

Teaching players to position "off" the ball to face forward to receive it.



Often players position to receive the ball with their back to play.

These session plans show some ideas on how to position and instead "Face Forward" or at least Half Turned or three quarters turned rather than positioning square and facing back.

Simple movements can create more space for a player to then be at an advantage in their 1 v 1's against opponents all over the field of play.

It can be the difference between keeping the ball and losing it.

Much is down to creating the correct Feet preparation and Body positions.

We start with Central Strikers.



Central Striker movements



Central Strikers 9 times out of 10 position face backwards against a center back.

This is a fact, watch any youth striker and you will see this. It still ok to do this but there are better ways to affect the center back.

Rarely do you see a central striker come off the shoulder of a defender and FACE FORWARD.

These following slides show you how to do this various ways.

Its very simple movement and very effective movement and it causes all sorts of problems for center backs.

There is more depth and detail to this but this is a starting point to initially learn these vital movements.

Also encourage players to face FORWARD or at the very least half or three quarters turned to see what's behind and around them before receiving and so their momentum on receiving the ball is then forward not back.



Facing Forward when receiving



Example: Facing back receiving square on: difficult to see behind, often don't know where defenders are, often don't know where team mates in advance of you are. First touch or movement is usually back.

Get **Side on** (half or three quarters turned), so the player can see defenders positioning, teammates positioning, where the space is in advance of them; plus first touch may be towards goal not back; so a much more attacking body position and mindset.

Center backs want you to play with your back to goal as they are then in control.

This can apply in all parts of the field, not just the central strikers.

Detail: Body position and feet preparation are vital to make this work. We MUST fix this.

Pass to the foot furthest away from the defender so the receiver can use their body to protect the ball, if they are half or three quarters turned to face forward on reception if marked tight.

A Half a yard off pass is the difference between keeping the ball and losing it.
So accuracy is a MUST.

Have each offensive player in black mark a defending opponent, or visa-versa.

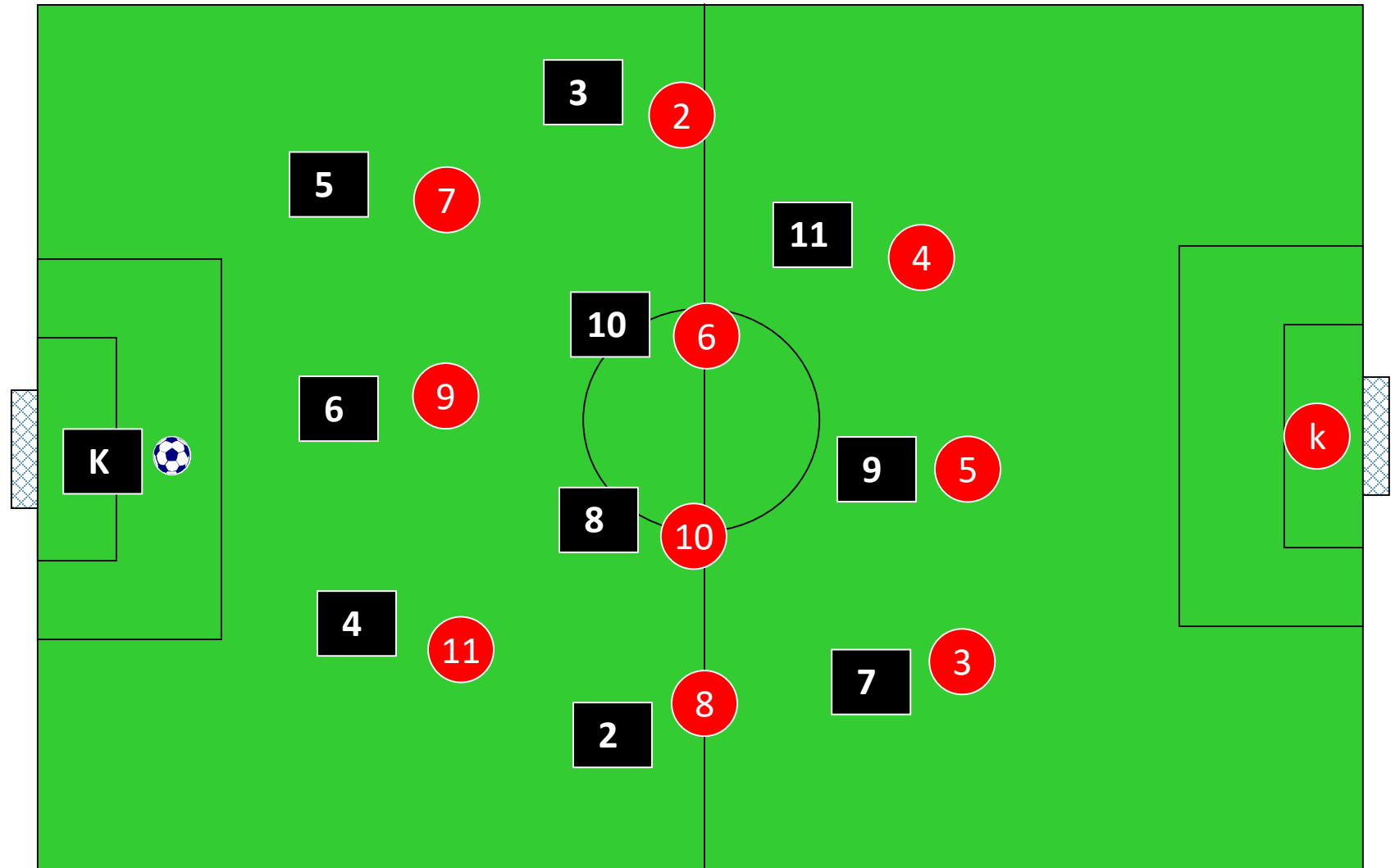
Sounds daft when we have possession of the ball; but this is what often occurs with poor positioning.

This is a very exaggerated situation but is done to show how not to position off the ball.

Players must always **SCAN** the field in every position to find open spaces to move into; and free themselves of being marked by an opponent.

They must also try to position so they are facing forward or at the very least Half Turned.

A simple exercise to show how players often position



This is the “Start Position” of the session. Everyone is marked.

As they move to spaces they must **SCAN** the field to see where opponents are, teammates are, where other spaces might be.

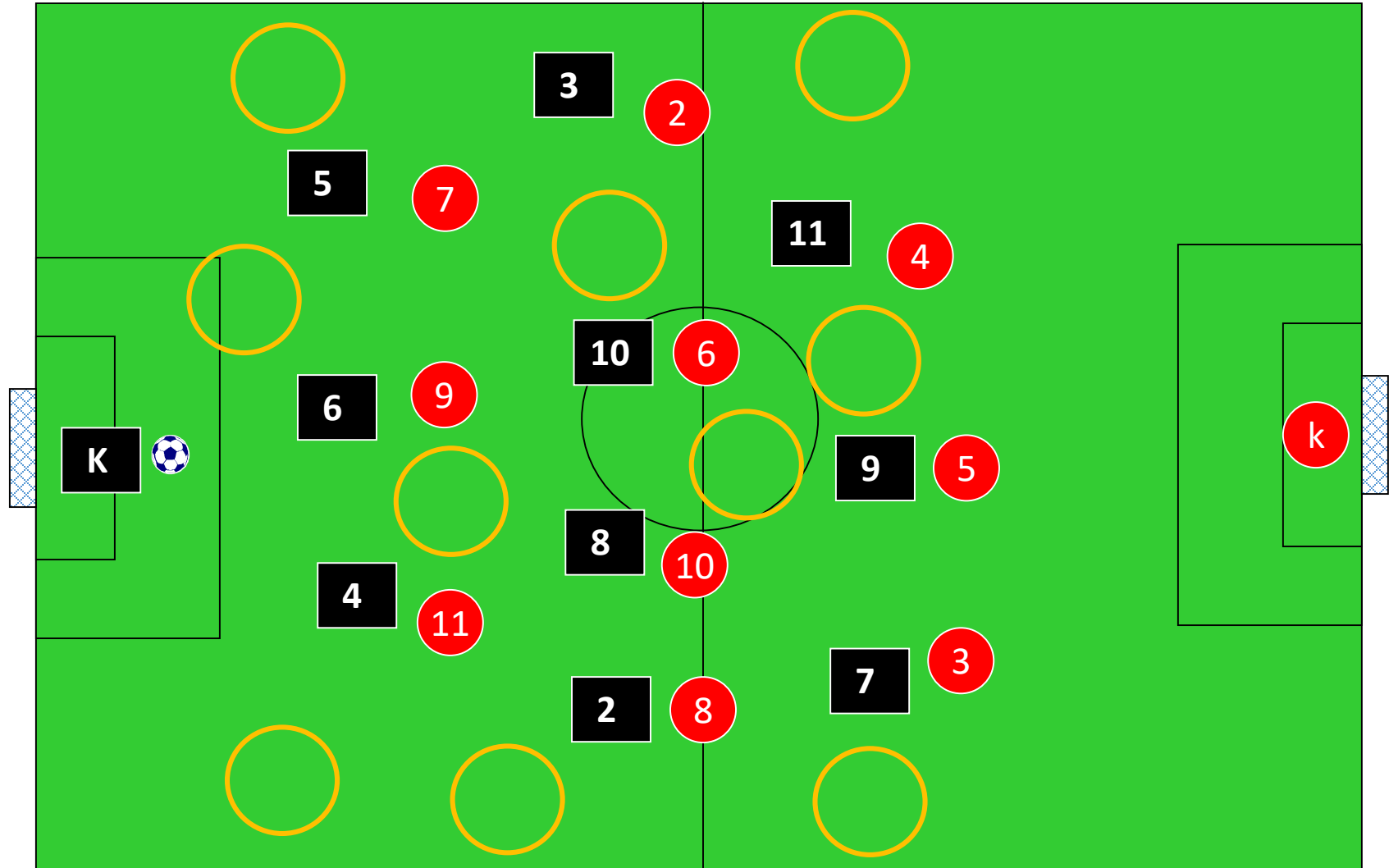
They must be aware of all this information **BEFORE** they receive the ball.

So as they move they **SCAN**.

They do **NOT** just focus on their immediate space to move to.

They do not just focus on the ball.

Showing potential spaces to move to



Just ideas; not set in Stone; there are many other spaces they can move to but this just serves as an example.

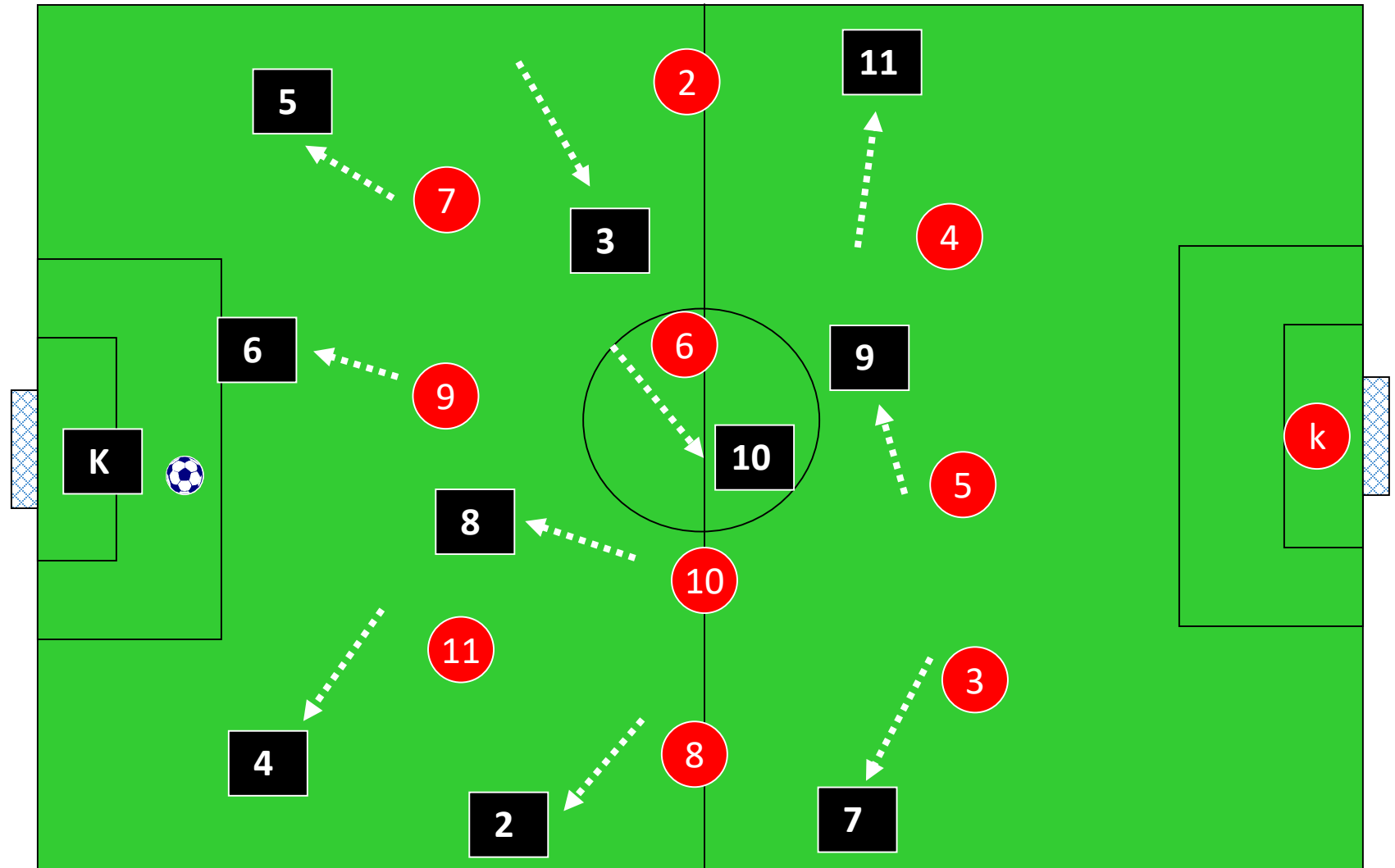
Now have a signal Word where attacking players now move to position OFF the ball in open spaces and be free from the defenders.

Have the defenders stand still initially to show how effective the movements of the attacking players are.

I believe; though this is exaggerated; it serves a purpose to show players how they often position wrong and how they can fix it.

Next progression have defenders adjusting as the attacking team adjusts (A bigger challenge to get free) and then just play.

A simple exercise to show how players often position



Every outfield player moves off their immediate marker into open space.

STRIKER

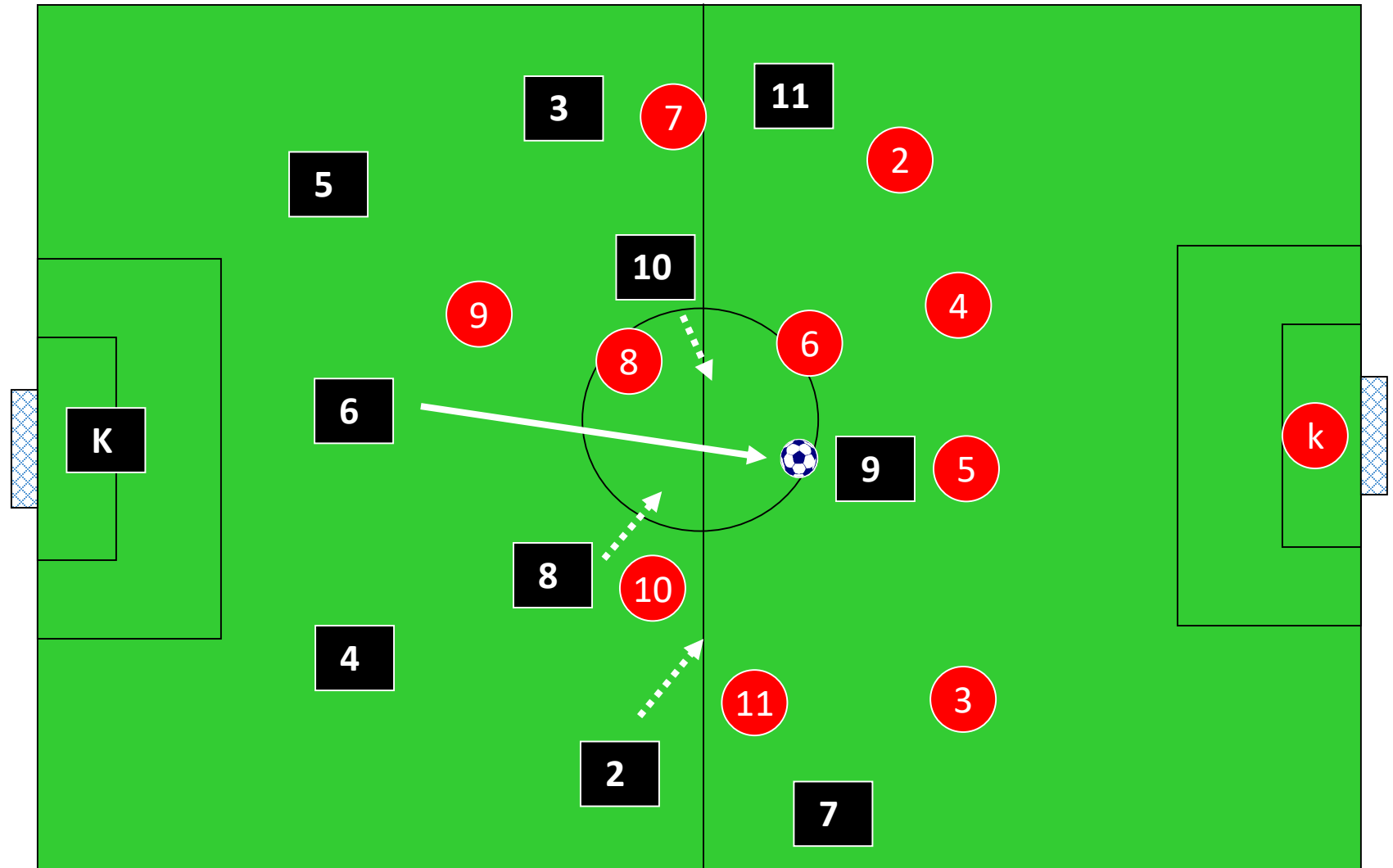
Striker (9) is now facing backwards, defender (5) is in charge but (9) can still bring people into play facing back from him or her.

But its not nearly as offensively threatening as how (9) positions in the next diagrams; but it Works too; as long as there is support around (9).

Players move into open passing lanes with the ball going back.

So still somewhat effective (9) being more of a "target player" for others.

1. Striker facing backwards to play: It works



Usual stance with (9)'s back to the defender and to the goal. (5) is in charge.

STRIKER

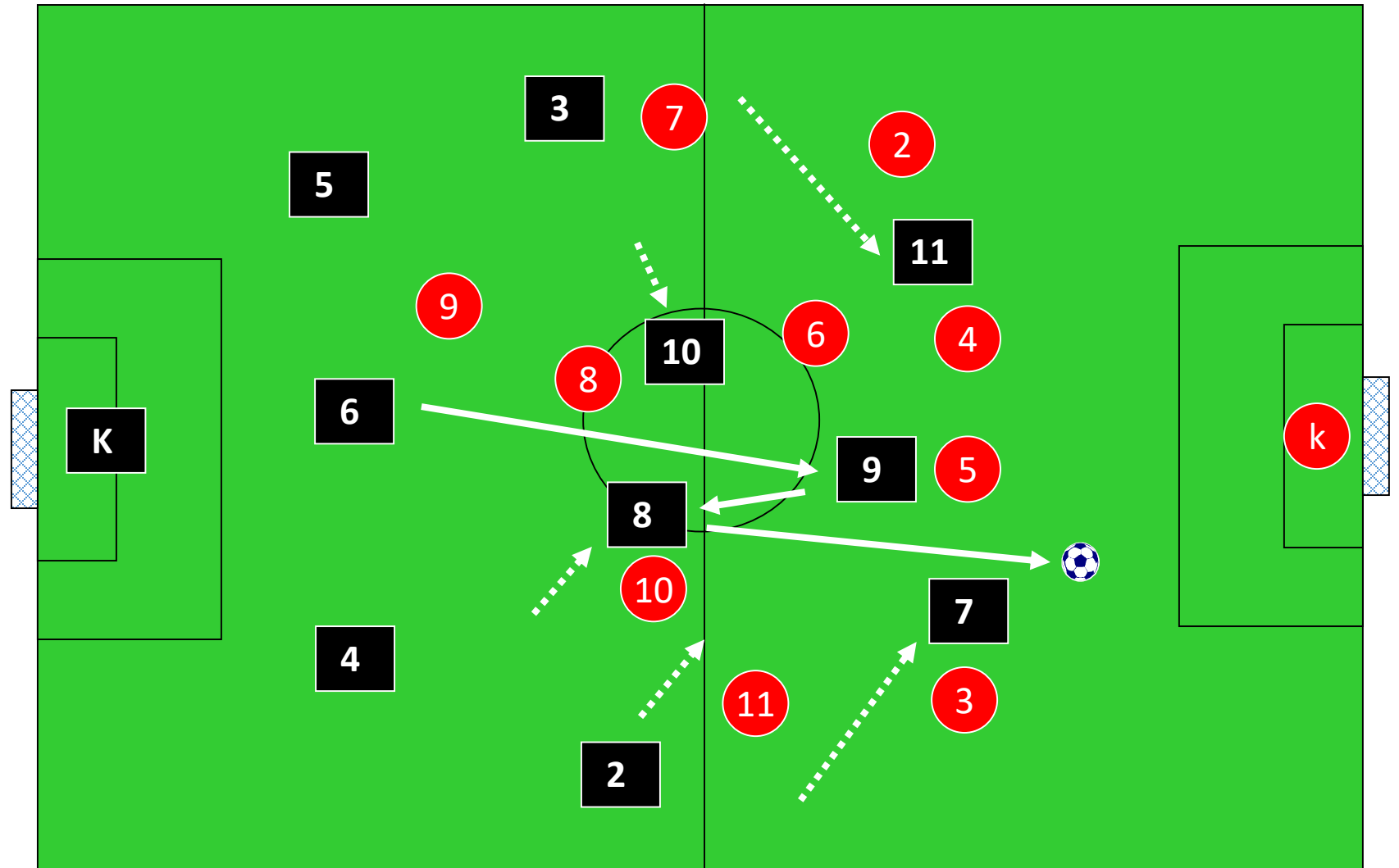
So we support behind (9) through (2), (10) and (8); and we also support in front through (7) and (11) in this example.

Here we pass into (9) who lays it off to (8) who plays (7) in on a "third man run".

Timing is of the essence here so as not to be offside.

Everyone plays the way they face.

2. Third man runs



(9) Into feet, lays it off to (8) who plays a forward PASS to (7); making the support run in front of the ball

3. Movement across the defenders

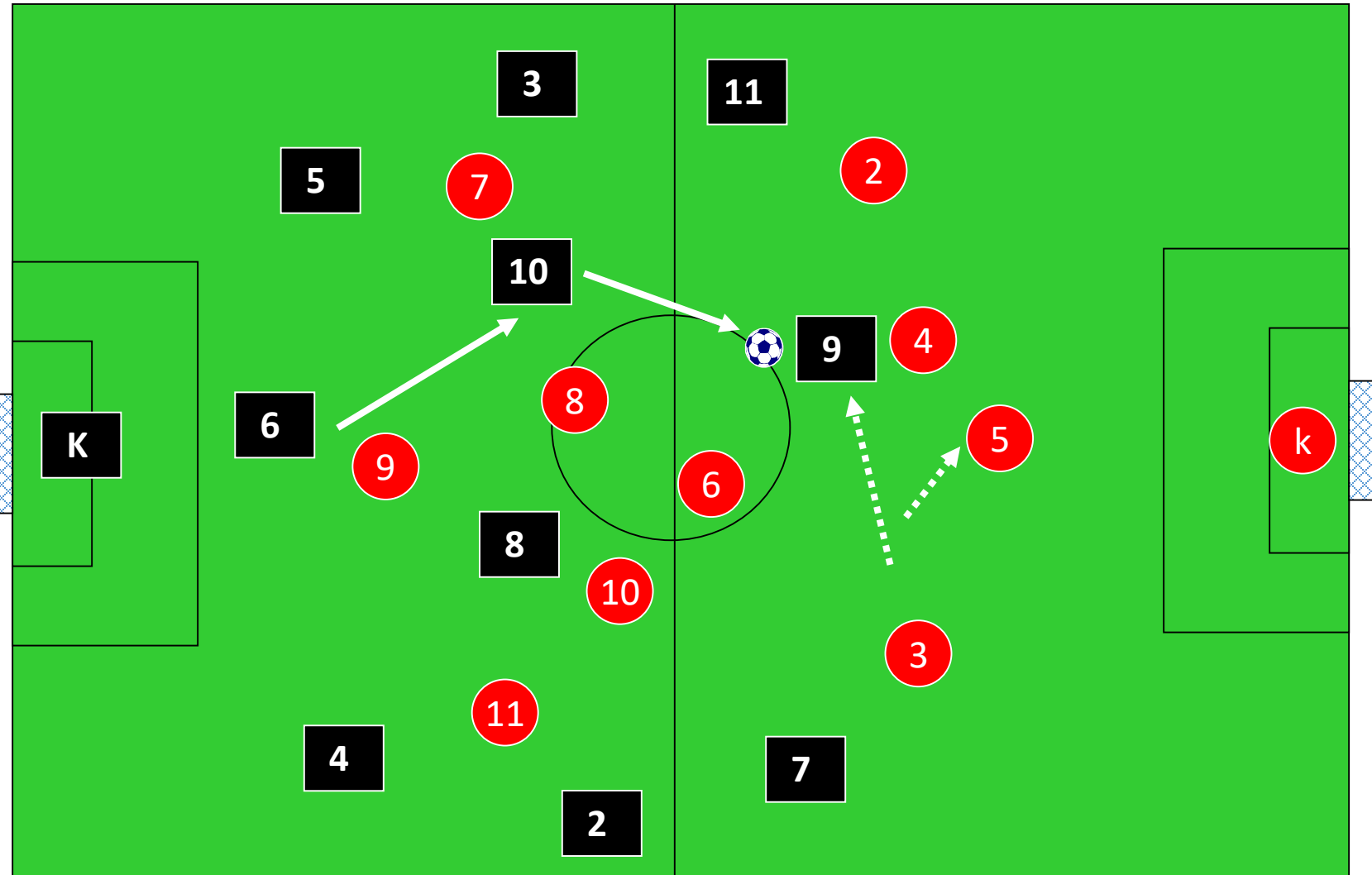
Striker (9) moves across the defenders and thus is often facing backwards on receiving.

Center back (5) passes (9) onto center back (4) easily and drops in to cover.

At this stage they are very secure defensively.

(9) can still bring players into the game as has been shown.

But (9) can go the opposite way and then it is a 1 v 1 with (5) and not a 2 v 1 against (4) and (5) as in this slide.



Strikers 9 times out of 10 will move towards the ball as it is moving. That is not wrong but there are better and more effective movements to make. Center backs want you to make these movements so they are in command of you.

The Crespo:

Striker (9) is now facing forward, defender (5) has to turn so (9) has an advantage already physically.

(9) Should be as high as possible in positioning without being offside.

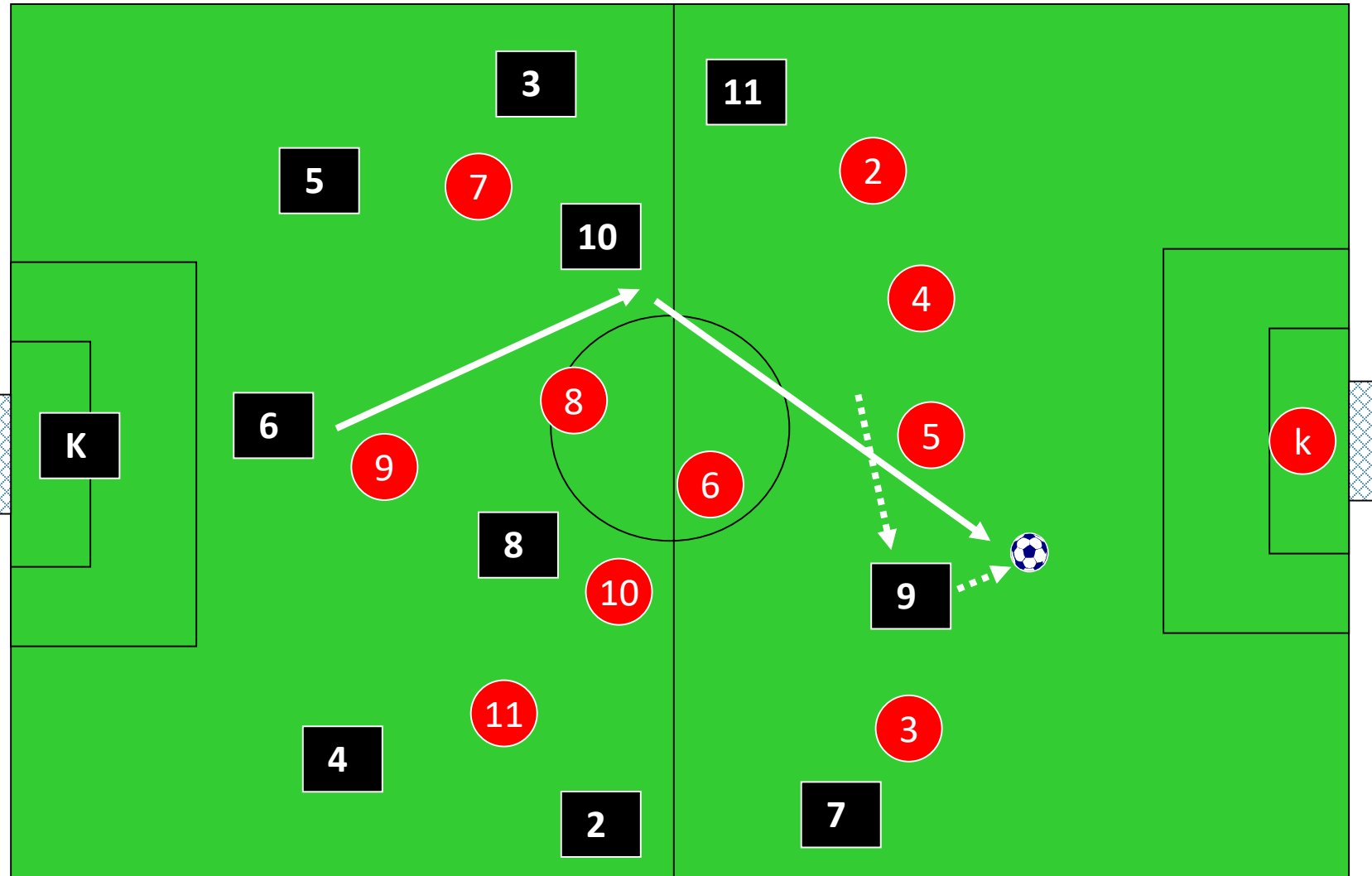
(9) Must look across the back line to see this.

Diagonal through balls are best for this not straight passes.

(4) Is the other side of (5) so cannot cover for him or her.

Winger (7) occupies defender (3).

4. Off the Shoulder Runs AWAY from the ball



Very simple movement to get free. May be only 3 yards in distance but now (9) is facing forward; NOT BACK. As the ball travels from (6) to (10), (9) uses that "time" to make his / her OFF THE SHOULDER movement from (5) to be free in open space.

5. Off the Shoulder Runs: Away and cut back

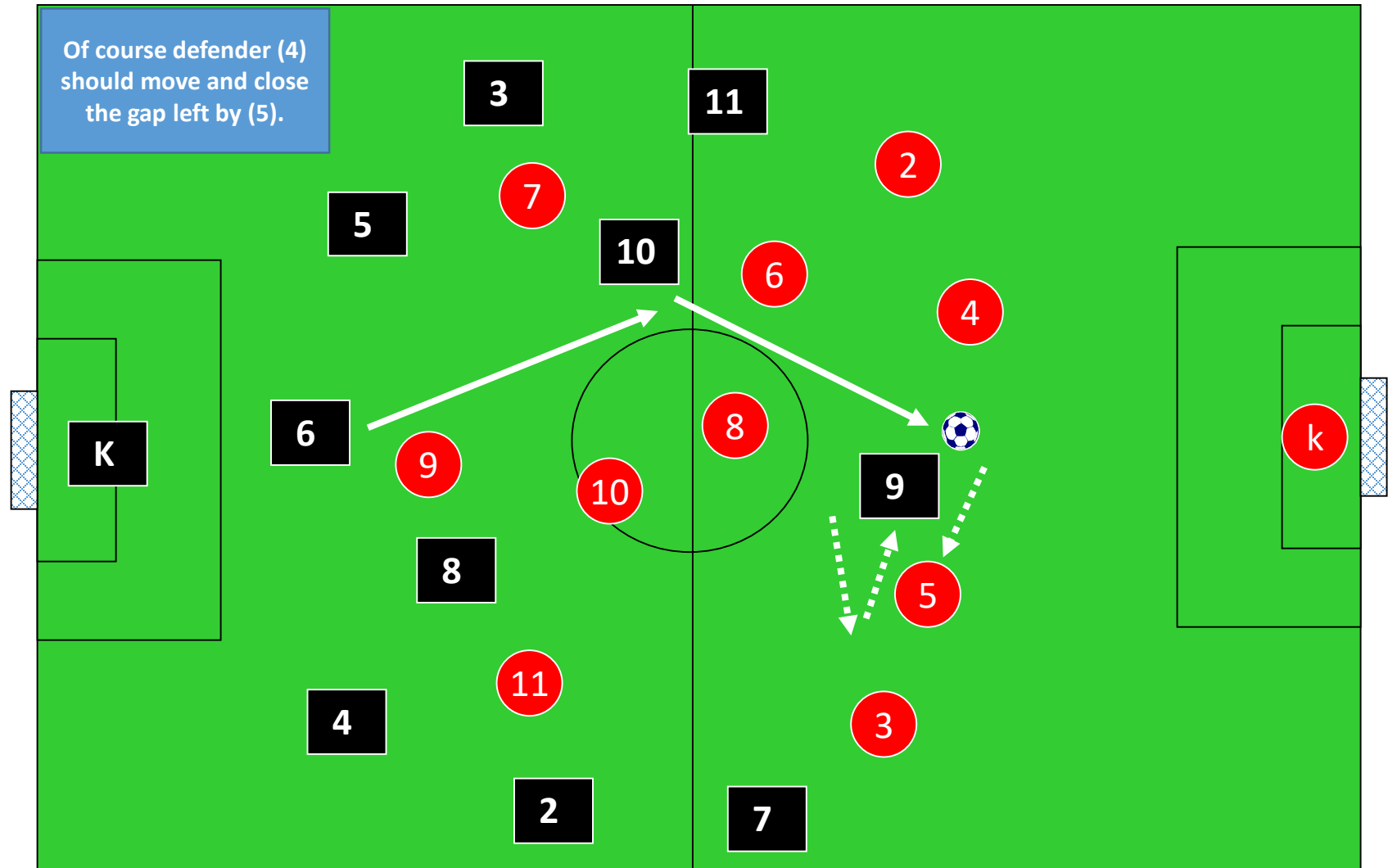
Striker (9) comes off the shoulder to get away from center back (5).

(5) comes with (9) and stays tight.

So (9) can now either check to the ball side on, or check back across and inside (5) to receive with a through ball into space.

Center back (4) should close that gap to prevent this but if not then (9) has space to receive and run at goal.

Detail: Striker checks back as the defender plants their left foot down and is slightly off balance perhaps.



Very simple movement to get free this time (5) follows and (9) checks back into the space left. As the ball travels from (6) to (10), (9) uses that time to make his / her OPPOSITE movement.

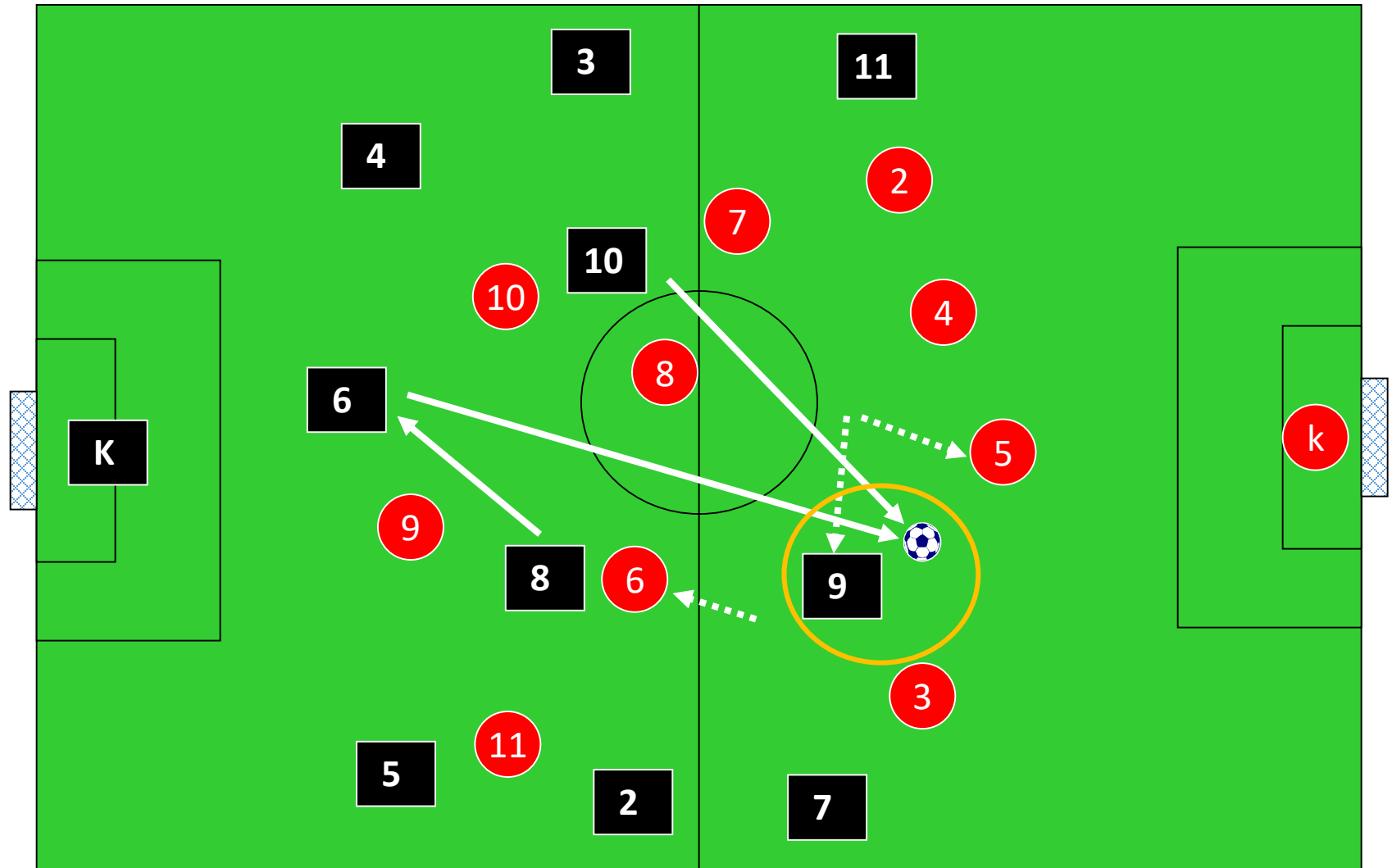
6. Off the Shoulder Runs: Defender Drops off to protect the space behind

If striker (9) is faster than center back (5) then the center backs best course of action can be to drop off into the space the ball might be played into.

This prevents the killer pass behind them.

This way (5) gives himself / herself time and space against (9) to get to the ball first if its played in behind them.

But here now instead of the ball in behind, (9) can get SIDE ON or almost facing forward, receive to feet and run at (5) 1 v 1 in the space in front and take them on.



Very simple movement to get free this time (5) drops off to protect the space behind. So (9) can Now get side on get the ball to feet and attack 1 v 1. (9) is facing forward not back.

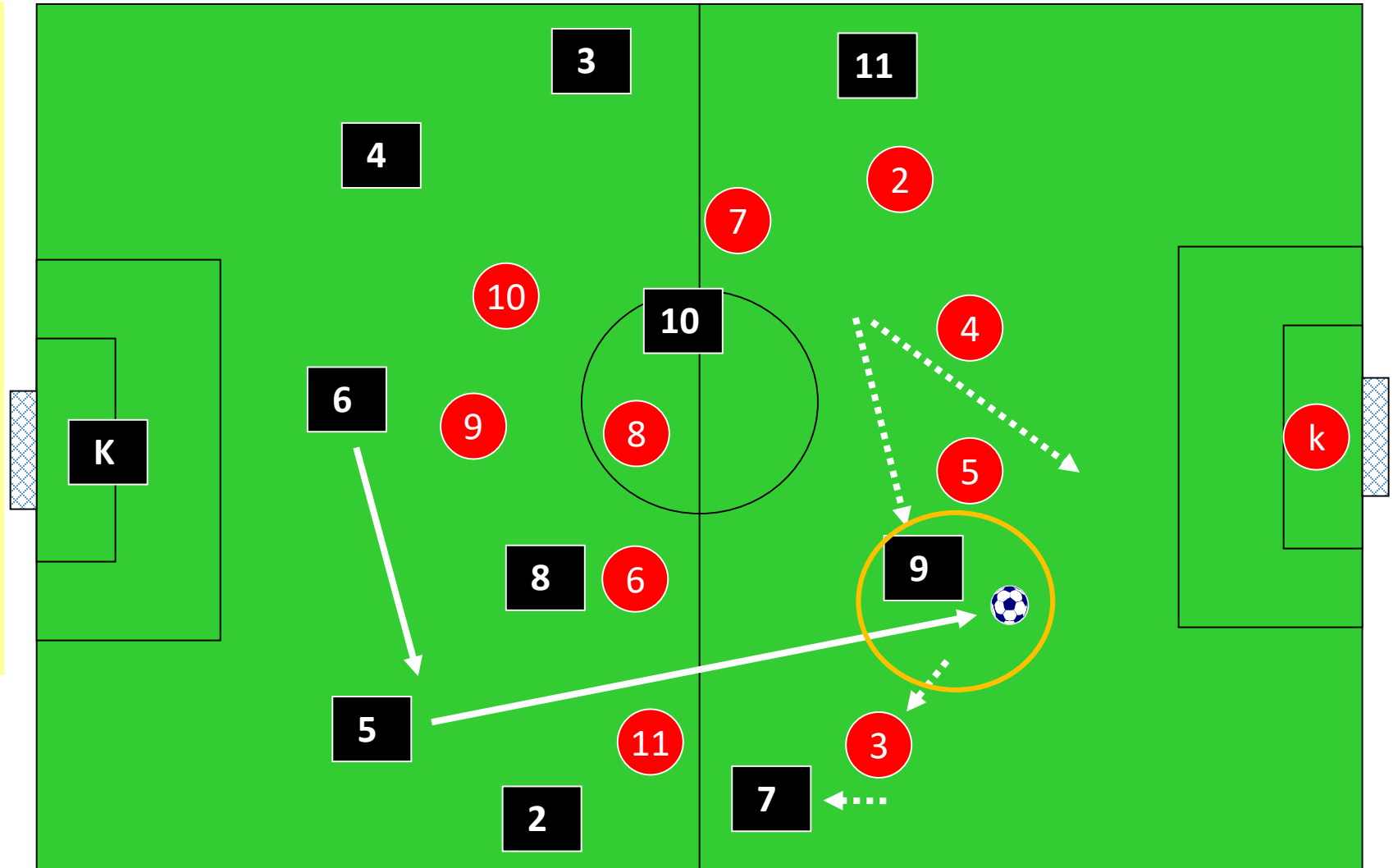
7. Opening up the Channel Pass

This is a simple pass down the channel that can be effective too.

Defender (3) is drawn to our attacking (7) which opens a gap up between defenders (3) and (5) for our striker (9) to exploit.

In this instance we can create a positive 1 v 1 situation.

Must open up the channel between defenders (5) and (3).



As the build up happens (9) moves across the center backs as late as possible; and then as fast as possible to be in the right position.

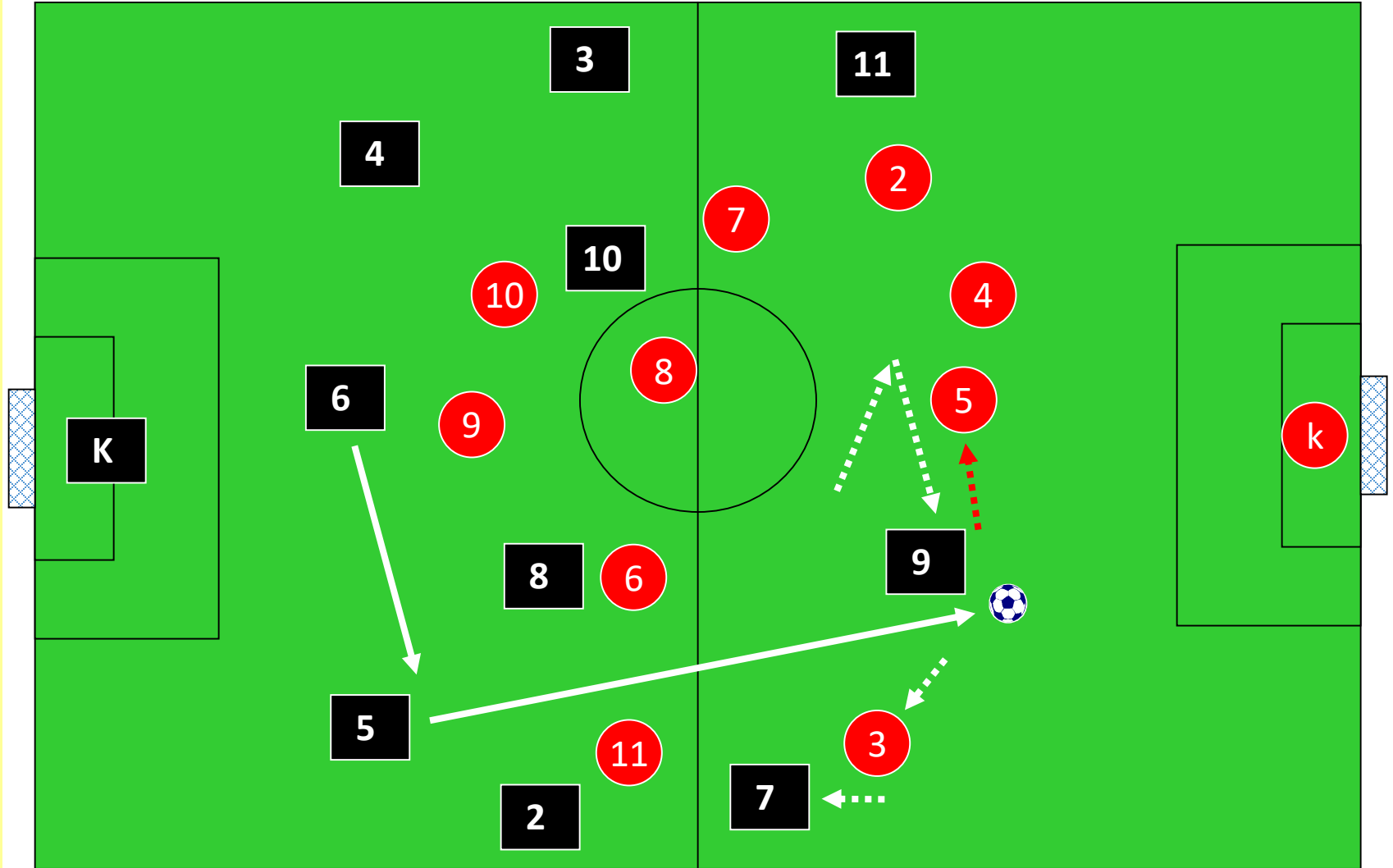
8. An Opposite run Opening up the Channel Pass

**This is a simple pass down
the channel that can be
effective too.**

BY moving AWAY from the channel space (9) creates even more space to run back into with an opposite run.

(5) Is caught with this run so it has to be timed correctly by (9), as late and as fast as possible to give (5) little time to adjust and recover defensively.

(9) Must have time to make this movement which will mean (5) must have time on the ball to deliver it.



Even better as the build up occurs and (9) has time, an OPPOSITE run can take place where (9) takes defender (5) AWAY from the space to open it up even more.

9. Short and spin back Opposite run Opening up the Channel Pass

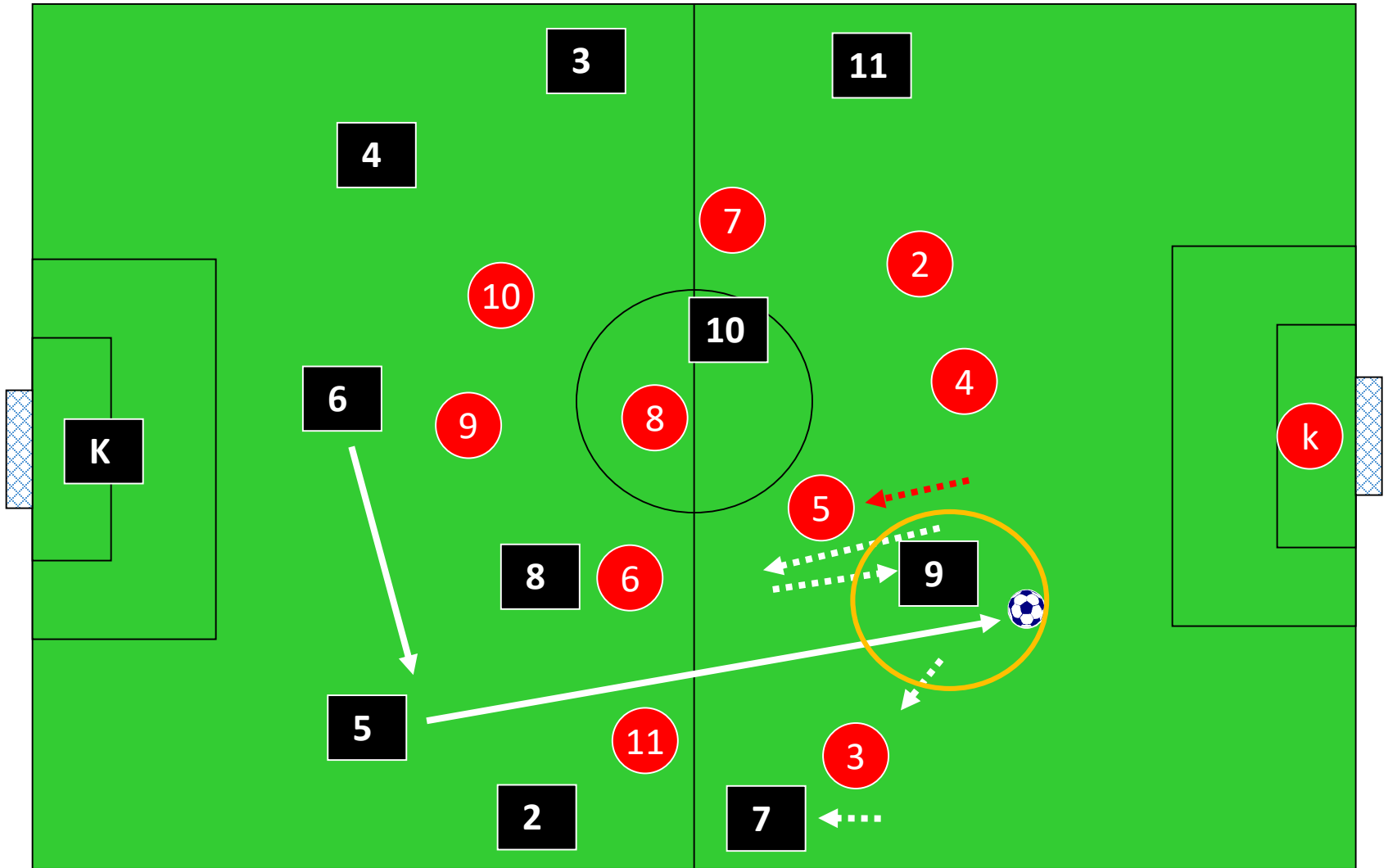
The Vialli:

**Our passing player (5)
must know this is
happening so he or she
does not play to (9)'s
feet, rather plays the ball
behind (9) into the space
created by coming short.**

The tighter defender (5)
is to (9) the better.

We can use a Signal Word by (9) to make this happen so attacking player (5) knows (9) is making the spin run.

This needs a lot of practice to make it work in the dynamics of the game situation.



A VERY simple movement. (9) draws defender (5) to the ball and then at the last moment spins back into the space created behind and down the side and behind defender (5).

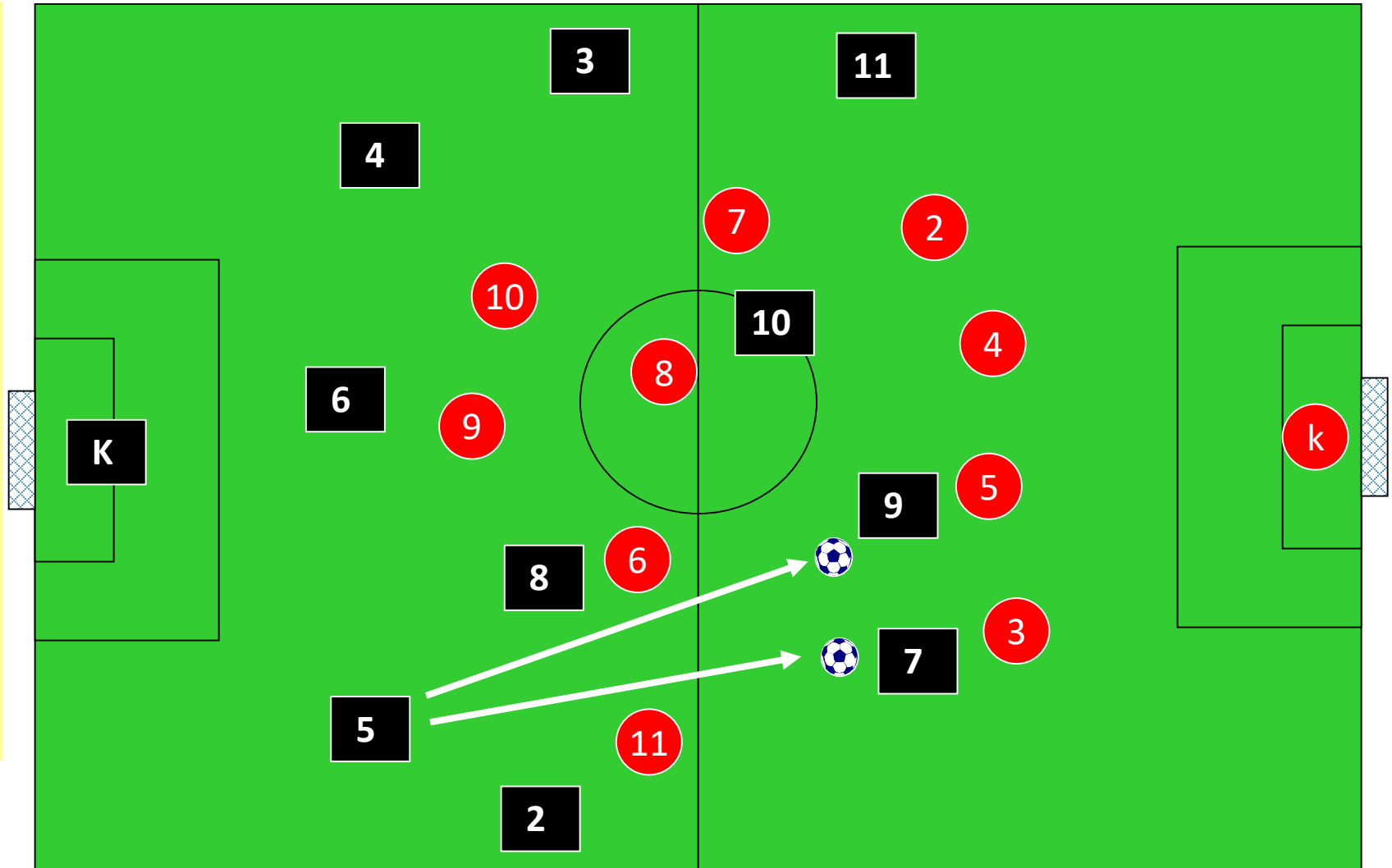
Closing down their own spaces and receiving to feet facing backwards

This is why I keep telling our players time after time to get wide.

When they dont this is what happens the space is closed up.

PLUS if (7) wants the ball they get it facing backwards and at a disadvantage (Unless a pre-planned Opposite Run).

It a common problem where we DO NOT use the FULL width of the field to open up passing lanes.



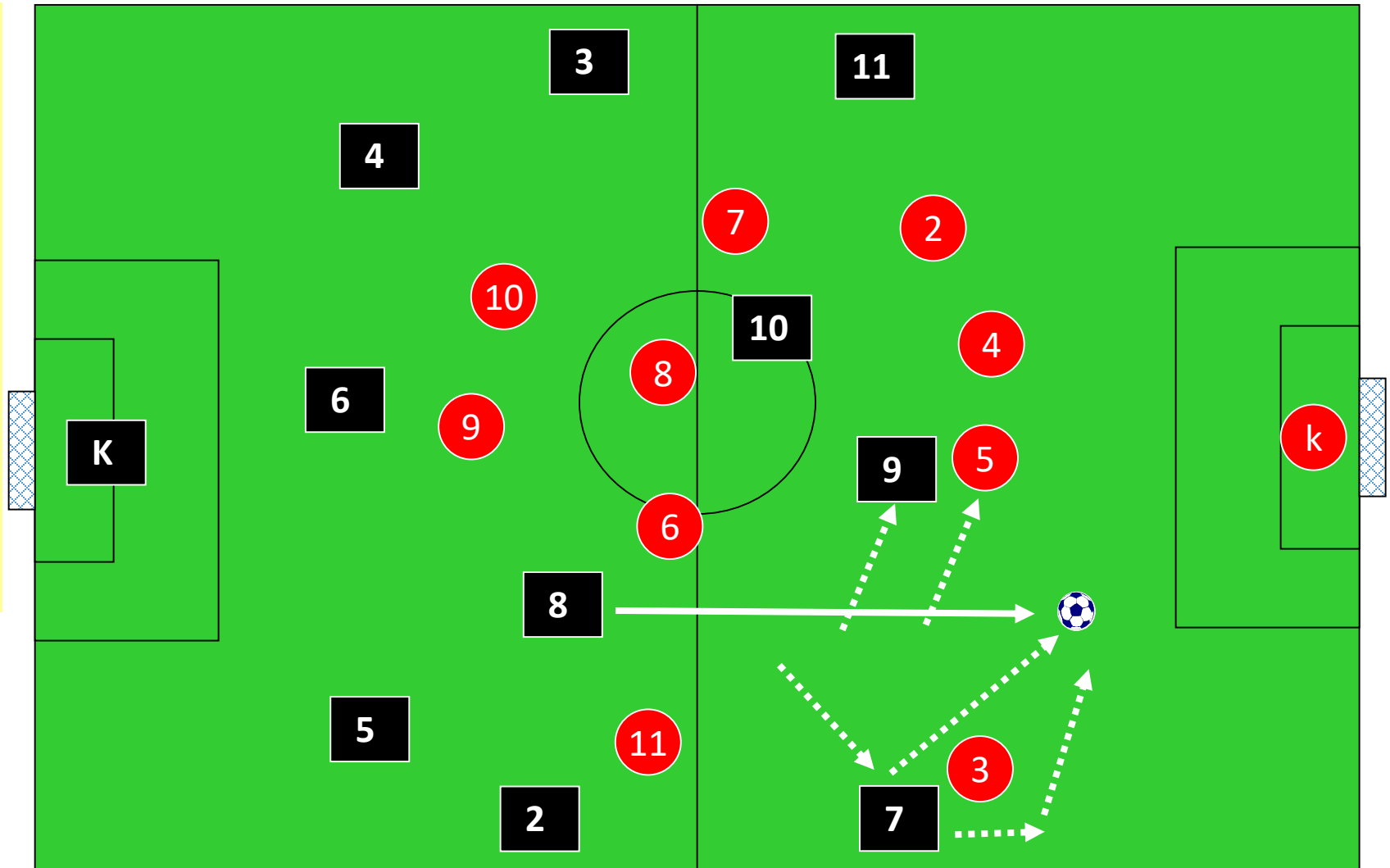
(7) Does not get wide so (3) stays central and stops the ball being played in behind for either (7) or (9). So no space behind all we can do is play to feet.

(7) Goes wide and opens the ball inside to them.

(9) Takes defender (5) away to open the space up and (7) takes defender (3) wide to cut back inside and receive on goal running and facing forward.

Some of our wide players STILL DONT UNDERSTAND this.

**Its all about timing of the run, timing of the pass.
And being in-synch together.**



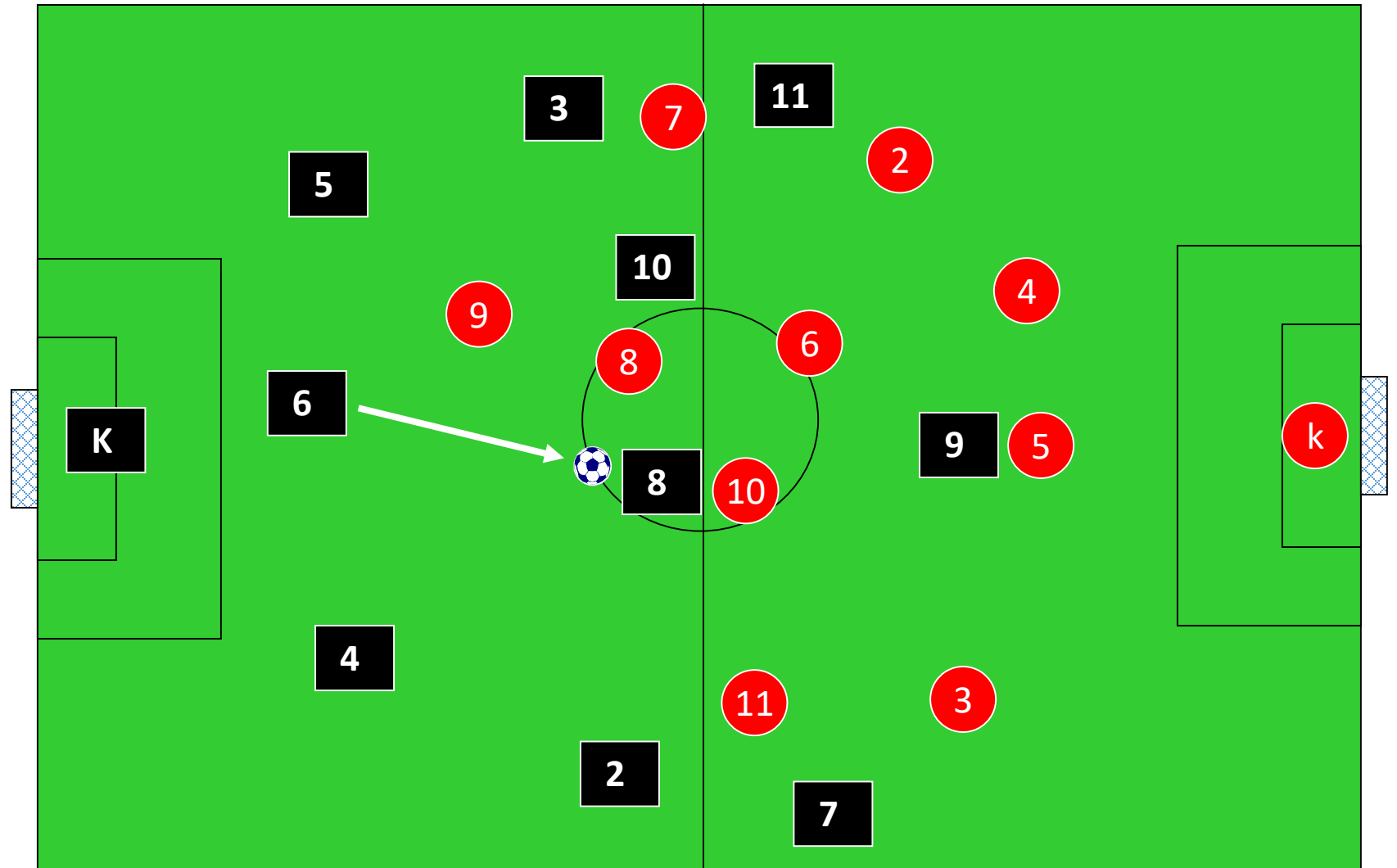
Opening the gap up between (7) and (9) for each other. Of course the same applies with (11) and (9) on the other side.

MIDFIELD PLAYERS

1. Ball into the feet of (8), it's ok we can still maintain possession but (8) is receiving facing back so often the only alternative is to pass back.

2. Also as often happens (8) will not see (10) behind them (due to not scanning the field in advance of the ball) and will attempt to turn with the ball and turn into the player and will lose possession in a dangerous area of the field.

Movements to get free can apply to midfield players too



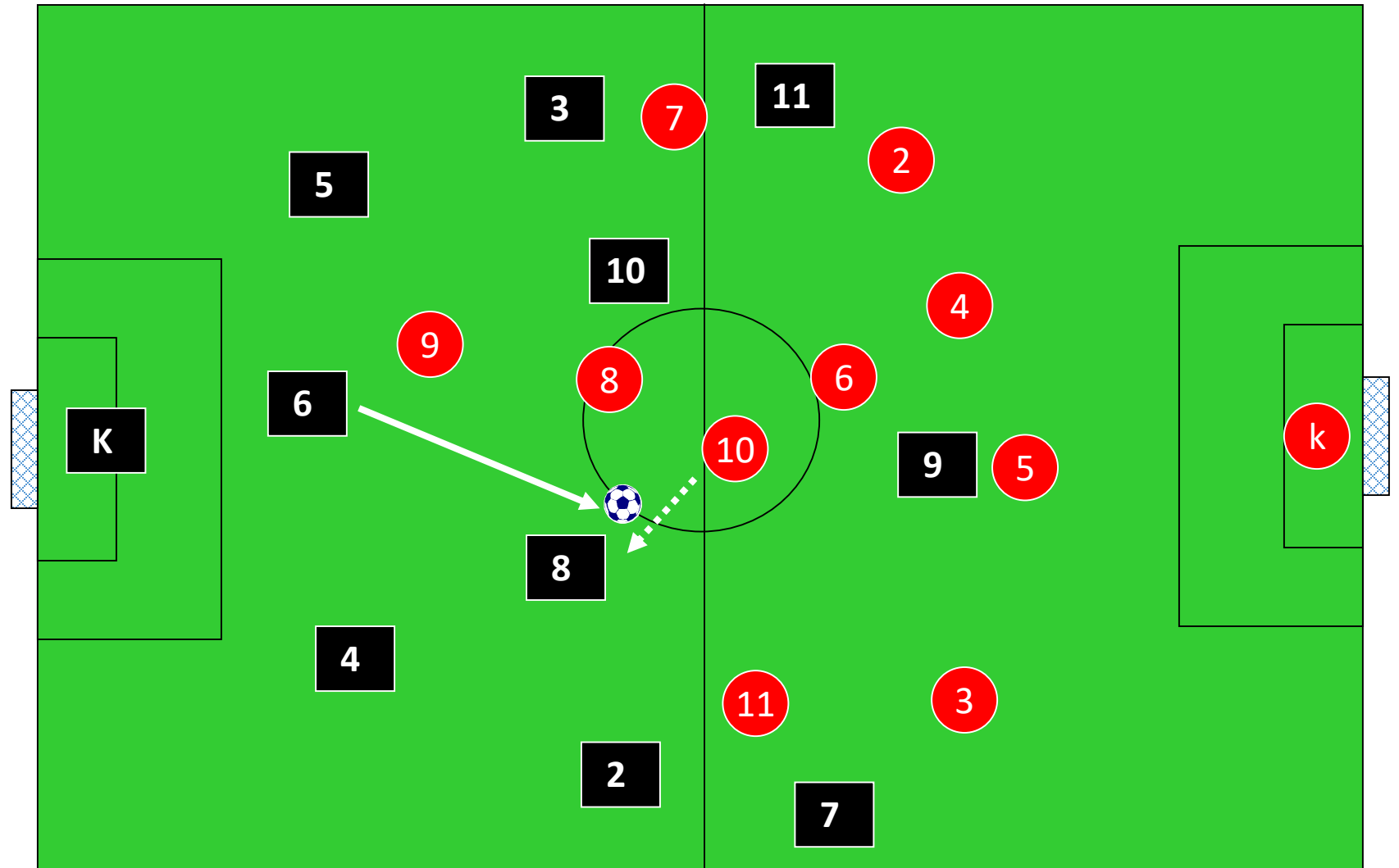
Usual stance with midfielder (8)'s back to the defender and to the goal. Defending player (10) is in charge.

MIDFIELD PLAYERS

Midfield player (8) must try to position so they are facing at least half turned but preferably facing forward not Back.

Very simple but very effective movement in tight spaces.

Midfield players: Movements to get free



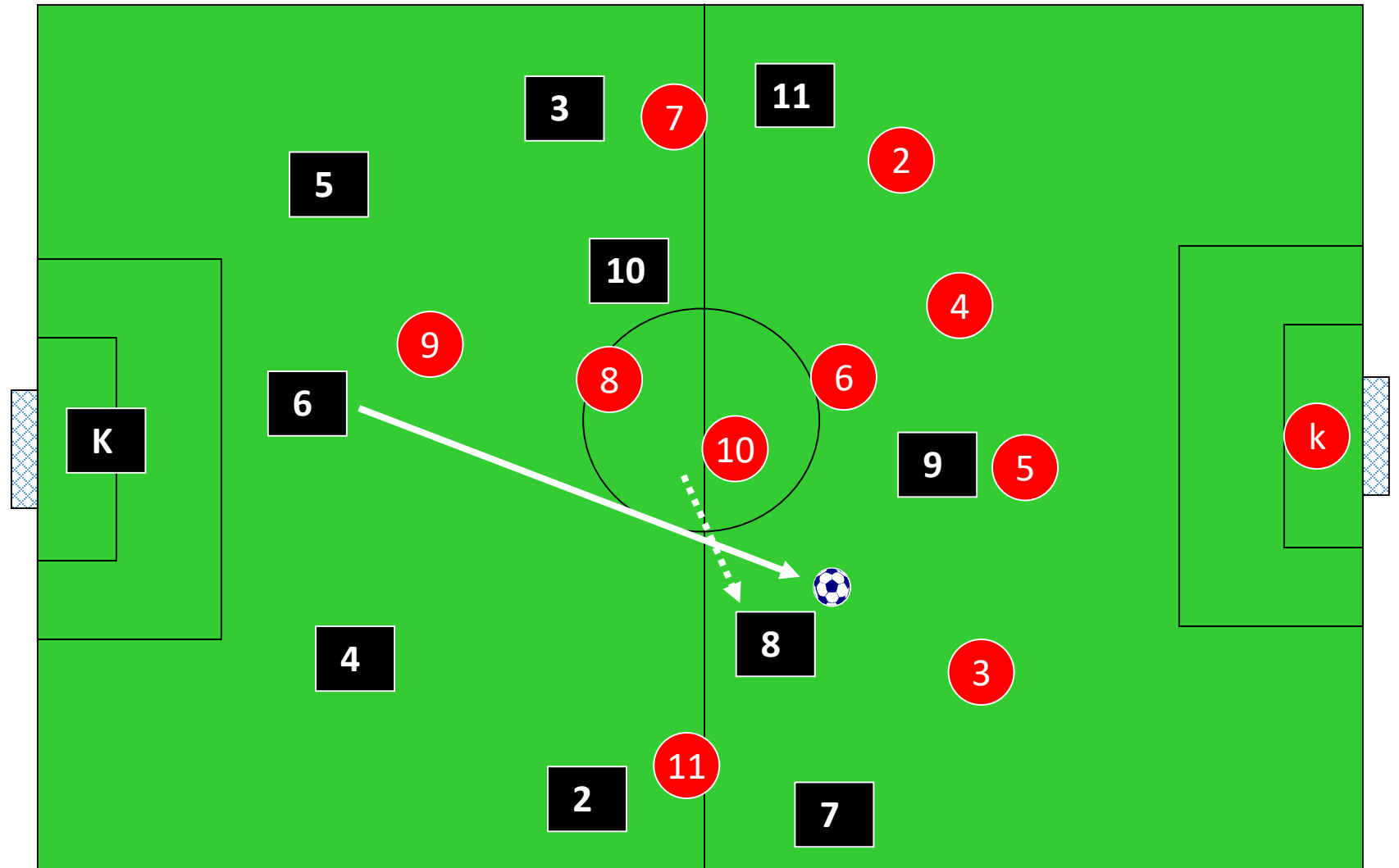
(8) Drops off from defender (10). Moving back yes, but body position so you are at least half turned facing forward not back..

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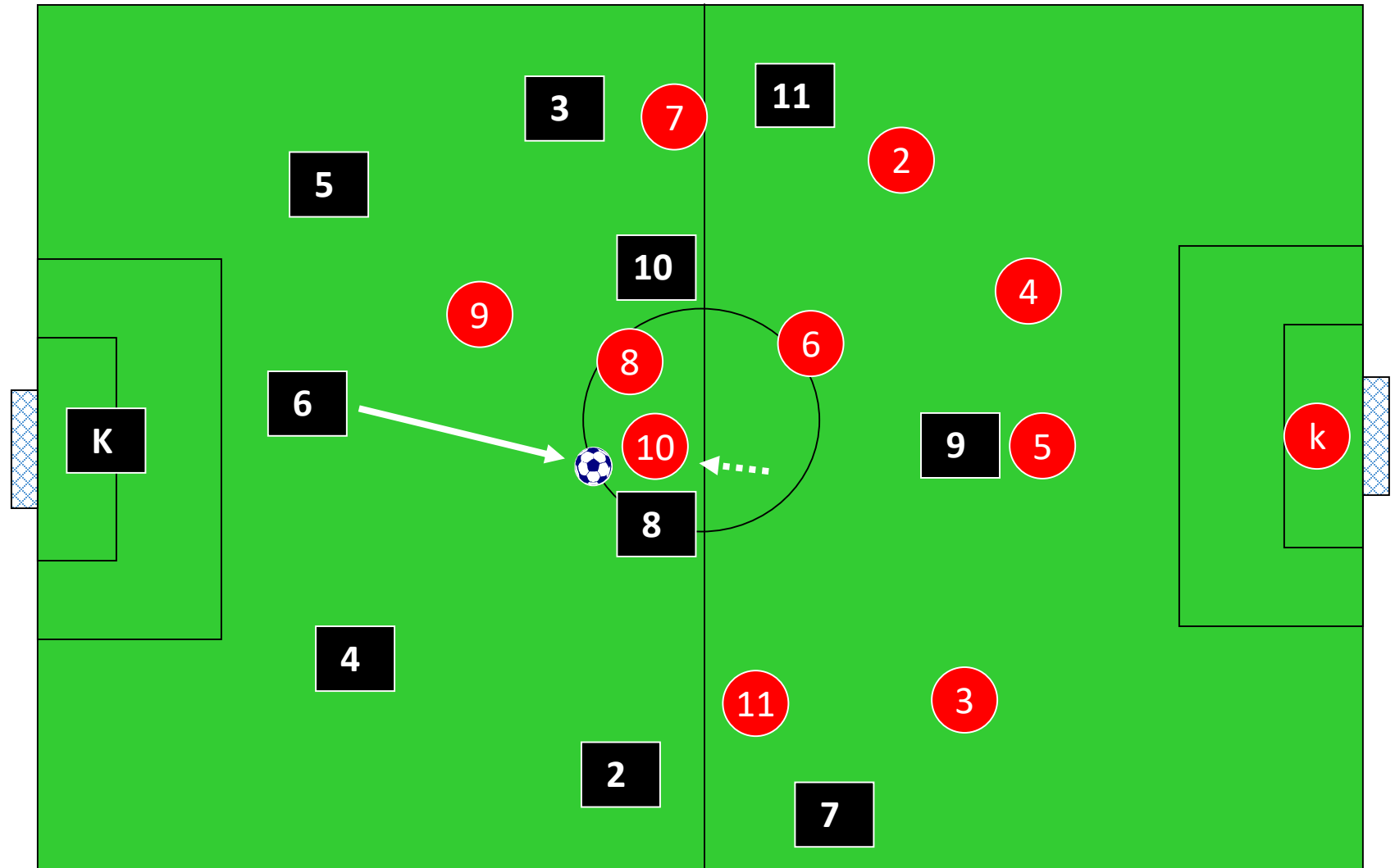
Striker (9) is now facing backwards, defender (5) is in charge but (9) can still bring people into play behind him or her.

But its not nearly as offensively threatening as how (9) positions in the next diagrams.

Players move into open passing lanes with the ball going back.

So still somewhat effective (9) being more of a "target player" for others.

This happens TOO much



Ball is apssed to the inmsde foot of (8) and defender (10) is able to intercept and attack us in a dangerous área.

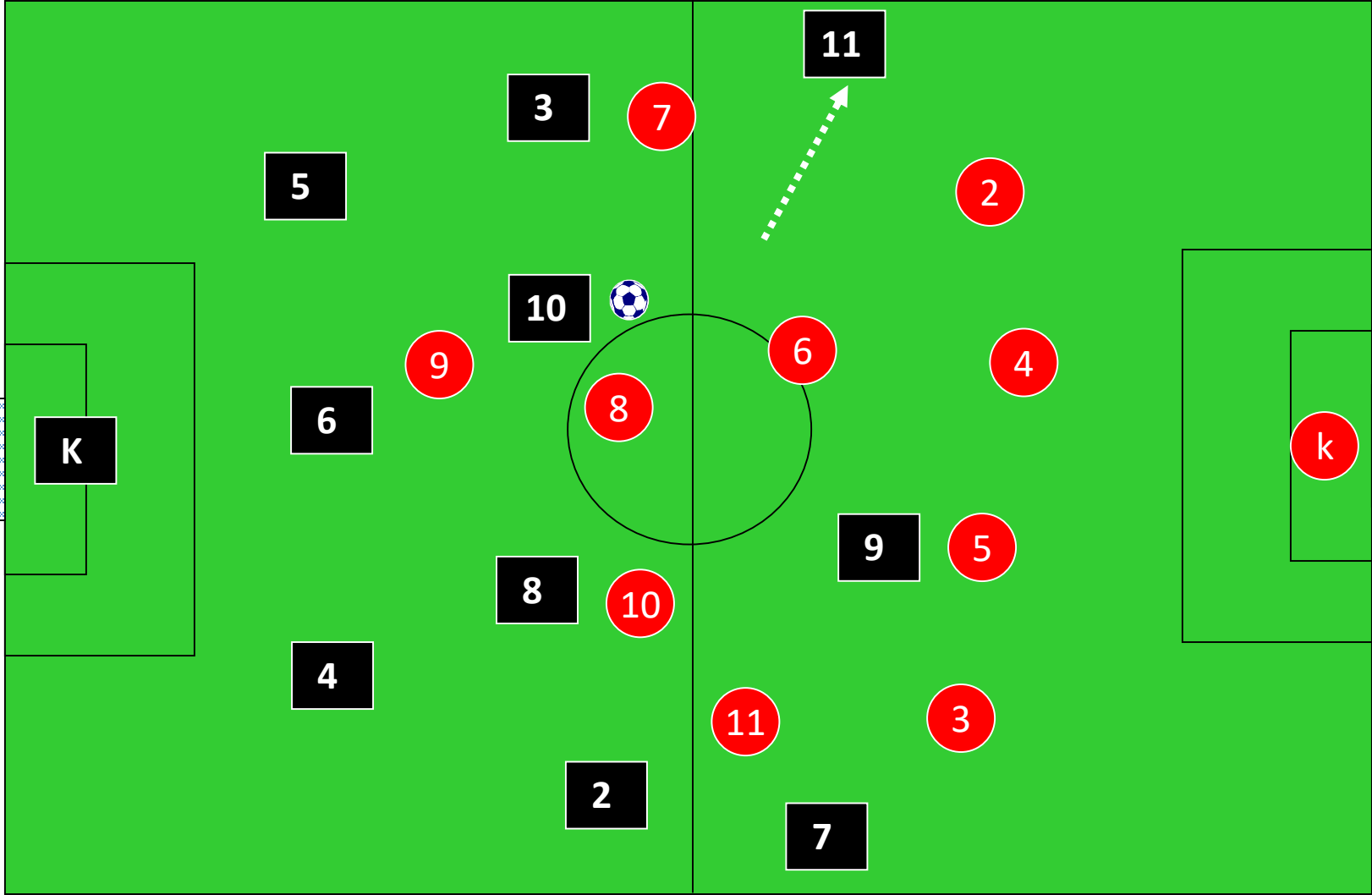
WINGERS

Choices of the winger and the passer can depend on the positioning of defender (2).

1. (2) very tight, then (11) can impart an inverted run inside into the space between (2) and (5).
2. (2) stands off and protects the inside space so pass into (11)'s feet for a 1 v 1 at pace.
3. (2) positioned too high, (10) pass the ball in behind (2) for (11) to run on to.
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Wingers positioning and "facing forward"



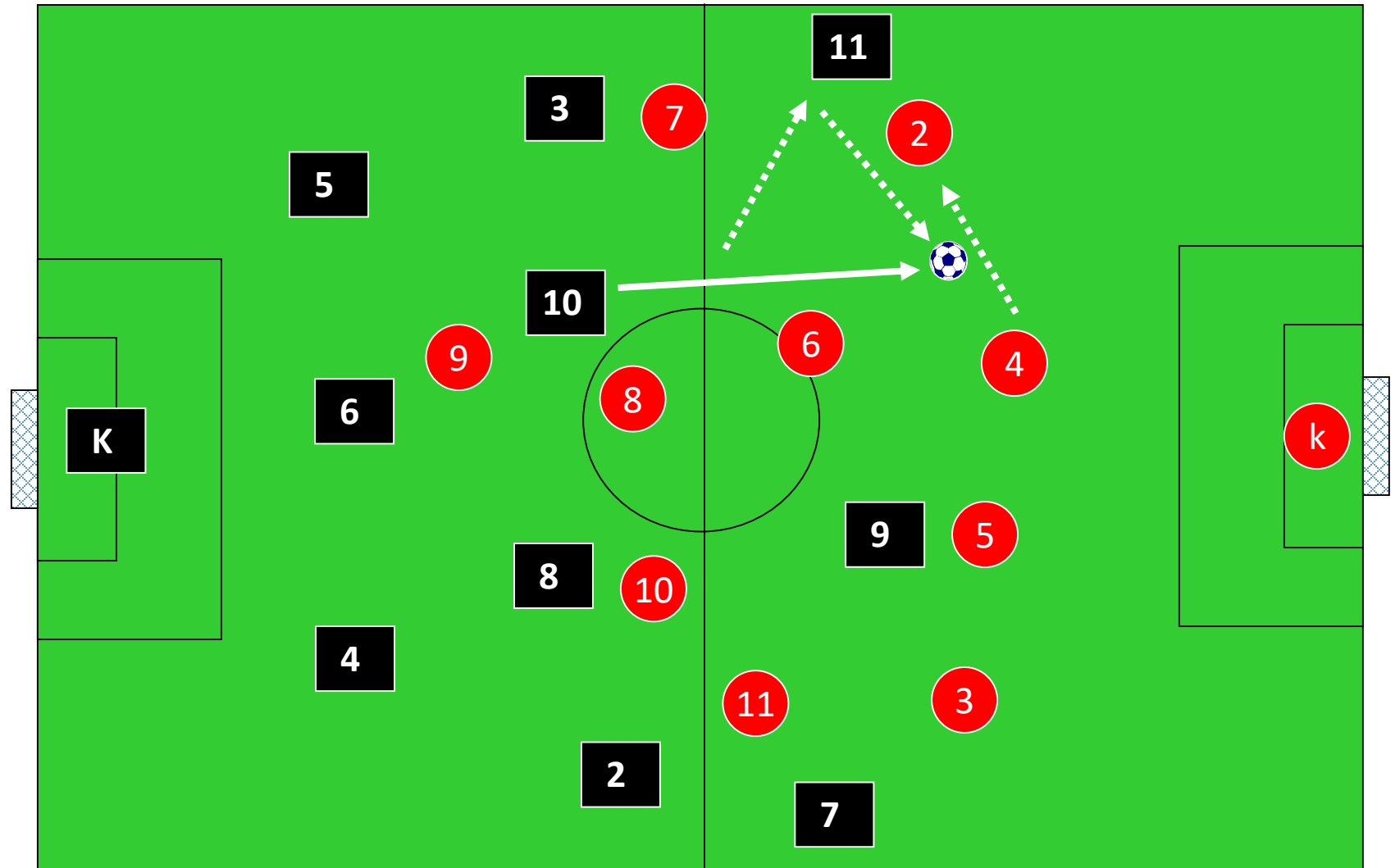
Winger positions touchline wide so they can see all the field. (2) stays off them so (10) can pass to feet of (11) to attack 1 v 1 at pace. Now sets (2) a problem.

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Wingers inverted run into space



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Wingers getting in behind



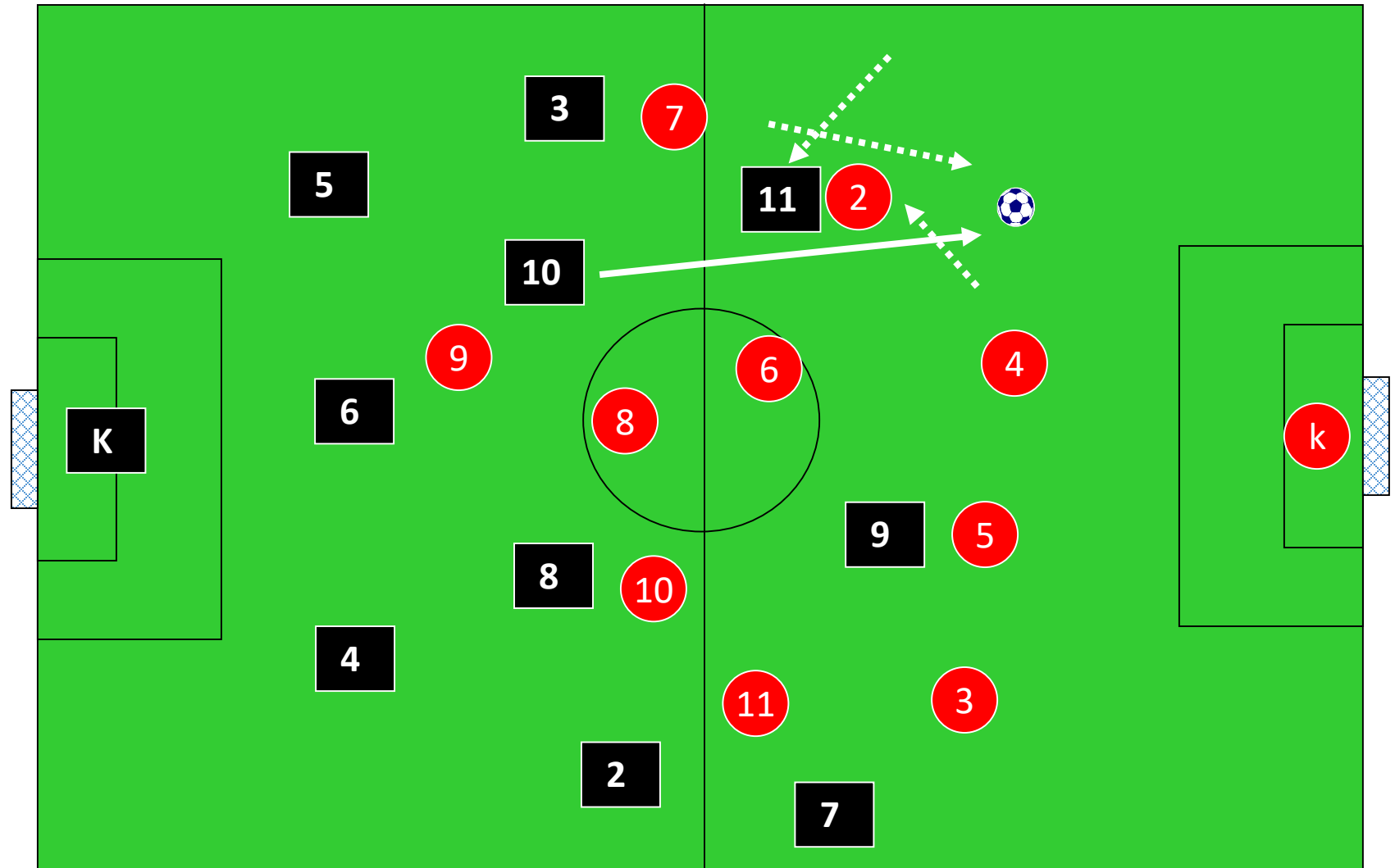
(2) positioned too high, (10) pass the ball in behind (2) for (11) to run on to. This one happens a LOT against us.

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Wingers: OPPOSITE RUNS



(11) come towards the ball, (2) gets tight can make an opposite run towards then away from the ball. Del Piero Spin.