

FIFA 09 GUIDE

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PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

We covered all of the different controls in the game. You've seen the fantastic variety of Skill Moves. We've given you a rundown on the formations, shown you how to custom tailor them to your team, and given you a crash course on the new Custom Tactics feature. Now it's time to take all your knowledge and put it together on the pitch so you can become an unstoppable force in FIFA 09.

Your Team's Style

Before you start any game, you will want to look at the Custom Tactics settings for your team. If you work with the Custom Tactic instead of against it, you will experience much more success and much less frustration on the pitch. Simply put, your Custom Tactics determine how your team plays and positions itself on the field. If you don't like the way they play, then change your Custom Tactic. Don't try to force your game with the wrong tactic. You can't play a short-passing, slow build up game if your team is set to Hump and Chase.

If you do decide to make drastic changes to your Custom Tactics, be sure that your personnel can handle it. If your team doesn't have the technical skill to trap, pass, and move quickly, then a Barcelona style of play is going to fail for you. Conversely, if your team lacks a big Target Man and speed on the wings, then a deep ball tactic is going to fall flat as well. Unlike real life, if your team's skills don't match your desired tactic, you can always switch to a new team!



When playing against the CPU, it is a good idea to look at the Custom Tactics setting for the opposing team as well. This will give you a good idea of what you can expect on the pitch. If the team likes to play high and press, then you had better be prepared to handle pace of the game. You will need to get rid of the ball quickly and try to open up space as your opponent attempts to double up on your dribblers.

Custom Tactics are only part of the approach you need to take before a game. There are plenty of other questions that need to be answered if you want to have

every single possible edge in the game. Since you are taking the time to read this guide, we know that you want that edge!

Knowing Your Personnel

We mentioned above that you couldn't shoehorn your personnel into a tactic that they can't handle. You want to play in such a way that it maximizes the skills of your team. Take a couple of minutes and page through the ratings for your team. You will want to be able to answer the following questions after a look at your team's ratings:

Let's take a look at each of these questions in more detail so you can have a full understanding of your team's capabilities.

Who are your fastest players? (Acceleration, Sprint Speed)

It's been said that speed kills. In FIFA 09, few statements are truer. When we say speed, we aren't referring to just flat out sprint speed, but speed with the ball as well. Speed allows a defence to play the Offside Trap with confidence that they have the make up pace needed if a mistake is made. Speed allows you to slip a through ball between two defenders and blaze a trail to the net. Know your fastest players, and be aware of the burners on your other team. You can have the greatest tactical plan in the world, but if you can't keep up with the other team, you are in for a long day.

Which players are most comfortable with the ball at their feet? (Ball Control, Dribbling)

Here's a hint...typically, this is not your Centre back. Players with high dribbling ratings can make quicker turns, change speeds with the ball, and fight their way through tackle attempts. You will notice that top ball handlers are able to do the quick double-touch dribbles, and usually will employ a Cruyff turn to make a fast 180 degree change of direction. These are the players that you want to get into space and attack the defence with skill moves. You can use them in the midfield to get around in tiny spaces and then distribute to keep the attack going forward.



Which players are the best passers? (Short Pass, Long Pass)

With defences coming in fast and furious to tackle the ball away, being a good passer is a must in FIFA 09. If you can't pass, you are in a world of trouble. With that said, you want to channel your offensive attack through your best passers. These are the players that can put a through ball on a dime, and are able to deliver a trappable ball to the striker so he can turn and shoot. Players with an 85+ short passing rating can also hit a swerving through ball. There are some players that don't have this rating, but are known to have this tendency in real life. They will be able to perform this skill as well. Some examples of players that can perform the swerving through ball are Michael Ballack, Andrey Arshavin,

Gareth Barry, Alessandro Del Piero, and Giovanni Dos Santos. There are over 200 players with this ability in the game.

Who are your crossers? (Crossing)

If you want to finish with a header or volley, then you need the best possible service. You want to get your top crossers out on the wing with the ball at their feet. Know who the best guys are to whip in the cross with. If you can, take time to slow down and get your balance before attempting a cross. Using the L1/LB buttons to square up on the goal will help you deliver a better quality ball.

Which players are strongest in the air? (Heading Accuracy, Jumping, Strength)

It is one thing to put in a good cross; it is another to be able to put it in the net. When it comes down to a cross or critical set piece, it is helpful to know that the player on the other end has the goods to get the job done. You will want to look at the Jumping attribute, as this will relate to the player's ability to get up over opponents to claim the ball. The Heading Accuracy attribute will reflect how well the player can place his header on target. Strength refers to a player's ability to hold his ground and fend off an opponent while trying to win the header. You'll also want to look at height. Peter Crouch certainly has a built-in advantage here. There are two determining factors to most one-on-one heading battles: positioning and strength. You'll have to fight for position, but if you learn to do this, you'll see more success with your aerial attack.

Who are your shooters? (Shot Power)

It is possible to score from a distance in FIFA 09, but you'll need a quality ball striker to get it done. Players like Frank Lampard and Paul Scholes can let it fly and put the ball in from distance. These are the types of players you want lining up outside of the box to let one rip. Try to get the ball to the endline, and then fire a pass back to one of your snipers at the top of the 18. You will have to learn to pull the trigger quickly as defenders in FIFA 09 close out quickly.



Which foot do your finishers prefer? (Foot)

The best way to finish is to use a finesse shot from close in. However, if you attempt a finesse shot with a player's off foot, you will get very unpredictable results. Most of the time, these are not positive, as what would be an easy finish ends up with a ball in the stands. Know the preferred foot of your strikers, wingers, and attacking midfielders. When you go for goal, attempt to get the ball on the preferred foot as much as possible. If you are going to take a finesse shot, hitting it with the better foot is imperative.

Who is your strongest defender? (Marking, Slide Tackle, Stand Tackle)

If you get into a situation where a single player is running roughshod over your defence, then it may be time to take your best defender and put him in a man-marking scenario. No matter what you do, knowing who you can count on to

make a tackle is important. You can take a few more risky tackling chances with a top-flight defender. They won't foul, and the odds of them getting the ball are usually pretty high.

Which players can you jostle with best? (Strength, Weight)

FIFA 09 has a new level of physicality never before seen in a football video game. You can defend smaller players by simply pushing them off the ball and taking it away. It is critical that you know who your bangers are. It doesn't do you any good to get into a shoving contest with a lightweight player. He is just going to get barged out of the way by a stronger man. Watch out for players like Torres and Drogba who combine speed and strength. If you can catch them, you'll still have a difficult time pushing them off the ball.

Building an Unstoppable Attack

If you want to be a successful goal scorer in FIFA 09, then you need to use plenty of variety in your attack. Your friends and online opponents will soon learn if you have a go-to strategy, and they will endeavour to take it away from you. If you don't have a back-up plan, then you will be in big trouble. In this section of the guide we are going to give you a number of tips and techniques that you can use to add flavour, flair, and creativity to your attacking build up.

Passing

If you have watched professional football for any length of time, then you have seen that games have a rhythm. The ball moves from side to side, forward to back and a little bit in between. One of the first goals that you should have in FIFA 09 is to maintain possession of the ball. If the other team doesn't have the ball, then they can't score.

It sounds simple, but this is key. We want to be the team with 55% plus possession on our side each and every game. This way we can dictate the pass and flow of the game in our favour. Forcing your opponent to play chase will frustrate them, tire their players out, and cause them to pull players out of position. If you want to establish this type of football attack, you will need to become a top-notch passer.

Work on your game to master all of the different types of passes. A big switch with a lob pass can free up space when the other team is clogging your attack on one side of the field. A well-timed through ball (we recommend becoming proficient with Manual Through ball assistance as soon as possible) will break open a defence and give you a dangerous one-on-one with the keeper. With the Manual Through ball, you can play ball into space and let your offensive players run onto them. This allows you to be unpredictable as you can pick part gaps in the defence and drop the ball into unmarked space.

One-two passes are another good way to keep the ball moving and create a flow to your attack. You don't want to get your Centerbacks in on this combination play. If you start pulling players out of position on runs, then you could leave a huge hole in the back to be exploited by the other team. Instead, work the ball out to the wings or central midfielders and begin your give-n-go attack from there.

Another good passing strategy is the third man passing combination. Start with a midfielder or wing defender. Initial a give-n-go pass, but do not play the ball back to the initial player. Instead, play the ball to a different (but nearby) player on the pitch. Now look for the original passer as he continues his run. Give your opponent a steady diet of these passing combos and you'll be running all over his penalty area.



The play starts with a simple pass to #7 as we begin a one-two pass sequence.



Instead of making the return pass, we hit our striker further up the pitch.



He collects but has two defenders in his vicinity.



The original passer completes his run and is finally rewarded for his quality off the ball movement.

Performing a dummy is another trick you have at your disposal to open things up in the passing game. By holding down the R1/RB as a pass comes to your player, you can allow the ball to ride between your legs. You must be standing still and facing the passer to execute this move. Your player will step forward and let the ball go through his legs.



Use this move to set up a shot from a player past the pass receiver. Another nice trick is to execute a dummy turn on the wings. As the ball comes to a player checking back to the ball, execute the dummy and immediately turn and follow down the same path. If you have a defender on your back, it is possible that you will turn and blow right by him.

Lastly, don't be afraid to move things backwards. Too many players get caught up in a race to get to the penalty area. Be patient. If one side of the field is shut down, pass it back and go around the world to the other side. Often you can take two quick passes forward and then a short pass back. You don't give back much territory, but you'll relieve the pressure on your players so you can push forward again.

Dribbling

You can be very successful and beat many players with a strong passing game and good finishing skills. But what fun is that? If you can gain skill with the ball at your feet, it opens up a completely new dimension to your game. You'll be able to navigate in tight spaces, wait for your players to spring open on runs, and find room to crack shots on the goal.

Don't underestimate the value of using the R2/RT button to initiate a hard stop. Often just putting on the brakes and changing to a new direction is good enough to shake a defender. Quick turns and changes of pace can make defending a nightmare for your opponent.

You can go along way just by laying off the Sprint button, using hard stops, and keeping control of the ball in tight spaces. However, there is such a nice trick engine in FIFA 09 that you just have to take it for a test drive. First of all, you need to practice the moves in the Arena. Work on them until they become second nature to you. Once you have a couple of moves down, begin to incorporate them into your game.

Start simple. A standing Reverse Stepover with an explosive exit will beat many defenders in the game. The key is to give yourself enough room to pull the move off. Most of the moves require more space than you might think. Once you can pull off the basic moves, then you can graduate to tougher stuff. Skill moves are a high risk/high reward proposition. You'll either beat your defender badly, or he'll take it right off your boot.



With this in mind, we don't recommend breaking out the trick stick in your back third. Save the moves for the wings when you have support behind your midfielders and in the middle third where a successful move will lead to an open shot on goal. With that said, we still fondly remember the time we pulled off a Heel Flick trick with Edwin van der Sar to blow past a pressing forward. Loads of fun, but not recommended.

Shielding

One final tactic that must be discussed when it comes to build up and possession is the Shield technique. Shielding allows a player to hold off his opponent and protect the ball with his body. Strong players are especially effective to shield with. If you hit your big Target Man down the field, you can use the Shield button to keep the ball until the rest of the cavalry arrives on the scene.



Players like Drogba, Kuranyi and Adebayor are extremely effective at Shielding. You can use the Right Thumbstick to perform ball fakes while shielding. Wait for your defender to shade to one side and release the Shield button to spin off in the other direction. Shielding can also be used to give the ball handler a quick breather in the middle of the field while you find an open player for a pass.

Finishing

It's all well and good if you can put together a nice build up to create a scoring chance. However, if at the end of the day you can't put the ball in the back of the

goal, then you really haven't accomplished anything. Success in finishing can elude gamers who first pick up FIFA 09, but after reading this section you should be prepared to finish off your play by shaking the net.

By far the most accurate shooting method is the finesse shot. If you can get the ball on your player's preferred foot, then you have a decent chance of scoring from anywhere inside the penalty box. One of our favourite techniques is to start at the left edge of the penalty area (with a right-footed player) and scoot along the top of the box. Before we get to the arc, we use a finesse shot to fire the ball to the back post. You'll generate a nicely curled shot that curves just out of the keeper's reach.



Another common finishing situation you will find yourself in is the breakaway. Whether due to a finely played through ball or a pressing tackle by your striker, you escape the last line of defence and have a wide open lane to the goal.

The most important thing you need to do is keep your composure. Be sure to slow down as you prepare to shoot, and get the ball on your preferred foot. Shoot the ball before the keeper is able to get too far out on you and close down your shot. A firm, side-footed shot to the far post is usually the best method for finishing a one-on-one.



Some players do like to go for a little more flair and try to beat the keeper off the dribble so they can shoot on the open net. We don't recommend this unless you have a sizeable lead. It's much easier to just slot it away for the score. However, there will be times when the keeper rushes so aggressively that you don't have a good shooting angle. A Ball Roll or Feint Drag Across can usually work in this situation. This might also be the time to pull out the chip shot and just knock it over the sliding keeper's prostrate frame.

Outside of the box, you are looking for a clear lane to the net. There is usually a great deal of traffic in front of goal, so you don't have too many options to just blast away. If you do see room, go ahead and try to hit it to either corner. Be ready on the controls so you can knock in the rebound. If your initial shot has enough pace, it will be very difficult to hold onto without a deflection.



Once you score your goal, don't forget to use one of the user-controlled celebrations to rub your opponent's face in it.

Scoring from Set Pieces

If you become a good attacking team, you will create numerous opportunities for set piece chances on goal. These will take the form of corner kicks and free kicks around the penalty area.

Free Kicks

For free kicks, you will want to practice shots from different places in the Arena mode. It's not quite the same as there isn't a wall, but you can get a good idea of the power and direction you need to put the ball on frame. There are three basic styles of free kick that you can use. The Driven free kick is best used from farther away, as you will need a great deal of pace to beat the keeper. From closer in, you can either try to curve the ball around the wall, or use topspin to smash it over the top and under the cross bar.

The trick to getting your free kicks down is to set the curve/spin while the meter is filling up. This isn't aftertouch where you can adjust the spin after the ball is struck. You have to set the curve while your player is winding up. Once you get this down, you'll be amazed at how much movement you can get on the ball. We've scored from the side of the box even with the penalty box by bending a ball to the back post. We like to use a heavily curved ball right in front of goal as well. The topspin shots works well from straight on just outside of the box.

No matter which style of free kick you go with, you'll need to get a ton of reps in the Arena if you want to "bend it like Beckham." Run to a spot in the Arena and press any direction on the D-pad to activate a free kick.



You can practice your penalties by pressing a direction on the D-pad while you are inside the box.

Corner Kicks

Corner kicks are another dangerous scoring opportunity, especially if you have players with height, strength, and jumping ability. There are nine different random corner kick set-ups based on the mentality you have set for your team. You can't pick which one you will get, but you will want to take a look at the set up so you can decide where to place your corner.



For outswingers, we like to aim as far to the line as we can. We then put a ton of curve on the ball. The ball swerves out into the box, usually freezing the keeper on his line. This is our goal with corner kicks. We want to get the ball to fall in the box around the penalty spot, and we don't want the keeper coming out on us. The big swerving corner kick usually accomplishes this goal. Now it's up to you to time your header and put the ball in the back of the net.

Defending

The number one thing to remember when you are defending is don't stab. Don't just switch and dive into tackles all over the field. A good player will just keep moving the ball around and let you hang yourself. When defending, you want to contain the threat first and then try to gain possession of the ball. Think safety first, attacking the ball second.

Jockeying

We discussed all the jockeying commands at length in the Controls section of this guide. However, the topic is so important that it is worth mentioning again. Jockeying is the cornerstone of defence. Your goal is to stay in front of the attacker and force him into making a mistake. When he does, you step in and take the ball. The new Jockey Press control is perfect for doing just this. You'll control and contain the forward progress of the attacker, and when you release the Jockey button your player will step in for the tackle.

Passing Lanes

Your first goal on defence is to prevent penetration. You want to stop the dribbler's forward momentum and force him to move either laterally or (better yet) backwards.

The second phase of defence after you stop penetration is to deny the passing lanes. You want to contain your attacker and try to eliminate some of his options. For example, against a Fullback, we like to come at him from the outside (sideline) of the field in so that he is forced to go to the middle. We don't want to let him hit his fast wing midfielder who can sprint with the ball into our third. Anticipate the through passes and you'll be a step ahead of the offense.

Secondary Pressure

When you are able to contain the dribbler and cut off some of the passing lanes, it is safe to call in some secondary pressure. You can channel the attacker into trouble spots, like the corners of the field and the pounce, with two players to recover the ball. Another good tactic is to call in a secondary defender while you step back and take away the obvious pass. We have created numerous turnovers using the technique. It also works in crossing situations where you call over a defender to put pressure on the crosser while you slide into the middle to pick up any players lurking there.

Jostling

FIFA 09 brings a new element of physicality to video game football with the new collision and jostling engine. Size now matters on the virtual football pitch. Defenders can use shoulder challenges to ride offensive players off the ball and take possession for themselves. Be careful though, as there are a handful of powerful strikers who can give even the most physical defender fits. If your defender is of slighter build than the attacking player, then move around the player to go for the ball. You won't be able to push through him.



The attacking player (in white) is trying to get down the field as our defender closes in.



We drop our shoulder into the smaller attacker and force him off the ball.



We leave the attacker on the ground as we claim the ball for our team. No harm, no foul!

Two final topics bear mentioning when it comes to defence. Number one is the Autoswitching control. Many players just go in and turn it all the way off. Our thoughts run just a bit contrary to this. We like to set the Autoswitch control two notches from the left. This setting is low enough so that our players aren't just switching all over the field, but high enough to give us that really quick switch we need to pick up a through ball.

Finally, we need to take a quick look at Man Marking. There are just some players in the game that need constant attention. Cristiano Ronaldo and Lionel Messi come to mind here. You can't just let them run out on their own. Even though it will take one of your attackers completely out of the play, it might not be a bad idea to assign players like that a personal caretaker.

You can also run a complete man marking system in the back. This isn't a bad idea with 3-5-2 formation teams. Take your Fullbacks and have them man mark the forwards. Leave the Centerback to play zone as a sweeper of sorts. Bear in mind that your Fullbacks will not be able to overlap and get in on the attack, as they will have to stick close to their defensive marks.

Defensive Zones

The following diagram breaks the pitch down into 5 distinct zones. These zones will help you to better understand what your thought process should be when the ball is in each area of the field. Remember when you lose possession the whole team is on defence and the entire team as a unit must start defending. It is important to keep in mind that you have several layers of defence, not just the backline players.



ZONE 1

In the opposing team's half of the field, focus on positioning. Start by using your forwards, then the midfielders as your first layers of defence. Light to medium harassment of the opponent here works well, just enough to try and deter their advancement. The amount of pressure you put on your opponent should increase as they approach the midfield line. Once the midfield line is crossed everyone should be accounted for.

ZONE 2

On your wings above the 18 yard box make sure players running there are covered. The major priority here is to deny them access to ZONE 3 and 5. So keep an eye out for any players on a run into those areas as potential passing targets. Pressing and the Running Jockey work well in Zone 2 and the intensity of your pressure should be elevating. A slide tackle can be used here as a last resort, just be sure your player approaches from the front and touches the ball before the attacker. It is a good idea to make sure you have a support player behind you so you don't give the attacker clear access to Zone 4 if you miss the slide tackle.

ZONE 3

Often referred to as the hole, this portion of the pitch requires a compact midfield with no holes. The closer the opponent gets to your red zone, ZONE 5, the more compact you should get. A strong possession team can spot holes a mile away and exploit them. Marking should now be tighter and the intensity to win back the ball should be increasing rapidly. Stay on top of the attackers and be physical enough to let them know you are there, but try not to foul. Look to break up passes, try to be first in the air to crosses, and most importantly watch your opponent's passing lanes carefully (the imaginary line forming possession triangles) and look to break them down. Lastly if your team is caught out of position, jockey and contain to buy time for them to get back.

ZONE 4

This zone is also known as the "passing zone." Be aware of fast wingers that have great individual ball skill. They will try to break into a gap to launch in a cross or

through ball. The best rule of thumb here is to not dive in and allow your opponent to get by. Instead use jockeying and containment to do all you can to force them back into ZONE 2, or better yet ZONE 1. Your wing midfielders should be assisting in the defence of ZONE 4 at all times. Unless you are running 5 defenders then your wing defenders should be providing pressure leaving your center midfielders to stay compact and hold down ZONE 3. Also if you have true wing forwards they should be involved. Keep an eye for the "big switch" to the opposite side of the field. Make sure that you are covering open players over there to prevent attacks from the opposite side. Stay balanced!

ZONE 5

Also known as the Red Zone for obvious reasons, this is a high alert area for everyone! The number one priority is to force your opponent to either turn the ball over or get them into another less critical zone by cutting off passing lanes and staying tight on the man with the ball. Look for mistakes and exploit them. Things like a poorly touched ball, dribbling too far ahead, a bad first touch and so on are your ideal times to step in to tackle. You are now vulnerable to penalty kicks so try to avoid slide tackles unless that is all you have left. Do NOT commit to tackles unless you are confident in your success. Keep scanning the ZONE for open players, players on runs and defensive gaps and hold down ZONE 5 at all cost.

Game Management

In football, you play 90 minutes with only a short half time break. If the game starts to get out of hand, things can go downhill quickly as adjustments are tough to make midgame. Fortunately, you can hit the pause button and take all the time you want to catch your breath and get your thoughts together. In this section of the guide, we are going to take a look at how to manage a game to get those three precious points that come with victory.

Momentum

Football is a game of momentum, and FIFA 09 captures this perfectly! If you give up an important goal, beware as the onslaught may be forthcoming. When the momentum shifts away from you in the game, your players are slower, they make more passing/trapping mistakes, and they are easier to knock off the ball. Several times we have seen a comfortable 2-0 game turn into a 3-2 defeat as the CPU goes on a 5 minute tear.

When you sense the momentum begin to shift away from your team, slow down the pace of the game and work possession. Make safe passes and try to avoid challenges with physical players. After a few minutes, you'll even things out and can begin to re-establish your game plan.

Conversely, if you score a backbreaker of a goal and sense the winds of change are blowing, then you might want to turn up the pressure. Shift to a pressing mentality and try to force your opponent into another mistake and a cheap turnover goal.

Match Ups

With 20 outfield players running around, there are places that you can hide your weaknesses. A good opponent, however, will find your weaker players and exploit them mercilessly. You should do the same. Always be on the lookout for matchups that favour your team.

Try to get your fastest attacker matched up against the other team's slowest defender. Look for opportunities to match a big strong striker up against a slightly built defender. If you have a large height advantage on your frontline, whip cross after cross into the box and try to bang home a header. Good game planning and tactics can negate many physical advantages, but you will find some extra chances if you play to the most favourable matchup.

Fatigue and Substitutions

FIFA 09 has a very realistic fatigue engine. Smart players will keep an eye on their fatigue and keep their team fresh so they can close out the game. The game

is geared so that players start to hit a fatigue wall around the 60th to 65th minute. This can vary according to the style of play that has been employed.

If the team has been running a full field-pressing defensive scheme, then players will gas out earlier than the 60th minute. If you play a slower, more deliberate pace and lay off the Sprint button, then your players will last longer. In any event, 60 minutes is a good rule of thumb as far as being mindful of fatigue.

Each player's fatigue meter has two parts to it. There is the overall stamina part of the meter and the Sprint stamina. Players can only sprint for a certain period of time before they have to slow down and recover. As the game progresses, their sprint endurance decreases. When the fatigue meter drops below 50%, players begin to lose their top end speed. With a fatigue meter of 25% or less, sprinting is no longer possible. If this happens, it's time to get this player out of the game.

There are three basic types of substitutions that you will make depending on the situation. The simplest one is to replace a player that has taken an injury. Many times during a game you will see a guy take a whack and go down holding a knee or leg. The player will usually get up after a moment or two, but his effectiveness may be slightly reduced while he plays through the injury.

Sometimes the injury will be severe enough that the player has to step off the field for a bit. Usually if they take another hit, they are going to be done for the day and you'll need to take them off.

The second type of substitution is to replace a tired player. If a player has performed at a very high work rate and covered lots of ground, he may need a replacement around the 60-65th minute. Older players also will need to come out about this time, as their stamina is not as good as younger players. Once you play with a team a couple of times, you will see how their players last using your tactic of choice.

For example, with Manchester United, you will often want to make a 65-70th minute sub for Paul Scholes. This is a great time to bring in the fresh legs of a player like Anderson. Ryan Giggs also makes a great wing/forward substitution for Manchester United late in the game.



Usually with stamina related substitutions you are replacing like players. You'll send in an attacking mid for an attacking mid or a striker for striker. The third type of substitution you'll make is a tactical one. If you are down late in a game, possibly you bring in a striker to replace your fourth midfielder. Or you might pull a striker and put in a defensive midfielder to try to hold down a slim lead in the dying moments of the game. One type of substitution that we have found to be

effective is to bring a speed burner off the bench as a late (80th + minute) replacement. Most teams don't sub out their wing defenders. If they have lost a step late in the game, then your fresh striker can usually get behind them for an attack on goal. Theo Walcott with Arsenal is a deadly late game substitution along these lines.

Finishing Off a Game

There are few things worse than blowing a late lead when you have the victory in hand. The opposition will make desperate attacks at your goal, literally throwing everybody forward in an attempt to equalize. You know to weather the storm and hopefully pop off a counter attack to put the game out of reach.

When you have a one-goal lead going into the final five minutes or so, you will need to change up your approach if you are going to complete the win. Look to change your mentality to a defensive one. This will bring more players behind the ball and they will be less likely to charge off down the pitch. Consider using the Possession Quick Tactic and turning Counter Attacks on.

Don't take any chances. If you get under pressure, clear the ball out of bounds or high down the field. You are killing time here, not trying to play pretty football. Keep possession as much as you can, but don't risk losing the ball deep in your own third. The opposing team will most often be pressing hard at this stage.

Look to get the ball to the outside and hit a striker on a through ball. We have had many games from 1-0 nail biters to 3-0 romps when we break a couple of players free later in the game. You can also look for the 50-yard strike in the last minute or two of the game. Often the opposing keeper will come up into the box if the team wins a corner kick in your end. Release as quickly as possible and try to get a long shot on goal before the keeper can get back.



If you are on the wrong end of a one-goal game, then you have no choice but to go for broke in the last 5-10 minutes of the game. A loss is a loss whether it is by one goal or two. Crank your mentality up to Ultra Offensive. Put an extra striker or two in the game and bomb the ball up. You have to go for broke and hope that your last-ditch assault on the net is good enough.