



Grasshopper Football Club

DOMINANT SOCCER PHILOSOPHY

Dominant soccer is a culture of INTENTIONAL PLAY. It is a culture in which the attitudes of the players and the team are to DICTATE the play on the INDIVIDUAL LEVEL, the GROUP LEVEL, and the TEAM LEVEL. Dominant soccer is a culture in which the players and the team operate with the UNDERSTANDING and CONFIDENCE that they have the POWER TO CONTROL the opponent, both when IN POSSESSION of the ball and when OUT OF POSSESSION. It is a culture in which the players and the team BELIEVE that their approach will yield the most favorable results possible REGARDLESS OF THE OPPONENT.

Louis van Gaal (Ajax Amsterdam, AZ Alkmaar, Dutch National Team, FC Bayern Munich, etc.)

“Dominant soccer means that you are the team that decides the flow of the game. Meaning creating more chances than the opponent, playing offensively and doing this based on technical and tactical capacity, whereby the will to win plays an essential role. You therefore assume an offensive rather than defensive organization. The core of this is that you decide what happens on the field.”

“Whether you are able to play dominant is of course dependent on the quality of your opponent, but even more on the quality of your own team.”

“Losing if often due more so to ourselves than due to our opponents.”

- Dominant Mental Attitude
 - Traits
 - Readiness
 - Competitiveness
 - Attacking Attitude
 - Support
 - Deception
 - Confidence/Belief
 - Trust in trainer, teammates, approach,...
 - Unwilling to accept loss
 - Winning Attitude – Feeling of being unbeatable
 - How
 - Responsibility On Ball (Make it Happen) “Always Oneself”
 - Responsibility Off Ball (Demand the Ball) “Always Oneself”
 - Control/Manipulate the #s (ball movement, deception, intentional play)
 - Quick Restarts, Transitions, ...
 - Communication - Clear, Loud, Demanding...
 - Defending - Intelligent, then Hard
 - Attacking - Always Looking to Go Forward
 - Shape the opponent’s view of themselves and their chances to win
 - Layers in Shape – Create 5-7 lines of play (not limited to 3-4 lines)
 - Players are not influenced by supporters
- Characteristics of Dominant Soccer
 - Intentional play
 - Action rather than reaction
 - High Tempo – meaning ball movement
 - Attacking minded - Always trying to go forward
 - Formation that does not change much to opponent’s formation
 - Positional Team Shape
 - Organized forward movements
 - Focus on Attacking Formation vs. Defending Formation (4-3-3, 3-4-3)
 - Coach as organizing force to put players on the same page (like-minded play)
 - Player Coaching
- Dominant Soccer – When Attacking
 - Determine the situation in an offensive manner



- Control the Pace of the match
- Deliberate build up from the back
 - But always aware of counter attack opportunity (disorientation)
- Willingness to take responsibility to control the match
 - Tactical ownership of the match
 - As opposed to moving the problem to the opponent's half (long ball)
- Fast ball movement through both passing and dribbling (Tempo)
 - Force positional mistakes on the opponent by moving them
 - Manipulate the oppositions #'s through intentional ball movement
 - Attacking attitude to dribble to create 2v1 situations
- Allow creative players to be creative
- Midfielders must be searching for the assist
 - Not only recognize the opportunity, but create the opportunity
- Positional shape focused on movement/flex, rather than interchange
 - Attacking/supporting/clearing movements from within positional space
 - Creating space via well timed pre-movement and movement
 - Ownership of positional space on the field (physical & mental attitude)
- Organized forward movements
 - Stretch, threaten, & show
- Use of entire team (True Team Concept)
 - All players, all spaces, all the time

• Dominant Soccer – When Defending

Arsene Wenger (Arsenal FC)

“Pressing is a way of attacking when you don't have the ball”

- Determine the situation in a defensive manner
- Control the Pace of the match / Control the Space
- Press to regain possession immediately after loss of possession (disorientation)
- Press on the opponent's half (intelligently & intentionally)
- Limit opponent's play with compactness and organization
- Shape with many layers makes it easier to surround the opponent and pressure the ball (individual distances are never more than 5-10m)
- Force opponent's play
 - Dictate play through steering opponent
 - Make opponent's preferred build up impossible
- Intelligent Defending (players must read the game themselves)
 - It is not about the opponent, nor the ball
 - It is about the space the ball may be played into and the space the opponent may come into with the ball
- Positional shape on attack that allows quick response to defending
 - Shape is maintained in attack to keep proper spacing to defend
 - Layers, vertical spacing, horizontal spacing.

• Training Dominant Soccer

- Train the Attitude
- Focus on the Objective over the Exercise itself
- Training players to Operate within their Positional Shape
- Train concept of Power of the Team
- Train for Individual Responsibility “Always Oneself”
- Train High Speed Soccer
 - High tempo
 - Quick decision-making
 - High level of focus and concentration in play
 - Active mutual coaching
 - Positive attitude/egotism
 - Willpower
 - Courage
 - Physical play