



TACTICAL TIPS

“Attacking a Flat-Back 4”

You don't see it much at the youth level but the Flat-Back 4 defensive system is still a choice for many coaches, especially at the high school level.

For the uninitiated, a Flat-Back 4 defense is where all four defenders -- 2 Center Backs flanked by Outside Backs -- play in a uniformed, organized line. When organized correctly, a Flat-Back 4 defense is a wonderful thing to watch. And it is not as conservative as it may seem.

Attacking against the Flat-Back 4 requires patience and organization. The best way to attack this defense is with "Direct Play" -- playing the ball behind the defending players. It is best attacked with the use of 3 Forwards, perhaps in a 4-3-3 or 3-4-3 formation or, at the very least, with 2 forwards and an Attacking Midfielder in a 3-5-2 or 4-3-2-1.

When employing the "Direct Play" philosophy, it is best to play the ball in the space behind either Outside Back. This will require one of the Center Backs to move toward the sideline in support of the Outside Back opening up space on the weakside of the defense.

A straight 4-4-2 formation will have some difficulty vs. a Flat Back, as would a 4-5-1 formation, which seems to be a very popular formation these days.