

Defending the cause...

A lot of discussion has been had since our defeat at the hands of the division's bottom club Shrewsbury on Saturday. Luckily most of it within our group has been sensible and well thought through and the main issues are the lack of goals scored and the amount of goals conceded. Pretty obvious really.

The way that CD sets up isn't going to change I don't think understanding his problems is going to sort them out but we can look at how we are now failing to beat teams the way that we did earlier in the season.

In our first four or five games the opposition knew we had some very good players but didn't really know how we operated our 4-2-3-1 set up so came into it cold.

In possession our formation changes as at least one defender sometimes more presses with the rest of the team overwhelming opponents in the middle of the pitch and simply passing through them at will.

It's a footballing philosophy that some of the best coaches in the world adopt, we have seen it in action and it's hard to argue against but I don't think a team so far down the footballing pyramid has had the players to do it the way that we have before.

If you can't match a superior opponent up then the only way to get any sort of result is to stop them operating and that's exactly what we are seeing now week in week out.

The "Low Block" is the system that everyone is using to stop us playing our football and it's the manager's job to find a way through it.

Basically teams are sitting in front of us in their own half and inviting us to play through them. Earlier in the season teams were being more expansive and paid the price when we "passed them to death" so teams have adapted tactics to play against us.

Our back four are encouraged to push up, and it's a pleasure to see both Bielik and Klarer marauding forward to add to our numbers as we try to pick our way through a compressed space, Klarer is often seen going wide right and Bielik on the edge of the opposition box trying to press defenders.

The full backs often act as wing backs going wide and supplying balls into the box, not necessarily high balls often cut backs or hard low crosses for the likes of Stansfield and Willumsson to finish off.

The problem is space. Laird has pretty much been sussed out by opponents, he loves to run into space or use his pace going past players. Deny Laird space and you are pretty much nullifying his attacking threat.

On the left hand side Cochrane is a little more defensively minded and when he comes forward he varies what he does sometimes inverting and allowing someone else to go wide, he has had more success than Laird of late.

When we look at our back four it's very easy to criticise someone for not "picking up their man" but the truth is when we go forward the way that we do no one really "has a man" it's a case of everyone staying alert and watching for runners in the case of the long ball.

It's unfair to expect Klarer to get back into a defensive position if he loses the ball when attacking down the right wing but someone should be switched on ready to cover him if that happens.

It's often not the player being out of position that's the issue it's the lack of cover offered by team mates if he loses the ball.

Players can't really be blamed if that's the instructions given to them by the coaching staff but it doesn't solve the problem.

I've seen people calling for Davies to replace Bielik in the back four and I understand why, Davies is a traditional Centre Half and he's left sided. He will stay back more and cover Cochrane when he goes forward but hasn't got Bielik's vision or passing ability. It's a tough one but may be worth a try.

Laird has also come in for some criticism, again it's not really his fault that he's been sussed out by opponents but I agree that he has lost his attacking threat of late and maybe a recall for Gardner-Hickman is due.

TGH adds some height to our defence and like Cochrane on the other side he often inverts allowing others to go wide and adds more movement giving opponents more to think about.

It may also be time to rotate either Paik or Iwata as both have played a lot of games especially Paik who has been on international duty too.

Leonard might be worth trying for a while or, if Davies is chosen as the left sided CH, let Bielik move in alongside Iwata.

However we look at it I think it needs freshening up a bit. I would also like to see Yokoyama getting a start on the left moving Anderson to the right and Thor into his position as number ten behind Stansfield.

I don't think the international breaks have helped us either and thankfully there are none now until March.

Let's hope for a return to winning ways tonight. It's not a time to panic, we got this.

KRO