



ARRANGEMENT OF PLAYERS

One of the most frequently asked questions to coaches relates to the system of play (the formation of the players on the field). Parents and players always want to know the *best system*; the system that will win games for their team. Is a 4-4-2 better than a 4-3-3? What is the advantage of one over the other? The best answer to that question is that a system by itself does not win games.

There are several factors that must be taken into consideration before arranging the players to form a system:

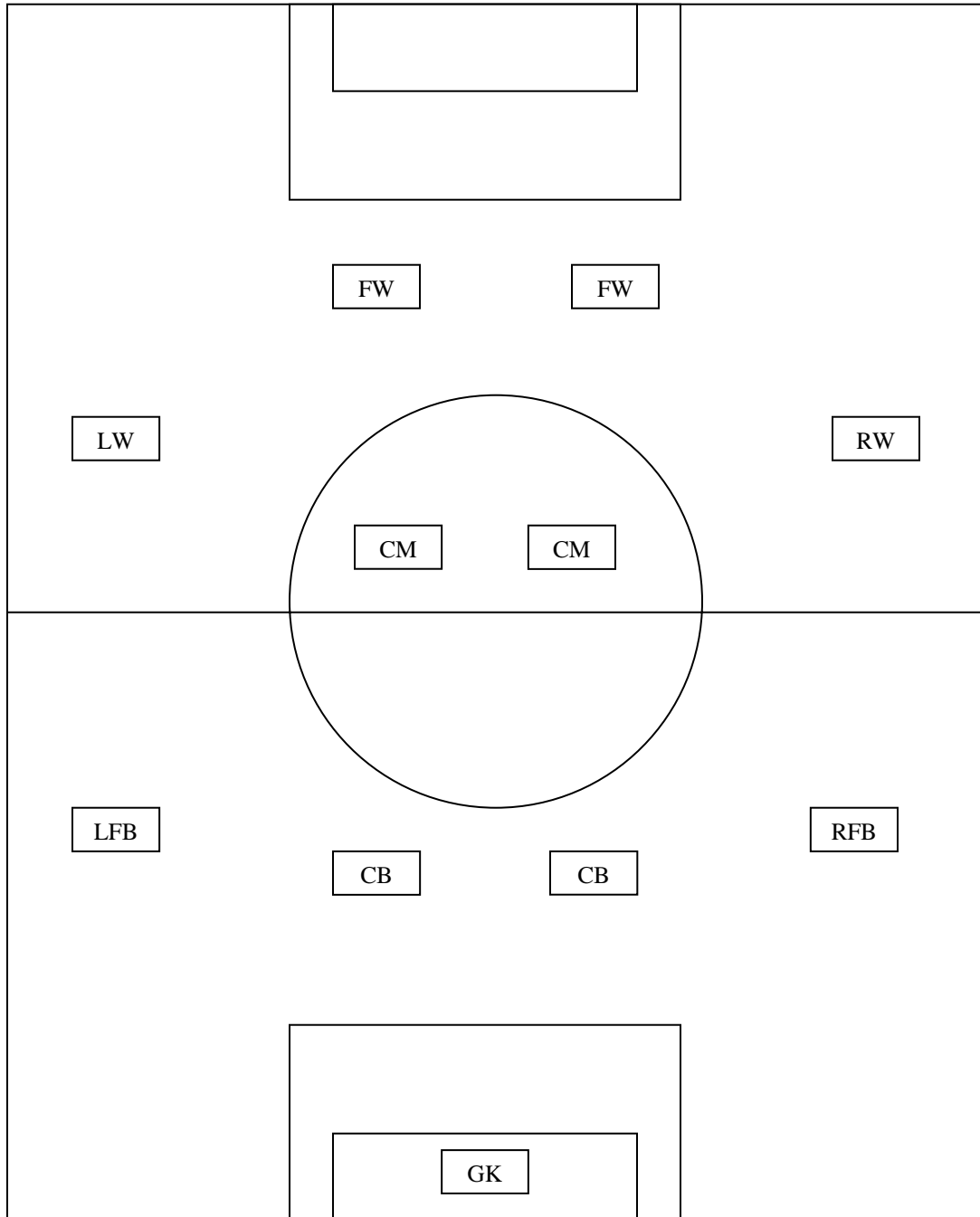
- Players differ in qualities and should be played in areas on the field where those qualities may be expressed. For example, a player who has a natural ability to score goals but is a poor defender should be played as a forward. Not only will the player be more comfortable in this position, but they will also be a greater asset to the team.
- Most players will feel more comfortable playing on one side of the field than the other (right-footed or left-footed players). It is important to put those players where they are most comfortable. (However, an experienced player should have the capability of using both feet with equal potential)
- Successful teams have a fine balance of players who can score goals, players who can dribble, players who can distribute the ball and players who can defend.
- Must consider the speed and quality of players on team.

This year we are going to work on teaching the girls how to play a flat back four formation in a 4-4-2 system on the field. It is important to learn this style of play because most select teams, high schools, and colleges use this system. However, we will still teach a Sweeper formation in a 4-4-2 because it is important to know all systems of play as a player. There will be times when it is important to look at the set up of the opponent and change our tactics to make the team more successful.



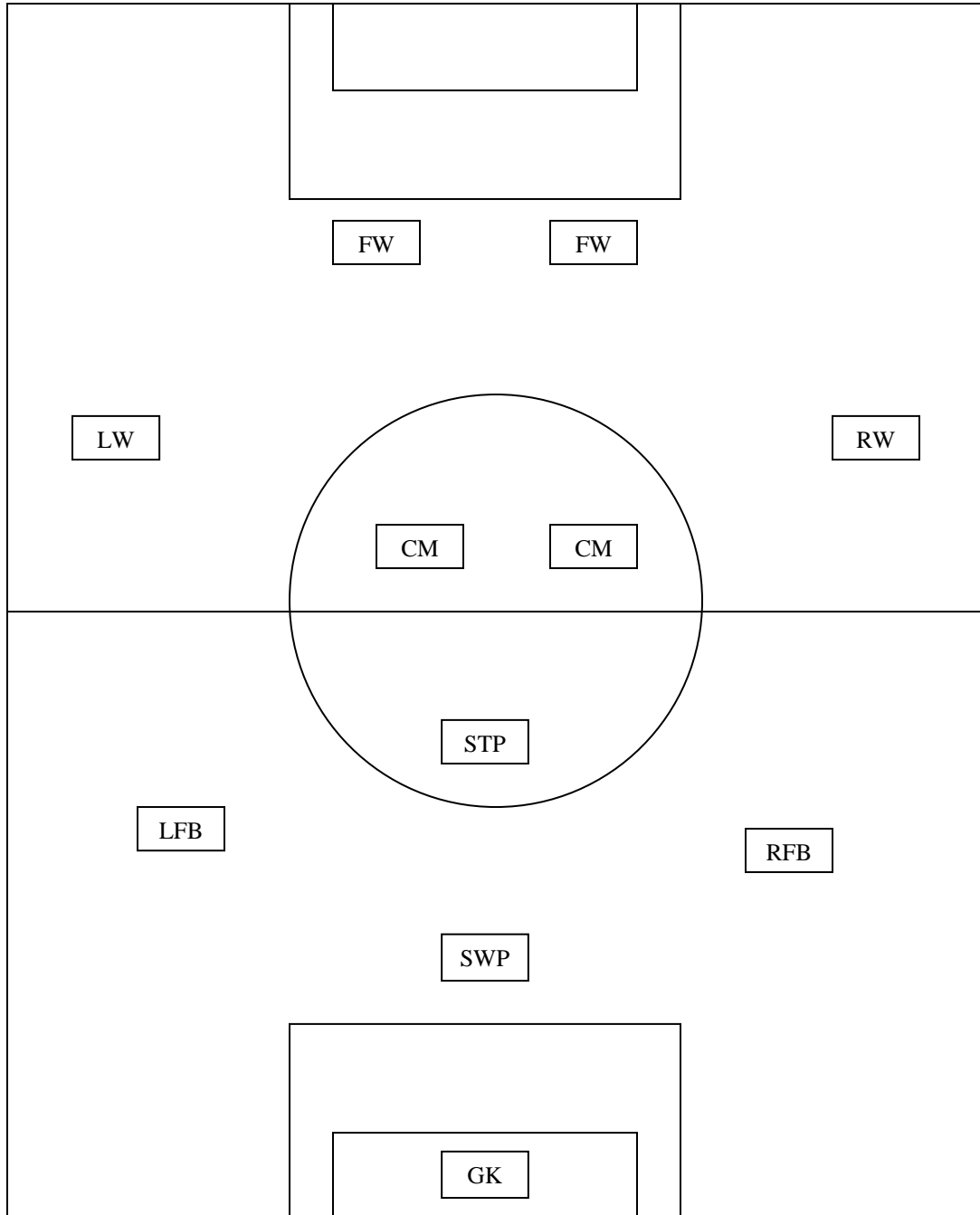
4-4-2 Formations

Flat Back Four:





Sweeper:





FLAT BACK FOUR

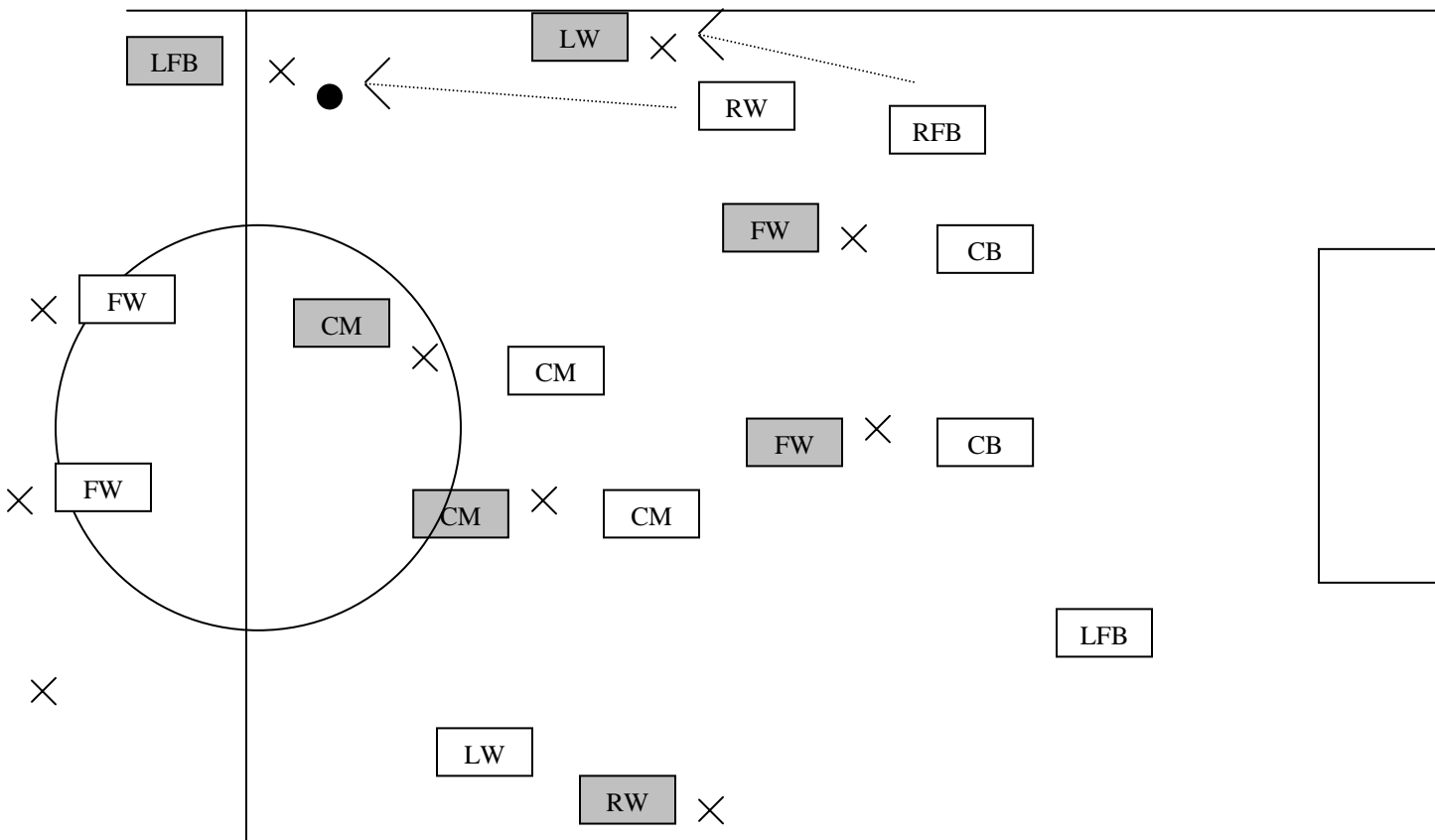
OUTSIDE FULLBACK (RIGHT and LEFT)

Strong Side (Side ball is on):

The position of the fullback is what makes a flat back four formation successful. The job of the fullback is to free up the outside midfielder (wing players) to attack and to defend attacking fullbacks from opposition.

When to release wing players:

- Fullbacks can release wing players to mark opponents attacking midfielders when they start to dribble through the middle third of the field.
- Once wing player is release, fullback needs to mark winger's player while winger is putting pressure on opponent's attacking fullback.
- It is important that the fullback and winger are in communication with each other.





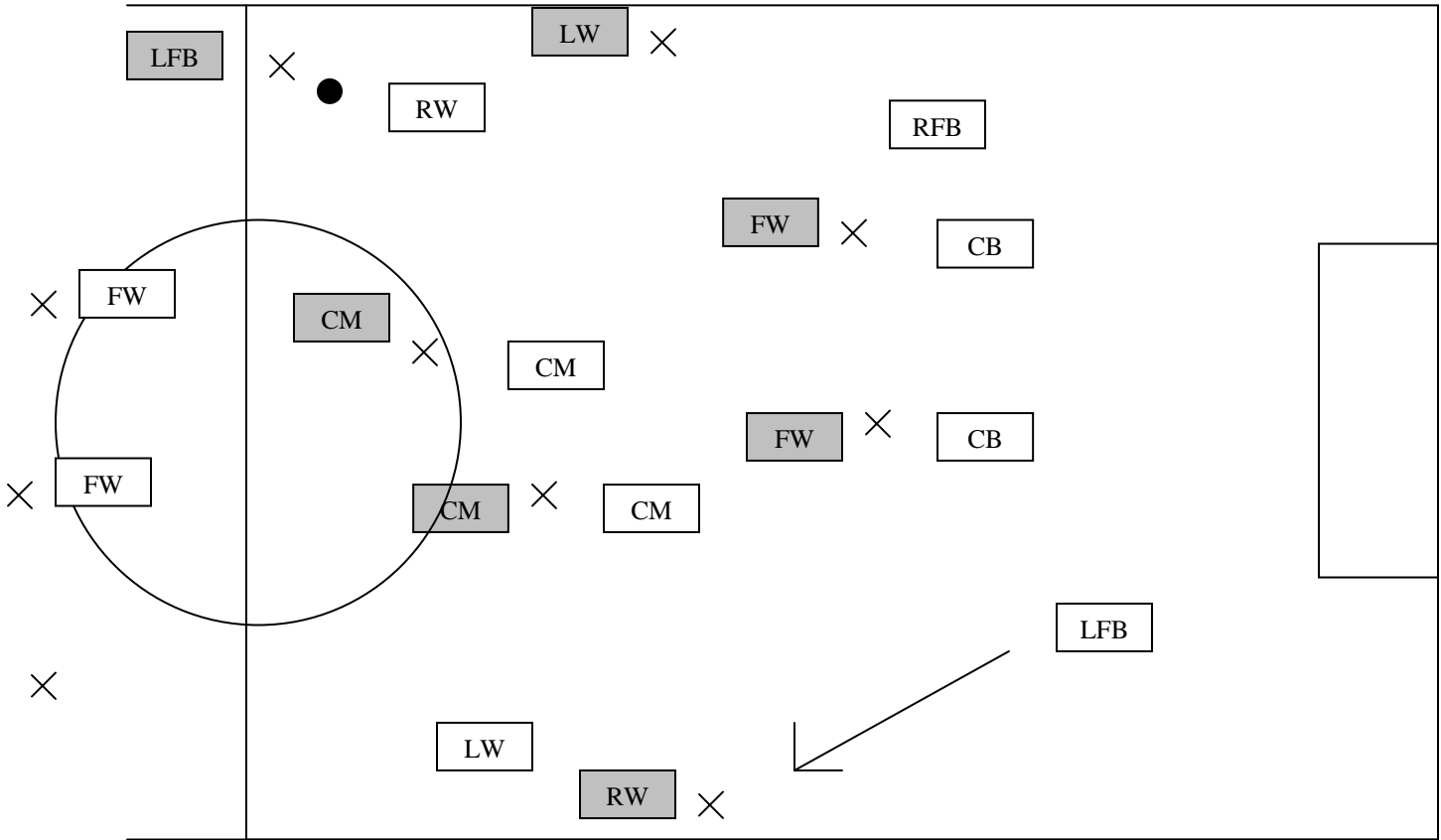
Weak Side (side the ball is not on):

When the ball is on one side of the field, the far side fullback is who creates the support for a flat back four defense. Where as in a sweeper formation it is the sweeper is always keeping depth on the field.

The weak side fullback pinches in towards the middle of the field while dropping back enough to give support to the other three defenders. It is important that the full back does not pinch over too far because she is still responsible for the opposition's weak side winger.

If the opposition's outside winger is on the far side, it is okay for the weak side fullback to leave them over there. But it is important that the fullback is aware of them. The far side player is not a threat to the team when to ball is on the other side of the field. In order for the opposition to get the ball to their far side winger they would have the play the ball either through the middle, or over the top as a long ball. If the opposition plays the ball through the midfield we have time to adjust accordingly and mark the needed players. If they play the ball over the top the outside fullback has enough time, while the ball is in the air, to get into a position where they are marking the far side winger.

This way our weak side winger will not have to worry about tracking back all the way to the defensive end of the field and will give us an attacking opportunity. However, it is important that the weak side fullback and winger communicate to each other. The winger needs to let the fullback know their player is coming towards them. If the fullback feels confident to mark that player, she needs to tell the winger to leave the opposition's winger and she will take over the mark. (Please see below)



**** In this picture the weak side fullback is in the correct position of support and is still covering the weak side winger.**



CENTER BACKS

In a flat back four the center backs become marking backs. It is the two center backs responsibility to mark the opponent's two center forwards.

Also the two center backs are responsible for communicating to the out side fullbacks when to shift across the field.

PRIORITIES OF DEFENDERS:

Order of Priorities:

- 1.) Deny – Deny the opposition the ball. If you can prevent your opponent from receiving the ball, do it.
- 2.) Don't Turn – Prevent the opponent from turning with the ball.
- 3.) Delay – If the opponent is dribbling down the field, slow her down while your team recovers behind you for support.]
- 4.) Tackle – If the opponent starts to get into a dangerous area on the field, tackle to win the ball.

**** Rule of Thumb:** When you tackle, either the ball gets past you without the player or the player gets by you without the ball. Never let both get by together.

A defender must be patient. If the ball is progressing through the middle third of the field the defender must be patient and not jump in. Just delay the player enough for teammates to recover behind. In the defensive third of the field, the fullback is to prevent her opponent from shooting or crossing the ball; she should wait for the right moment and then ***tackle aggressively***.