

10 Insights To Understanding Soccer Strategy

Whether you are a soccer player, coach, or parent it's important to be knowledgeable of soccer strategy.



1. Pay attention to the diagonal runs behind the defense. A center forward making an angled run just behind another defender, say a 10 yard sprint, at just the right moment, could be getting ready to receive the ball. Is the opposition playing zone-defense and passing the offensive player to another defender? Is the player making the pass under pressure?

2. Look for how a third man running opens up the game. A midfielder and forward might exchange a few passes on the side and then a defender (a third player) will break towards the goal from behind to receive the ball – almost out of nowhere.

3. Watch how quick give-and-goes, both static and moving, open up the defense. A player can play a wall-pass (a give and go) just to get more time on the ball if he's being closed down (static), or can play the ball and then sprint into the space to receive the ball. Keeping the ball moving relieves pressure and opens up space. Quick passes (the ball moves much faster than anyone else) breaks down a defense.

4. Discover how switching the field of play gives players more time and space. Two or three passes on one side of the field and suddenly there's no space, the defense has closed the offensive team down, and that's when they look for a long switch to the defender or midfielder on the other side. In soccer terms it's called, 'short short long' or 'switching play' – a few short passes and then a long pass. At times, this switch, when done cleverly, can surprise the other team, who is preoccupied on one side, and results in a chance for a goal or a cross.

5. Learn how counter attacks can lead to goal scoring opportunities. A team may just hunker down and pack their players into their goal box and leave one player up high, waiting to break down the field when they win possession.

6. Come to embrace the long ball in soccer. Don't knock the long ball (no pun intended). Watch how a team might pick out their forward with a long ball. The forward will control the ball and enable the rest of his team to move up the field.



Or, one long pass can lead to a perfect lay off or flick to an on rushing player for a goal.

7. Observe how 'overlaps' create opportunities for crosses. A wide defender might make a run around the outside midfielder, who has cut inside, and join the attack. An effective cross creates a goal scoring chance.

8. Watch how a 'take over' (when players interchange positions) opens up space or a time and a window of space for a shot or pass. One player might dribble right at another player and exchange the ball, the other player screening the defender for a moment.

9. Savor the blind pass. Look for a subtle back heel to an unseen player, looking in one direction but playing the ball the other, dribbling to the right but serving a long diagonal pass to the left side (you know that player is there). Watch for that one more pass that almost doesn't seem necessary but results in a tap in goal.

10. Enjoy the most exciting play in soccer, when someone takes on another player on the dribble. Watch how they change pace once they've made a move, a cut or a feint or a stepover or ten. Sometimes it's a fake shot, a subtle shoulder dip and then a burst of speed.

Tips:

* Go to a bar or restaurant to watch the game, to capture more of the atmosphere and excitement of the game. * Start playing (more) soccer yourself! Being (or rather, running and kicking) in the player's shoes will help you see the field from their perspective and understand why they make certain moves.