



SOCCKER POSITIONS AND ROLES

Each team has 11 players on the field at a time (9 players for U9-U12). They will play one of the following positions; **forward, midfielder, stopper, defender, sweeper,** and **goalkeeper**. The most common setup is to have three **forwards**, three **midfielders**, four **defenders**, and one **GK** in U13+ and in U9-U12; one forward, three midfielders, one stopper, three defenders, and **GK**.

GK or Goal Keeper: Position 1 on the pitch. The GK can see the field and the fractals that can form specific matchups to expose the other team's defensive weaknesses. This is the only player who can use hands and arms if the GK stays within the penalty area. Outside of the penalty area the GK becomes a regular player and is bound by those laws of the game. The GK may not use hands if the pass comes from a teammate unless it was accidental touching, but that is a referee call and judgement so when in doubt use your feet.

Sweeper: Position 4 on the pitch. The last player between the GK and the Centerbacks. Not often used anymore. This player protects the GK at all cost. Very physical, very athletic, and is typically the best defender on the field. Plays inside of the penalty area.

Fullback or Inside Defender or Centerback: Positions 2,3,4 on the pitch. The GK protectors when there is no Sweeper. Strong physical presence – domineering and solid defender. Typically, the Captain and a team leader. Plays inside of the penalty area and moves up to midfield when the team is on the attack.

Cornerback or Outside Defender or Left/Right Backs: Positions 4,5,6 on the pitch. They stop the wingers, outside forwards, and outside midfielders from attacking, crossing the ball, or serving the ball. On offense they behave more like Wingbacks and can run crosses, make run switches with the outside midfielders, or shoot from just outside of the penalty area especially when the team needs to score. They play from goal line to goal line on the outside with their primary role being defenders. Defense is first. Skillful players to watch in this role are Marcelo (RM/Brasil), Dani Alves.

Defensive Midfielder (Stopper) or Wingbacks: Positions 2,3,4,5,6 on the pitch. This position is a defense first, offensive role supporting the attacking midfield and the forwards, but may also shoot in certain formations. They play box to box (18 to 18) with priority being the defensive penalty area (18). A hybrid defender/midfielder. Skillful players to watch in this role are Ivan Rakitic (FCB/Croatia) Busquets (FCB/Spain) in the Stopper role.

Outside Midfielder (Left/Right): Positions 6,7,8 on the pitch. This is a balanced offense/defense role playing from 18 to 18 or box to box. They support, create, and defend perpetually on the pitch. They are ubiquitous both in the offensive scheme and on defense. They are great at reading cues, defending/takeaways, managing the ball, passing and crossing, changing speed, and shooting the ball



with power. They move in and out of space quickly supporting the attacking center midfielder and the forwards. Skillful players to watch in this role are Coutinho (FCB/Brasil), James Rodriguez (RM/Columbia), Andres Iniesta (FCB/Spain), Insko (RM/Spain), and

Center Midfielder: Position 8 on the pitch. The game is won in the midfield and so this midfielder is key to winning. This player is on the attack in one second and the key to getting the ball back via crafty defending in the next second. You must be creative, have fast feet, solid moves, ball control, passing accuracy, and finesse, plus sometimes make runs toward goal to score. You must also be quick to get back on defense playing on the 18 around the center of it.

Attacking Midfielder: Position 10 on the pitch. This player is aggressive, crafty, cool, and has a strategic-creative mind that moves at IBM Watson® speeds. This is equivalent to the NFL QB on the field. The attacking field general who creates most plays and sometimes finishes them with a goal. This player is willing to attack like a forward if necessary but is really the creative force on the field who ends up passing it to an awaiting forward next to the goal to score and only plays defense (if at all) like a forward does on the attacking side of the pitch. Think Messi in the 2014 World Cup for Argentina (also Zidane, Totti, Ronaldinho).

Midfielders in general: Midfielders play between the backs and the forwards. The offensive midfielder will play closer to the forwards and aid in attacking. Defensive Midfielder. Usually works as the second half of a pair with the offensive midfielder but plays closer to the backs and aids in defense rather than attack. Midfielders are good runners, passers, defenders, and finishers that can solve problems and create quickly.

Forwards or Striker (Delantero) or L/R Wingers: Positions 7, 9, 10, 11 on the pitch. There are forwards/wingers with distinctive styles, but all have one goal in mind -finishing (scoring a goal or more). Playing “up top” as center forward is referred to, means your job is to score. If your team does not score, you (and the other forwards/wingers) are responsible 99.999% of the time (the 5-9s) and must answer for your “play”. Wingers will be also good at crossing the ball. All forwards and wingers must be able to dribble while running full speed, pay attention to offside, defend the attacking side of the field up to the midfield (steal the ball back), pass quickly and have fast feet, run to goal on every shot and put a blocked shot in, run set pieces on restarts and on-the-fly, shoot the ball with power and with English (Cristiano Ronaldo, Suarez, Mbappe).

