

# Fluidity

Broadly speaking, the mentality of your team determines how defensive or attacking your players set out to play. You can choose from five main mentalities; defensive, counter, standard, control and attacking. There are also the two Fluidity

The fluidity of your playing style affects two distinct things. Firstly, it determines the extent to which your defensive, supporting and attacking players will all contribute to the defensive, transition and attacking phases of play. It does this by adjusting the individual mentalities, as initially set by the team's overall mentality and discussed in detail earlier, of players in each position.

Secondly, it determines the extent to which your players will creatively express themselves outside of the restraints of your tactical setup. This is known as creative freedom. A player with more creative freedom will be more likely to use his own intelligence to decide whether to attempt higher risk-reward actions such as forward runs, forward passes, through balls, dribbles and shots, regardless of his given individual mentality and other player instructions.

## **Rigid Playing Styles**

The more rigid the playing style the more your defenders will focus on defending, midfielders on supporting defence and attack, and attackers on attacking. Your defenders will be given more defensive mentalities and your attackers more attacking mentalities (relative to the overall team mentality), with midfielders being given a mentality setting between the two. Mentalities will be mostly determined by these positions and vary only slightly from defender to defender, midfielder to midfielder, and attacker to attacker, as according to their assigned roles and duties. As a result you will have less freedom to vary mentalities and create a more dynamic tactic by mixing player duties, although mixing duties is still important regardless of fluidity.

Your players will also be given less creative freedom, meaning they will be more likely to stick to their tactical instructions, as set by mentality, specific team instructions and player instructions. This lends itself to a more considered tactical system that focuses on keeping control of the game.

Your team will therefore be more disciplined and more likely to keep its basic shape, but this can in turn lead to large gaps being present between the defence, midfield and attacking areas in flatter formations such as a flat 4-4-2 or a flat 4-3-3. You would benefit from using a more layered formation, such as a diamond 4-1-2-1-2, a 3-2-2-1-2 with wingbacks, or a 4-1-2-2-1 with wingers, in order to provide a more effective structure. Any formation with as many as four players in attack or attacking midfield positions, such as an attacking 4-2-3-1, is likely to be defensively vulnerable with a more rigid playing style as the attacking players will be less likely to track back. Similarly, if a formation has more than five defenders and defensive midfielders then it will probably be too weak in attack.

However, even with a well balanced and layered formation, rigid playing styles are still less dynamic than the more fluid playing styles. Despite this, they can be a suitable option for teams with poorer mental and technical attributes, particularly at lower levels of football.

## **Fluid Playing Styles**

The more fluid the playing style, the more defensive and attacking responsibilities will be shared across your team. Players in all positions will have more closely matching individual mentalities that reflect the overall team mentality. Therefore, with more defensive mentalities in particular your attacking players will need to have good defensive ability, while with more attacking mentalities in particular your defensive players will need to have good attacking capability. In addition, your team will be more compact than with rigid playing styles, meaning flatter formations will be less of an issue. Again, you will have less freedom to vary mentalities by mixing player duties. But your players will be given more creative freedom, and will therefore be able to use their own intelligence to decide their actions. This will result in a more dynamic and unpredictable, but less controllable, tactical system. Your team will attack and defend as a unit, while there will be more varied movement and flair in attacks.

As a result, fluid playing styles can be a good option for teams expected to compete at the top of their league and that have sufficiently capable players across the pitch, provided that you are willing to forgo a large element of tactical control. However, without the right players to play such a style, attacks can prove ineffective and the tactic can be defensively vulnerable.

Your players will need excellent mental attributes such as Anticipation, Creativity, Decisions, Flair, Off The Ball, Positioning and Teamwork, while your defensive players should have decent enough technical and mental attributes to be able to contribute in attack and, similarly, your attacking players should be defensively capable.

### **Balanced Playing Styles**

As its name suggests, the balanced playing style will offer a mid-way point between the more rigid playing styles where the mentalities of players are determined largely by position, and the more fluid playing styles where the mentalities are more alike across the pitch. Similarly, the level of creative freedom given to your players will be in between the more rigid and more fluid styles.

Most notably though, the balanced playing style will give you a greater ability to change a player's individual mentality by changing his duty. Those given more defensive duties will have more defensive mentalities and those given more attacking duties will have more attacking mentalities. By varying duties as appropriate across the team, you will be able to create a more dynamic, yet defensively stable, tactical structure that allows for more fluid movement in attack without conceding tactical control by giving your players too much creative freedom. In addition, you will have far more control over exactly who defends, who attacks and who supports play at any point during each match simply by adjusting duties as appropriate according to the situation.

Such variation in mentalities will result in more movement between the lines. This will make it easier for your players to retain possession or create effective passing moves when attacking, and harder for the opposition defenders who have to decide to either mark a deeper striker at a risk of creating space for a more advanced attacker, or stay in position at a risk of giving too much time and space to the deeper striker. In addition, it can also make your team harder to attack against as your players will be able to defend in layers.

The balanced playing style, or alternatively the slightly less balanced rigid or fluid playing styles, would therefore be a good choice for the majority of teams. In particular, selecting rigid or fluid would enable you to combine much of the benefits of the balanced playing style with some of the benefits associated with the more extreme playing styles discussed above.

### **Fluidity and Player Roles**

Player roles, as discussed in more detail later in the guide, define each players' basic responsibilities in the areas of defence, possession and build-up play, chance creation, and finishing. However, the more fluid your team's playing style is, the more redundant your choice of role becomes, as all players will be expected to contribute in all areas. In contrast, with more rigid styles it becomes more important to specifically define each players' responsibilities using appropriate roles. Therefore, if you want to be able exert control over the individual responsibilities of players in your team using roles, it would be best to select the balanced or a more rigid playing style.

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