

3-3-3-1-1

The European Sweeper System is a naturally fluid one; currently played by the majority of the leading league clubs and national teams.

The success of the system depends on the ability and fitness of the 3 midfield players, who support the 3 strikers when required in attack as well as providing cover and support when needed in defence. This leaves the sweeper free to cover any player or pass that penetrates the defence and also be free to move forward and provide an extra player in attack.

N.B. The Australians regularly play their sweeper **in front of** the back 3 to intercept.

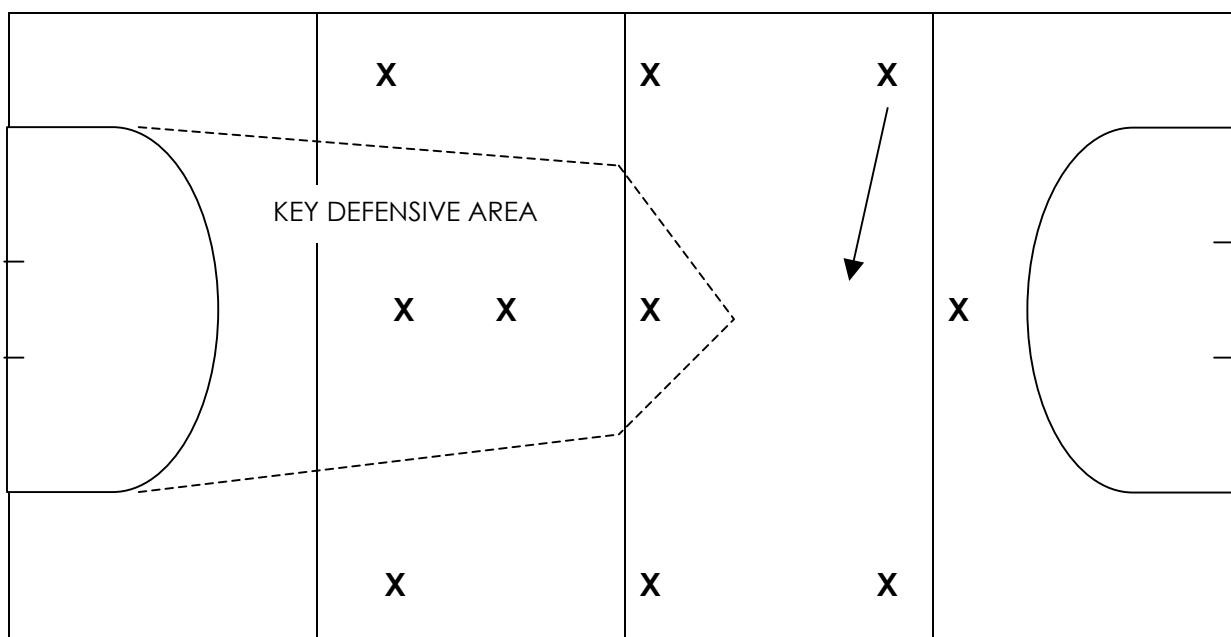
Also note that on synthetic surfaces defenders mark slightly differently and with the new obstruction interpretation need to go for the 'interception'. Marking in front demands good communication with the back player – calling particular players with instructions to move left or right, backwards or forwards. This type of communication is important all over the pitch.

Generally play will feed from defence to attack in short simple passes usually through the centre midfield. However, long passes must be encouraged when a quick break is made.

Teams playing this system well are able to dominate the midfield and subsequently control the game.

As with all systems, to be successful it is essential to have: -

DEPTH, COVER & SUPPORT



Shows alternative position →

SWEEPER – plays as an extra Midfield Interceptor in front of the back 3. Security is essential; thus the sweeper should play safe and remove the ball from the defensive area. Covering the area in front of the defence; tackling any player entering the defensive 25 yard area. If the sweeper is beaten then he/she must get behind the back 3 in the old traditional sweeper position. The sweeper should look for long passes to the strikers as well as short passes to other defenders. Supporting the midfield in attacking leaving the 'back 3' to cover.

RIGHT DEFENDER (Back/Half) – **supports the attack on the right side** providing overlap. Centre the ball, go to the goal line and pull it back short. Score goals.

Marks opposing left striker in the defensive 25-yard area. Provides cover for the defence when the ball is on the defensive left side. If the opposition are playing two in attack the RD may need to mark the extra midfield player.

CENTRAL DEFENDER (Centre Back) – supports the midfield in the build-up area – passing the ball quickly. This is the most defensive position – marking the opposing centre forward in the defensive half. Must be able to mark and tackle.

LEFT DEFENDER (Back/Half) – similar to the right defender but with less opportunity to attack. Supporting the left attack positioned to receive passes and centre the ball. The main role is to **mark the opposing right attack out of the game** – traditionally the right side attack is the strongest element of a team. Marking the opposing right attack in the defending half.

RIGHT / CENTRE / LEFT MIDFIELD – crucial supporters to the attack but with equal ability to get back to support the defence. In attack 2 of the 3 should be further forward with the other covering; it is more usual for the left midfield to be more defensive (marking out the opposing right attack). This means the right half plays more in attack and the centre midfield is more likely to assume the role of an attacking centre half.

In defence the midfield 3 should mark man to man on the goal side. If the opposition is playing 4 in attack the left midfield may need to assume a more defensive role similar to the defenders.

RIGHT & LEFT MIDFIELD – these two players are crucial to keep the 'shape' of the team; when attacking they should supply support and width if necessary – especially on the right. When defending, both should tuck inside and force the opposition attack into the sidelines and ultimately into the corners.

RIGHT / CENTRE / LEFT STRIKERS – the wing strikers should stay wide and attack down the flanks. They should interchange with the centre striker. Strikers should pass the ball at a variety of angles and different speeds. Taking the ball to the goal line on the right side is a strong attacking move, passing back towards the penalty spot in line with the right post. From this play the centre attacker should be able to pick up the cross. In the modern artificial turf game, attackers will find more space by running laterally especially on or near the goal line behind the opposing sweeper.

Strikers should face the ball for the opposing free hits from the attacking 25-yard area, tackling the defence.

The central striker is a target for the defence to send long clearing passes.

Following in on shots on goal, harass opposing defence, and move laterally to side of field to collect the ball. The attack should not be concerned with defence in the defending 25-yard area. Attack on the break but also to know when to slow the game to wait for support from the midfield. The 3 strikers should not come back much beyond the half way line.

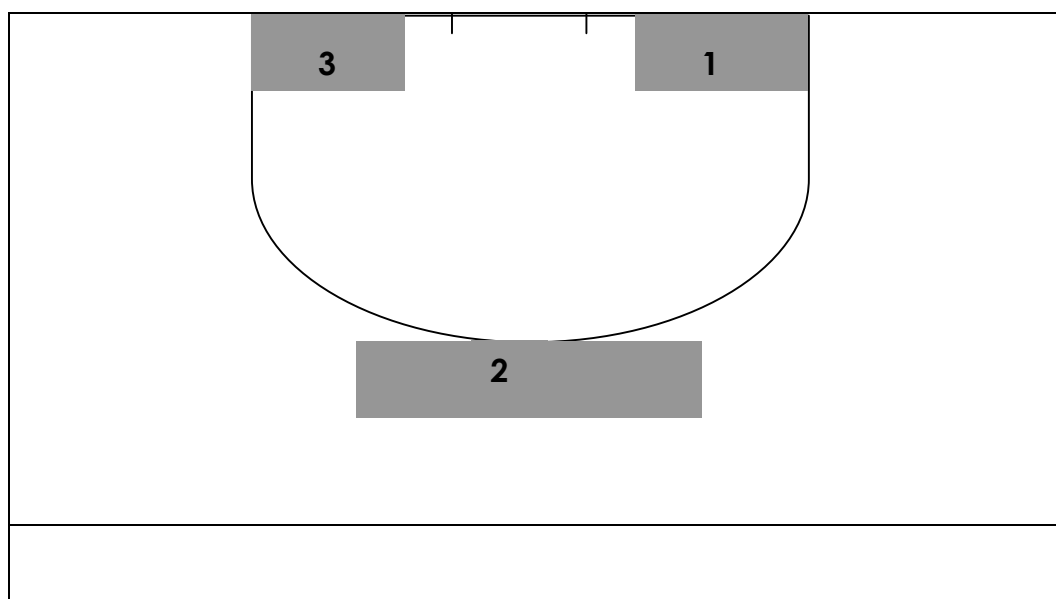
DEFENDING TOGETHER

All players should take the responsibility of channelling play to the wings and keeping the attacking players in the central area well marked and so discouraging the opposition from playing through the middle.

ATTACKING TOGETHER

Each player should be aware of his/her passing options and all players must make consistent efforts to be there to receive simple passes.

AIMS WHEN ATTACKING



Possession in zones 1, 2 or 3 should lead to a pass which will create a good goal scoring opportunity. Therefore the aim must be to attempt to pass to players in these positions or to dribble to them and make the final pass to the attacker for a one-touch (slap/flick/deflection) attempt on goal.