

CHANGING TREND IN THE STYLE OF PLAYING FORMATION

INTRODUCTION

In the past, when we speak about methodology of playing structure, it is believed that theoretically, the style of playing formation should be stretched to the width to create space. This is regardless of what system the team plays.

However, this may not be completely true currently as some teams are now deliberately reducing playing to the width structurally but are still creating space and playing effectively.

We find that teams reduce width now to create space and depth in attack, a situation where never possible previously.

This development has in fact influenced the present style of playing formation which some teams are using. It is very dynamic and versatile thus making it unpredictable and exciting.

Below are 2 diagrams (A and B) that can describe the structure of the two different style of playing formation. Diagram A is the structure of the present style of playing formation. And diagram B is the structure of the Conventional style of playing formation. Both structures can be clearly distinguished when the team is in possession and lining up their attack.

Diagram A

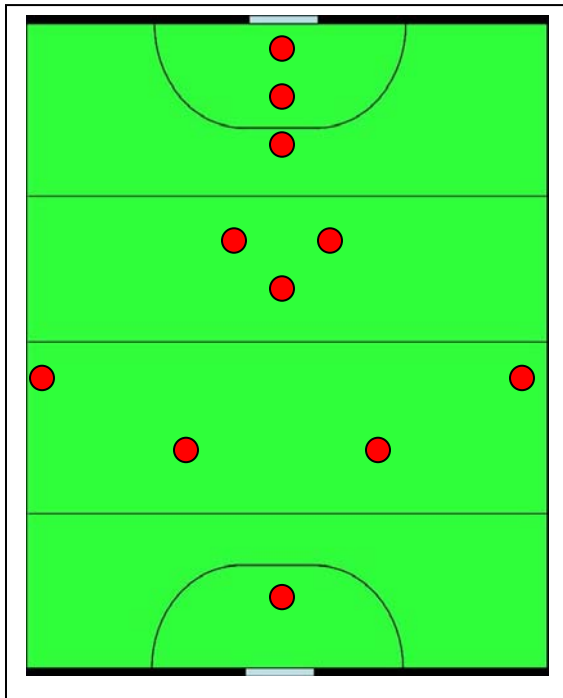
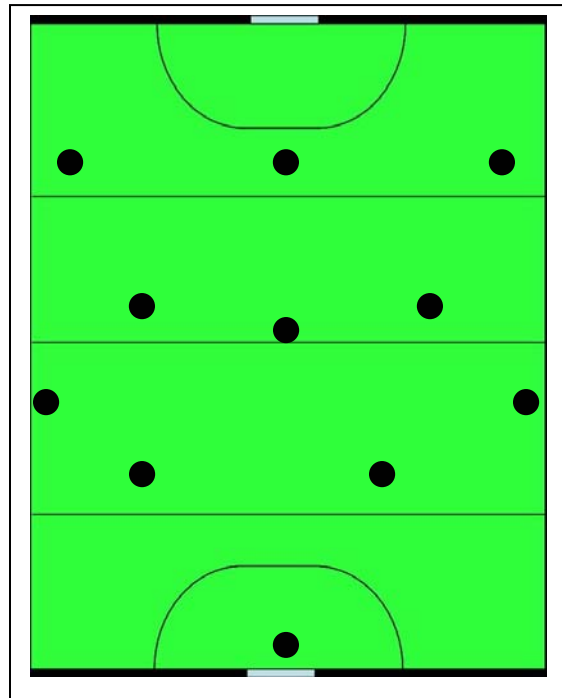


Diagram B



Definition

- ✓ **Present Style of Playing Formation**
 - **Style of Playing Formation without width.**

- ✓ **Conventional Style of Playing Formation.**
 - **Style of Playing Formation to Maximum Width.**

FACTORS THAT INFLUENCED PRESENT STYLE OF PLAYING FORMATION.

The changing trend of the present style of play could be contributed by many factors. However, 3 factors singled out as the most influential.

1. Changes to the Rules.
 - a. Removal of offside rule.
 - b. Changes to the substitution rule.

2. System of play.

1. CHANGES TO THE RULES.

a. REMOVAL OF OFFSIDE RULE

Space is single out as the most influential factor in the changing trend of the present style of playing formation. The removal the Offside rule completely changed the game. The game has developed into a very exciting trend, as there is no restriction to space.

The game went through a few phases of transition and initially the impact to this was not so drastic. As team begin adapt to the changes, they took advantage of the space behind the defenders by playing the ball into the space behind the defenders but the attackers are still positioned in line with the defenders.

Later on the attackers were taking advantage of the space by positioning behind the defenders to gain ground and this is what we see today in many teams. Teams are definitely taking a very attacking position in their approach by stretching the defenders in depth but still maintaining the width.

Of late, we find that this trend could be changing as seen presently where teams are deliberately reducing the width in attack to create space by positioning deep in opposition's half, in the center channel. (presentation / discussion topic)

Playing the structure without width has created a new dimension as to how hockey can be played today and this has lead to the present style of playing formation.

b. CHANGE TO THE SUBSTITUTION RULE

The substitution rule is also one of the other major influences in the present style of playing formation. Unlimited number of changes also allows the flexibility for players to really push the tempo to maneuver the opposition with constant interchanging to create space. This also allows the players to play fast counter attack hockey in the space created.

Having players work hard in short spells to run and shift the opponents and then substituting them with fresher and more energetic players meant than more option for Coaches and the way teams played.

2. SYSTEM OF PLAY

As seen recently, teams from Holland, Spain and Argentina etc., are making changes to their style of playing formation. A contributing factor is also that this teams play the 3-3-3-1 system. The flexibility of the 3-3-3-1 system could also be a contributing factor to this changing trend.

By nature the 3-3-3-1 system is very flexible and even before the changes to the 2 abovementioned rules i.e. removal of the Offside and Substitution rule, the 3-3-3-1 system of play allows the game to be played with more or less the same characteristics as per the present style of playing formation. The amendments of both rules created more ideal situation in favor of this system.

CHARACTERISTIC OF THE PRESENT STYLE OF PLAYING FORMATION.

Diagram C

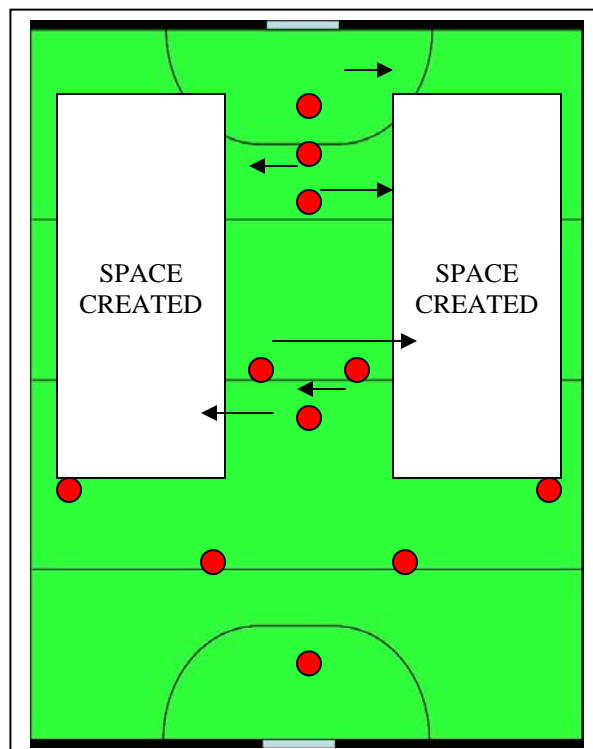


Diagram D



As seen in diagram D, is the Present Style of Playing Formation when in possession. The yellow indicators on the left and right channel show the depth in attack. The opposition team is stretched to the depth when the 4 defenders are holding play building / lining up attack in their defensive 25 yards. The forwards are positioned in the attacking 25 yards and circle.

The diagram D also illustrates the play is reduced in width. Because of the present style of playing formation where players are mostly in the center, the space in the Left and Right Channel is automatically created. The structure and formation of the present style of playing formation has created a “breakdown”. Conventional style cannot dictate their normal structure of play i.e. to the width and this has created a situation where both teams are not “occupying” both these channels. Players are mostly in the center channel, thus playing a reduced width.

Diagram E



Diagram E shows the Conventional style of playing formation. When ball is in possession the players are using the maximum width of the field.

Characteristics of the present style of playing formation are to creating of space and utilizing the space. This is done by maneuvering and having a strong starting position which is a very attacking in nature. The structure in the starting position actually creates space in the right and left channel, an area of play players from both teams are not “occupying”. This is not by chance but it is due to the way the forward and midfield players have manipulated the marking to stretch the structure in depth and reduced width of the conventional style.

In this present style of playing formation, the forwards deliberately bunched together in the center channel and make mostly short sideways leading. This is where the space on both the right and left channels are automatically created.

When the forwards make this kind of lead they will sometimes receive passes in the center channel; otherwise it is mostly passes in the empty space in the left and right channel.

The 'starting position' of the present style of playing formation in the forward department obviously "breakdown" the opposition's structure and the playing style (marking). As in normal cases the attacking forwards have to be marked man to man and some times the forwards can be passed on to another defender if the situation permits. However in this case the defenders have no choice but to mark man to man and follow all the way as the forwards are actually in the 25yards or in the Circle.

In the midfield department, adjustments also have to be made by the opposition. Many teams employ a normal zonal marking combined with man to man marking. The zonal marking is structured to hold and intercept direct passes to the forwards. However with the present style of playing formation, midfield players are bunched together with constant interchanging. It is difficult for the conventional style midfield to mark and at the same time cut the direct line of passes to the forwards on both left and right channels.

If the marking is man-to-man in the midfield than the right and left channels will be open for long passes by the defenders directly to the forwards. Vice versa if the defending team marks zonal than they are subject to being out numbered in the center channel where it will be used as the outlet pass to the forwards.

When ball is constantly being passed from right and left amongst the defenders to find the correct moment to play the pass into space or directly to the forwards and midfield, it is very difficult for the conventional style team to mark. Taking this into consideration, the present style of playing formation, both the forward or midfield department will have the advantage as. When the ball is played into the space, it is a race for both teams' players. In this aspect the team with the present style formation will definitely have the advantage possession.

The situation is also compounded by the fact that the defending team structure is vertically stretched. This in fact a situation where the defending team's defender and midfield department are stretched and unable to coordinate as one unit to stop both the long ball and passes via the midfield outlets to the forwards.

Fast counter attack opportunity play is always available. The breakdown in the opposition's structure and big space created on the left and right channel and the space behind the midfield encourages fast attacking hockey where we see many small game situation i.e. 3 vs 3, 3 vs 2, 2 v2, 1 vs 1 etc.

Summarized below are characteristics of the present style of playing formation

1. Create space by reduced playing width.

Characteristics - In contrast with the conventional way of playing, the present style of playing formation is more in the center channel.

Impact – Reduced width opens up the left and right channel. This is because the defending team defenders will have to mark man to man. It is very unlikely that the defenders will mark zonal as forwards are already in the hot spot or 25 yard zone.

2. Positioned deep in attacking zone.

Characteristics - The 3 strikers/forwards will position very high up in the opposition's 25 yards and in some cases in the circle (hot spot).

Impact - This actually stretches the opposition's defender in depth, making the structure not compact and vulnerable. This is because the midfield and defender are unable to work as a unit. Both departments are stretched making it difficult to contain and absorb the pressure.

3. Players group together in center channel.

Characteristics - Players group together in center channel

Impact – Grouping in the center makes it difficult for defenders to mark and intercept the direct passes to the forwards at the same time. Grouping together in the center channel with reduced width create space in the left and right channel.

4. Side to side leading.

Characteristics – The 3 striker makes mostly short side to side leading and are position very deep in the opposition defense i.e. 25 yards and circle. Forwards will lead longer when ready to receive pass.

Impact – When making mostly short side-to-side leading, the depth is still maintained. This will automatically create space in the left and right channel. Maintaining depth and short side to side leading also maintained the distance between the midfield and forwards. The forwards can lead towards own goal to receive pass, space behind midfield.

5. Interchanging position regularly.

Characteristics - Consistently interchanging position.

Impact – Makes marking difficult and opportunity to constantly create space. While waiting for opportunity to select moves and receive pass.

6. Reorganise and patient in build up.

Characteristics - Reorganise and patient in build – up.

Impact – When the defenders reorganize by passing the ball around, the forwards will gain ground by leading vertically to stretch the opposition in depth to create space.

7. Midfield interchanging in rotation.

Characteristics – Midfield continues moving and interchanging.

Impact – Continues moving and interchanging breakdown the opposition's structure and midfield department. Decision has to be constantly changed depending on situations at that time, marking man or cutting the horizontal direct passes to forwards.

8. Back 4 defenders holding play to build up / lining up attack.

Characteristics -The 4 defenders holding play to select the next attack by passing among themselves and structured to the maximum width in the bowl shape mostly.

Impact – This strong position and combination of many passes around the back makes it difficult for the opposition to press.

9. Players highly skill / versatile / multitasking.

Characteristics – Players highly skilled and versatile, and undertakes multitasking roles.

Impact – As this style of play creates a lot of space, it automatically requires all players to be able to play in most positions to utilize the space created. Players are versatile and skills to perform multitasking roles.

10. Attacking style.

Characteristics - Attacking Style of play.

Impact – Space encourages attacking style basically. This is also because the forwards are positioned in the 25 yards or circle, which encourages elimination and fast counter attacking style.

COMPARISON BETWEEN THE CHANGES IN THE TREND OF PLAYING STYLE – PRESENT STYLE AND CONVENTIONAL STYLE

<u>Present style of playing formation</u>	<u>Conventional style of playing formation.</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduced width and players concentrate in center channel. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maximum width and players use the whole width of the field.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stretched opponent structure in depth but not width. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stretch opponent structure in width. But may not stretch the opponent structure in depth. Depends on game tactical.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Players group together in center channel and mobile. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stretched apart and sometimes quite rigid in respective position.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Forwards positioned deep in opposition's 25 yards and circle when in possession to line up attack. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Forwards not always position deep in opposition's 25 yards and circle.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Space available for side backs to overlap. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Space not readily available for side backs to overlap.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Back 4 can be adventures and involved in counter attack with inter changing and overlapping. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not very adventures. As the back 4 are mostly holding structure position
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Players interchanging a lot without the ball. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not very frequent. Interchanging mostly occur when ball is in area of play.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Players highly skill in small games situation. 1 vs 1, 2 vs 1, 3 vs 3 etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not all players are highly skilled as some players are not very flexible to undertake other position.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Forwards and midfield mostly side to side leading (Horizontal) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Forwards and midfield mixture of leading pattern.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Midfield interchanging and rotation position constantly. Interchanging position regularly between forwards and midfield. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some interchanging in midfield but less interchanging between forwards and midfield.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Back 4 defenders holding play and involved in attack. Overlap quite regularly. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Back 4 defenders concentrate in defending roles and mostly making passes the midfield and forwards.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multitasking roles. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimal multitasking roles.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Very fast counter attack style with small games situations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build up attacking style and counter attack.
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STRONG POINT AND WEAK POINT OF THE PRESENT STYLE OF PLAYING FORMATION

<u>Strong Point</u>	<u>Weak Point</u>
Stretched opponent's structure in depth	Back 4 defenders unable to build up and line up attack if constantly pressed by opposition.
Very attacking concept	May not be able to contain counter attack.
Breakdown in opponent structure as to zonal or man-to-man or intercept ball.	At times overload too many players in attack.
Reduce opponent's structure in width	Need time to reorganize to build up attack after turn over.
Very attacking style. And counter attack concept.	
Ability to apply pressure with out the ball and gain ground.	
Provide option for immediate press	
Unlimited space	
Free flow hockey	
Very dynamic with many options	
Opportunity for defenders to join attack using space on left and right channel.	

CONCLUSION.

Changes to the rules have influenced the present style of playing formation. These changes have given us an opportunity to explore new ideas. In the past many characteristics of the present style of playing formation will not work. Some of the concept and principal may not be applicable but is currently good.

The "present style of playing formation" is the result of this. It has given us another option to play hockey.