






Guideline (GUI)

7 vs 7 Formation Option Guide

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Errors or Omissions

Big Country Soccer Association has provided this manual to the membership as a guide for the options available with an 7 vs 7 field formation. Any errors or omissions contained herein shall not supersede the by-laws, policies, procedures, or guidelines of the Association. Any changes to the manual shall be included in the next edition. The by-laws of the association supersede any guideline or policy should a conflict occur.

Document Revision History

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1 Vision

The Big Country Soccer Association aspires to be an outstanding educational-athletic organization that provides a high-quality experience for every athlete. A high-quality experience is one in which every athlete:

1. Is coached using the principles of Positive Coaching;
2. Has fun playing the game;
3. Feels like an important part of the team regardless of performance;
4. Learns “life lessons” that have value beyond the playing field; and
5. Learns the skills, tactics and strategies of the game and improves as a player.

2 Mission

The Big Country Soccer Association is committed to providing well-organized soccer recreation appropriately structured to accommodate any level of play commensurate with our players’ individual abilities, potential, and interest and to promoting a positive youth sports culture that teaches life lessons and “honors the game” for all players in the Big Country, Alberta area. Our sporting philosophy is based on the following objectives:

1. To provide and support programs for the involvement and enjoyment of members of the Big Country Soccer Association in support of a long-term development of the sport of soccer.
2. To encourage and welcome parental support in youth soccer development.
3. To encourage good sportsmanship through development and competition in the sport.
4. To ensure all participants in all programs have fun and equal opportunity to actively participate in the sport.
5. To develop each athlete's basic skills that they can apply to the sport.
6. To develop good coaching and officiating capabilities in the sport.
7. To create and maintain a spirit of friendly competition without fear of bullying.

3 Scope

This document is intended to provide general guidelines to Big Country Soccer Association community on the general information on the 7 vs 7 formation and its various options. For a coach to play a particular formation, it is still suggested that coaches also research their selected formations further including player movement when attacking and defending to see how the relationship of players and their positioning is essential to master the selected formation. It is important to select a formation that is specific to team skills.



4 References

The following referenced documents are to be considered the latest edition and indispensable for the application of this document.

Table 1 – References

Document Number	Title
	Alberta Soccer Association
	Canada Soccer Association

5 Acronyms and Defined Terms

For this document, the following acronyms and terms apply.

5.1 Acronyms

Table 2 – Acronyms

Acronym	Definition
ASA	Alberta Soccer Association
BCSA	Big Country Soccer Association
CSA	Canada Soccer Association

5.2 Definitions

Table 3 – Definitions

Term	Definition
Big Country Soccer Association	This is the name used to identify the association of community rural teams in Big Country central Alberta.
Registered Member	This is the community that is registered with BCSA to register their players to compete in the Association with other registered teams. These communities will have their players registered with Alberta Soccer Association.

6 Responsibilities

6.1 The following list of responsibilities are not all encompassing. Additional responsibilities may be assigned out, as required, when there are tasks and/ or actions required to represent Big Country



Soccer Association, its players, parents, coaches, and the governing soccer associations that Big Country Soccer Association is required to adhere to.

6.2 President of Big Country Soccer Association is responsible for the following in reference to this document:

- a) Provide final comment on all Big Country Soccer Association governance and other administrative documents before releasing them as a published document to the Big Country community.

6.3 Vice- President of Big Country Soccer Association is responsible for the following in reference to this document:

- a) Lead on the development of Big Country Soccer Association governance, policies, and any other administrative documents necessary for Big Country Soccer Association to operate in the soccer community.
- b) Provide support for the development and support of Big Country Soccer Association coaches.

6.4 Registered Members of Big Country Soccer Association is responsible for the following in reference to this document:

- a) Ensure Big Country Soccer Association coaching information is made available to coaches that this document applies to.

6.5 Coaches of Big Country Soccer Association is responsible for the following in reference to this document:

- a) Ensure players are aware of the system of play selected for the team including player responsibilities related to that system.
- b) Provide an environment where players are able to explore and experience the positions related to the 7 vs 7 formation.



7 2 x 3 x 1 Formation



Figure 1 – 2-3-1 Formation

7.1 Formation Overview

2-3-1 is the most classic 7v7 formation out there. It offers fantastic balance in any team and is incredibly easy for young players to grasp. Two defenders being helped by three hard-working midfielders offers plenty of support at the back without overloading defensive areas. Simultaneously, the midfield can get forward and the wide players allow for plenty of width in attack.

A lone striker is often supported by a central midfielder who can play as a 6 or 10 depending on the situation and has the best of both roles wrapped up in one.. That being said, the perks and pros of the 2-3-1, such as its overwhelming attacking potential, can be invaluable to any team looking to play free-flowing football.

When the opponent attacks, the three midfielders can easily fall back and support the defense. The midfielders can also lead the attack by feeding the ball to the striker and providing the necessary backup.

The 2-3-1 formation requires great ball-handling skills. In certain instances, the striker may face a 1-v-1 situation, so knowing how to dribble and control the ball can increase the probability of scoring. Additionally, the right and left midfielders should be hard-working players, because they're



the only ones on the outside. They must lead the attack and still fall back to assist defenders. In other words, right and left midfield positions have to do a lot of running.

7.2 Some Pros to 2-3-1

- Central area control. With three central midfielders, the team can maintain control of the central areas of the field, which is crucial for buildup and dictating the style of play.
- Strong attacking presence. The single forward, with the support of the midfield, give the team a potent attacking threat, allowing them to create and score goals.
- Balanced midfield. The 2-3-1 formation requires three versatile midfielders who can play multiple roles: passing, tackling, shooting, initiating attacks, reading the game, and breaking up opponents' possession. This balanced midfield allows for sharp passing combinations through midfield and in the final third, creating natural width and overlaps.
- Passing options. The midfield three provides ample passing options for the team, making it easier to play through the midfield and create goal-scoring opportunities.
- Versatility. The formation allows different attacking players to be used in each position, making it adaptable to different teams' strengths and weaknesses.

7.3 Some Cons to 2-3-1

- Vulnerable to counterattacks. The 2-3-1 formation can sometimes leave teams exposed in defensive areas, particularly if their wide players push up high. This is especially true in the event of counterattacks by the opposing team, as it can be difficult for the defense to recover if they're caught out of position with a high defensive line.
- Dependence on wingers. The formation relies heavily on the wingers to provide width and create chances, putting pressure on them to perform.
- Fitness requirements. The 2-3-1 formation requires high energy and stamina levels from the fullbacks and central midfielders. Their roles involve a lot of movement up and down the pitch. This can be a challenge for teams with players who aren't fit enough to press properly, making the formation susceptible to quick counterattacks. If a team has weak fullback players, the 2-3-1 may not be the best.

7.4 Key to a Successful 2-3-1 Formation

- When not in possession the 2-3-1 formation almost becomes a 3-2-1 system as the 1 of the 2 wingers should 'sag' back into a defensive position on the side where the ball is located.
- Wingers need to not get stuck into the center of the field allowing for gaps on the outside where the opposition can play out wide exposing space and overrunning the defence on the outside.



- Immediately possession is gained the team must be prepared to create width, depth and support at pace and can sometimes be seen as a counter attacking tactic against strong teams.
- Defenders need to be mobile and compact; adjusting to defending areas where the danger with the ball is located i.e. left wide, center, right wide.



8 2-1-2-1 Formation



Figure 2 – 2-1-2-1 Formation

8.1 Formation Overview

2-1-2-1 offers a different take on the classic 2-3-1, bringing the central midfielder a little deeper and the wide players higher. The major and obvious benefit to this formation is that it is very attack-oriented but still provides enough cover in defense. With the right players and a central midfielder that can cover a lot of ground, this could be the formation that catches any team by surprise. 2-1-2-1 also helps players clearly understand that they are either primarily an attacking player or a defensive player, helping to make the transition from the 5v5 game all the smoother.

Ideal formation for advancing 7-a-side teams to a more tactical game with the use of a diamond formation stretching from the defence to the attack. Great attacking formation with ability to go with three upfront, making it hard to defend against. Additionally, this formation has a dedicated defending midfielder player who will provide additional protection of the back two defenders, shielding them from initial attacks.



8.2 Formation Requirements

- A central defensive midfielder: The defensive midfielder in the 2-1-2-1 is the most important component of the setup. This player plays the role of two midfielders in a normal 4-4-3 system of play—the defensive midfielder and the controller. As such, the player must have adequate technical skills, ability to pass under pressure, an impressive passing range, and great positional sense.

8.3 Some Pros to 2-1-2-1

- Attack: Strong in attack with the ability to go to three attackers with wide players providing support to the lone striker. Lots of attacking opportunities will come through the midfield diamond.
- Fluidity: The 2-1-2-1 boasts of a rather impressive ease of transition. While as many as three players can be dedicated to the attack, that number can just as easily change to five in defence. This fluidity in transition is what makes it so popular, as it is less susceptible to the threat of a counterattack.
- Balance: The 2-1-2-1 is well balanced, having the potential for great attacking football or a masterpiece defensive performance depending on the manager's game plan.
- Flexibility: Provides flexibility for teams to move from a defensive shape to an attacking shape quickly. This allows teams to protect their back line while still maintaining an attacking presence.
- Possession: Encourages teams to keep possession of the ball. This allows teams to maintain control of the game and dictate the tempo of play.
- Versatility: Allows teams to switch between different tactics and styles of play depending on the situation (such as switching to 2-3-1 or 2-2-2). This makes it an ideal formation for teams that want to be unpredictable and hard to read.

8.4 Some Cons to 2-1-2-1

- Finding the right personnel: The defending midfield player needs to be comfortable with the ball and understand both defending roles and how to help initiate the attack forward.
- The box-to-box midfield positions need to still be able to come back to support the wide areas but also need to be good in the attack with both passing and shooting. Because of the two-way play, midfield players need to have good stamina.
- Vulnerable to width: Can be vulnerable to teams that use width to stretch the defense when playing in a 2-3-1 formation where the midfield has strong support. Wide players need to be disciplined to come back in defensive support on the width in midfield; keeping the defending midfield player in the center to support the back defenders.



8.5 Key to a Successful 2-1-2-1 Formation

- The 2-1-2-1 formation is a not a common soccer formation. Having a team learn this formation sets the players up to be better at the larger formations such as the 4-2-3-1 formation.
- This formation is known for its balanced nature, as it provides a good mix of defensive solidity and attacking prowess.
- The defensive midfielder help to protect the back defenders, while the two attacking midfielders support the striker and provide a creative outlet for the team.
- The lone striker is the team's main goalscoring threat and is typically a player with good finishing ability and movement off the ball. Overall, the formation is a well-rounded option that can be effective in a variety of situations.



9 3 x 1 x 2 Formation



Figure 3 – 3-1-2 Formation

9.1 Formation Overview

For a more defensive approach, coaches should look no further than the 3-1-2. The formation provides excellent balance and a three-player defensive base to ease the future transition into 9v9 and 11v11 formations. Although the central midfielder may look isolated on paper, playing with a 3 in behind and a 2 up front offers loads of tactical flexibility and positional fluidity, which often happens with younger players either way.

Defenders can be given the license to fill in gaps in wide areas up in the midfield, while strikers learn that they have to be more than just goal-scorers and have to do a job in defense as well.

The goalkeeper also has options on where the ball can be played due to additional options with 3 at the back but also more opportunities to kick the ball long with attaching players being able to receive the ball and attack with numbers quickly.



9.2 Some Pros to 3-1-2

- Attacking potency: With two forwards, the formation is designed to provide plenty of attacking options, making it difficult for the opposition to defend against. This allows the strikers to learn to create attacking chemistry with one another.
- Defending from the front: The formation helps strikers to learn on how to pressure from the front that will allow opportunities to recover possession and attack.
- Defensive stability: With three center-backs, the formation offers a solid defensive base, making it difficult for the opposition to penetrate through the middle.
- Flexibility: This formation allows for easy transition to 2-2-2, 1-3-2, and 2-1-2-1 formations giving opposition teams difficulty in making adjustments to game play.

9.3 Some Cons to 3-1-2

- Not possession-based formation: Not naturally rooted in a possession-based style of play (but this can be mitigated with fluidity in the fullbacks).
- Defensive: The formation can be too defensive if you do not have players that are able to understand how they can move into wide wing positions to provide support going forward. Outside defenders need to be flexible and able to learn both defending responsibilities and wide attack responsibilities.
- Lack of midfield control: The center midfield role is difficult if you do not have a strong player who is capable of both defending and attacking. In addition, this position must have good stamina in order to provide defensive coverage, and, when in possession, now adds supply to the attack.
- Limited width: While the wing-backs provide width, the formation can sometimes lack natural wingers, which can limit the team's options for crossing and attacking down the flanks.

9.4 Key to a Successful 3-1-2 Formation

- Allowing the wide defensive players to join in when the team has the ball, and to be brave and positive in their play, is an essential requirement of this formation. Without these players providing the width, all of the play will be through the central areas, making the team predictable.
- Players in the center-midfield position must be able to receive the ball in tight spaces and retain possession individually, until a team-mate moves so that they become an option for them to pass the ball to.
- Having forwards playing close to each other will help develop two key areas: decision-making and combination play.



10 3 x 2 x 1 Formation



Figure 4 – 3-2-1 Formation

10.1 Formation Overview

The 3-2-1 is an increasingly popular choice for teams that wish to adopt a less attacking- based style of play. It allows teams to play a solid defensive back-line of three players without negating too much control in midfield areas.

You'll notice that in this diagram, the central defender is higher than the two fullbacks, as opposed to the picture for the 3-1-2. This is to emphasize how crucial it is for the central defender to step up in central areas when required as there is no 'central midfielder' in this formation. As such, the 3-2-1 can sometimes resemble the 2-1-2-1.

The main distinction is that in the 3-2-1, the central defender is often a ball-playing centre half, while in the 2-1-2-1, it's often a midfield destroyer, tasked with winning the ball for their team and distributing it to more attacking talents.



10.2 Some Pros of 3-2-1

- Flexibility: Provides a great deal of flexibility by switching easily into a 2-3-1, 2-2-2, or 2-1-2-1- formations.
- Balance: Provides a great balance in defence and midfield.
- Strength in the Middle: This formation allows for more of a possession-based play with having 2 designated midfield players who can play with defense and also feed the attack.
- Robustness: Easier formation work with if the team is limited with skilled players. Provides a stronger base against more skilled and faster teams.
- Player out from Back: This formation gives the goalkeeper options on playing the ball out from the back; whether to the defenders, midfield options, or long to the attacking striker.

10.3 Some Cons of 3-2-1

- Central Defenders: Central defender required to step up into midfield when the time is right.
- Attacking Width: Wide midfielders may become confused as to how and when to come central as opposed to staying wide. Width can also be lacking if wide midfielders stay too central.
- Attacking Options: formation can lead to poor attacking since there are fewer players in the upper parts of the field. The lone striker can easily lose the- ball due to limited passing options.

10.4 Keys to Successful 3-2-1

- The striker in the attacking third cannot be isolated. The midfield players need to provide support to the striker especially when pressuring the opposition to get the ball back through defensive pressing.
- The center defender needs to be comfortable with the ball and be able to read the play well enough to step up into center midfield during the attack to allow the midfield players to quickly transition into attack to join in support of the lone striker.
- Striker will need to press hard on what is a great effort and sacrifice on their part. The side where the ball is positioned, the midfield player must join in the press with the striker to shrink the field and space for the opposing player to play the ball out.