

“Quantum CS” (4-1-3-2 DM Narrow) Tactic for FM21

Revision 2021.1 (Dec-8-2020) (c) 2013-2020 Xeewaj Q.

“Quality of possession provides victory.”

FM21 WARNING

They didn't make any major changes to the match engine, so everything is working as expected. You can even safely load a version of tactic from FM20 (that's what I did).

TL;DR

Don't change a single instruction (but don't expect perfection either).

Intro

It's “Quantum” ‘cause it's full of superpositions and controversies. Be more disciplined but roam a lot? Sure. Defenders attacking, strikers defending, midfielders are everywhere? Of course. It's called in-game “4-1-3-2 DM Narrow”, but it's actually very wide. You get the pattern.

I played variations of this tactic for years, from exotic lower divisions to top European leagues and it gave excellent results everywhere. Especially well it does against (undeservedly) popular nowadays 4-2-3-1 and 4-3-3 variations (in general, every tactic with wingers is highly vulnerable, but it's out of the scope of this manual).

CS stands for “Creeping Suffocation”. Why? ‘Cause it slowly suffocates opponents, restricting them from playing football as much as possible. Even top opponents will often fail to do a single shot on

target. Often they'll enrage and get red cards. Also, it may mean "Complete System" 'cause it's not bare tactics, but a system with a set of recommendations on how to select and/or breed the right players.

Philosophy

Balance, discipline, possession, fluidity, restricting the opponent as much as possible. Sounds boring enough, but board and supporters will praise you for the attacking football.

We'll have relatively high possession (usually 55-60%) with dynamic play and many shots, without playing for the sake of possession artificially.

Theory

A key concept is overloading zones 2 & 5 while defending, zones 14 & 17 while attacking and eliminating opponent presence in the middle (zones 8 & 11) by pressing them out to sides. We'll use flanks occasionally, mostly for crossing and/or stretching defense, but as a whole, it's a centerline strategy (still, it's wide, you know).



Pros

- One tactic to cover them all. You don't need alternative tactics, minor changes are usually enough to solve any problem.











- Almost plug-n-play, it works well for top clubs and relegation candidates with minimal tweaking.
- You don't need wingers (though you may use them until they're sold).
- High possession.
- Graphene-strength defense, you'll concede mostly flukes.
- Ideal for "Play attacking football" philosophy (again, quantum of discipline and possession do the magic), but board and supporters will be extremely happy anyway.

Cons

- Can be vulnerable to popular with "AI" long-ball-over-defense counter-attacks if you have low-quality center-backs.
- Heavy rotation is required to keep players alive during the season.

Proof Of Concept

Vizela (from the second tier Portuguese league). Prediction – 15th. No first-team transfers, only offloaded all wingers during the winter transfer window and loaned in a couple of youngsters as backups. FM version 21.1.3.

POS	INF	TEAM	PLD	WON	DRN	LST	FOR	AG	GD	PTS	FORM
1st	C	 Vizela	34	20	11	3	46	20	26	71	
2nd		 SL Benfica B	33	18	9	6	58	34	24	63	
3rd	P	 Estoril Praia	34	17	8	9	47	26	21	59	
4th		 FC Porto B	34	16	8	10	56	42	14	56	
5th	PI	 Vilafranquense	34	15	9	10	57	43	14	54	

Well... I beg you don't expect miracles like that in every save where you pick a random team. Vizela had surprisingly good players for the tactics and awesome RPM (he'll get top rating and the player of the year in the league). But you can expect solid results much above expectations.

Player stats (league only):

PKD	INF	NAME	APPS	GLS	AST	XG	POM	PAS %	TCK	DRBPG	SHOT %	YEL	RED	AV RAT
✓ GK		⚔ Pedro Silva	33	0	0	0.00	0	82%	0.00	-	-	0	0	6.70
✓ DR	Wnt	⚔ Koffi Kouao	27 (2)	0	3	0.28	1	93%	1.80	0.73	67%	3	0	6.91
✓ DCR		⚔ Leonel Mosevich	29 (1)	0	1	0.99	2	92%	1.47	-	14%	5	1	6.99
✓ DCL		⚔ Matheus Costa	29 (2)	0	1	1.07	0	93%	1.03	-	33%	7	0	7.17
✓ DL		⚔ Kiki	20 (9)	0	3	0.04	1	90%	2.41	0.05	100%	3	0	7.02
✓ DM		⚔ Evrard	32	2	2	1.75	3	94%	2.08	-	36%	6	0	7.22
✓ MCR		⚔ Marcos Paulo	31	5	1	3.21	3	93%	3.57	0.24	27%	10	0	7.14
✓ MC		⚔ Samu	33	3	11	2.26	7	92%	1.39	0.10	31%	1	0	7.54
✓ MCL	Wnt	⚔ Kiko Bondoso	29 (1)	5	2	2.24	3	93%	3.95	0.18	33%	8	1	7.12
✓ STCR		⚔ Cassiano	28 (2)	6	3	7.47	3	94%	1.63	0.08	35%	1	0	7.16
✓ STCL		⚔ Diogo Ribeiro	34	16	3	12.35	5	93%	1.20	0.16	43%	0	0	7.28

There are some demo matches in the “matches” directory.

Formation

Tactics itself looks plain enough, but don’t be fooled. It transforms to 5-3-2, 3-5-2, even to 2-4-4 or 5-5-0 when needed.



Team Instructions

The mentality is **always** "Balanced". Don't touch it. Switching to "Very Attacking" will not help you score without generating many defensive problems. "Positive" mentality is too positive and lowers discipline too much. May work for playing against weaker teams, but use it on your own risk. The same can be said about "Cautious". And again, there is **absolutely no reason** for using very attacking or very defensive mentalities.

In Possession:

We playing cautious football focused on keeping the ball and teamwork. No brainless longballs, we play out of defense with patience. Though we may use direct passes when appropriate or passes into free space if there's an opening.



Constants: [Width], [Pass Into Space],[Play Out Of Defense], [Focus Play Through The Middle], [Be More Disciplined].

Tweakable: [Overlap Left/ Right], all [Final Third] instructions, [Play For Set Pieces].

Semi-Tweakable:[Dribbling](no [Run At Defense]).

Not recommended to touch: [Tempo] (tactic itself is quite intense and you'll just kill your players with the high tempo, though it's possible to slow down when you in total control of the match), [Passing Directness](can be shorter when needed, but absolutely never direct), [Underlap Left/Right](there is enough underlapping by default),[Time Wasting](especially! See "Soft Time Wasting" section below).

Using [Play For Set Pieces] is generally not recommended unless you have problems scoring normal way and/or already scored from set-pieces.

In Transition:

We press opponents as soon as they get the ball and counter-attack. Keeper throws the ball to full-backs quickly.



Generally, you don't need to change anything there. Though you may use [Regroup] if play vs much stronger team and/or want to play safe.

Out Of Possession:

We press high and play offside.



Constants: [Defensive Width], [Prevent Short GK Distribution].

Tweakable: [Use Offside Trap](if you center-backs can't do it consistently), [Pressing Intensity] (temporary bursts of[Extremely Urgent]), [Tackling].

Not recommended to touch: [Use Tighter Marking], [Line of Engagement], [Defensive Line].

Using offside traps and defensive line depends on the quality of your defenders, though tactic works better with high lines. We don't use global tight marking and hard tackling (there can be exceptions). Though it's possible to use easier tackling when you in control of the match and want to prevent any unnecessary suspensions.

Player Instructions

There are 1-3 types of instruction presets for all positions, more cautious, (balanced) and attacking. Choosing the right one is depends on the situation. You can find instructions in the "player instructions" directory (they're loadable from instructions edit dialog). Keep formation symmetrical (i.e. same instructions for Full-Backs, Center-Backs, Box-To-Boxes, Strikers) - asymmetry is a weakness and can be exploited.

Keeper

Cautious Keeper (default): He plays safe, sweep when needed and distributes the ball to full-backs with long throws (somehow it's now moved to "In Transition")

Desperate Keeper: Plays much riskier. Should be used only with panic mode set pieces.

Full-Backs

They stay wide and cross a lot.

Aggressive Full-Back (default): going forward often and cross close to the byline.

Balanced Full-Back: is, indeed, balanced, with no fixed orders.

Cautious Full-Back: playing more carefully, dribbles less, crosses from deep (works well with[Hit Early Crosses]).

Centre-Backs

Advanced Defender: They obviously defend but may start counter-attacks with through balls and go forward for set-pieces often.

Defensive Midfielder

Tries to win the ball asap, tackles and presses hard.

Cautious Ball Winner (default): stays deeper, arrives late near the opposition area.

Adventurous Ball Winner: goes forward more often, similar to Box-To-Box.

Static Ball Winner: acts more like third center-back/stopper.

Deep Playmaker: when playmaker plays here (tank break setup).

Playmaker

Chaotic Playmaker: team brain. Does anything he wants.

Central Midfielder

Midfield All-Rounder: they move all around the pitch, press and tackle hard, helping both with defense and attack.

Striker

Omnipotent Striker: default balanced variation.

Guardian Striker: plays a bit deeper and acts much more aggressive. Should be used when containing and/or dealing with a parked bus.

Alternate Tactics & Plan B

You don't need one. This tactic covers (almost) everything. When the team has a ball, it's extremely attacking. When not, it's extremely defending. Use Player/Team Instructions to make it more attacking or defensive. Be creative, use non-standard moves. For example, put center-backs into BBMs positions, turn on Float/Early Crosses from the Deep, etc.

Familiarity, Cohesion, and Partnership

This tactic is focused on teamwork so it may require some time until it starts to give the best results. Usually, pre-season is enough for the start. Focus on establishing partnerships ASAP (especially for central defenders).

Rotation

As this tactic is quite intensive, a rotation is very important. Generally, you should have two full line-ups. The second line-up can be made from few rotation/backup players + some vets and youngsters. The main purpose of the second line-up is to give first-team players a rest and protect them from exhaustion and injuries. At the start of the season, good rotation is 25%-33%, but close to the end of the season, it may require 50% rotation sometimes (packed schedule, important/cup matches etc). Sometimes it's wise to risk dropping points by using the second line-up to give the first team a rest. If possible, rotate in units so partnerships can be established faster.

Personalized Instructions

I strongly recommend avoiding any types of personalized, especially asymmetrical, instructions. For example, "Shoot Often" for central midfielders and Center-Backs is turned on by purpose, and low "Long Shots" is no reason to turn it off. Players for the tactic, not vice versa.

Opposition Instructions

It's a complex topic and you can read about it [here](#) or [there](#), for example. If you have a decent assistant, let him handle this. Though, even top assistants with Tactical Knowledge 16+ rarely set Marking and Closing Down instructions until it's too late.

Yellow Cards

By default, Ball Winner, Box-To-Boxes (and Guardian Striker) use hard-tackling, so be careful. No need to set [Easy Off Tackles] unless your player is too aggressive or global [Get Stuck In] is on, but turning off [Tackle Harder] is a good idea.

Man Down (Red Card)

An obvious solution is to take off one of the forwards, but it greatly reduces your chance to score. If you still need some goals, it's possible to take off Ball Winner, move playmaker to DM position and set strikers to Guardian Striker.

Shouts

Avoid using shouts which may influence team structure and positions, like [Tighten Up] and [Push Forward]. For some reason, [Demand More] is the best choice for the last minutes of half/match 'cause it triggers a "focused" state for players. Why? Oh, well.

Assistant

Just ignore him in most cases. "We being terrible overrun at midfield" and "We need to use more direct passing" when your team is winning 2-0 with 65% possession and opponents have 0 shots on target. However, his remarks about closing down and/or marking can be useful (but, usually, they're too late).

Team Talks

Don't be harsh. Don't yell. Be calm and motivate. Remember, usually, the team who scores "pep" goal during 46-49 min, wins. FM21 update: don't kick the chair!

Set Pieces

Tactic includes some decent set pieces, but you may want to tune them for players you have. The playmaker is default taker (except for throws, full-backs obviously do them). Also, note that offensive set pieces are quite risky with many players going forward.

There is a "Panic" set for situations when you desperately need to score (extremely risky with the keeper going forward). You need to load it manually when needed.

Default throws are short, but if you have decent throwers, you can load alternate (obviously, riskier) set designed for long throws.

Protecting The Lead & Soft Time Wasting

The tactic itself does it fairly well, but some changes may improve safety. Bring on fresh “Cautious” Full-Backs, set strikers to “Guardian”. Never touch [Time Wasting]slider. Use “Soft Time Wasting” instead:

- [(Much) Lower Tempo]
- [(Much) Shorter Passing Directness]
- [Work Ball Into Box]
- [Play For Set Pieces]
- [Dribble Less]
- [Regroup]

Breaking the Crossbar-Tank

Sometimes it's hard to score even if your team is dominating. Before going postal and moving all attack-related sliders to the right and subbing all the strikers, check your midfielders and full-backs, the problem is most likely there. Typical settings:

- move playmaker to DM positions
- set all three MC to Box-To-Box
- set strikers to “Guardian” preset
- [Work Ball Into Box]
- [Play For Set Pieces] if needed
- [Extremely Urgent] pressing
- [Get Stuck In] tackling



This way we'll increase pressure to the area between zones 14 and 17 with a chance to break opposition defense.

Panic

If you desperately need to score or else, just add to “Breaking the Tank” recommendations:

- set GK to “Desperate Keeper”
- set GK distribution to playmaker
- load Panic set-pieces
- optionally increase tempo
- pray to RNG

Ratings & Stats

When judging player efficiency and deciding to substitute, don't be harsh to BWM and BBMs – they do a lot of dirty work and usually have ratings about 6.8-6.9 if they didn't manage to score/assist. That's perfectly fine if your team is doing well. It's applicable to pressing ("Guardian" preset) strikers and sometimes to strikers in general (i.e. when play vs parked bus). Basic rule: if everything is fine, don't try to make it even better 'cause it may ruin everything.

Pass completion ratio for the playmaker can be slightly below 80% (even lower than the team average). It's ok 'cause he's the only player with direct passing and riskier passes obviously fail more often.

Pitch Size

It's important. Basic rules are: max size if your team is among the favorites, max width and normal length for midtable teams, min size for relegation candidate.

Training & Match Preparation

Focus on teamwork, cohesion and set pieces. Or leave it to the assistant.

Scouting

Don't let the color of the suitability circle distract you. Usually, I have only 2-3 players with more or less green circles, the rest are orange/red. Role/duty circle is a good reference sometimes, but again, don't worship it. A typical setup for teams I manage:

Don't chase expensive players. 11 Neymars can't win anything. Generally, a well-crafted team with an average CA of 140 can challenge top leagues and an average CA of 150 is enough to challenge the Champions League. Going further is overkill and bullying the kids which may result in 2-3 draws and 5-6 conceded goals per season and, eventually, dropped save.

GK

Any decent keeper will do. The green circle of “Sweeper Keeper” is not necessary.

Example: Andre Moreira, Wojciech Szczesny, Mattia Perin, Jan Oblak

DC

The position where the green circle of BPD is a good indicator. Though generic quality limited defenders may perform well.

Example: Davinson Sanchez, Sebastiano Luperto, Ruben Dias, Presnel Kimpembe

DRL

Fast players with good dribbling and crossing and decent defensive skills. Some wingers may be used there even with a red circle, especially if you play a top team whose center-backs can eat anything coming their way.

Example: Bartosz Bereszynski, Mattia De Sciglio, Kyle Walker, Cristiano Biraghi, Danny Rose

BWM

A defensive midfielder with decent technical skills.

Example: Grzegorz Krychowiak, Mario Lemina

MC/Playmaker

It's hard to find a player with a green circle for that role, but DLP and some AP usually perform well there. Default set pieces use playmaker as default taker, so consider that.

Example: Miralem Pjanic, Lovro Majer, Christian Eriksen

MC/Box-To-Box

Again, it's hard to find "green circles" for that role and it's no guarantee they'll perform well. Look for MC, DM or DC/DM/MC with well-balanced stats. You may use wingers there if you don't have other options.

Example: Eric Dier, Jordan Henderson, Rodrigo Bentancur

ST

Complete forwards are quite rare, but powerful pressing forwards do well there. Some wingers can be used in this position.

Example: Pietro Pellegri, Patrik Schick

[!] Player recommendations are from FM19 at the moment (should be updated sooner or later), so CA/PA may differ. Always scout before signing!

General Player Recommendations

Center-Backs are the absolute priority. Then playmaker, Full-Backs and the rest.

There are some scouting filters provided in "filters" directory you can use as a reference. They're loadable via very user-friendly Scouting → New Search → gear icon at lower bottom corner → Manage Filters → Import. Stats are ordered from most important to less, so if you see very few players, start decreasing numbers from the bottom. Also, foot filters are only "is-type", so if you want to look for reasonable or better weaker foot, you need to check reasonable, fairly strong, strong and very strong. At the moment, filters are quite raw. Note: Finishing 10 for strikers is not a bug.

Try to avoid one-footed players. Make exceptions only for VERY good and/or young players (and immediately start developing their weaker foot).

Try to avoid midgets, except for good full-backs or extraordinary players. Height must be 180+cm.

Hidden attributes are extremely important. Though extensive scouting is required to get vague reports. Of course, "Model Citizen" personality is preferred, but at least try to get players with "Fairly Consistent Performer" consistency. More about personality types [here](#).

Traits

There is one player trait that should be avoided no matter what: [Avoids Using Weaker Foot]. It's quite hard to get rid of it even if a player has a reasonable weaker foot. Exceptions: very good keeper or full-back, very young players. In any case, try to unlearn it ASAP.

Common bad traits are:

- [Dwells On Ball]
- [Stops Play]
- [Argues With Officials]
- all [Cuts Inside] variations
- all [Runs With Ball] variations (full-backs are the exception)

Common unwanted traits are:

- [Looking For Pass Rather Than Attempting To Score]
- [Plays Short Simple Passes]
- [Dictates Tempo]

Common good traits are:

- [Gets Forward Whenever Possible] (except for keeper and center-backs)

GK

Good: [Uses Long Throw To Start Counter Attacks]

DC

Good: [Runs With Ball Rarely]

Bad: [Gets Forward Whenever Possible]

Ugly: [Brings Ball Out Of Defense]

DRL

Good: [Runs With Ball Down Left/Right], [Gets Forward Whenever Possible], [Hugs Line]

Ugly: [Crosses Early]

BWM/BBM

Good: [Shoots From Distance], [Gets Into Opposition Area]

Bad: [Refrains From Taking Long Shots]

Ugly: [Plays No Through Balls]

RPM

Good: [Curls Ball], [Tries Killer Balls Often], [Plays One-Twos], [Tries Long Range Free Kicks], [Tries Long Range Passes]

ST

Good: [Moves Into Channels], [Tries First Time Shots], [Places Shots], [Plays One-Twos]

Bad: [Does Not Move Into Channels]

Training

Position/Role/Duty should be the same as the preferred tactical position for a player.

Additional focus can be set as:

GK

Pre/Early-Season/Breaks: Strength

Season: Agility & Balance

DC

Pre/Early-Season/Breaks: Strength, Quickness (if too low)

Season: Defensive Positioning

DRL

Pre/Early-Season/Breaks: Quickness, Agility & Balance

Season: Attacking Movement, Defensive Positioning

BWM

Pre/Early-Season/Breaks: Stamina, Strength

Season: Defensive Positioning, Agility & Balance

BBM

Pre/Early-Season/Breaks: Stamina, Agility & Balance

Season: Attacking Movement, Final Third

RPM

Pre/Early-Season/Breaks: Agility & Balance, Stamina (if low)

Season: Free Kick Taking, Corners

ST

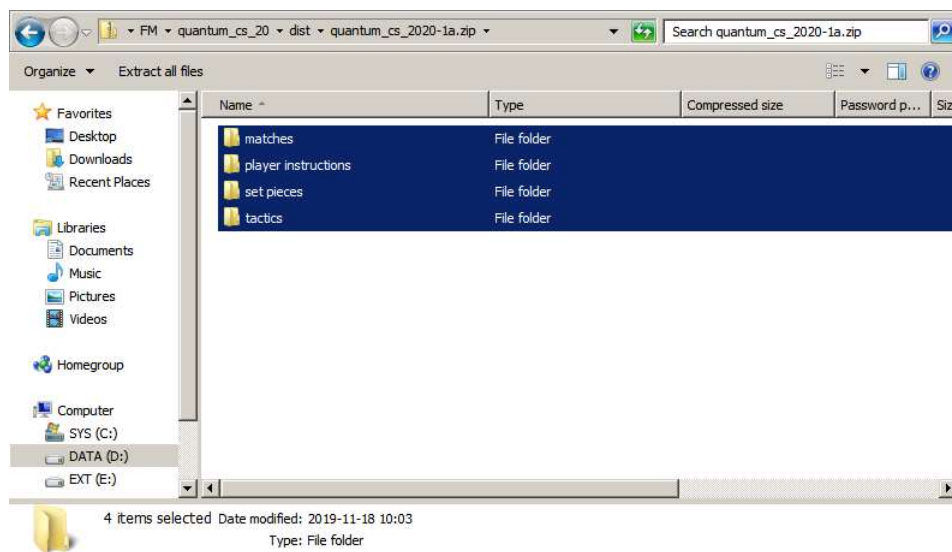
Pre/Early-Season/Breaks: Strength, Quickness (if too low)

Season: Attacking Movement, Shooting

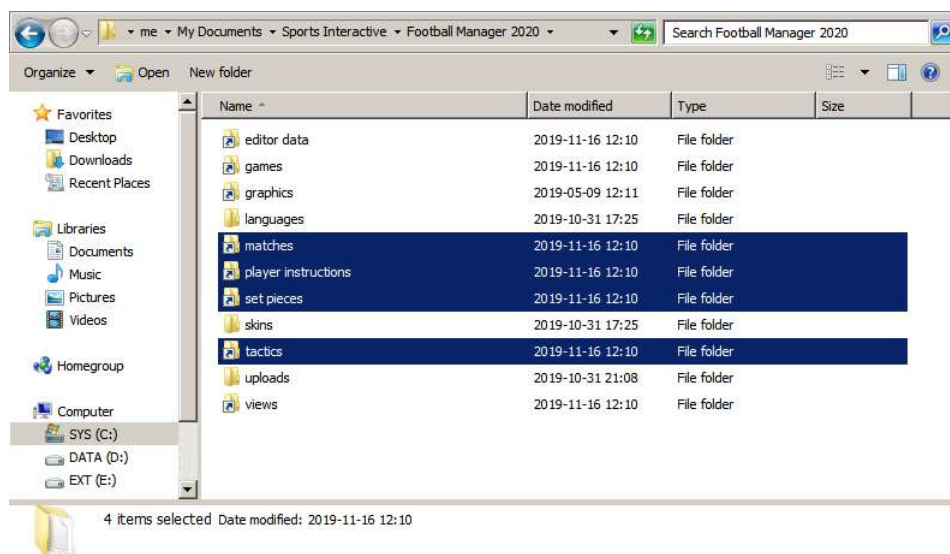
Installation

Unpack the archive and copy directories “matches”, “tactics”, “player_instructions”, “set pieces”, “filters” (or select only files you need) to your FM21 directory (usually “C:\Users\[your_name]\Documents\Sports Interactive\Football Manager 2021”).

Ctrl-C:



Ctrl-V:



Anomalies

Nothing serious was detected as of 21.1.3. Probably too many goals from long shots, but can't say for sure ATM.

Lite Variation (Experimental)

For low-quality teams. Changes compared to the default tactic:

Use Offside Trap: Off

Use Tighter Marking: On

Get Stuck In: On (be careful with yellows and set easy tackling for those warned)

In Transition: + Distribute To Centre-Backs

Hit Early Crosses: On

Passing Directness: Shorter

Tempo: Lower

BWM: Static Ball Winner preset

DRL: Cautious Full-Back preset

ST: Guardian Striker preset

Optional

Floated Crosses: if you have tall strikers

Play For Set Pieces: if you train them regularly & have tall CBs and strikers

Changes

2021.1 (Dec-08-2021): copy-paste to FM21.