

Players position guide

Goalkeeper

By common consent, most goalkeepers are a little bit crazy. But there is no doubting it is one of the most important jobs on the football pitch. The position of goalkeeper is that of a 'specialist technician' and, therefore, a great deal of work on individual techniques is required .

- A goalkeeper needs to be agile and brave
- They need good technical skills, handling, catching, punching
- A goalkeeper needs to keep concentration and focus - to be always ready and alert for that crucial save - especially if they have not had much to do during the game
- They need to be confident
- Now that goalkeepers can no longer pick up back passes, there is more emphasis on the control and kicking skills of a keeper
- Positioning in relation to the ball and the defence is also very important
- A goalkeeper also needs very good communication skills
- A keeper also needs to be supple - to stretch for shots and crosses
- They need quick feet and speed - close players down, move their feet quickly for saves. Reaction speed
- A goalkeeper also needs to be strong, to withstand challenges and to jump for crosses and saves

Full-back

A full back is a very key player in the team. Very often attacking play starts with the fullback as they tend to have more space to receive a pass.

- A fullback's main responsibility is to stop the opposition attacking in wide areas and to support and cover the central defenders.
- Fullbacks need to have a good ability in the air, to deal with long passes down the pitch and crosses
- They need to have good pace and stamina, to match wingers in 1 v 1 defending situations and to get up and down the pitch
- Ideally a fullback should have a good range of passing and crossing skills.
- They need to be able to run well with the ball
- Fullbacks also need power - a combination of speed and strength to defend in sustained bouts of pressure
- They also need good levels of strength - jumping to head the ball, tackling, withstanding challenges

Central defender

Being a central defender ensures that for 90% of the game a central defender will have the ball and most players in front of them. This gives them a unique opportunity to be able to

read the game and see what is going on. Central defenders tend to be good organisers, communicators and leaders of the team.

- The main priority of a central defender is to defend their goal
- They have to be strong, be a good tackler and powerful and competitive in the air.
- A central defender will have to be competitive and aggressive to match and beat opposition forwards
- Central defenders need an ability to read the game by spotting where the likely danger will come from.
- Central defenders need to be very committed, concentrated and focused on their role.
- They need to have good levels of concentration, they cannot relax for one second - there is danger on the football pitch from every possible angle.
- Central defenders need good pace and running power
- Very often the opposition will allow central defenders to have the ball, as a result they should have good ability on the ball and a wide range of passing skills.
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Central midfield

The centre of midfield is the engine room of a team. If a team can gain control of this area, then very often they control and dictate what happens in the game. The best teams always have world-class players in this position, such as Frank Lampard for Chelsea, Steven Gerrard at Liverpool, Cesc Fabregas at Arsenal. They are described as the orchestra conductors or the engines of the team.

- Central midfield players have to have good stamina to play in this position. It involves endless running from box to box, to pressure the ball, to attack and defend.
- They will need to be a strong tackler to win the ball back and have good passing skills to create opportunities for the forwards.
- Whilst they don't have to be the quickest players in the team, they do need to have speed and power to make challenges and get to the loose ball first.
- They will also need an overall range of football skills, such as heading, ball control, passing, tackling, shooting.
- Very often they will be very competitive and good leaders. It is useful for them to have good communication skills and to be able to read the game.

Wide midfield

Wingers, wide midfielders, call them what you like, they are some of the most exciting players around. Ronaldo at Real Madrid, Shaun Wright-Phillips or Aaron Lennon at Spurs. Being a wide midfield players is a varied and hardworking job, it's no longer enough to have a couple of dribbles and and let the full backs do the defending behind.

- Energy and stamina are needed to give defensive cover to the full-backs playing behind you and get forward to supply crosses
- Playing right out on the touchline when your team are in possession requires a different perspective on the game. A wide player needs to be able to play on the half turn most of the time
- Wide players and wingers need very good speed to get to the ball first, beat the fullback and make recovery runs

- They also need good ball control skills, particularly when receiving the ball in tight areas and good crossing abilities.

Second striker or hole player

In football today, the role of the second striker is very important. Many teams employ formations where this player plays a vital link. The player plays between their midfield and the main striker and has a license to roam. It is a difficult position for the opposition to pick up and mark as the players can be playing quite deep one minute and then burst forward to link up with their striker. Wayne Rooney plays in this role for both Man Utd and England. Both Zinedine Zidane and Dennis Bergkamp have been masters at playing as the second striker.

- To play in this role the players has to be very comfortable on the ball, have great vision and a very quick turn of pace.
- They are usually the most talented forward player in the team.
- Second strikers need to have great ball control, be able to receive a pass from all sorts of angles and have great vision and awareness.
- They also need good goalscoring skills as well as goal making abilities
- They will usually create plenty of chances for team-mates, but also bang in more than a few themselves.
- A player who plays in the "hole" will need good strength to withstand and ride tackles as well as good stamina.
- They will also have to display good defensive awareness as very often they will have to tuck in alongside the midfield when the team are under pressure

Striker

Strikers are very often see as the glory boys of a team. The rest of the team can work and run for 89 minutes and in the last minute, the striker nips in and scores the winner and gets all the headlines. Strikers tend to be very strong minded individual players, who have a healthy selfish streak. They live and die by the goals they score . There are all sorts of different characteristics that make up a good striker, but the overall characteristic is the desire to score goals.

- Nicholas Anelka and Fernando Torres have fantastic pace, while others like Drogba rely on strength and power.
- What some strikers lack in pace, they make up for in speed of thought and ability to move away from markers to create chances.
- They need to have a strikers instinct - to be in the right place at the right time.
- Strikers need to be mentally very strong and thick skinned, it's not easy to keep getting in the box to try and score when you have just missed a sitter and everyone is moaning at you
- They need to be technically very proficient in ball control, shooting, finishing and heading skills, to convert chances into goals.
- Strikers need to be very cool, calm and composed in a sometimes very hectic and crowded penalty area.

Any questions on this please feel free to ask.

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