

Dominant Wing Midfield Play



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Historically

- Other than on game day, wing midfield has been very much neglected
- Little thought is given to a game day strategy or strategy for continued improvement for wing play
- Very little, if any advice or direction is given to players at training or on game day on wing play
- Wing midfield has been used to rotate players into the game instead of viewed as a specialist role
- Typically most all practice sessions involving face off and wing midfield is reactive to a bad game
- No benchmarks - guidelines to becoming a wing midfielder i.e. what you need to do
- No drills or plans for wing middies to improve

Think about it

- In a 13 to 12 goal game there are 29 face offs.
- That means 29 opportunity's for 1st possession
- Most coaches will spend 20+ minutes on man up and man down, 10+ minutes on fast break, but 0 minutes on face off and wing midfield.
- Statistically now days only 5-6 man up-down opportunity's and 4 fast break opportunity's per game
- ❖ **Comment:** Not to spend any time on midfield wing and face off strategy simply does not make sense!

Attributes of a Top Wing Middie

- Quick off the mark with an ability to get to contest after contest
- Have a strong core, they cannot afford to be be pushed off the ball at contests and they must keep their feet at the contest, cannot go to ground
- Great on ground balls, lefty & righty and must be able to GB one handed on the run at top pace
- Have excellent stick protection and great ball retention skills/ability
- Quick thinking and be able to react quickly
- Hard at it, hungry and determined

Attributes of a Top Wing Middie

- Play great one on one and team defence
- Clear the ball and provide run out of back half
- Drive and attack the goal on off a centre break
- Must be offensively threatening
- Must value possession and work in with both set offensive and defensive structures
- ❖ **ELITE POSITION:** Wing midfield is an elite position and should be seen as a 3 man special team
- ❖ **Reason:** Because 1st possession and use of the ball is crucial for ongoing team success.

Instructions for Wing Middies

- Explain to wing middle why it is such an important role
- Have a list for constant reference and reinforcement of your message
- Must instruct players at practice, before the game and reinforce during the game

❖ Key Points:

- Wait for the whistle, take front position, run in hard, be ready for the loose ball
- Stay with your opponent until our possession then run off them on and create offensive opportunity
- Secure GB before looking for an escape route

Instructions for Wing Middies

- See ball - Get ball
- Get low on the GB, protect your stick, tuck it in, head up, must get GB on first attempt
- Talk to teammates & listen for the voice of your teammates
- Get the GB and move the ball quickly at the first opportunity
- Be prepared for physical contact by stick and body
- Cut off the fast break - create the fast break

On the Line

- Be first on the line after a goal and take up the advantage position (i.e. where you want to be)
- Evaluate your opponents and the situation, what are their strengths and or weakness
- Look for signs to anticipate where ball is going
- Stay 2 inches or 50mm off the white line
- On whistle, 1st step must be to step across in front of your opponent to get the front position
- Visualise all the possible outcomes
- **Attitude:** Never, ever take a backward step, hungry dogs hunt best

Communication

- Middies and face man off must discuss a strategy
- Communication prior to a face off is visual between face off and middies, therefore:
- Look for and develop signals, such position of handle, the way face off hands and feet are positioned
- Talk it up, encourage your face off man
- Study what is happening even when you are on bench and share observations with team to create a strategy

Cardinal Sins

- Illegal Procedures (5)
- Face Off Player pre draws
- Face Off player moving after being set
- Face Off Player called for an Illegal Stick
- Wing midfield breaking line prior to whistle
- Wing midfield foot on the line
- Not providing support for face off man in the middle
- Not contesting hard enough for GB from the wings
- ❖ Coaches need to address and educate to negate all of the above situations

Face Off: They win it, we win it, GB contest

- 1 Opposition face off man is winning his own ball
- 2 Our face off man is winning his own ball
- 3 Ball Pushed Out: Ground Ball Contests
- (3a) Opposition face off wins advantage and places ball out to their wing middie for GB
- (3b) Our face off wins advantage and places ball to our wing middie for GB
- (3c) Neither face off players gets a clear advantage so a 3 on 3 GB contest will unfold at the face off X
- At the end of the day, after every face off and wing contest, the only 2 outcomes are we have possession or they have possession and wingmen must then adjust accordingly

Note: 3 a, b & c: Game on for the wing middie

No provisions given any of above to any illegal procedures

Strategy: Opposition face off is winning their own ball

- Our face off man must hold him up whilst wingmen charge in to help. Must give a contest
- Force opposition face off to go backwards and have attack up on restraining line ready to apply pressure
- Defence must be set up for a forward fast break
- Send wing middie from our strong-attack side into D to shut off fast break
- Use a long pole in the face off to apply pressure
- Use 3 long poles: face off and on both wings
- Apply extreme pressure from midfield wings

Strategy: Our face off is winning own ball

- Wing middies, especially on strong-attack wing must stay with opposition, run them off and not allow defensive pressure
- Attack must be set up for fast break
- Wingmen must present for relief outlet pass
- Wing must be in front, run in and pick up GB
- Attack needs to value the first use of the ball, do not give up ball on a nothing play

Strategy: Wing Ground Ball Contest

- Step across opponent and get front position
- Explode first 5 steps to maintain position
- Look for signals or set up position of face off players, and anticipate where ball is going and go there
- Get to the contest each and every time
- Expect contact by stick and body at the contest
- If ball is caught in the middle, don't get too close to the face off. Stay 1.5 - 2 metres away so if ball pops out it won't get past you
- Pick up GB before looking for an escape from pressure

Drills for Improving Wing Midfield

- Implement Agility Drills (agility can be improved)
 1. Use Running ladder
 2. Figure 8 Cones
 3. W formation Cones
- Speed and reaction: On the whistle
 1. Reaction off the line 5-10 metre sprint
 2. Stepping across for front position

Drills for Improving Wing Midfield

- GB pick up, protect, carry and spin moves
- Pick up, protect and move ball on drill
- One handed GB slow (technique)
- One handed GB at pace (game situation)
- 3 to 2 to 1 drill
- Poke Drill: back hand when not in front position
- Middies contesting GB from the wing 2 on 2
- Game situation with face off and wings 3 on 3
- Drills focus is on improving reaction, speed, GB

Recommendations

- Schedule face off & wing midfield play into every practice session, short sharp drills
- Build an elite wing & face off special teams attitude
- Take very good game day stats including:
 1. Face off wins or loss F/A
 2. Ground ball contests from face off (# of)
 3. Ground Balls won or loss F/A
 4. Goals scored from face immediate off possession F/A
 5. Illegal Procedures (# of, what, who, why)

Recommendations

- Continue to give instructions, build players confidence and knowledge, keep a list to convey a consistent message and always have a plan and strategy for both the attacking and defensive wings.
- Improve middies ability and performance with:
 1. Agility
 2. Reaction time to the whistle
 3. Stepping across opponent & gaining front position
 4. Explosive speed, especially the first 5 steps – 5 metres
 5. Practice one handed ground balls on the run
 6. Stick and ball protection skills in a contested situation

Recommendations

- Rate the performance of your face off and wing middies each and every game
- Must have a plan and a strategy, and if you don't have one now is the time to

GET ONE!!