

## Modern football game

„The year 1899 marked a turning point for the development of continental football. For the first time an English team, the Oxonians, faced our native [Austrian] players. It left ‚bloody‘ traces. The strikes were hit in mass. Playfully the Oxford strikers broke through the ranks of the Ours and it was astounding how easily they floated while the Ours struggled in the sweat of the face.

Soon we had the cause of their success out. Combination became the buzzword of all footballers. The training, so far, a mere pastime, became somewhat more systematic. Here practice in dribbling the ball (literally translated: driving the ball in front of him), there a group busy with the art of interrupting the game, or headers. Some clubs even afforded an English coach. And last but not least, the annual games with the English brought us to where we are today.

In the past we were so weak that first-class English teams could be satisfied with the attacking game, but now we are so strong that we force all their defensive forces to take full action.

And now we were able to recognize what could be foreseen, however, that the combination of the attackers must correspond to a cooperation of the defenders, the latter should be able to arise. Manchester United showed this almost classically at this year's games in Vienna. Besides the superiority of the individual players as such, this is the main reason why their middle and defense players nipped the attacks of the Viennese in the bud before they could unfold at all. Before this exemplary defence game of the English is presented, however, it is necessary to become clear about our defence and its shortcomings.

A number of single craftsmen can also develop an abnormal skill, a number of playing with normal skills, but cooperating can be competitors. In comparison to the English players, \*the weakness of our defenders lies in their lower individual ability to play and in the fact that they are only fragmented against the combining strikers.\* The relationship between backing and defense is similar to that between the [military] swarm line and the reserve. Only if both appear from the outset uniformly, they can fulfill their task. If, however, the reserve is so far behind the swarm line that it can reach it later than the attacking enemy, then the enemy will easily throw back the parts that occasionally face each other. What applies to war applies mutatis mutandis to peaceful betting as well. An example will show this: The opposite left-wing attacks; the right midfielder throws himself against it but is passed by the combining strikers because he only appears as one; for the moment he is finished. Now the right defender act, and since he can only use his individual power to defend, too, he will usually draw the shorter one. It is true that in reality this is not always the case. There are never completely equal opponents against each other and often a middle or defense player makes up for a tactical mistake by individual extra effort. This is even the rule here. But this does not mean that the theory is absurd. As in production, the highest principle also applies to sporting activity: Success can be achieved with the least possible effort from productive forces, here from physical forces.

Already this consideration of our current tactics shows that the defense must oppose something similar to the combination of the strikers. If, however, the cooperation of the strikers has the ball as an object, because it is supposed to push it into the goal, then this is excluded with the back team, because their task is the destruction and only in second place comes the supporting activity. Then it is clear: \*not the ball, but the players themselves are the object of the ‚combination‘. They must be related to each other in such a way they represent a ‚unity‘ by an appropriate, constantly adapting formation to the changing situation. Let us take the example above: Again the enemy left wing attacks. The right half goes on and gets passed. But at the same moment the right defender backs up (literally: throws himself) towards the enemy, clears or at least stops the attack and gives the player the opportunity to retreat, while in the example above the by the opposite covered player was out of action for the moment.

For this ‚position play‘ the following scheme can be given: Let’s think of the players in their basic formation connected to each other by rubber cords. What happens now, if e.g. the own right wing goes over to the attack? The whole team is moved forward and to the right. Whoever is closer to the right wing will have to change his position more, whoever is further away from it will have to change his position less. The placement of the counterattack will then be analogous. This template shows the law of movement, which should control the movement and retreat of the teams in the match. However, the mere knowledge of this principle will not be of much use in practice if the individual has not already acquired the skills necessary to realize this principle. A certain amount of physical strength and technical skill, though, will be desired by anyone the captain hires in the first team. [In the majority the captains were at the same time coaches and managers in Austria and also in Germany, called „Spielkaiser“- „Emperor of the play“ literally in English.] But the required mental abilities, which are necessary for the implementation of the position play, can be acquired only empirically, depending upon the plant and the competition practice.

How many moments does not determine the position of the individual? The situation of each time must be judged in no time, because fractions of a second play a decisive role in the betting game. First of all, the player will have to know his own playing strength well, especially his speed. There are many defenders who overestimate themselves in this respect. Trusting in their speed, they press hard against the cover line, a long pass across the field, only one [Ludwig Hussak] needs to intervene and the misfortune is finished. Further it is necessary to know the playing ability of the opposite players as well. The ‚range‘ of the middle player, for example, depends on this and afterwards the defender will have to set up the distance and the interval as he staggers. Furthermore, it is important to know the speed of the opposing players, their playing method, whether they pass short or long, wing or three-inside-tactic forcing etc., and finally also natural circumstances play a role, e.g. the wind direction. [„Three-inside-tactic“ is how the 2-3-5-system was called in German speaking area before the Second World War.]

To judge these moments in every moment, to make the right decision immediately and to put it into action just as quickly, these are the two characteristics which, however, are seldom found united in our company: Experience and attention. Who follows the game - not just the ball - from the beginning, who overlooks his own and enemy position from time to time, who closely observes the playing style of his opponents, even if he himself is currently unemployed, will at least anticipate the coming in every

situation, who, if he is to take action, will already be correctly placed and able to intervene successfully.

In general, apart from subtleties, this law of the ‚position game‘ can be formulated as follows: Never stand on the same level, never unprotected exactly one behind the other; always staggered backwards, the front side protect the inside!

Dr. Frey.“

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