

“Quantum CS” (4-1-3-2 DM Narrow) Tactic for FM24+

Revision 24.1A (Nov-13-2023)

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“Quality of possession provides victory.”

Quantum CS is a high-intensity wingerless tactic. It's suitable for almost any club, with minimal tweaking. Of course, best results require carefully selecting/breeding right players, but you can expect decent performance after taking control of a typical club with a bunch of useless wingers.

FM24 WARNING

The tactic passed the smoke test with FM24 beta version 24.0.1 (ME 24.0.0.0). See details in the “Proof Of Concept” section below.

The core of the tactics remains the same as it was for ten years, and it still works as intended. That's why I didn't upload anything since FM21 – everything worked the same in FM22 and FM23.

If you used that tactic before, just load and play. Consider reading about new set pieces.

TL;DR

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

Note that you need to load set pieces manually using “Load All Routines” dropdown menu (not sure if this is a beta bug).

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. Sometimes 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.

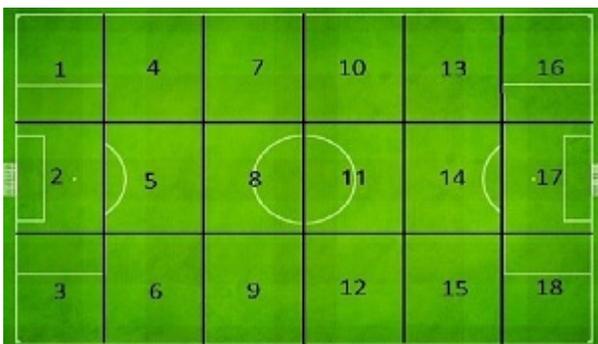
Philosophy

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

FM24 beta 24.0.1. Newcastle United from EPL, media prediction – 5th. A team of average CA in the range of 140-150. No superstar ~~wingers~~ players. A good choice.

I played some part of the season, facing most of the top teams except Liverpool (it's locked beyond December madness).

I didn't pay any attention to training and interaction with players and media. That can increase productivity of players up to 5-15%, so don't do that in the real save.

League table:

POS	TEAM	PLD	WON	DRN	LST	FOR	AG	GD	PTS	FORM
1st	 Newcastle	12	11	1	0	23	3	20	34	●●●●
2nd	 Chelsea	13	9	1	3	26	13	13	28	●●●●●
3rd	 Liverpool	12	7	4	1	28	9	19	25	●●●●
4th	 Man City	13	8	1	4	25	9	16	25	●●●●●
5th	 Tottenham	12	8	1	3	24	13	11	25	●●●●●
6th	 Brighton	12	6	5	1	19	15	4	23	●●●●
7th	 West Ham	12	6	3	3	27	21	6	21	●●●●

Fixtures:

DATE	OPPOSITION	VENUE	RESULT	COMPETITION	GOALSCORERS
AUGUST 2023					
Sat, 2023-8-12	Arsenal	H	1 - 0	Premier Division	Miguel Almirón (5)
Sat, 2023-8-19	Luton	A	2 - 0	Premier Division	Callum Wilson (pen 11), Alexander Isak (65)
Sat, 2023-8-26	Man City	A	3 - 0	Premier Division	Callum Wilson (pen 23, 75), Kyle Walker o.g. (37)
SEPTEMBER 2023					
Sat, 2023-9-2	Crystal Palace	H	1 - 0	Premier Division	Miguel Almirón (89)
Sat, 2023-9-16	Everton	A	1 - 0	Premier Division	Elliot Anderson (84)
Tue, 2023-9-19	Feyenoord	A	1 - 0	UEFA Champions League Group A	Jamaal Lascelles (34)
Tue, 2023-9-26	Man City	A	3 - 4	Carabao Cup Third Round	Joelinton (31), Alexander Isak (51), Callum Wilson (58)
Sat, 2023-9-30	Fulham	A	2 - 0	Premier Division	Anthony Gordon (64), Callum Wilson (pen 78)
OCTOBER 2023					
Wed, 2023-10-4	FC Porto	H	2 - 1	UEFA Champions League Group A	Bruno Guimarães (62), Joelinton (90+4)
Sun, 2023-10-8	Sheff Utd	H	2 - 1	Premier Division	Alexander Isak (10), Anthony Gordon (48)
Sat, 2023-10-21	Aston Villa	A	1 - 1	Premier Division	Allan Saint-Maximin (86)
Wed, 2023-10-25	Crvena zvezda	A	1 - 0	UEFA Champions League Group A	Alexander Isak (66)
Sat, 2023-10-28	Tottenham	H	2 - 0	Premier Division	Callum Wilson (11), Alexander Isak (27)
NOVEMBER 2023					
Sat, 2023-11-4	Nottm Forest	A	1 - 0	Premier Division	Alexander Isak (62)
Tue, 2023-11-7	Crvena zvezda	H	3 - 0	UEFA Champions League Group A	Anthony Gordon (18, 21), Ryan Fraser (36)
Sat, 2023-11-11	Burnley	H	3 - 1	Premier Division	Callum Wilson (13), Elliot Anderson (86), Sven Botman (90+8)
Sat, 2023-11-25	Chelsea	A	4 - 0	Premier Division	Joelinton (17, 49), Fabian Schär (71), Ryan Fraser (84)

First eleven stats:

PKD	INF	NAME	POSITION	ABILITY	CON	SHP	LAST 5 GAMES	APPS	GLS	AST	AV RAT	PAS %	K PS/90	CR C/A	SHT/90	DIST/90	HDR %	K TCK/90	CLR/90	INT/90
GK	BPR	Nick Pope	GK	★★★★★	♥	🟢	7.32	13	0	0	7.33	91%	-	-	-	6.4km	-	0.00	0.95	0.16
DR		Kieran Trippier	D/WB (R)	★★★★★	♥	🟢	7.44	15 (1)	0	7	7.42	83%	3.48	20%	0.28	14.2km	63%	0.21	0.57	3.19
DCR		Sven Botman	D (C)	★★★★★	♥	🟢	7.04	14 (1)	1	0	7.01	94%	0.57	0%	0.29	11.7km	68%	0.36	0.57	2.01
DCL		Dan Burn	D (LC)	★★★★★	♥	🟢	7.32	12 (1)	0	1	7.23	85%	1.22	17%	0.44	13.7km	71%	0.26	0.70	2.70
DL		Matthew Targett	D (L)	★★★★★	♥	🟢	7.10	8 (3)	0	2	7.20	81%	2.24	11%	0.00	14.2km	61%	0.12	1.00	3.61
DM		Fabian Schär	D (C)	★★★★★	♥	🟢	7.04	9 (6)	1	0	6.92	93%	0.20	0%	0.10	11.4km	53%	0.40	0.79	1.69
MCR	PR	Joelinton	M (C), AM (L)	★★★★★	♥	🟢	7.28	13 (1)	4	1	6.94	86%	0.72	23%	0.99	13.5km	54%	0.09	0.54	1.89
MC	BPR	Joe Willock	M (C)	★★★★★	♥	🟢	6.96	4 (3)	0	2	6.89	88%	1.86	0%	0.00	13.7km	17%	0.00	0.93	1.86
MCL		Miguel Almirón	AM (RC)	★★★★★	♥	🟢	6.80	10 (1)	2	0	6.99	90%	0.91	16%	0.23	13.7km	15%	0.11	0.80	2.40
STCR		Callum Wilson	ST (C)	★★★★★	♥	🟢	7.32	15 (2)	7	4	7.08	86%	1.20	21%	1.05	13.2km	20%	0.00	0.30	1.28
STCL	Rat	Alexander Isak	ST (C)	★★★★★	♥	🟢	7.48	13 (2)	6	2	7.22	82%	1.36	0%	1.54	13.1km	57%	0.17	0.17	1.36

I'm not sure if it's possible to win the league. After all, Newcastle's second line-up is pretty weak, and I have no idea how they'll perform in the final third of the season. Also, injuries of the key players are a threat. But, in general, the test result is very decent.

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.



During attack/defence (rough approximation):



Team Instructions

The mentality is almost **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.

WHEN POSSESSION HAS BEEN LOST

- Counter-Press
- Regroup

WHEN POSSESSION HAS BEEN WON

- Counter
- Hold Shape

GOALKEEPER IN POSSESSION

- Distribute Quickly
- Slow Pace Down

DISTRIBUTE TO AREA/PLAYER

- Distribute Over Opposition Defence
- Distribute To Flanks
- Distribute To Flanks
- Distribute To Playmaker
- Distribute To Full-Backs
- Distribute To Centre-Backs
- Distribute To Full-Backs

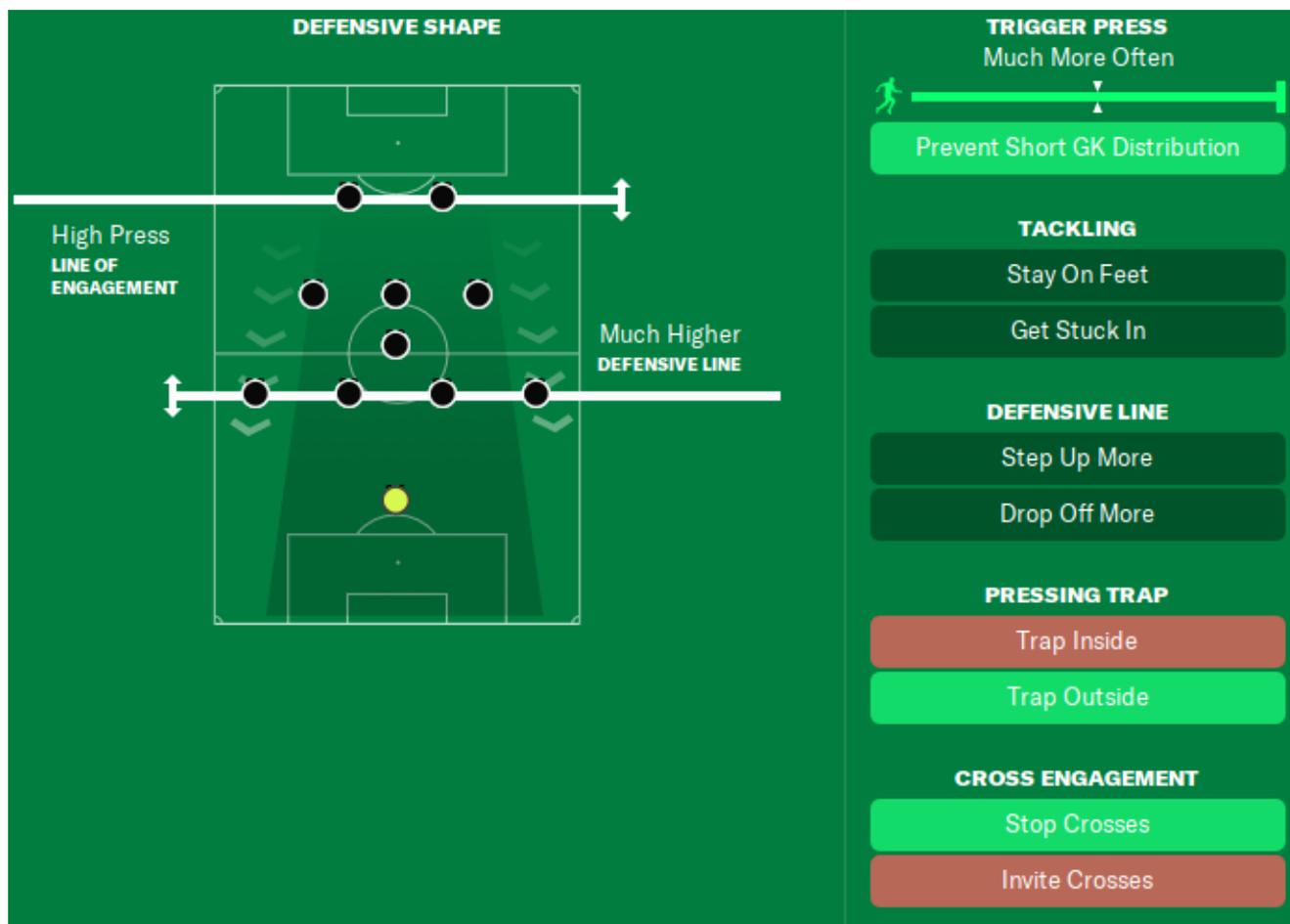
DISTRIBUTION TYPE

- Roll It Out
- Throw It Long
- Take Short Kicks
- Take Long Kicks

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 forcing opponents out of the center, also preventing crossing.



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

Tweakable: [Use Offside Trap] (if your 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 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're 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 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 intense, 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 and/or loanees. 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/Ball Winner* is turned on by purpose, and low "Long Shots" is no reason to turn it off. Players for the tactic, not vice versa.

* People asked me a lot about that. Therefore, I want to clarify why "Shoot More Often" is on for Dcs and BWM. The only chance for them to shoot is during set pieces, and it's much better to shoot on the stands than dwell on the ball, lose it, and concede the counter-attack. Sometimes, they even score (nice) goals that way.

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

You'll need to load set pieces manually after loading tactics. Use a drop-down menu in the "Routine" section and load "Quantum CS - Set Pieces.fmf".

Set pieces were changed in FM24 and, therefore, not well-tested. Though, during the test run, I conceded 1 goal from the set pieces and scored 6 in 17 matches. Not bad, but not perfect either.

A few important things:

- 1) default attacking throws are long, so if you don't have a decent thrower, you may want to change it to "Keep Possession";
- 2) deep attacking free kicks are long, but if you want to play safe, consider changing it to "Short".

Also, it's wise to turn both above off for the last 15-20 minutes of the match if the result is satisfying, to preserve DCs stamina.

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.

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.

I played FM22-23 in lower/exotic leagues and I don't really up to date with modern trends, so examples are coming soon, sorry. Also, I think it's not a bad idea to share best performers in the comments.

GK

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

Example: coming soon.

DC

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

Example: coming soon.

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: Kieran Trippier!

BWM

A defensive midfielder with decent technical skills.

Example: coming soon.

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: coming soon.

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: coming soon.

ST

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

Example: coming soon.

Reminder: Always deeply 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

Pre-Season

What's a good pre-season?

Play vs weaker teams, win everything 10-0, and get maxed morale? Then fail in the first competitive match.

Play vs similar and/or stronger opponents, win, lose, draw, concede goals, but play well when the regular season starts?

I think the answer is obvious. Pre-season exists to find and correct errors early, build match fitness, and keep injuries away.

So here is my pre-season strategy. It's not a dogma, you can adapt it for your play style.

I always use 2 full line-ups (22 players). If you don't have enough players, take any available youngsters to fill spots in the second line-up. It doesn't matter if you lose a friendly if you keep your first-team players uninjured.

I prefer to play against foreign teams to get some money and also build resistance against different playstyles. Usually, 2 matches per week, about 10 matches in total, it's enough to build fitness for all players. Each line-up plays for 45 mins, with 11 changes at the half-time. It makes 1 full match per week. With moderate physical training, it's pretty safe.

Don't forget motivational talks: "Don't overexert yourselves" for the 1st, "Prove yourselves" for the 2nd (or something that fits the personality of your manager character).

For 10 matches, the setup should be something like this: 4-5 same-level teams, 4-5 higher-level teams, and 1 slightly weaker (for the last match; usually only 2nd lineup plays it, to keep 1st lineup fresh & uninjured for the opening day). Don't forget to set 2-3 away matches, I know - it's a money loss, but you need to test your squad against away pressure. If you don't care about income, 5 home, 5 away is a wise choice.

Training during pre-season should be focused on tactics and teamwork. One of each physical category training per week, at least 1 set pieces training (excluding match focus). If you set individual training focus for players as physical, it should produce enough physical training for the pre-season w/o risking many injuries. Don't forget to change individual training from physical after pre-season ends.

Good luck!

Installation

Unpack the archive and copy directories "matches", "tactics", "player instructions", "set pieces", "filters" (or select only files you need) to your FM24 directory (usually "C:\Users\[your_name]\Documents\Sports Interactive\Football Manager 2024" for Windows and "~/steam/steamapps/compatdata/2252570/pfx/drive_c/users/steamuser/Documents/Sports Interactive/Football Manager 2024" for Linux).

Anomalies

Too many critical errors by top goalkeepers as of ME 24.0.0.0, i.e. rushing out ahead of defenders, passing to the nearest def when there is an enemy nearby etc. 17 matches, 6 errors leading to goal (1 for my team, 5 for the opposition).

LoFi Variation (Experimental)

A variation of tactic for low-profile teams. Not (well) tested, just to show the direction.

Changes

24.1 (Nov-6-2023): updated for FM24. New set pieces, the rest is mostly unchanged.

24.1A (Nov-13-2023): filters updated for FM24 (sorry, my fault). Alternate set piece “CS – Corners - Attack – 1A” for the case when you don’t have a jumper good enough to directly challenge keeper (you need to load it manually). New “Pre-Season” section in the manual.