



U11 FIELD POSITIONING AND RESPONSIBILITIES (2-3-1 FORMATION) BULLETIN

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2-3-1 Formation (2-Defenders, 3-Midfield, and 1-Striker/ Attacker)

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.

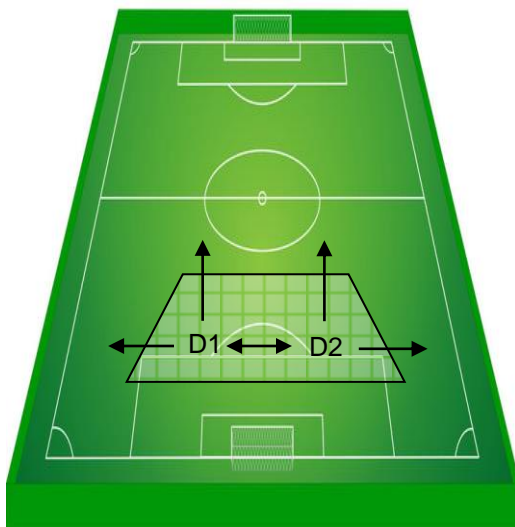
A lone striker is often supported by a central midfielder who can play as a 6 or 10 depending on the situation and has the best of both roles wrapped up in one. That being said, the perks and pros of the 2-3-1, such as its overwhelming attacking potential, can be invaluable to any team looking to play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

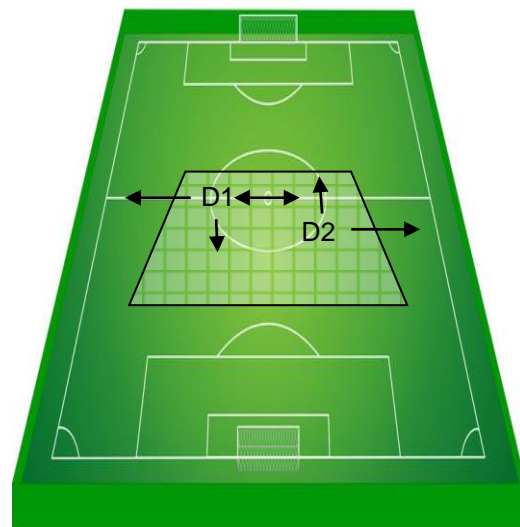
On-Field Positioning (Zones for Defensive and Attacking Positioning)

Defenders- Defensive Positioning



- Defender to be in line with each goal post.
- Defenders will slide left to right to where the ball is i.e. ball on left, defenders shift left.
- Outside midfield will provide support near touch line.

Defenders- Attacking Positioning



- Defenders move up with the play to support midfield and avoid space between themselves and the midfield.
- Defenders to be staggered i.e. ball is high left, the right defender to be in a cover position behind on an angle to the left defender.
- Defenders shift left and right depending on where the ball is located/ cut the field in half.



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Center Midfield- Defensive Positioning



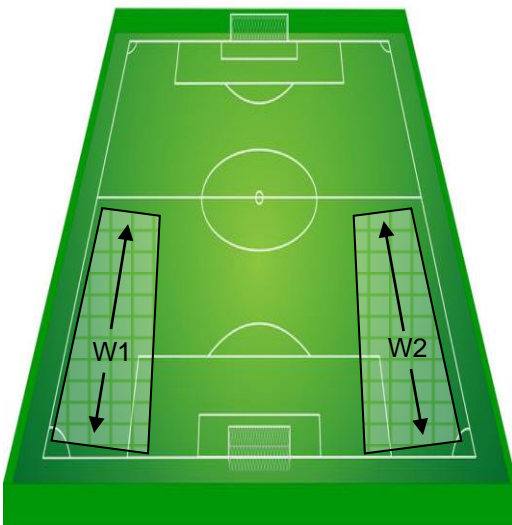
- Covers the center of the field in the defensive zone and is not in-line with defenders.
- Pressures the ball in the center of the defensive zone.

Center Midfield- Attacking Positioning



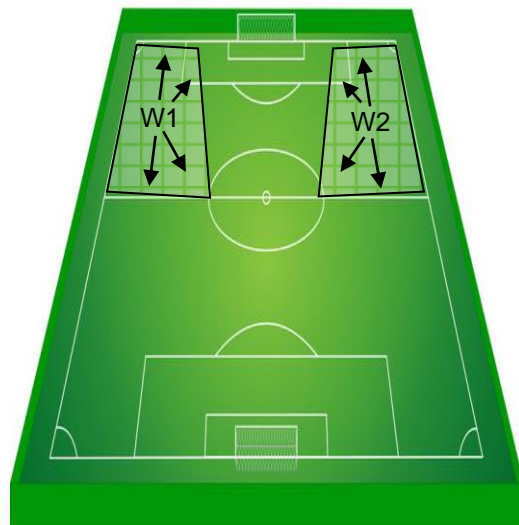
- Controls the ball in the center of the field and can pass to either the striker/ attacker, and/ or the outside midfield (wingers).
- Depending on position, the center midfielder can also take shots on the goal as well.
- Is positioned between the defenders (behind) and the outside midfield (wingers) and striker/ attacker (in front).

Outside Midfield (Winger)- Defensive Positioning



- Pressures the ball when on the outside to prevent the attacker getting close to the center of the field for a chance on goal.
- Will stay wide to be an option if team regains possession of the ball where the winger can now move from defense into attack.

Outside Midfield (Winger)- Attacking Positioning



- Stays wider to make space for the striker/ attacker, and center midfielder.
- Pressures the ball in the zone when not in possession of the ball.
- Can pass into the center midfield, the striker/ attacker, and/ or can move towards the net if behind the defenders.



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Striker/ Attacker- Defensive Positioning



- Stays with the opposition defenders. This forces a defender to stay with the striker/ attacker to avoid having a break-away on goal.
- Will pressure the ball in the zone.
- When in possession, use the outside midfield/ wingers to pass to, then move into space quickly for a return pass and a chance to get behind the defenders.

Striker/ Attacker- Attacking Positioning



- Striker/ attacker pressures the ball when the opposition defenders have the ball.
- Will work with the center midfield player to regain possession of the ball then quickly move to attacking the goal.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

Q1: If I am the closest player to the ball, even if it is not in my zone, can I still pressure the ball?

A1: Absolutely. Although you may start as a center midfield player at the start of the game (for example) does not mean you will not find yourself being a defender at times. Sometimes the play of the other team may force you to take a spot on the field temporarily until you regain possession. Then you get back into your assigned role. It is always good to know the roles and responsibilities of all positions too when you are ever needed to help out, you know what you need to do.

Q2: Are strikers/ attackers the only positions to score?

A2: Absolutely not. Depending on the game, a player may find they have open space that they can quickly attack into, even as a defender, and can take a shot. The trick is, if a player sees another player in a position where they have the advantage, they need to realize that they may need to assume that player's position temporarily until the play ends in order to ensure that their team is not creating gaps for the opposing team to take advantage of. For example, if you are a defender in on goal, then someone needs to take your spot on the defender until you can get back to your original position.



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Q3: Does this work in other formations?

A3: Yes. The basic principles for playing suit more than one formation. There are obviously some tactical differences, but the basic principles will apply. For more information on other formations, consult the “7vs7 Formation Option Guide” (Ref. BCSA-GUI-026). It’s best to select a formation that suits not just the type of play but also the type of players that the team has on the roster. If your system is basic but you have mastered it, a team will be successful for much of their games.

References

Big Country Soccer Association U11 Coaching Program Curriculum (Ref. BCSA-GUI-016)

Big Country Soccer Association 7vs7 Formation Option Guide (Ref. BCSA-GUI-026)