



PAU GARNATJE

MID SEASON ANALYSIS

IF ELFSBORG 2026

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- ▶ This report aims to provide an objective analysis of the first part of the season, identifying key performance trends, positive patterns to reinforce, and potential areas for improvement.
- ▶ The purpose is to support the coaching process by offering data-driven insights aligned with the team's identity and playing philosophy. The focus is not to change the coach's style and team principles, but to explore how we can further optimise our approach to increase efficiency, transforming the great performances of the team into consistent results.

NOTES BEFORE READING

- ▶ The coach's decisions make much more sense than my interpretation of what can be analysed in the games without context. This report only intends to provide an outsider's point of view with the aim of pursuing constant improvement and development of the team to achieve great and sustainable success. Not a single sentence has been written with intention to criticise the team or the coach.
- ▶ This document was created during July and polished during August. Many of the enhancements written down here started happening more and more as the document was being finished (for example the 4-1-4-1 structure or the inside triangle relationship and distances).

FROM FOUNDATIONS TO PERFORMANCE

- ▶ Four steps connect where we are today to where we want to be: a team performing at a consistently high level.

1

IMPROVE THE TEAM

2

**IMPROVE THE
PLAYERS**

3

DEVELOP
CONSISTENCY

4

SUSTAINED
PERFORMANCE

A closer look at how steps 1 & 2 work together → next slide

The result: what steps 1 & 2 are building toward

BUILDING ON THE FOUNDATION: TEAM & PLAYERS

- ▶ The team has a very solid foundation. These steps build on what has been built.

TEAM

1 Enhance our strengths

2 Polishing the details

3 Finding complementarities

PLAYERS

1 Connect with the players

2 Individual development plans

3 Individual & positions training

Consistent progress across both columns → develop consistency (step 3) → sustained performance (result)



WITH THE BALL

BUILD UP (1)



[WATCH VIDEO HERE](#)

- ▶ When resorting to the short-long strategy there are 2 key elements to consider:
 - ▶ 1. In order to generate advantage we need to attract enough opponents, if we haven't achieved that we need a **few extra passes** before finding the far players.
 - ▶ 2. When Pettersson, Holmén, Thomas, Wikström, etc. want to find the advanced players they **shouldn't play the player but rather the space**. Once we create a 3v3 up front for example, play towards the space between the lines where the teammate can drop, rather than sending the ball towards where he is to have a challenge with the defender. The reason behind that is that our attacking three don't have the profile of "target strikers" who can win the challenges easily.
 - ▶ The alternative to that if we have to play the duel is that one of the wingers (or Beck) **come inside right behind the duel** in the same axis (and right timing) to facilitate the pass back and carry the ball forward. The team did this against Mjällby in game 16 and it proved really efficient.

BUILD UP (2)



[WATCH VIDEO HERE](#)

- ▶ The team is moving towards a shorter build up intention and it is great to see because **they have the quality to do so**. This would allow the team to stay compact throughout the attacking phase.
- ▶ It is important that the far players (ST, AMF) can provide different passing lines and alternate the axis which they play from (the match vs GAIS is a good example of this).
- ▶ When the players inside alternate the passing lines and provide 4 or 5 heights the team is able to progress from the back even against high pressing opponents.

BALL CIRCULATION



[WATCH VIDEO HERE](#)

- ▶ The level of fluidity and positional exchange that the team has reached by this point of the season is outstanding and amazing to watch.
- ▶ Said fluidity though, requires **a level of balance** and to have a certain anchoring structure for the floating players to move more and better.
- ▶ Magnússon acting as an anchor could provide this balance. Olsson likes to be close to the ball and carry it forward. He needs freedom to do so, and someone who rebalances and covers him. With these principles he could also get closer to the box where he is decisive.
- ▶ The most important thing is not the starting positions themselves but rather the self-awareness and the constant scanning of the teammates positions. When fluidity comes into play there are teammates who need to be selfless to support and rebalance the space (anchors) for others to be able to move with freedom (floaters).
- ▶ Following a similar idea, the team likes to really overload the flank and centre which is very difficult for the opponents to defend; this needs to be balanced with a certain level of width on the opposite side and inner passing lines to guarantee switching options if the progression ways on the active side become unavailable.

FINAL THIRD



[WATCH VIDEO HERE](#)

- ▶ Similar to what happens while progressing, the lack of width (i.e. vs Hammarby) with the intention to crowd the box sometimes plays against us as it facilitates the compactness of the opponent. When the team can **balance the overload with alternatives on the opposite side** it becomes more dangerous (the second goal against Västerås is a great example. Hult's positioning inside allows an easy extra pass to switch and find Zeneli on the opposite side and then underlap).
- ▶ When facing low blocks we need players who can attack the tight spaces with double runs or second-line runs (Julius has proven capable of this for example).
- ▶ To have players **in & around the box**. The team normally achieves one or the other but once we push the opponent deep down into their box we need both.
- ▶ In the latest games the team has shown the capacity to create **short and quick speed ups** in tight spaces, enhancing this could increase the amount of chances created per game.



WITHOUT THE BALL

HIGH BLOCK $\neq$ HIGH PRESS



[WATCH VIDEO HERE](#)

- ▶ The team isn't characterized by a high pressing activity, (this season's average PPDA is 13.75 passes being the 4th highest PPDA in the league), however they've shown the capacity to do it when necessary. (The league's average is 11.95)
- ▶ There is an important distinction between high block & high press. There are situations where the players position themselves in a high block but without the required pressing behavior which leaves the team exposed to easy progressions and vertical attacks.

MIDDLE BLOCK



[WATCH VIDEO HERE](#)

- ▶ The compactness and togetherness when defending in middle block is outstanding.
- ▶ Using Magnússon as free player between two lines of 4 is helping the team protect the spaces better and have improved the zonal defense principles in many games.
- ▶ The outside players are really focused on closing inner spaces leaving the flanks empty which is not inherently bad however it makes it more difficult to avoid crossing situations.
- ▶ When the players have well defined pressing triggers & pressing leaders the team has a greater sense of compactness. Unifying the response criteria to avoid doubts between players on when and where to press. Earlier on the season we could see actions where some players went forward to press and some stayed/ran back. This has been improved and the team is now able to locate more clearly the recovery spaces that allow them to transition into counter attacking situations.

LOW BLOCK



[WATCH VIDEO HERE](#)

- ▶ The team's compactness & capacity to sacrifice is outstanding.
- ▶ There is a big difference in the team when everyone is involved, this is specially important for the second line players which later relates to how the team defends the box (see next slide).
- ▶ Wingers and advanced midfielders need to understand when they are preparing the counter-attack and when they need to sacrifice to protect the spaces.

DEFENSE OF THE BOX



[WATCH VIDEO HERE](#)

- ▶ 7 out of 19 goals have been conceded from crossing situations, highlighting an opportunity to strengthen our performance inside the box.
- ▶ One area of focus is the defense of the flanks as mentioned in the middle block slides, with the aim of reducing the number of crosses conceded per game.
- ▶ When defending the box, further refining the coordination between the centre-backs' zonal/man-marking responsibilities, and the midfielders' individual marking could make the organisation even more effective.
- ▶ Increasing the involvement of the second-line players in these situations would further strengthen the team's collective protection of the box.



TRANSITIONS

OFFENSIVE TRANSITION



[WATCH VIDEO HERE](#)

- ▶ While the team prioritises controlling possession, counter-attacking has also emerged as one of its most effective attacking weapons.
- ▶ Creating greater occupation of all available channels could increase the number of counter-attacks that transform into shots (currently 25.5%).
- ▶ Olsson, Julius and Kamara are acting amazingly well as transition conductors, and increasing the speed of the second-wave players would help exploit the spaces they create.
- ▶ The team already shows a strong capacity to threaten immediately after regaining possession. The opportunity is to build on this strength and improve the conversion of counter-attacks into shots.

DEFENSIVE TRANSITION



[WATCH VIDEO HERE](#)

- ▶ The main element identified is that the team is not living up to its potential when losing the ball (they are good, they could be GREAT), for different reasons:
- ▶ First, there are moments when the team is extremely focused and they all press forward and backwards and can recover the ball quickly. Others, some players switch off allowing the opponent to progress (i.e. Örgryte's goal).
- ▶ Second, there are situations where the distances to counter-press are great but the defensive line decides to run back too soon. As a centre-back it feels counter-intuitive sometimes but if they can hold the line to keep the team compact then they would be able to counter-press faster and better.
- ▶ Seeing a yellow block, counter-pressing as a unit and chasing the opponent down like a pack of wolves is what we should aspire to see, they have all the qualities to achieve that.



COMPLEMENTARITIES

LEFT FLANK



[WATCH VIDEO HERE](#)

- ▶ Hult needs people around him with whom he can associate through short passes and allow him time and space to run. Grouping together Olsson-Beck-Zeneli near him is a great idea that the team has been using and should exploit even more.
- ▶ The way for the opponents to defend this would have to be by overloading the side which would expose their left side so if we can't progress through this 4-player relationship we can switch and threaten them from the right flank.

OUR INSIDE TRIANGLE



[WATCH VIDEO HERE](#)

- ▶ Olsson-Julius-Magnússon have really good complementary skills and they manage the game tempo. With better understanding of each other's roles and spaces to occupy & rebalance the team should be able to move the ball better as well as being less exposed to counter-attacks when losing the ball.
- ▶ They've improved significantly as the season progresses (GAIS, Sirius, Malmö, Göteborg, etc.) where the relationship of these players showed a deeper level of understanding and self-awareness.

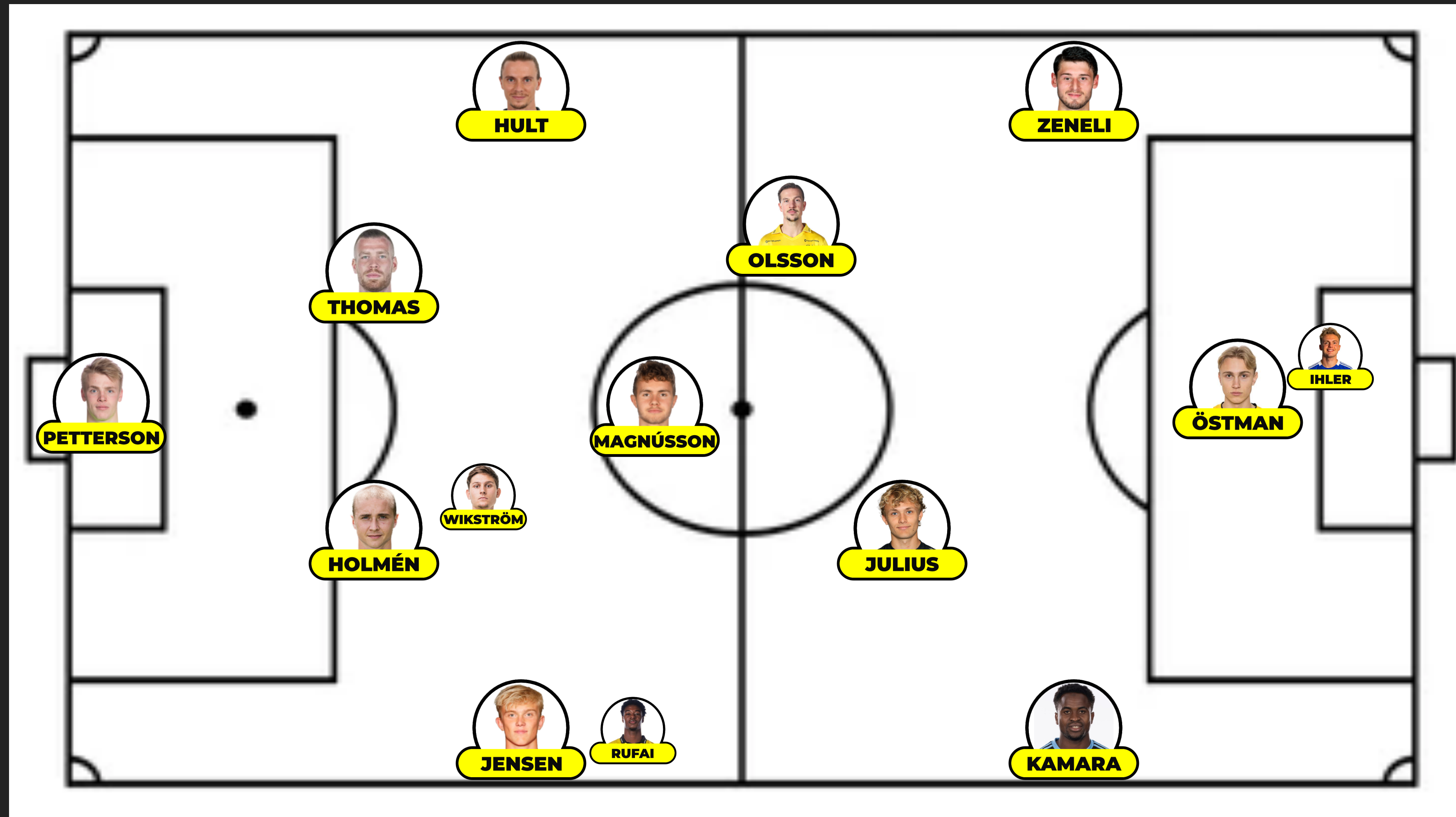


STRUCTURAL TRANSFORMATIONS & ADJUSTMENTS

LINE UP & STRUCTURAL ADJUSTMENTS

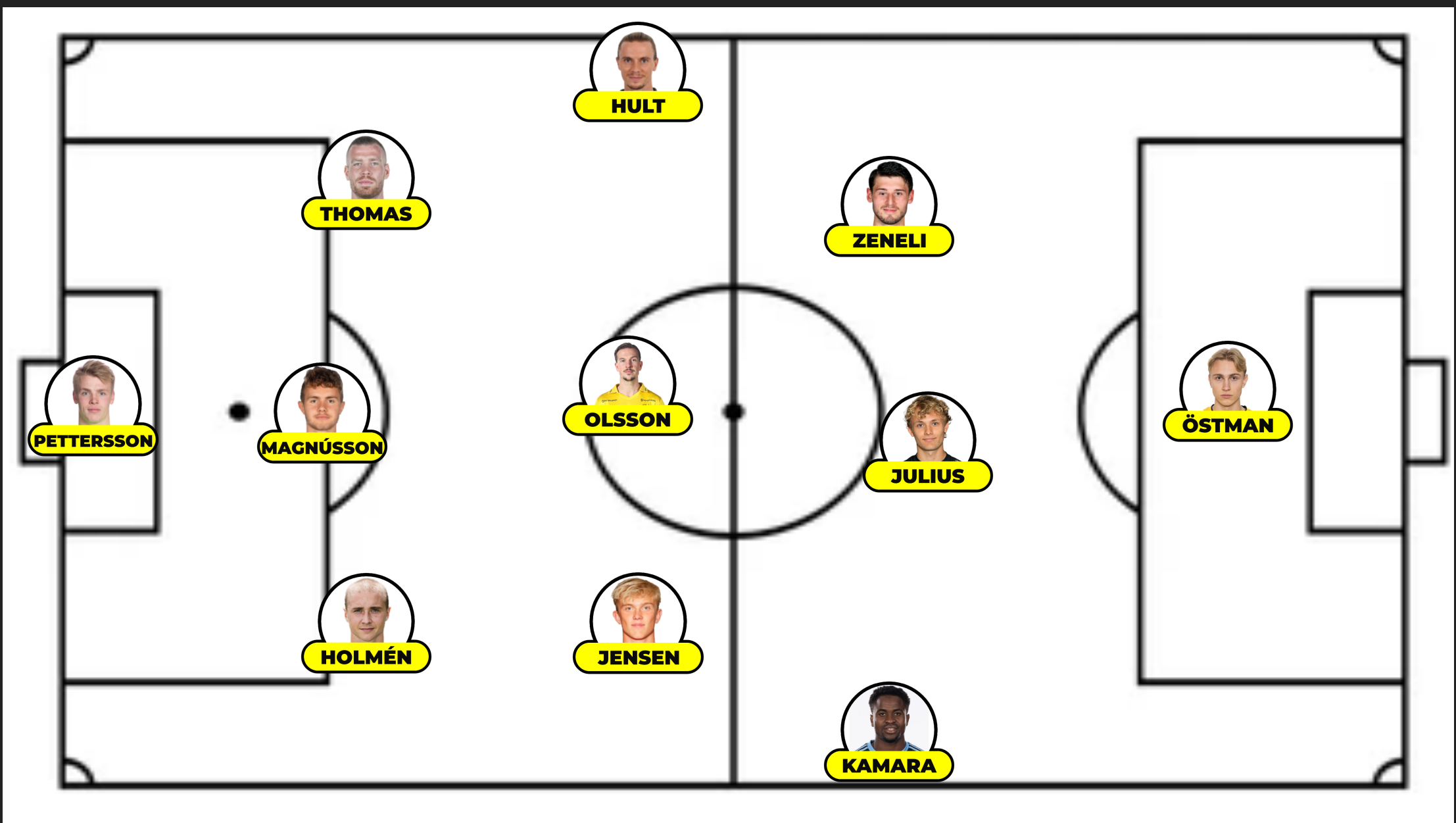
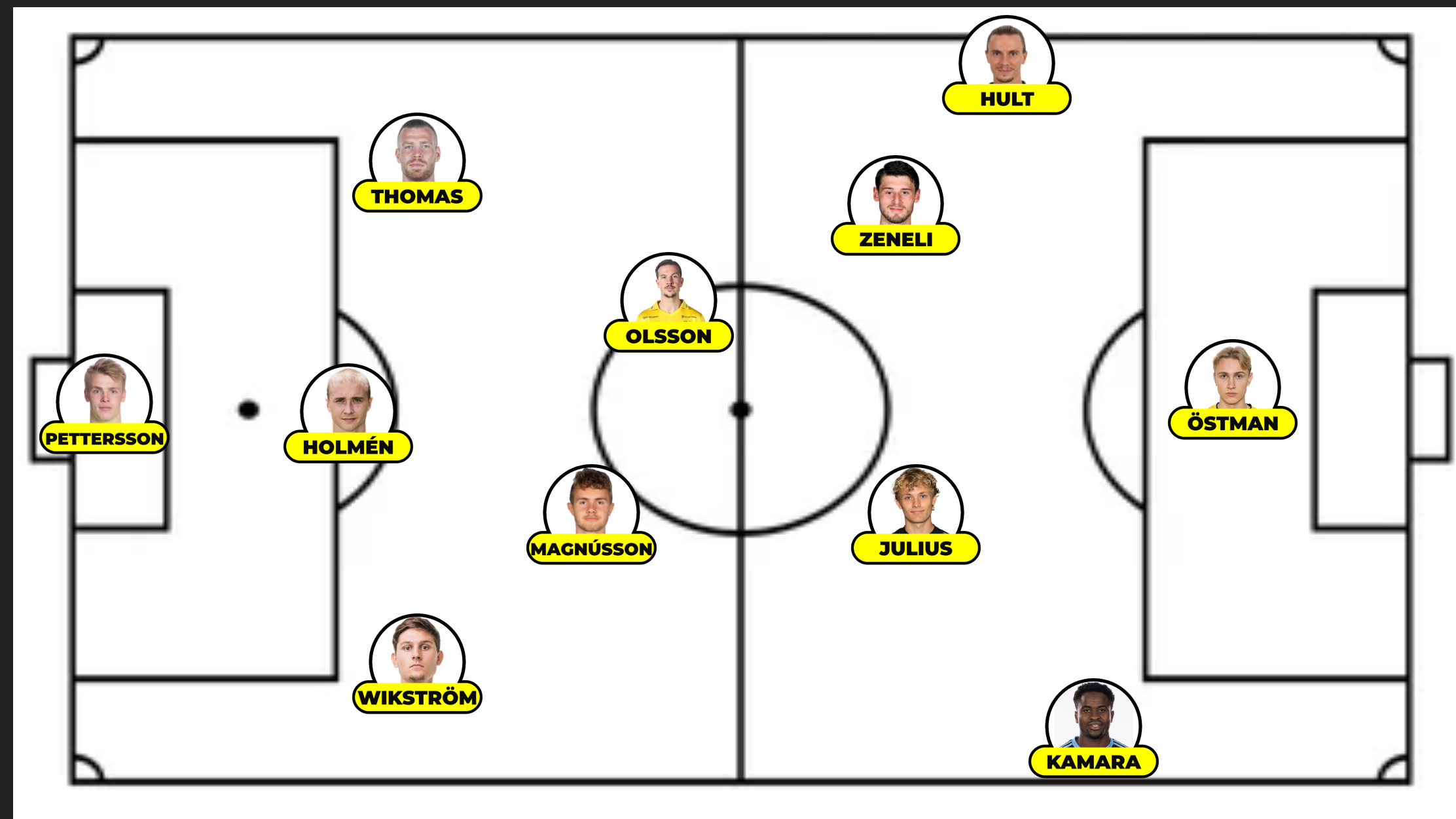
- ▶ This part is not to suggest anything new or to say the team is doing something wrong.
- ▶ Actually all the modifications or little tweaks in the formation have already been used by the team at some point during the season.
- ▶ What I've noticed is how the relationship between the players and the fluidity of the play increases when the team organises the occupation of spaces in certain ways.

LINE UP & STRUCTURAL ADJUSTMENTS

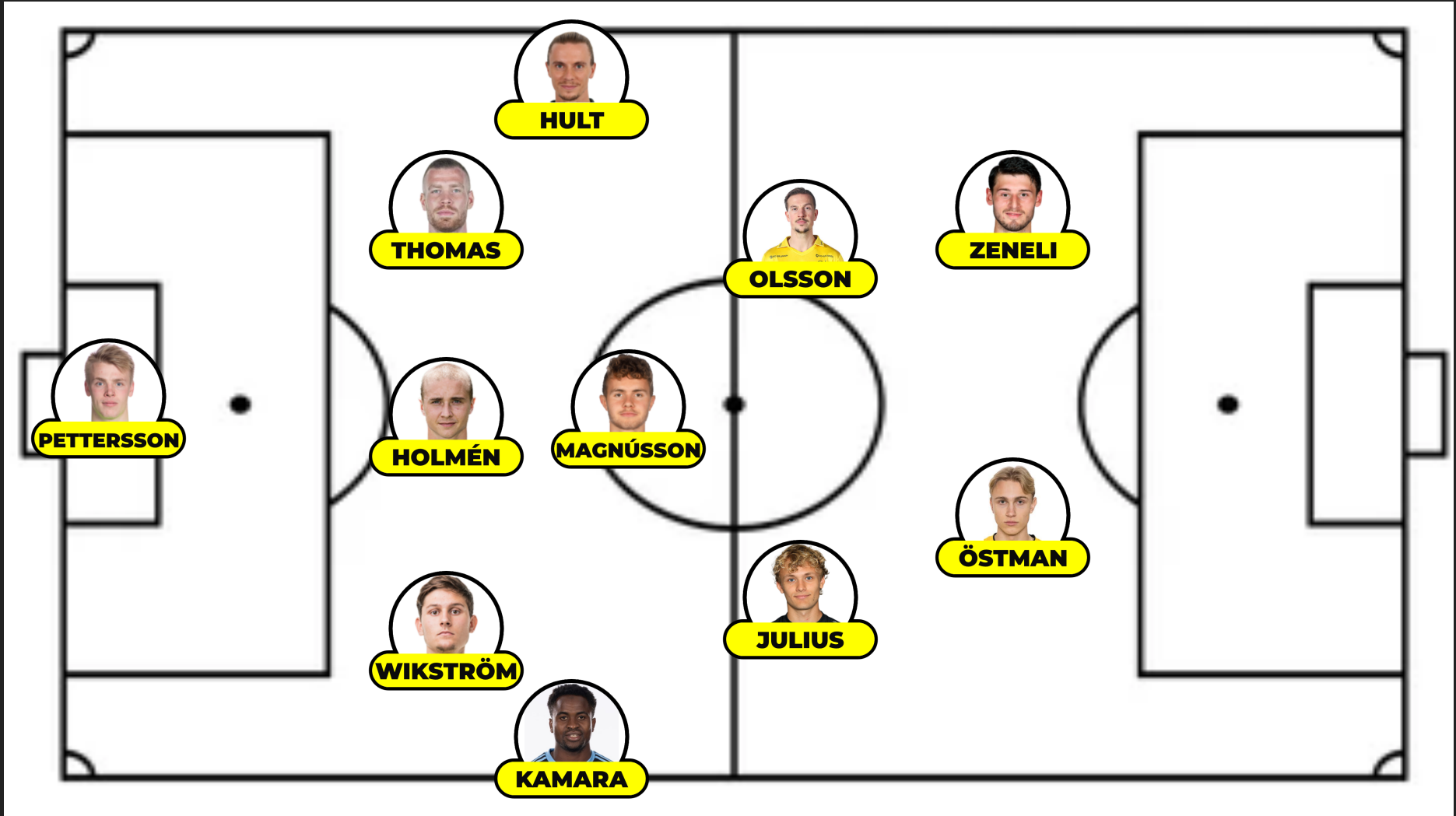
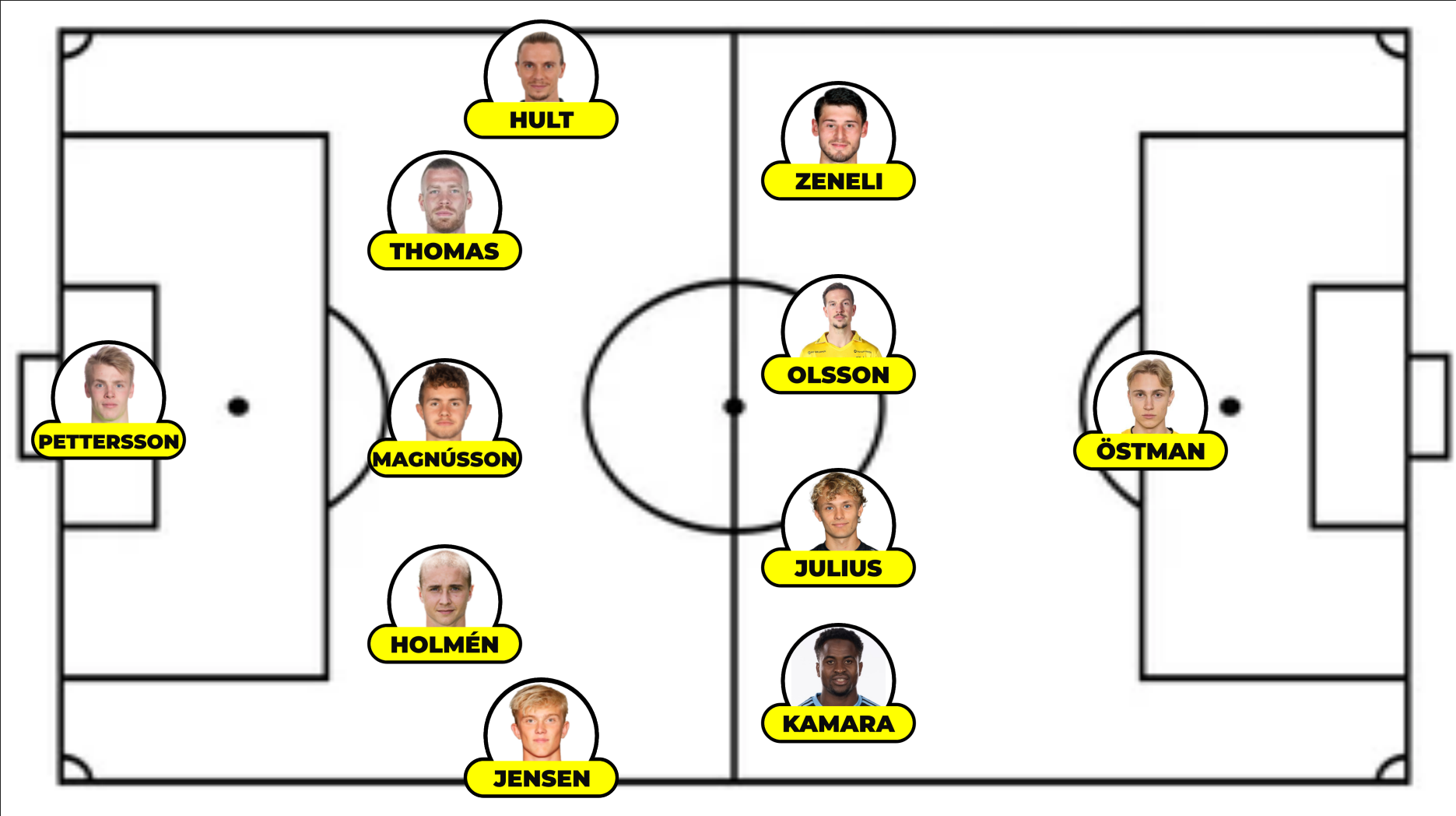
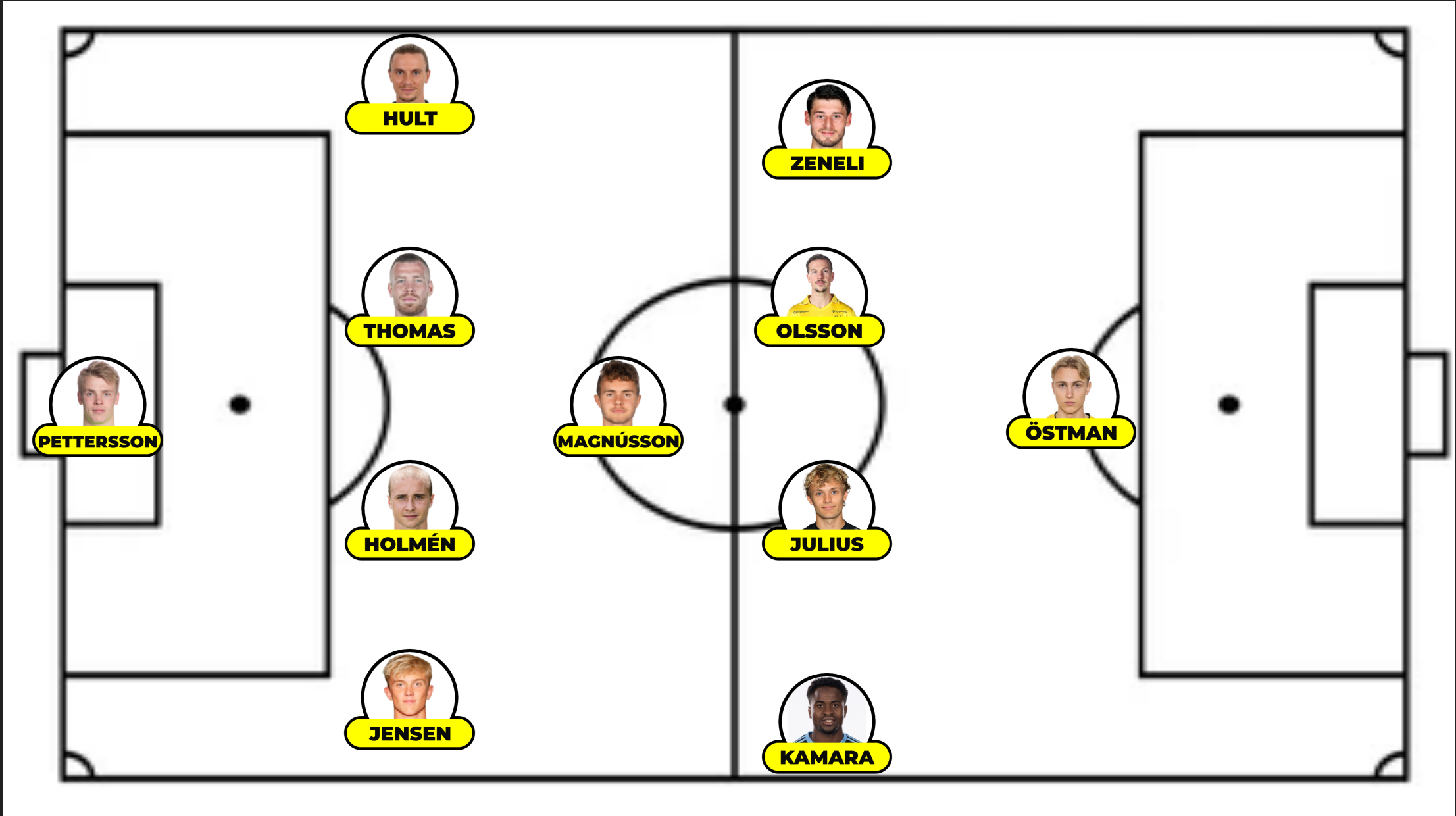


I prepared this slide in July and the team played exactly like this against Mjällby on August 8th

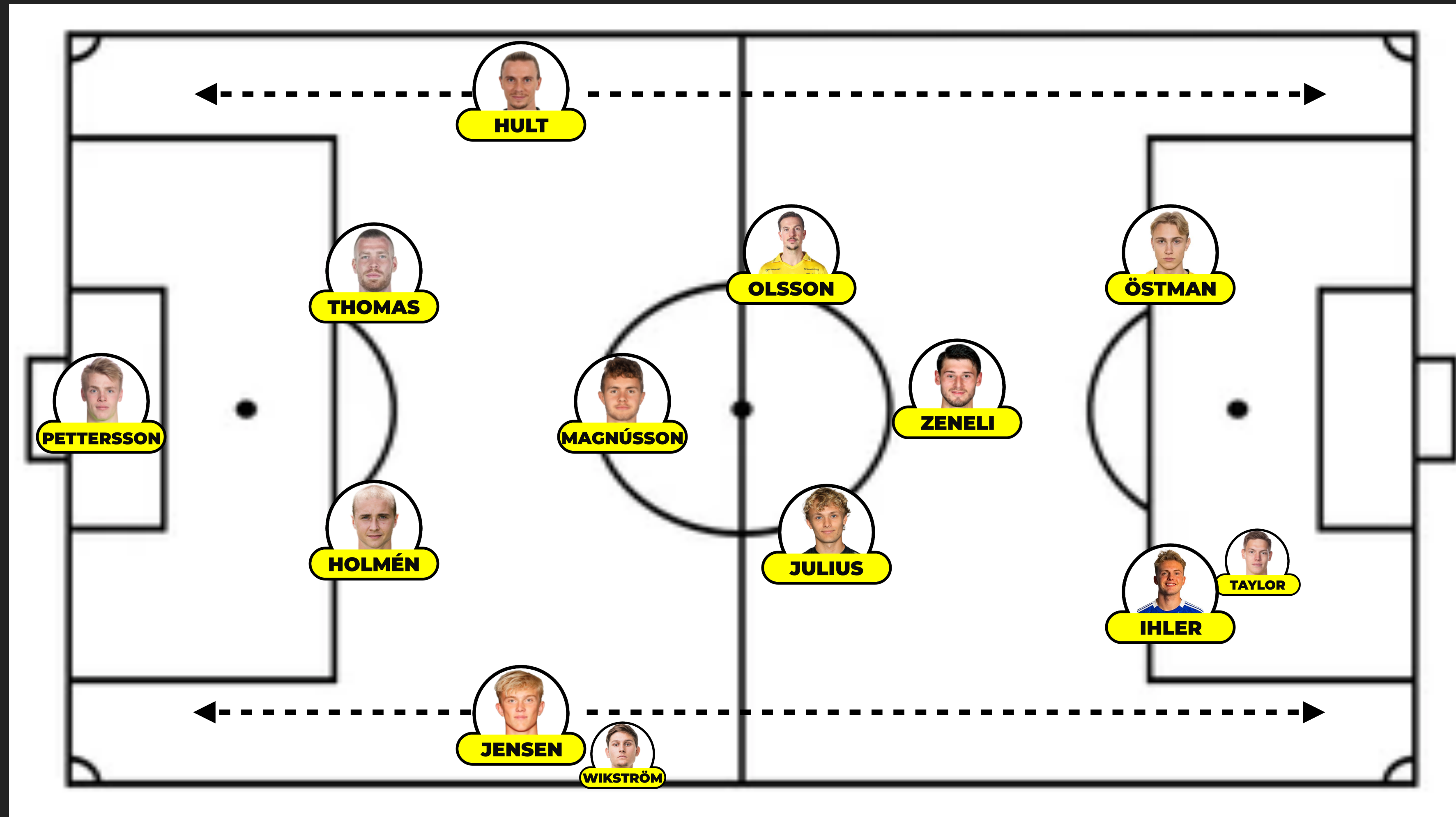
TRANSFORMING THE STRUCTURE (WITH THE BALL)



TRANSFORMING THE STRUCTURE (WITHOUT THE BALL)



LINE UP & STRUCTURAL ADJUSTMENTS (ALTERNATIVE)





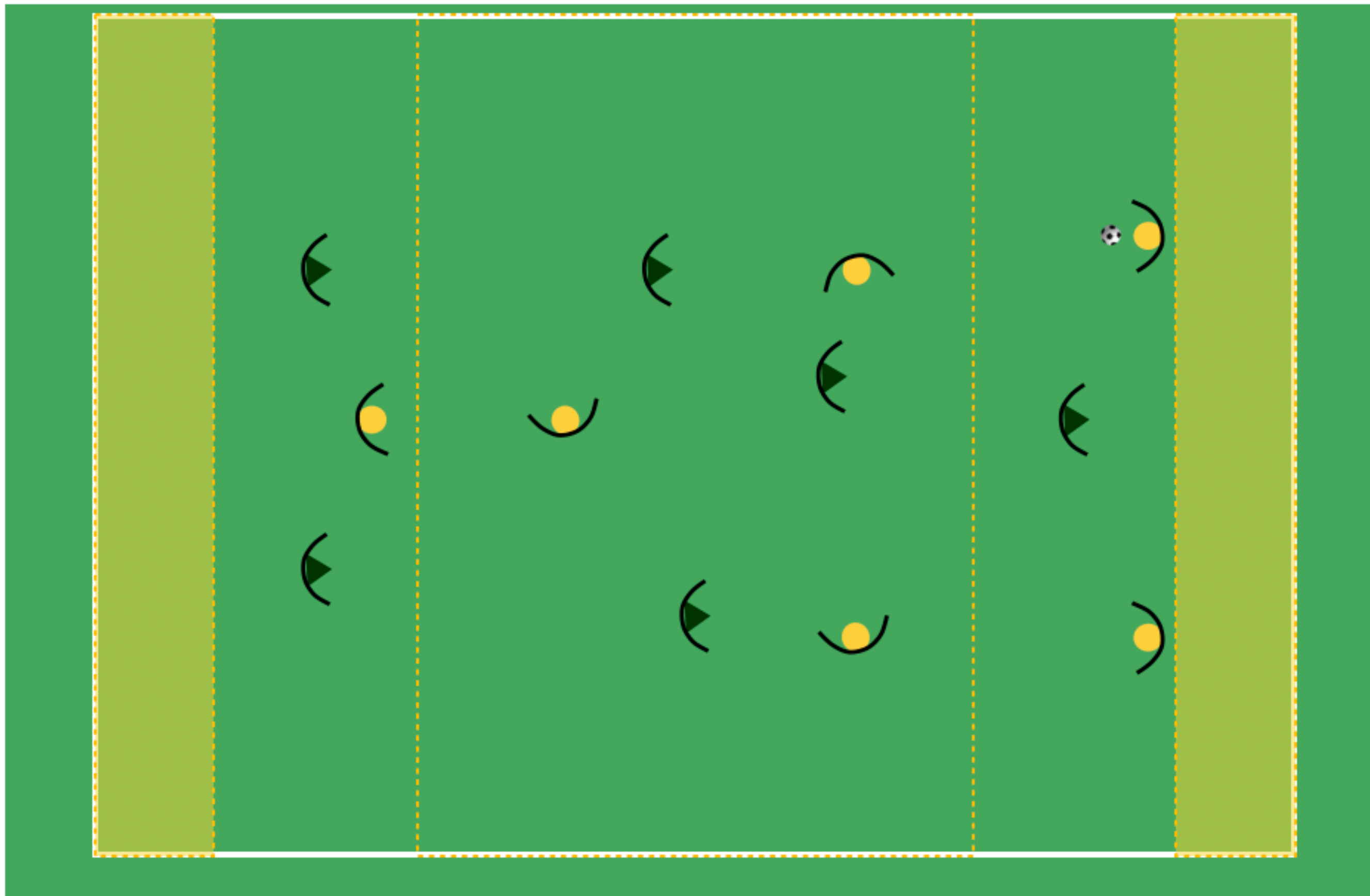
INDIVIDUAL DEVELOPMENT EXAMPLES

LEO HÅKAN ÖSTMAN

- ▶ He is a smart player that can help the team a lot in the first stages of the attacking phase, however his back game needs some improvement.
- ▶ When he plays the challenge he has difficulty keeping the ball so we have to find the way for him to drop with certain advantage in order to give continuity to the game.



Representation



Content: Striker - Drop to receive | Prepare the movement

Concepts:

1. Avoid dropping vertically.
2. Prepare the drop with a counter-movement.
3. Adjust timing and body orientation to receive with advantage

Teams: 6v6

Description: Ball possession where the attacking team has to try to bring the ball into the yellow zone.

Rules:

1. Defenders start defending from their zone.
2. CBs must alternate their behavior, following or not the striker when he drops.

Coaching Points:

1. Adjust the timing and body orientation of the drop.
2. Create your own space or take advantage of the space left by the midfielders.
3. Drop diagonally to facilitate the next action. Receive while running.

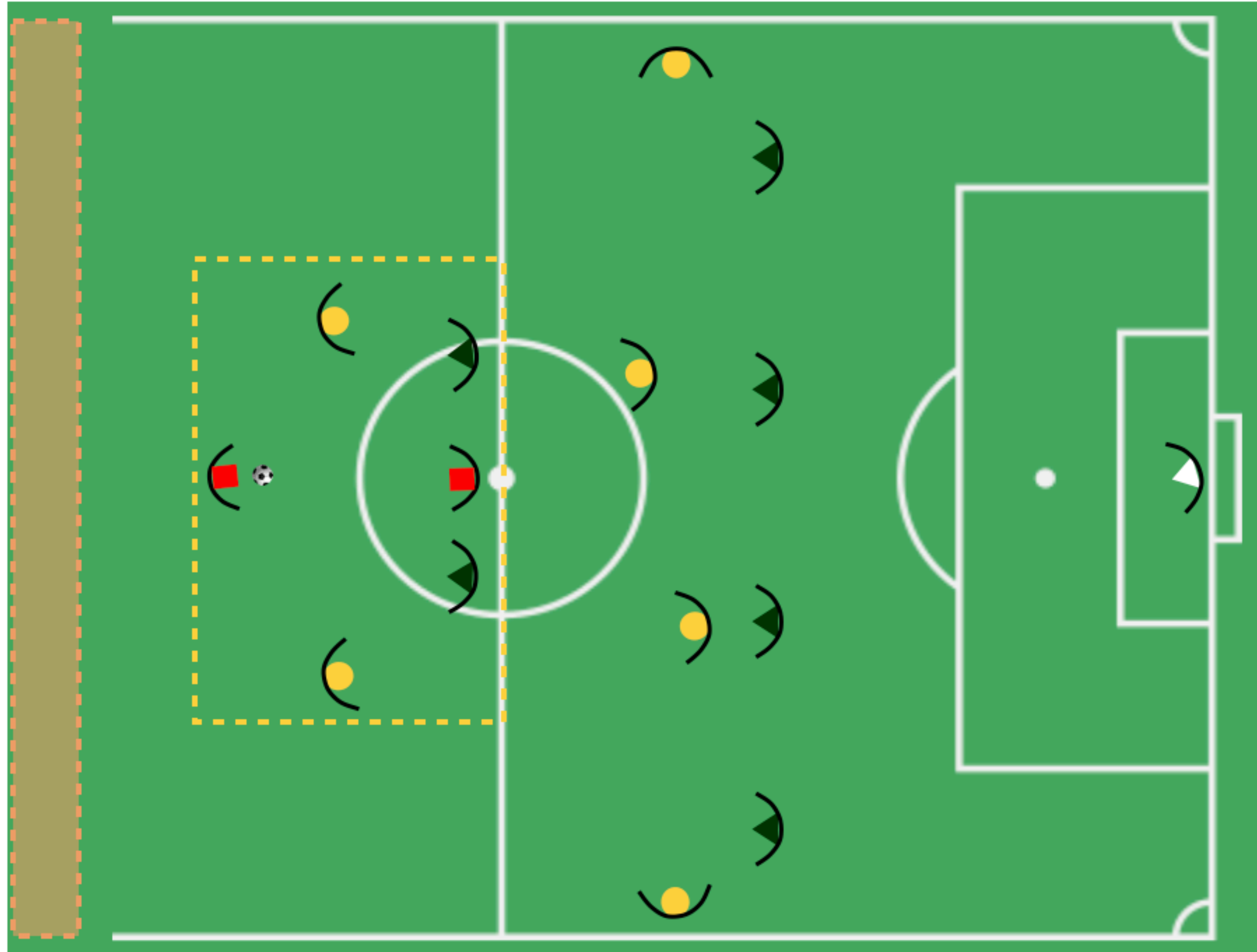
Notes: Alternative rule: Midfielders must do Man-Marking

RUFAI MOHAMMED (1)

- ▶ When Mohammed plays as a centre-back he has a tendency to follow the strikers a little bit too much and that can open gaps which create some unnecessary risks.
- ▶ Identifying which players can attack the space behind him will help him understand better when he can jump to press between the lines reducing the space, which, when he does, he does really well.



Representation



Content: Centre-back. Reduce the distance between lines.

Concepts:

1. Identify the ball holder situation to adjust your intentions.
2. Identify if any opponent can attack the space behind if you leave your position.

Teams: GK+6 vs 6 + 2F

Description: Wave where the attacking team has to score and the defenders bring the ball to the scoring zone when they recover.

Rules:

1. Wave starts with a 4v2 possession. To progress the attacking team must connect with the strikers first, after that, free play.
2. Winger must alternate between being inside/outside when opposite MF has the ball.
3. 1 freeman can alternate between the square and between lines.

Coaching Points:

1. If BH is free, prioritise the defense of the space first.
2. If no one can attack your back, follow the striker and reduce the space between the lines.
3. If someone can attack the space, press while the ball is rolling.

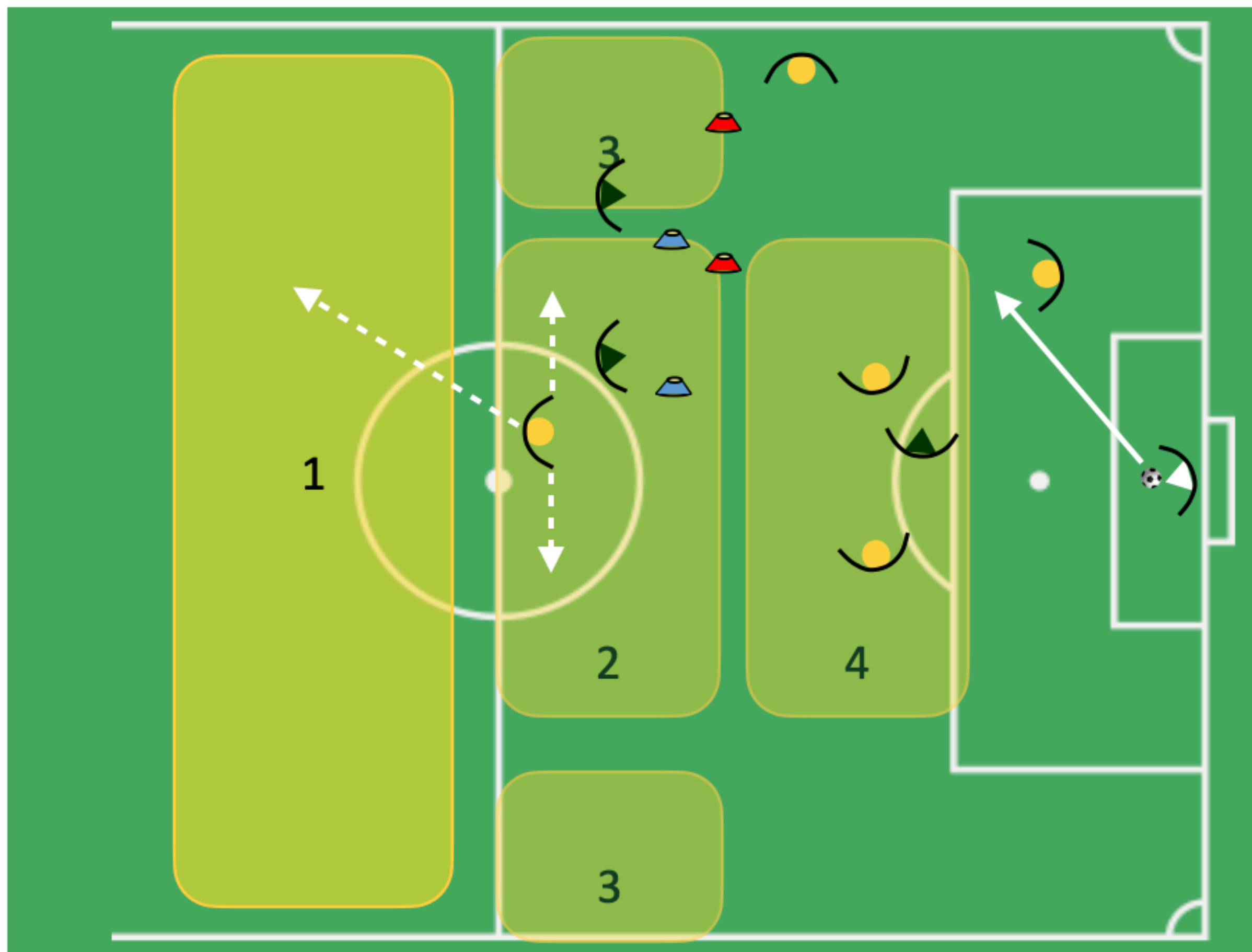
Notes: Alternate the position of the player between the lines and the strikers so the centre-backs have to identify the different situations.

RUFAI MOHAMMED (2)

- ▶ Understanding where to play as a CB is fundamental for the way the team tries to play.
- ▶ The passing priorities should be Depth, Pockets, Width and Base. Understanding them would facilitate the decision-making and the identification of which passing lines are available depending on the opponent's structure.



Representation



Content: Centre-back. Passing priorities

Concepts:

1. Look far as a priority.
2. Identify the gaps to play through.

Teams: Analytical

Description: Centre-back has to identify the MF movements to see who he must pass the ball to.

Rules:

1. When the ball is rolling towards the CB, the defenders must choose a color of marker to go. Both must go to the same color.
2. Striker must alternate the way he presses the CB.

Coaching Points:

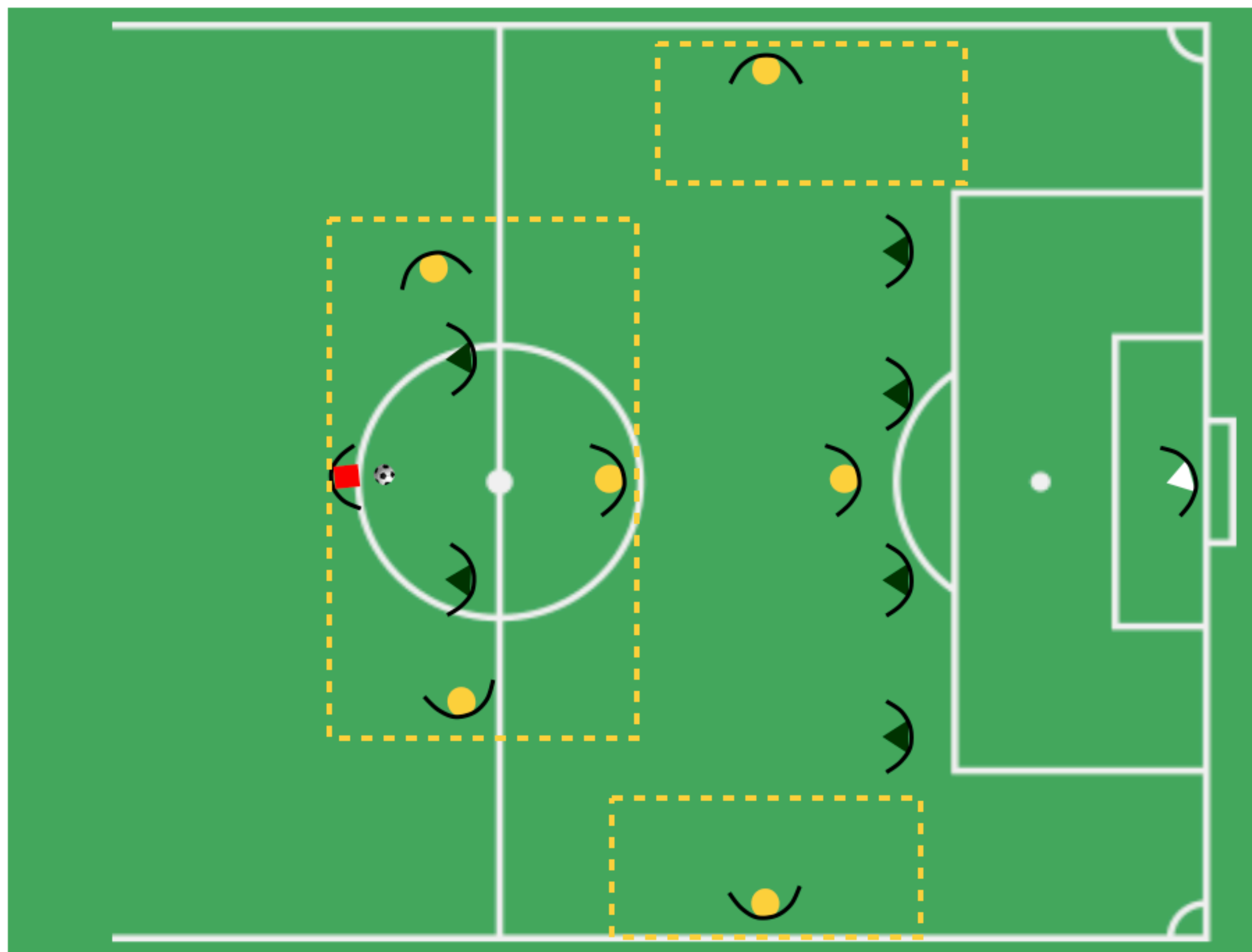
1. Understand the spatial priorities (Far, Pockets, Width, Base)
2. Look far before receiving the ball.
3. Usage of body language to mislead the opposition.

CENTRE-BACKS

- ▶ Most of the goals in Allsvenskan come from crossing situations (for us is 7 scored & 7 conceded so far).
- ▶ Mastering how to defend the box can, in many games, make the difference between 0 or 3 points.



Representation



Content: Centre-back. Defend the box

Concepts:

1. 1st CB defend the near post zonally.
2. 2nd CB mark individually the striker or opponent in his space.

Teams: GK+6 vs 6 + 1F

Description: Wave. Attacking team has to score. Defensive team if they recover must play with the Freeman inside the yellow square.

Rules:

1. Wave starts with a 4v2 possession. To progress the attacking team must connect with the wingers inside the boxes.
2. Fullback cannot intercept the pass to the winger. Only press after 1st touch.
3. Winger can alternate between crossing & dribbling inside.

Coaching Points:

1. Identify the player entering your space to mark accordingly.
2. Mark with a body angle and distance that allows you to intercept the ball.
3. Block the run of your opponent with arms and/or body.

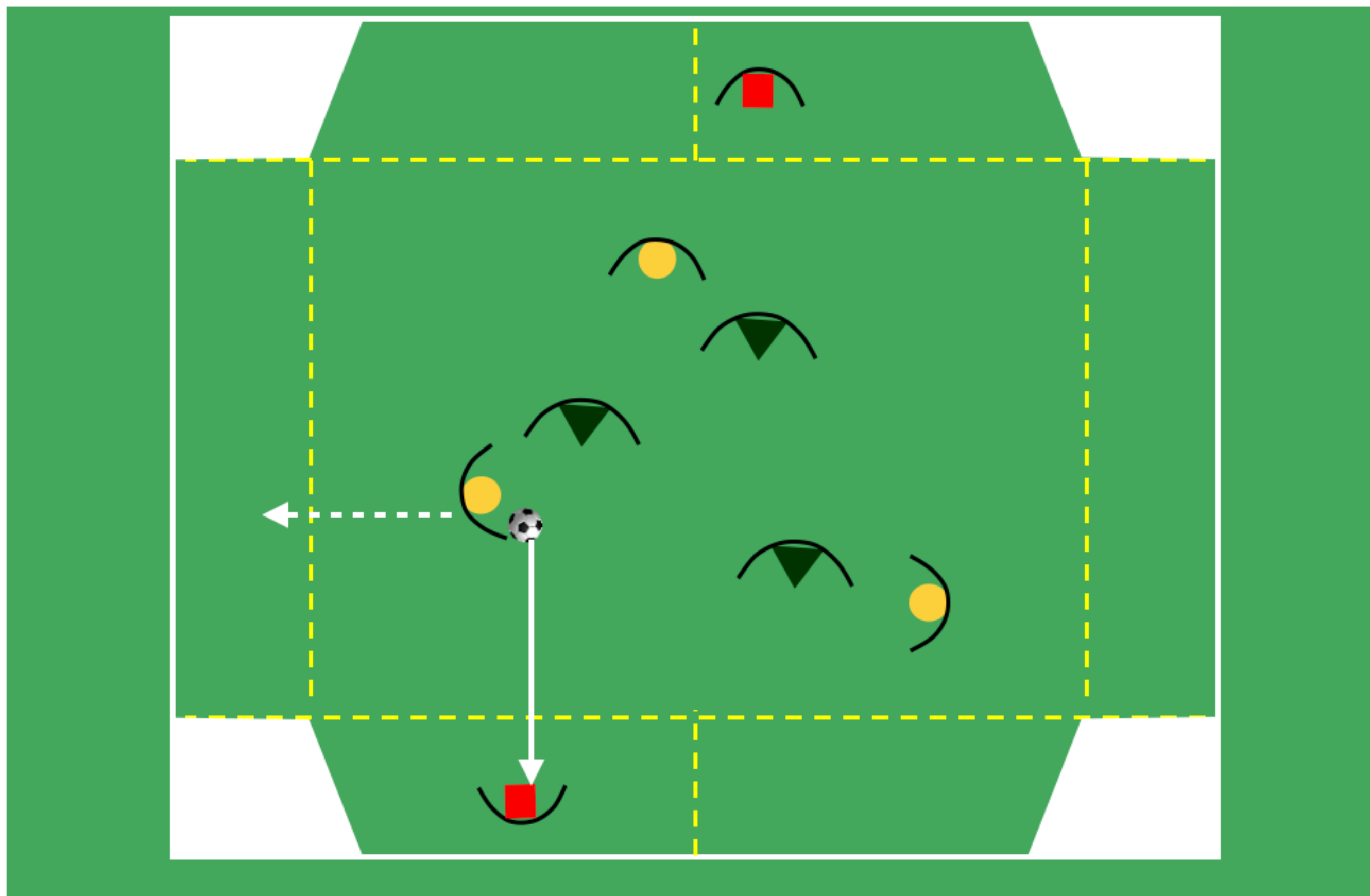
Notes: We can increase the difficulty by allowing more opponents to join the box. We can also introduce the MF fundamentals of defending the box.

MIDFIELDERS

- ▶ Relationships and understanding between players is as important as the individuals mastering the key elements of their position.
- ▶ We can work on these through the team games but sometimes isolating them can be very beneficial.
- ▶ Here are two games for the inside triangle, thinking specifically about the relationship between Magnússon-Olsson-Beck.



Representation



Content: Midfielders - Open passing lines | Rebalance spaces

Concepts:

1. Identify when I'm the first receptor or the 2nd one.
2. Identify when to move for my own benefit or to open a passing line.
3. Move to the spaces that are empty or freed by my teammates moves.

Teams: 3v3 + 2

Description: Attacking team has to bring the ball from Freeman to Freeman and keep the ball for as long as they can. Corners of the pitch are eliminated.

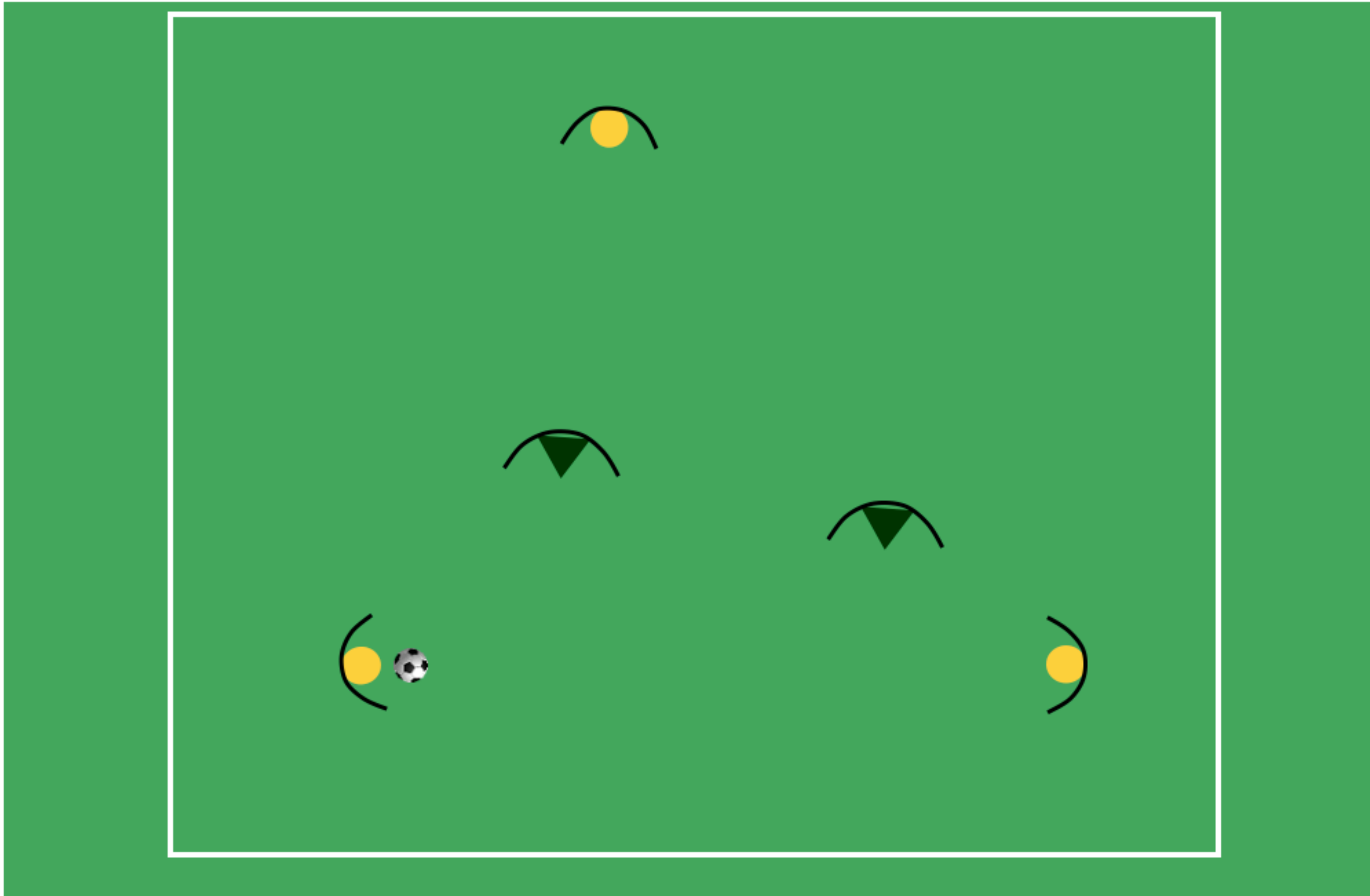
Rules:

1. The Freeman has 2 boxes he can be in, when the teammates pass the ball to him the outside lane of the side where the freeman is becomes available to play.

Coaching Points:

1. Can players think not one but two passes ahead.
2. Identify the pressing trajectories to provide the right support.
3. Selfless movements to open passes for other teammates (when man-marked).

Representation



Content: Midfielders - Inner relationship + Hold the ball under pressure

Concepts:

1. Quick supports to move the ball.
2. Continuous rebalance of the space.
3. Courage and personality to overtake your opponent when under press.

Teams: 3v2

Description: Rondo of 3v2. If we want continuity in the game we play 2v2+1F so when the defenders recover we can keep the possession going.

Rules:

1. Attacking players can only play 1 touch. If they control the ball then they have to dribble one of the opponents before they can pass the ball again.
2. 10 passes = 1 point. 5 dribbles = 1 point.

Coaching Points:

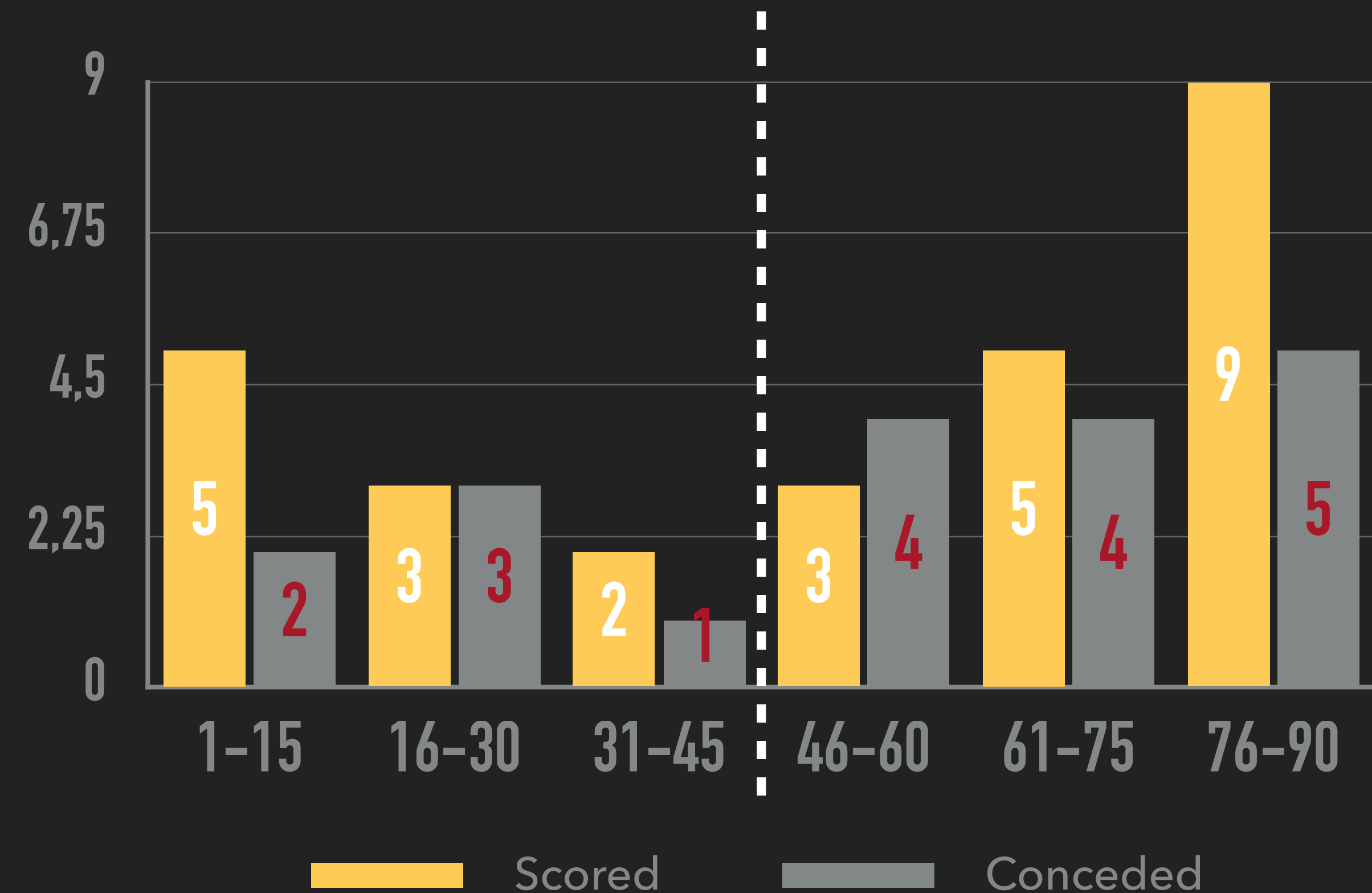
1. When under pressure playing fast is not always the best option. Guarantee that with your next pass the teammate can keep the ball.
2. Rebalance the space to be available to receive.
3. Passing, dribbling & support quality.



GOALS' ANALYSIS

ANALYSIS OF THE GOALS BY PERIOD

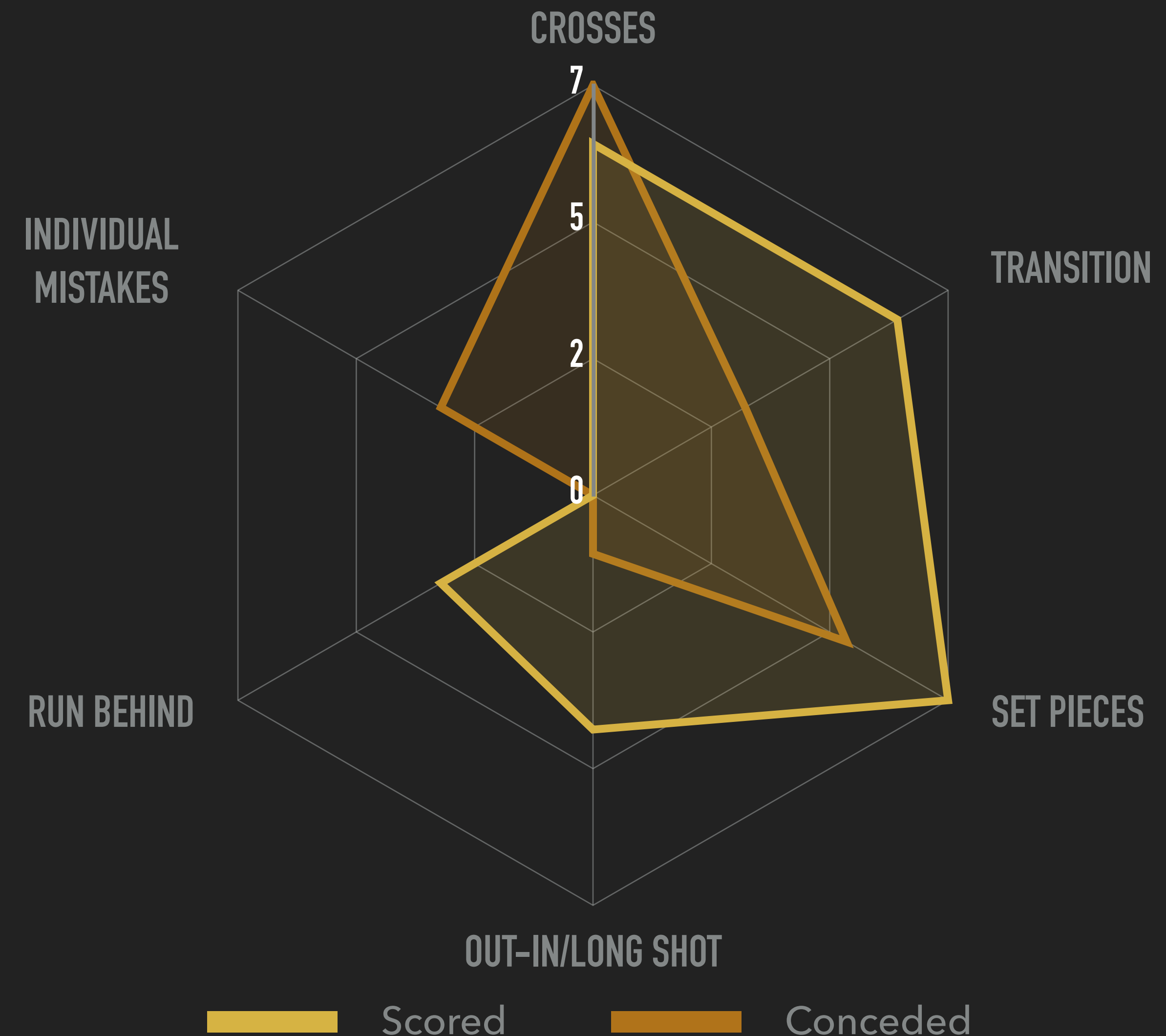
- ▶ Notice the strong start the team can have in some games.
- ▶ It is also good to see how the team gains momentum during the second half, increasing the amount of goals as the game comes to an end.
- ▶ In goals conceded, we can see how the restart of the 2nd half and the last 15 minutes of the game are critical for the team (this trend is the same for all Allsvenskan goals, not just for Elfsborg).



ANALYSIS OF THE GOALS BY TYPE

- ▶ Crossing situations are both a strong and weak point for the team (also a current trend in Allsvenskan).
- ▶ Even though the team leans towards a possession-based style, the counter-attacks are one of the most effective ways for the team to score.

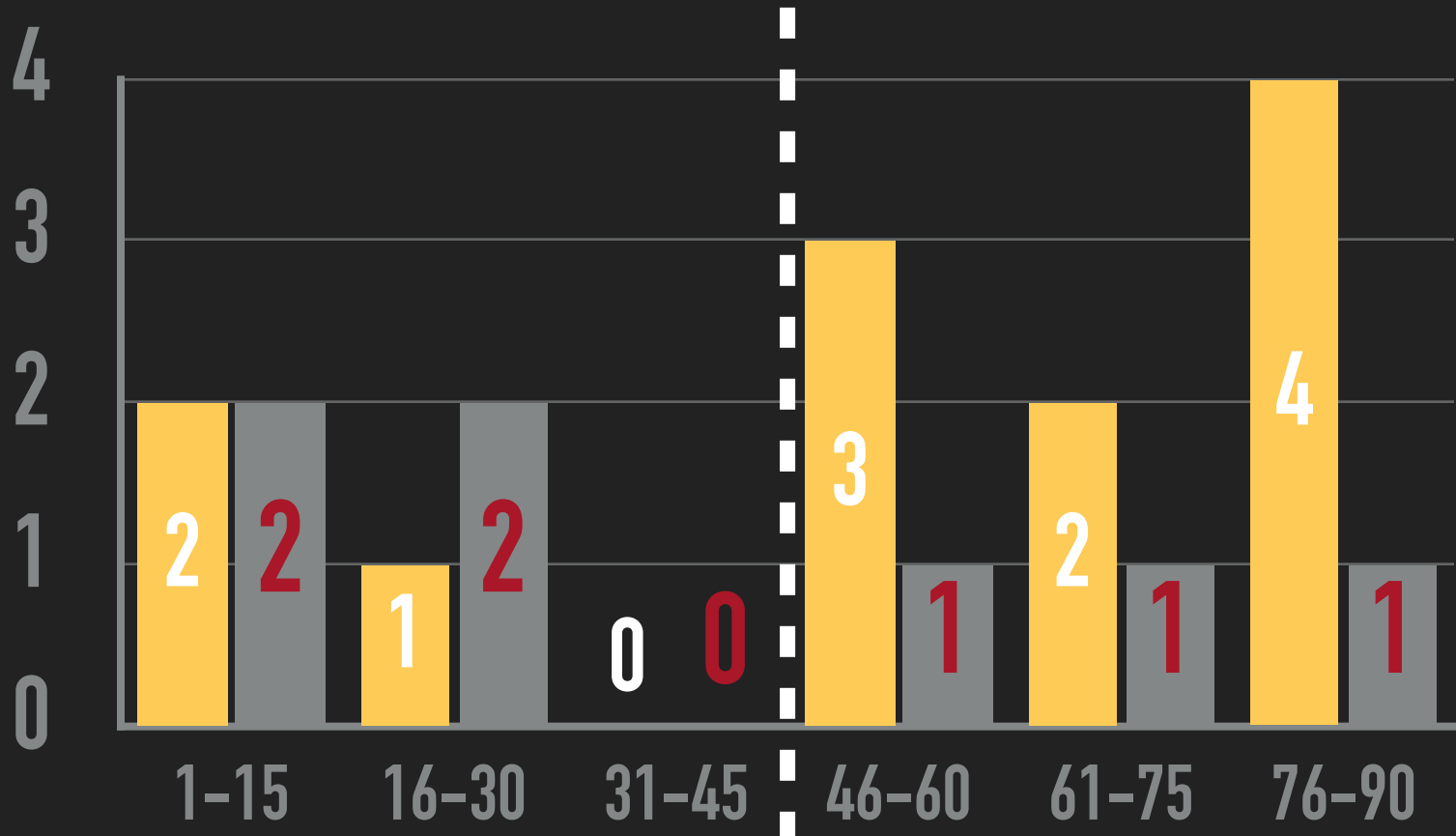
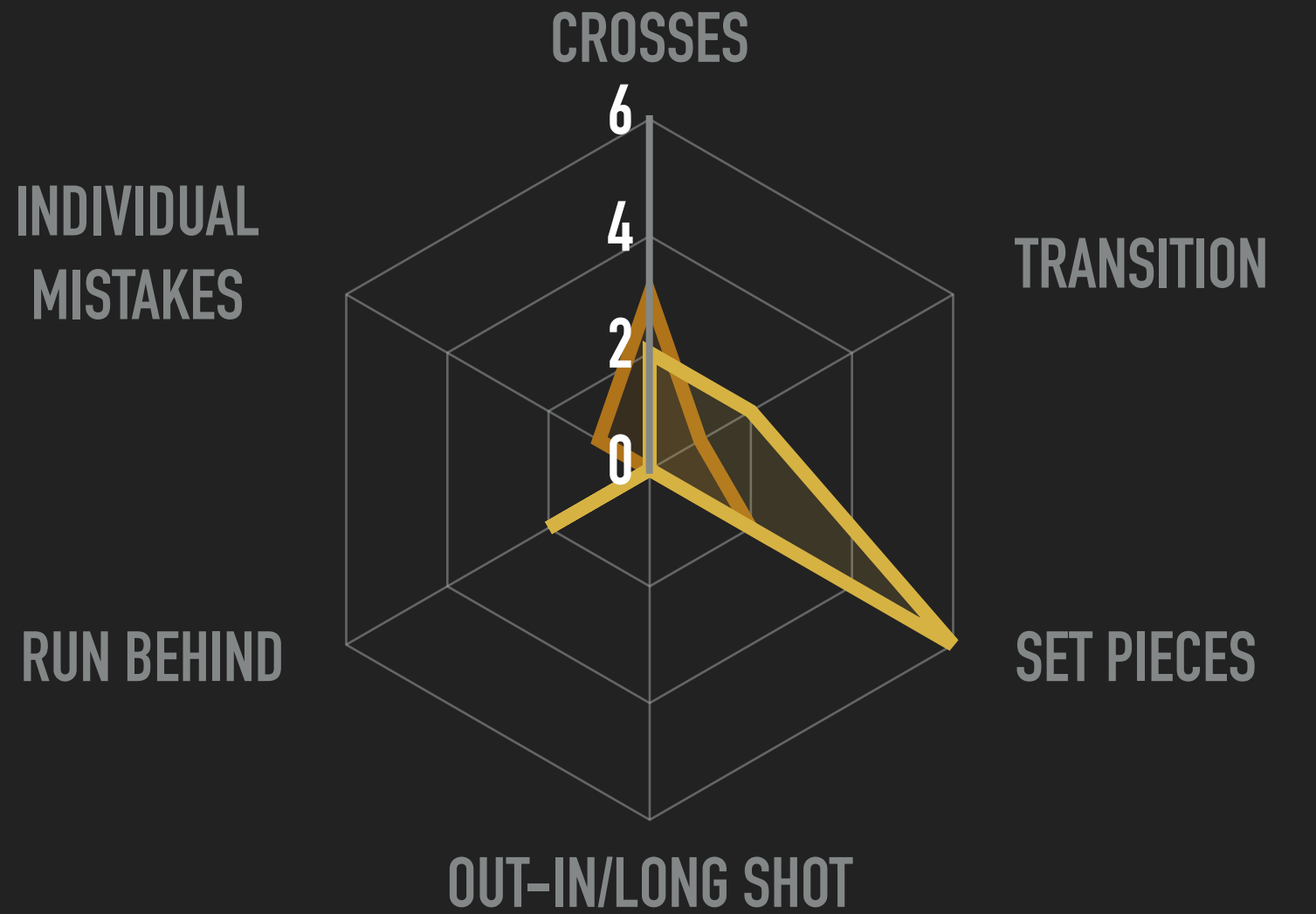
** The set pieces goals include the penalty kicks both scored and conceded.*



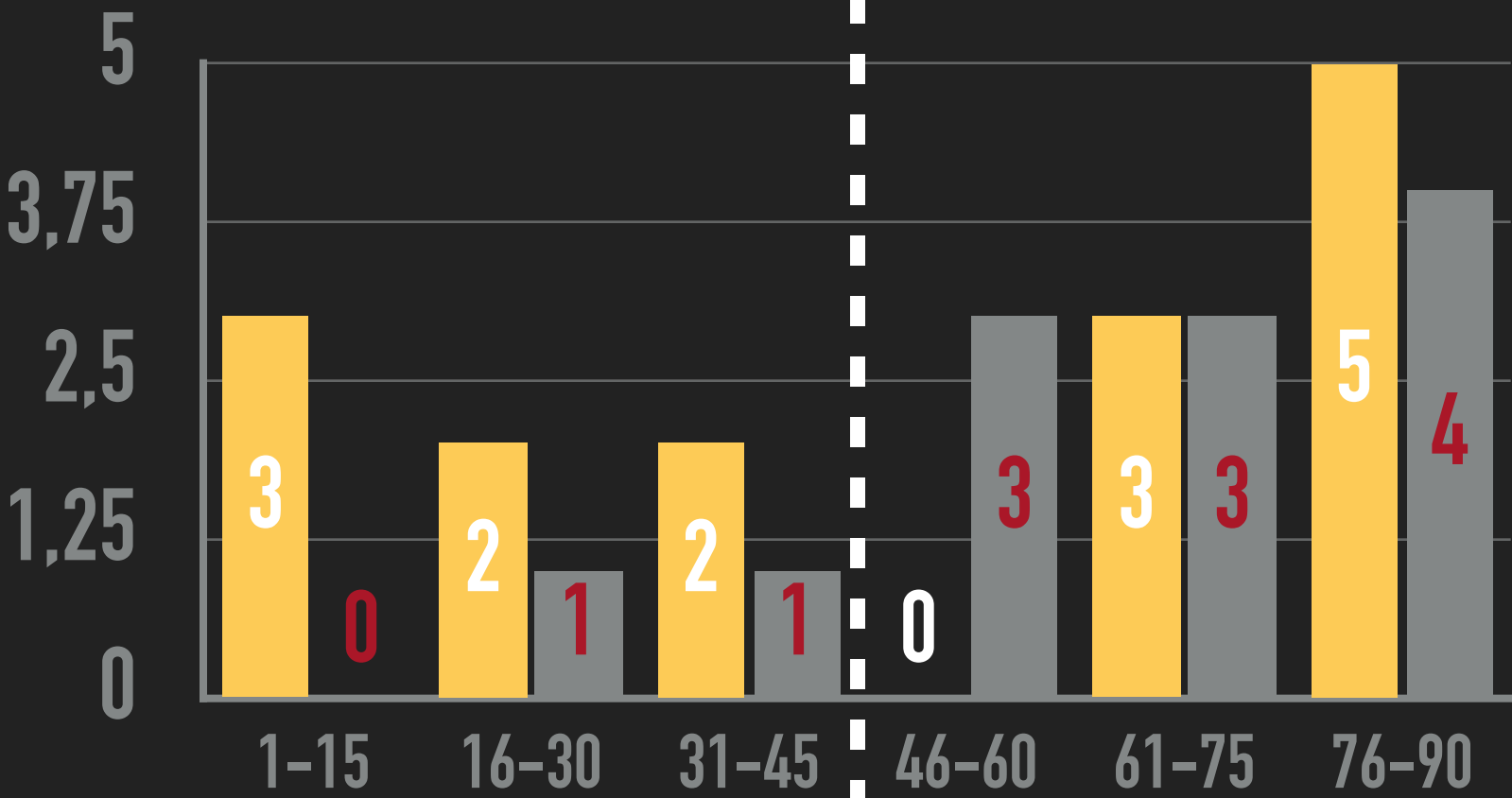
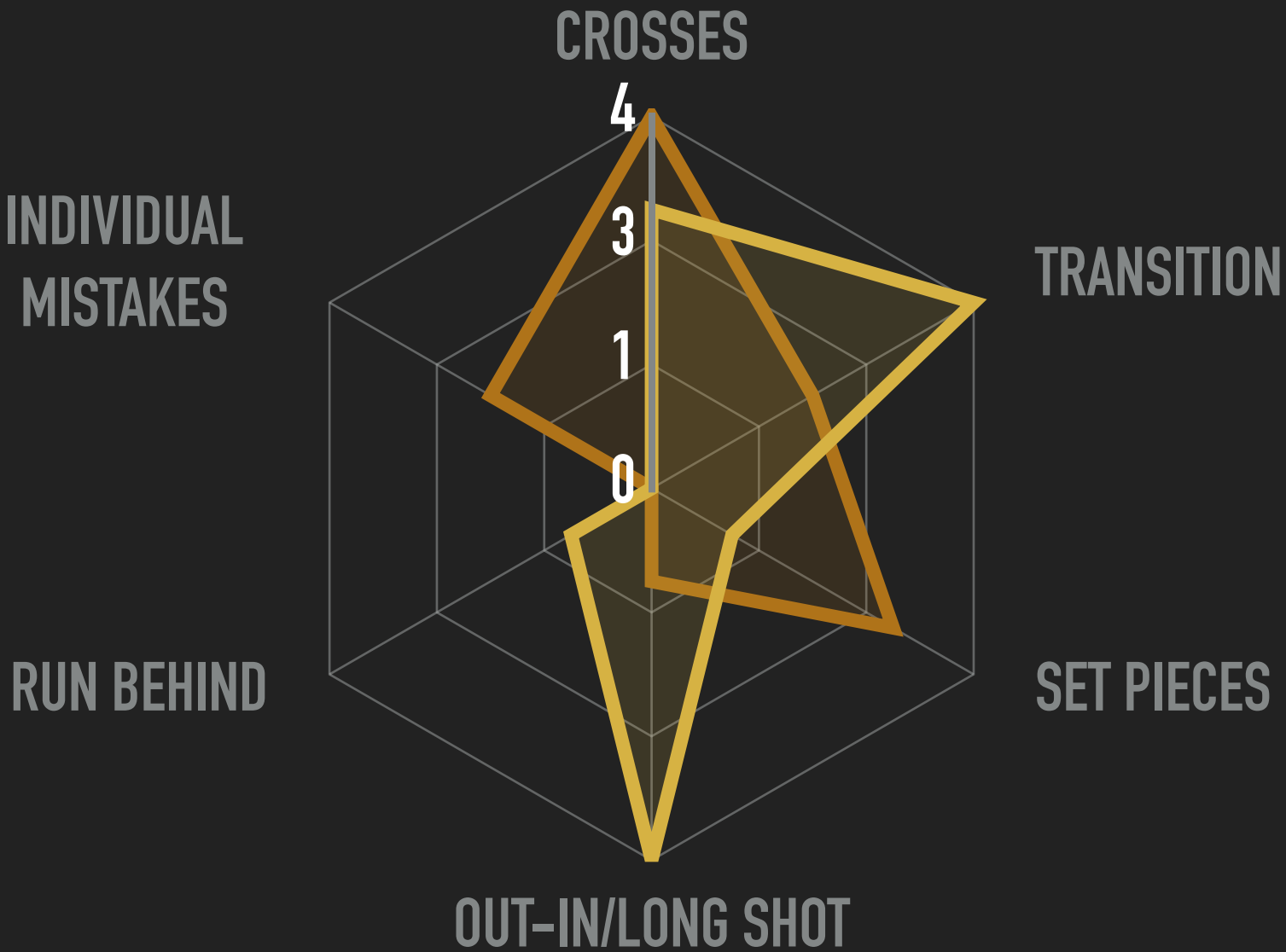
ANALYSIS OF THE GOALS BACK 5 VS BACK 4

Although it has more to do with the opponents rather than the team structure, it's good to see the comparison.

WITH BACK 5



WITH BACK 4





A MATCH PLAN AGAINST IF ELFSBORG

A HYPOTHETICAL MATCH PLAN VS IF ELFSBORG AS HALMSTAD HEAD COACH

- ▶ In the next slides you will see how I would prepare a game plan against our team.
- ▶ In this scenario I've chosen Halmstad, imagining the game the team will play on October 13th 2026.

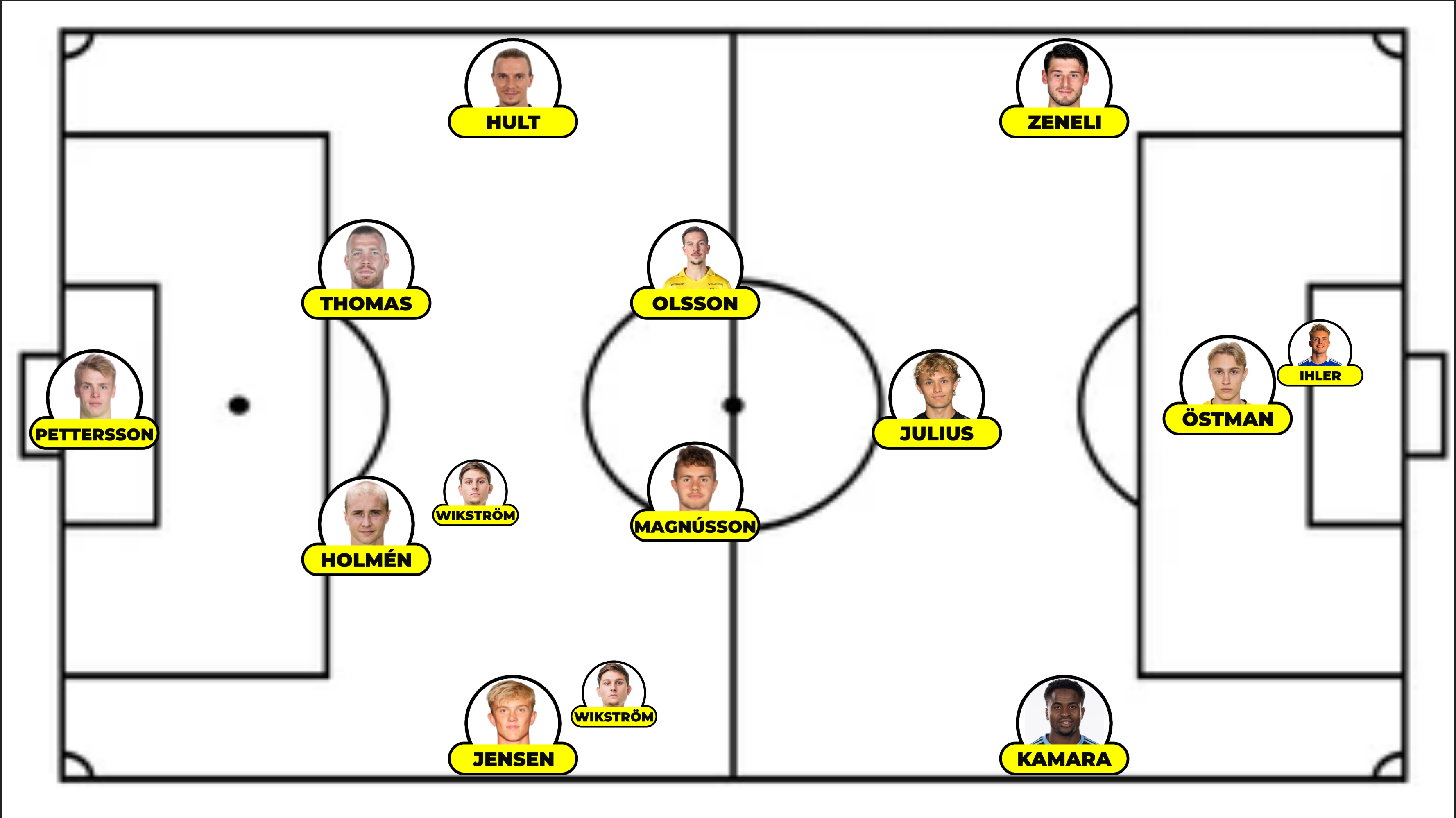
KEY IDEAS

- ▶ Make them uncomfortable when having the ball (high press)
- ▶ Let them expose themselves where we want (low block)
- ▶ Be patient to find our moment to exploit the spaces they leave (counter-attack)
- ▶ Exploit their midfielders' difficulty to press back (vertical play + attacking the box)

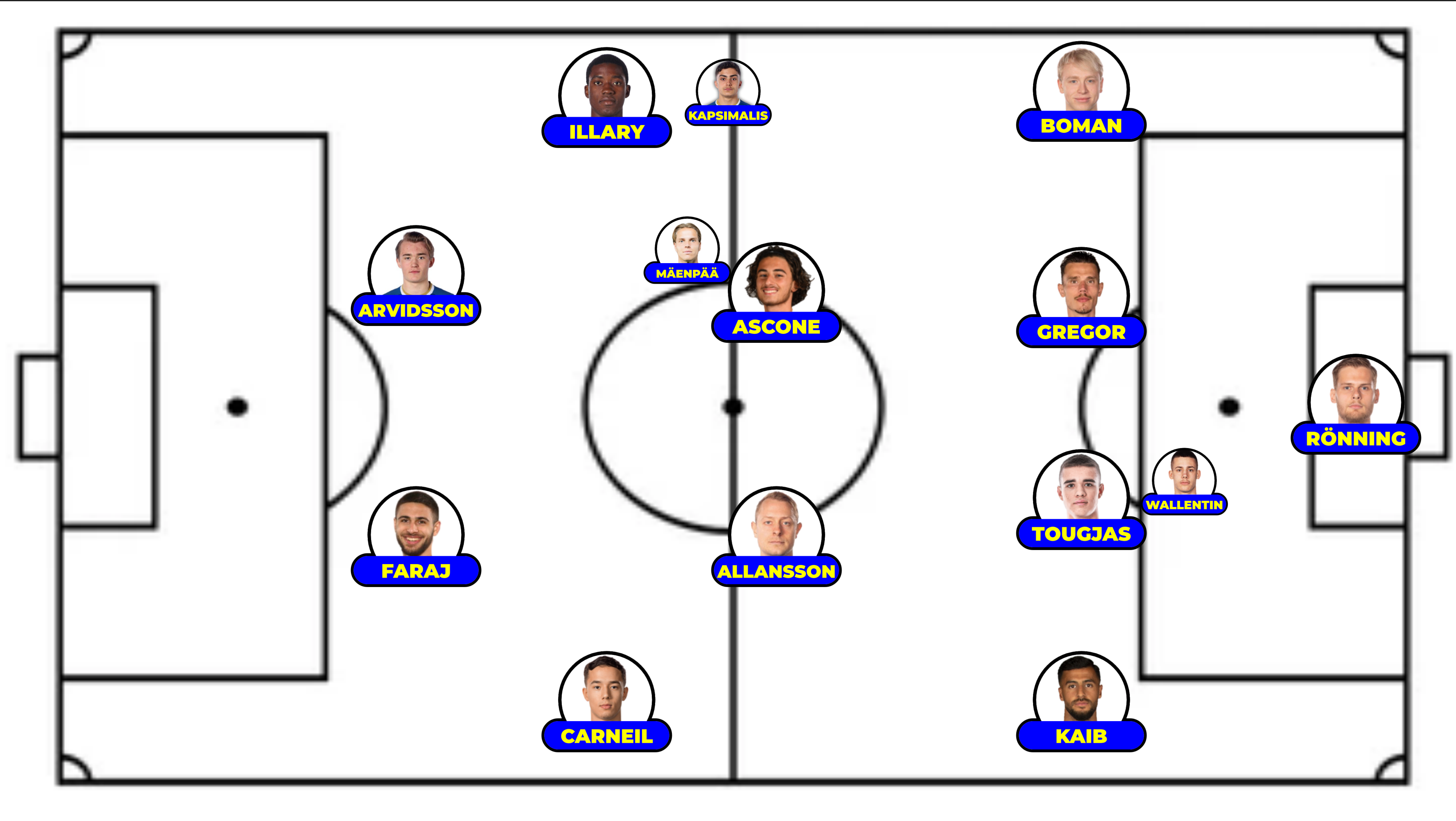
KEY IDEAS

- ▶ Control the overloads zonally. Don't allow their movements to get us out of position.
- ▶ Increase pressure on Holmén, Magnússon.
- ▶ Reduce pressure on Olsson, Hult. Instead block their passing options and let them get exposed and make mistakes.

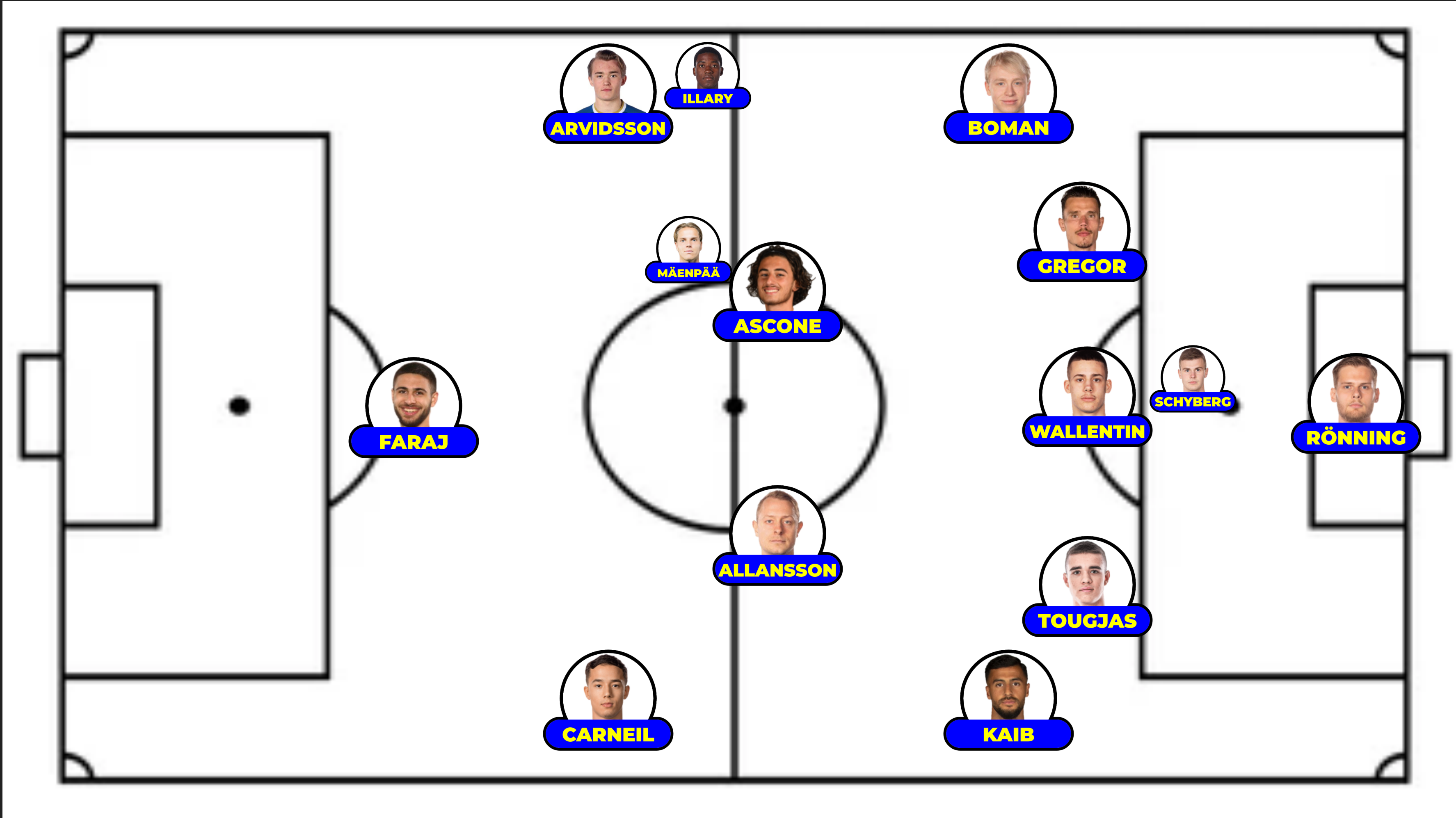
EXPECTED LINE UP



EXPECTED LINE UP

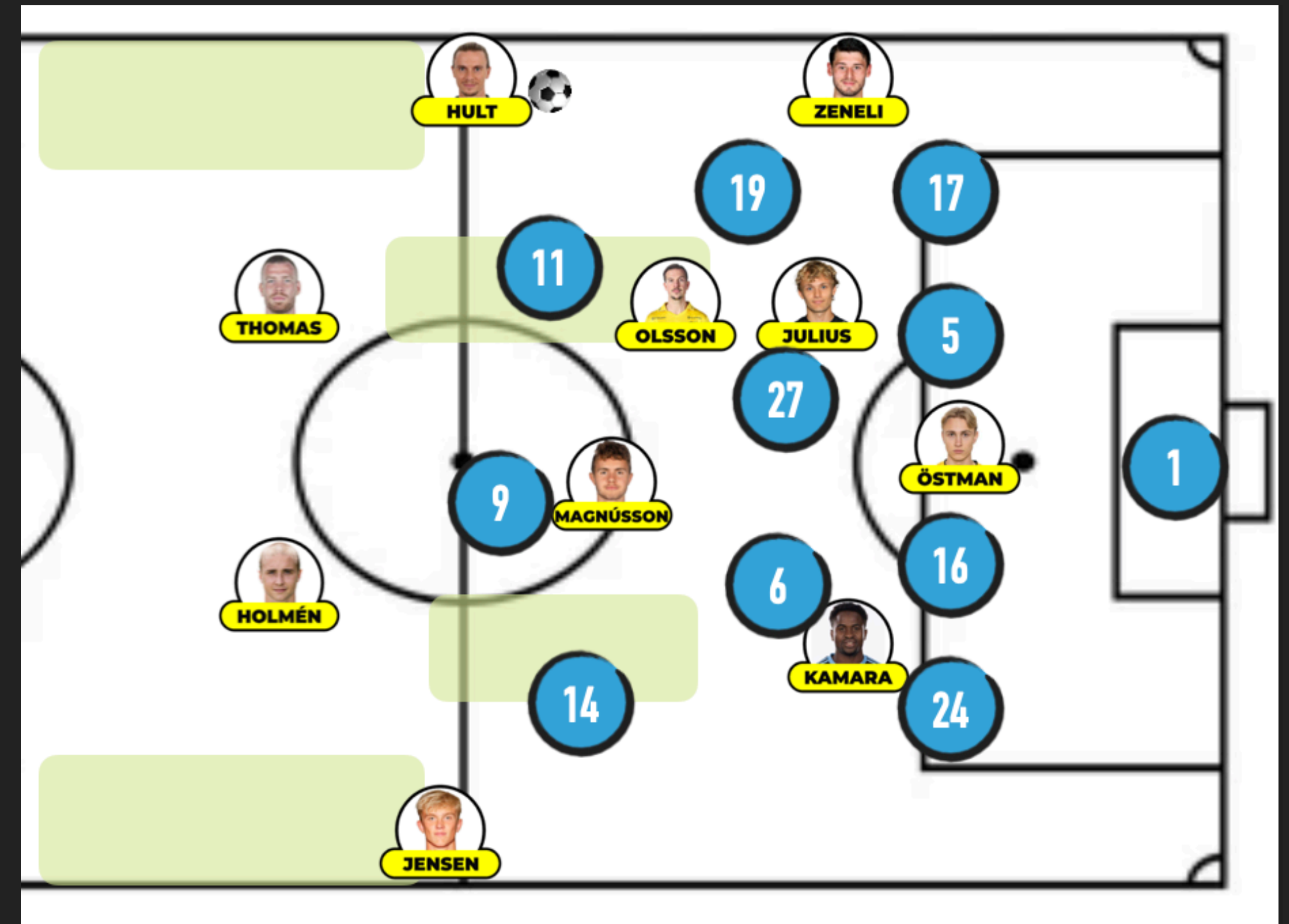


ALTERNATIVE (USED AGAINST STRONGER TEAMS)



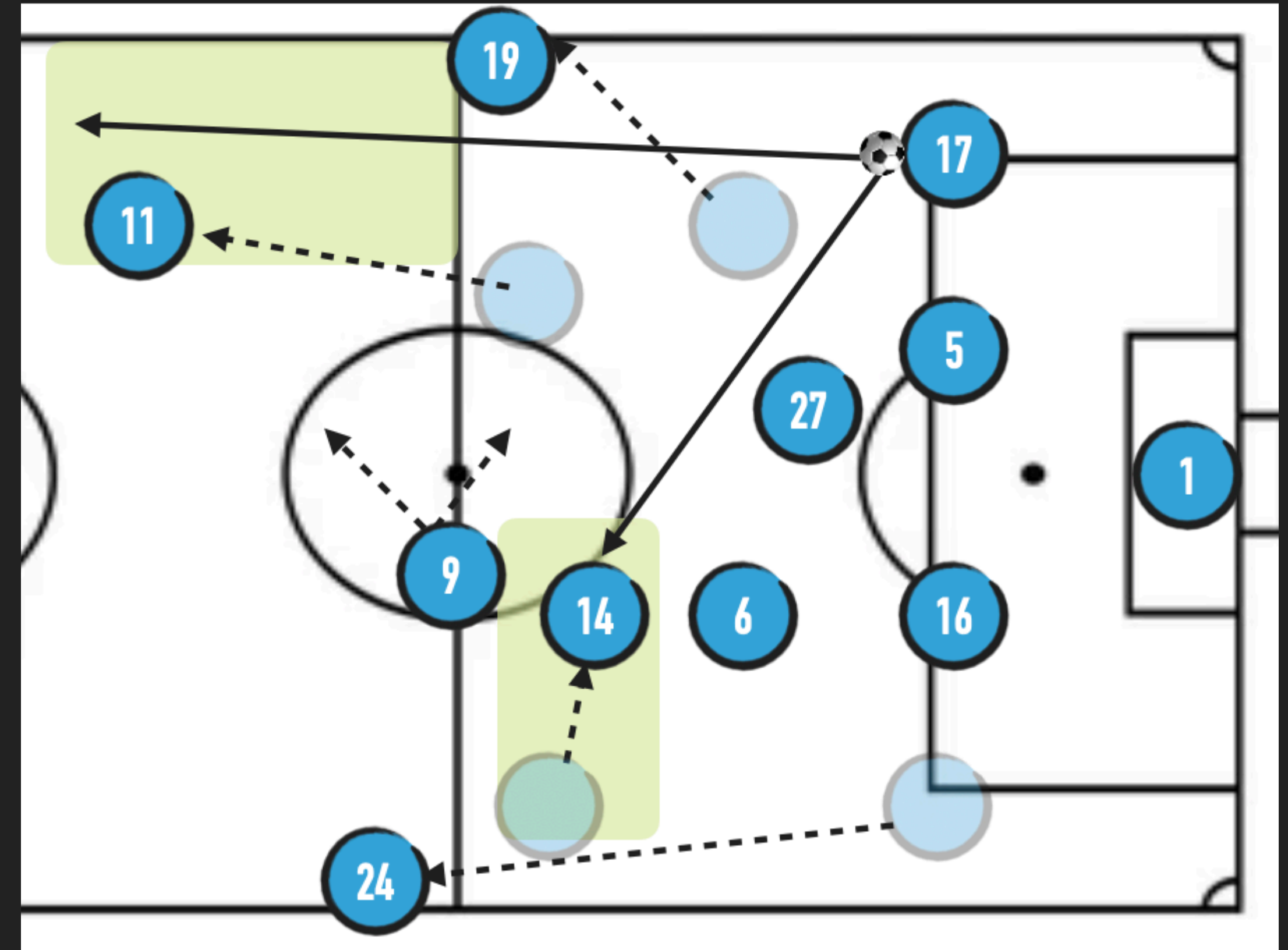
DEFENSIVE PHASE: MID-LOW BLOCK

- ▶ Low and compact 1-4-4-2 structure allowing them to have the ball while preparing our counter-attacks.
- ▶ Leave the opposite outside player in a higher position to either press the centre-back or guarantee we can find him the second we recover the ball.
- ▶ Use the half-spaces next to Olsson-Magnússon & the spaces behind Hult and the RFB (Jensen, Wikström)
- ▶ Strikers block passing to Olsson-Magnússon, leaving Thomas and Holmén/Wikström free.



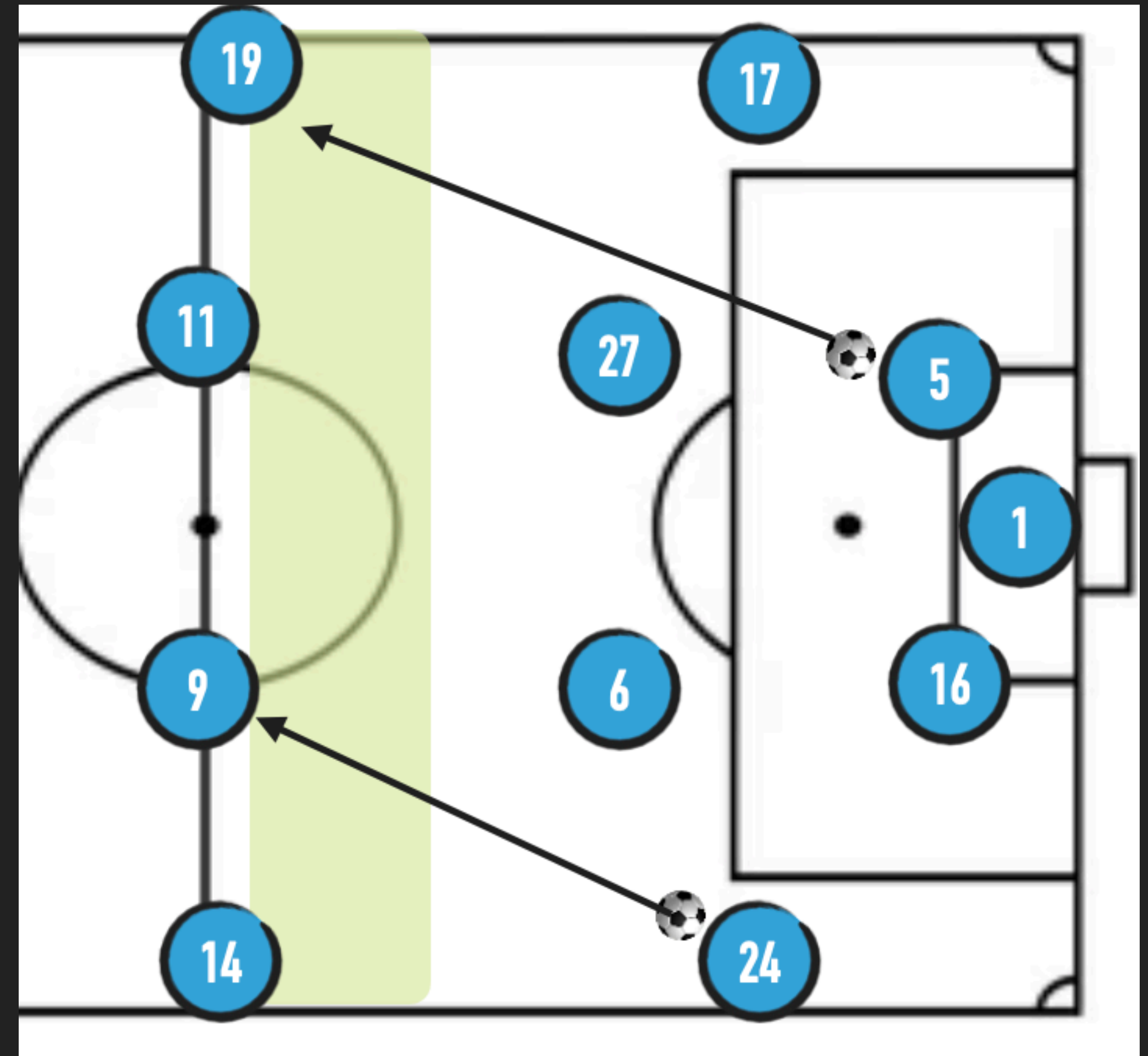
OFFENSIVE TRANSITION

- ▶ One of our strikers needs to run attacking the space left by Hult.
- ▶ Find the player to the space or the opposite winger coming inside, their defensive line will quickly drop back if someone is threatening their back.
- ▶ Once we connect with someone between the lines quickly attack the flanks to cross.



ATTACKING PHASE: BUILD UP

- ▶ We don't expect a high pressure from the start.
- ▶ We'll plan a 1-4-2-4 if we can attract them to play vertically and quickly attack the back 4.
- ▶ If they hold in a mid block we'll switch to a 1-2-4-4 trying to create advantage inside or force the odds to jump (Kamara, Zeneli)
- ▶ Last option is to play direct over their right side where their duels are weaker.



ATTACKING PHASE: OPPONENT'S HALF

- ▶ 1-2-4-4 structure. Kaib and Boman take the width.
- ▶ We need to exploit 3 key spaces: (i) the half-spaces next to Olsson-Magnússon, (ii) the gap between them when Magnússon slides (iii) the flanks when they try to block the base and pockets.
- ▶ Wingers' starting position has to be the pockets while Faraj & Arvidsson start from the CB-FB gap.
- ▶ Create confusion on how to defend outside to attack the flanks & generate crossing situations.

