



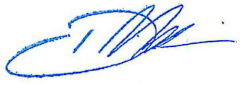
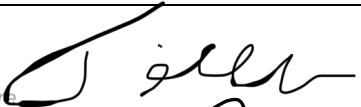
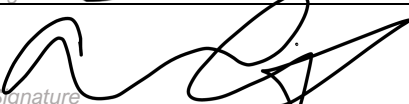
Guideline (GUI)

9 vs 9 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 9 vs 9 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

Rev	Date	Description	Originator	Checker	Approver
0	13-Feb-2024	Published.	Duncan Hawkins	Ivo Toellner	Cody Craig
A	30-Dec-2023	This is the initial DRAFT of this Guideline document.	Duncan Hawkins	Ivo Toellner	Cody Craig

Current Revision Description

Section	Description



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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 9 vs 9 formation and its various options.



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 9 vs 9 formation.



7 3 x 2 x 2 Formation



Figure 1 – 3-2-3 Formation

7.1 Formation Overview

The 3-2-3 is one of the most popular 9v9 formations. This formation allows for easy triangles to be made all over the pitch. For a team that is good in possession, this formation can allow the team to run circles around their opposition and dominating possession using this formation.

With the ball it's a 3-2-3 and without it becomes a 3-4-1. Plenty of width in attack, cover all over the pitch and 3 defenders seems the right number for the size of pitch and age of players to provide adequate cover at the back, with the two central midfielders expected to work hard up and down the pitch.

The front three players will be doing a lot of the pressing in the attacking zone. However, when defending, the importance is to have conditioned players on the wings as they will require to play both attacking and defending. Having a two-center midfield formation will require strong communication and coaching on the importance of the movement of a pivot system to prevent the center of the field with too large of gaps to play through.

Adaptable Formations for 11 v 11: 3-4-3 or 4-3-3 or 4-2-3-1



7.2 Players/ Skills Required

- Wingers who like to stay wide and don't get drawn to the middle, BUT can also do defensive work for the team.
- A centre forward who can hold the line all on their own.
- Midfielders who are good in possession and can run from left to right in a pivot motion depending on the placement of the ball to support the attack and also support the defence.
- Defenders who understand they need to be more than just defenders. Each of the left and right backs will be an overlapping option to the attack so long as midfield players are playing both in support of attack and support on the defensive side of the ball.

7.3 Pros of This Formation

- Attack-minded and possession oriented.
- Provides loads of width but still a good base in midfield, creating excellent balance in the team.
- Easily adaptable into a 3-4-1 in defense if wingers track back.
- Provides a solid defensive 3 as a base with central midfielders easily able to learn the art of dropping in and covering for defenders when they go on runs.

7.4 Cons of This Formation

- Wingers can get drawn too wide, leaving the centre forward all alone and outnumbered.
- If central midfielders are not tactically sound and positionally aware, it can become very easy for them to get outnumbered due to the wingers playing so high.
- Requires wingers to track back and defend or central midfielders to cover in wide areas, otherwise there's a massive gap in between them and the fullbacks.
- Defenders can often be reluctant to join the attack.



8 2 x 3 x 2 x 1 or 2 x 3 x 3 Formation



Figure 2 – 2-3-3 Formation

8.1 Formation Overview

With practically a perfect balance of players in both attack and defense, the 2-3-2-1/ 2-3-3 is one of the most popular 9v9 formations out there and is used by Barcelona and Ajax's famed academies. It allows players to easily learn defensive and attacking roles and gives them the freedom and autonomy to play however they want to play.

The formation suits teams looking to play on the counterattack just like it works for teams who like to keep possession, play wide, play through the middle or even the often-criticized long-ball game. It's also easily able to accommodate nearly every type of player and allows teams with a lack of natural defenders to still have a strong defensive base if the three in front of them do their defensive work.

Having a strong ball-playing player in the defending midfield role allows for a strong transition from the defense through to the attack. This role is the most important role on the field for this formation to be successful.

Adaptable Formations for 11 v 11: 3-4-3 or 4-3-3



8.2 Players/ Skills Required

- Right and left midfielders who can get up and down the line and understand that although they are not defenders, they have a crucial defensive role. As a coach you can also call these positions wing-backs to really cement that notion in their minds.
- Either wingers or attacking midfielders who can play inverted and not get caught too far wide.
- A centre forward who can hold up play and is talented on and off the ball. Support will come from the two in behind but because they are playing as 'midfielders' if the striker can never hang onto the ball the formation won't work effectively.
- You need a strong ball controlling player in the center defending midfield role to help the defenders but also take the ball from the defenders and play the ball into the attack.
- Industrious, hard-working players all around the pitch.

8.3 Pros of This Formation

- Suits all styles of the game, most notably a game that relies on crossing and playing wide.
- Offers perfect symmetry and stability within a team and is neither overly defensive or overly attack-minded.
- Easily adjustable and can become a 4-1-2-1 in defense if wing-backs tuck in or a 2-1-4-1 in attack if wing-backs can get forward. Also easily adjusted into a 2-3-1-2 and 2-4-2 without disrupting the balance.
- Arguably the best way to get players familiar with a 3-4-3 system in 11v11.
- Creates loads of triangles necessary for both attack and defense.

8.4 Cons of This Formation

- Defenders must be fast as any slip-ups from right/ left midfielder will leave the team easily exposed.
- Midfield can get too open if defensive midfielder plays too low and attacking midfielders play too high. Similarly if defensive midfielder plays too high, a massive gap will again be created and right/left midfielders may be forced inside.
- Defenders and defensive midfielder need to be in constant communication about who is marking who as most 9v9 teams play with 3 forward players.
- Works best if defensive midfielder is more of a ball-winner than ball-player. As such it's not always the best formation for teams who like to keep possession and much more suited to hard-working counter-attacking teams.



9 3 x 3 x 2 Formation



Figure 3 – 3-3-2 Formation

9.1 Formation Overview

This must be one of the most common 9v9 formations in existence and it's primarily down to the good practice it provides for playing the world's most standardized 11v11 formation: 4-4-2. 3-3-2 has several more issues in eliminating space around the field than its natural successor in 4-4-2, but is still a simple, effective approach to winning games in 9v9 for managers and coaches who don't want to over-complicate things.

The two up front can be confusing for opposition at this age group, partly just because the majority of teams seemed to play with one central striker, so handling the movement of two players wasn't something they were used to. The danger is being overrun in midfield if you have two strikers.

This is a more traditional formation that reflects the 4-4-2 formation when transitioning to 11vs11.

Adaptable Formations for 11 v 11: 4-4-2 or 3-5-2



9.2 Players/ Skills Required

- Wide midfielders who have attacking flair and talent.
- Strikers who have the ability to work in a pair and be unselfish.
- Good passers around the field. Either defenders or midfielders can effectively control the game with their distribution.

9.3 Pros of This Formation

- Simplistic and naturally effective for a possession styled game.
- In theory, it does not overload any given area on the field.
- Allows an attacking duo to develop together and learn how to play effectively with 2 up top.
- Players don't need to be particularly fast or talented on the ball as necessary coverage should always be near to win the ball back.

9.4 Cons of This Formation

- Lack of clearly defined roles for midfielders. Are they supposed to be more attack-minded or defensive-minded?
- Easily outnumbered in central areas by most other formations. This can become less of an issue if one central midfielder can completely control the game.
- 2 strikers up top can become incredibly isolated, especially if midfielders play right on top of the defenders.
- Restricts players to very specific roles as if they abandon their roles even momentarily, the entire balance of the team is lost and not easily recoverable.

10 4 x 3 x 1 Formation

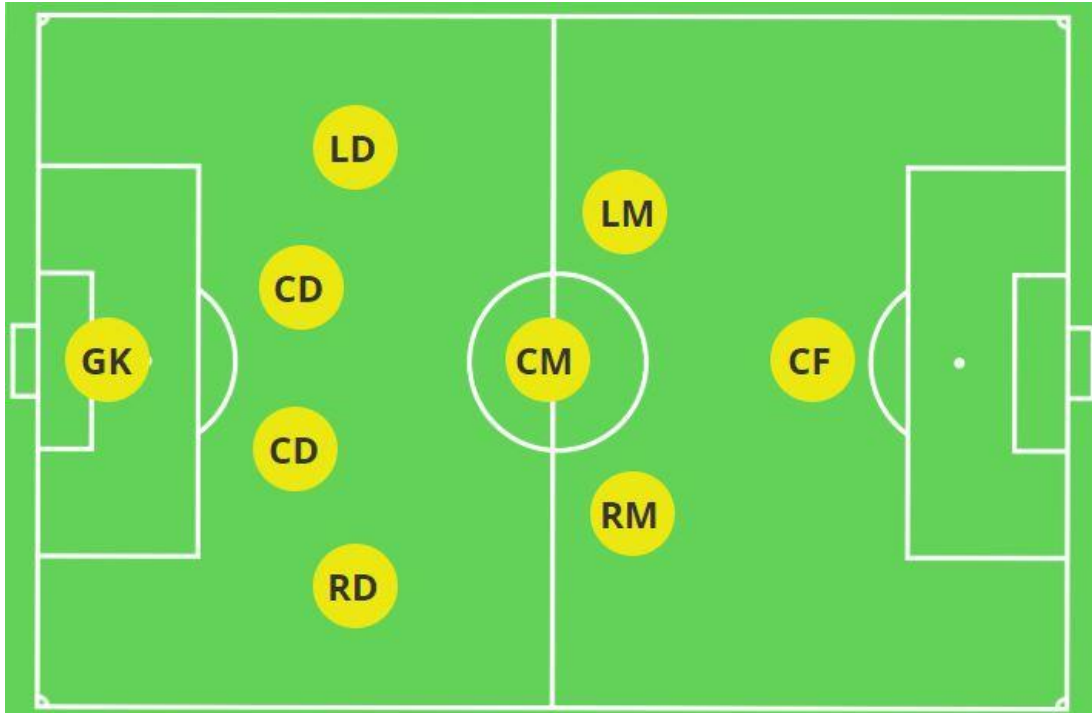


Figure 4 – 4-3-1 Formation

10.1 Formation Overview

The 4-3-1 is one of the best formations to get team used to playing 11v11 football. The standardized way of playing 11-a-side around the world is with a back four. 9v9 might just be the best time to introduce the arc of the back-four and get teams thinking about the notion that defense is the best form of attack. Although it can look a bit defensive on paper and requires your team to have the necessary defensive personnel, a fantastic balance can still be achieved.

This formation introduces the idea of wing backs and getting your width from 2 players who are expecting to both attack and defend with energy and pace. They operate around a central diamond of midfield / attacking players and two centre backs.

Obvious disadvantage is if both wing backs think their primary job is to attack, you end up very exposed at the back potentially, but if they have the energy to get up and down the pitch, you can create serious overloads when attacking and be very hard to break down when they drop back to make a back 4. The player in the CDM role will need to understand the need to provide cover.

Adaptable Formations for 11 v 11: 4-2-3-1 or 3-5-2 or 4-3-3



10.2 Players/ Skills Required

- At least four strong defenders in the squad, otherwise you're better off playing with a three or two.
- Outside defenders and wide midfielders who are fast and can carry the ball up the field.
- Central midfielder who can support attack and not play right on top of the defense. This player will need to understand both defending and attacking responsibilities. Must be good on the ball and good passer.
- A striker who knows how to get into a game even when they get isolated. Striker must also be quick and able to chase down the opposition defenders.

10.3 Pros of This Formation

- Effective for wing play.
- Right/ left defenders can push high and take the ball up the field without apprehension about who might cover them.
- If outside defenders can mark opposition wingers and inside defenders can mark opposition strikers/attacking midfielders, the other team's attack is completely shut down.
- Teaches players how to play in a 4-defense system very early in their development.
- Effective for keeping clean sheets.

10.4 Cons of This Formation

- Midfielders need to quickly learn that they have an integral role in supporting the striker in attack. If there's no support, the striker will become extremely isolated.
- Can become overly defensive if outside defenders or central midfielder show no attacking prowess or become static.
- Limits striker to play within a specific, 'chaser' like style.
- With an extra player in defense, you always have at least one less player joining attacks.



11 2 x 4 x 2 Formation



Figure 4 – 2-4-2 Formation

11.1 Formation Overview

The 2-4-2 is fantastic for keeping possession of the ball, while also prepares players for a variety of different 11-a-side formations including 4-4-2, 3-4-3 and 3-5-2. It's also easily adjustable into a 2-3-1-2 and fantastic for teaching young central defenders, central midfielders, and strikers alike how to work effectively in pairs.

Another one to use a front 2, But - the two wing backs have to have bags of energy and an understanding of their attacking and defensive duties or you end up creating spaces for the opponent to exploit at the back (or lightweight in attacking wide areas) if they don't.

Adaptable Formations for 11 v 11: 4-4-1 or 3-5-2 or 3-4-3



11.2 Players/ Skills Required

- Wide midfielders who have attacking flair and talent.
- Strikers who have the ability to work in a pair and be unselfish.
- Good passers around the field. Either defenders or midfielders can effectively control the game with their distribution.

11.3 Pros of This Formation

- Overloads the midfield, allowing teams to control possession and manipulate the ball effectively.
- Central midfielders can move interchangeably and have a level of freedom not present in formations that restrict them to either a defensive or attacking role.
- Develops players to learn how to effectively work in pairs.
- Although better suited for a possession-styled game, it still works for a counter attacking game if wingers are fast and can get up and down the line.

11.4 Cons of This Formation

- Defenders must be fast as any slip-ups from right/ left midfielder will leave the team easily exposed.
- Requires midfielders to be tactically aware of when to join attack vs. defense as their roles are loosely defined.
- The two defenders need to be vocal and strong leaders, otherwise marking may be a massive issue. Most teams will play with a front three, requiring defenders and midfielders constantly to be in communication over who has the opposition's wide players.
- If a defender gets drawn too far wide due to lack of necessary cover, a massive gap in the middle might be exploited by the other team.