, the Brighton **attacking midfielder (AM)** and **forward (F)** can occupy positions in free available space.
- With the **double box structure** shown, Brighton have a **6v4 Overload in the centre of the pitch (highlighted)**, which enables them to play through the opposition's organisation and move the ball forward to their attacking players.

1b. Square Pass (Bait to Press), Third Man Link Player to Move Ball to Free Player + Launch Attack



- De Zerbi's aims are to bait the opposition forward to press and draw them out of position and use a third man link player to move the ball to a free **DM**, Brighton can move the ball into the free available space (highlighted yellow). This space to play is there because the opposition's back 4 were pinned back by the wingers.
- The **defensive midfielders (DM)** stay behind the 2 red forwards (in shadow) with the aim of receiving via a link player. They do not move at angles to receive directly from the **centre backs (CB)**.
- Once their opponents commit, Brighton play out from the back successfully by

following this set tactical structure and principles. Once a link player is used to "bounce" the ball to a free **DM**, Brighton can move the ball into the free available space (highlighted yellow). This space to play is there because the opposition's back 4 were pinned back by the wingers.

- In the diagram example, the **attacking midfielder (AM)** is the link player and the **DM's** pass breaks the midfield line to play through to the **forward (F)**. A good attacking opportunity has been created very quickly with 6 or 7 opponents taken out of the game.

“[Centre backs] have the pleasure of holding the ball, of building the game, knowing that everything starts from them.”



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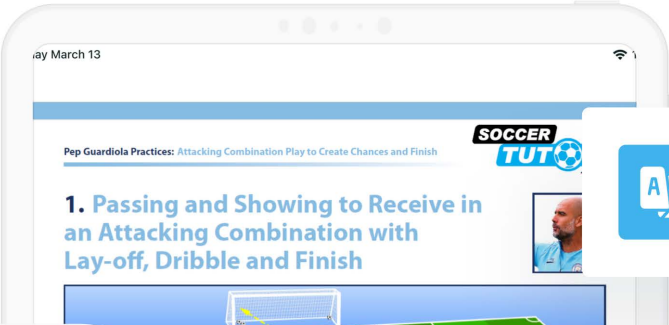
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Description

1. Player A passes to B, who drops back behind the pole.
2. Player B passes back for A to move forward onto, completing the 1-2 combination.
3. Player B passes to C.
4. Player C passes across to B, who has moved forward past the pole.
5. Player B passes forward to D, who drops back.
6. Player D plays a lay-off pass for E to move forward onto.
7. Player E receives and dribbles past the mannequin.
8. Player E shoots at goal.
9. The players rotate positions: (A -> B -> C -> D -> E -> A).

Source: Pep Guardiola's Manchester City training session at Etihad Campus Training Ground, Manchester - 12th July 2017

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Base Español

B, who drops back behind

ask for A to move forward the 1-2 combination.

es to C.

es across to B, who has moved the pole.

es forward to D, who drops back.

6. Player D plays a lay-off pass for E to move forward onto.

7. Player E receives and dribbles past the mannequin.

8. Player E shoots at goal.

9. The players rotate positions: (A -> B -> C -> D -> E -> A).

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