



JUVENTUS: TECHNIQUE AT THE SERVICE OF THE GROUP.

By MAURIZIO VISCIDI - MASSIMO LUCCHESI

Directly from its training camp, technical and tactical combinations proposed by Juventus during the week.

We were guests of the Juventus team for a week (short) from Tuesday, December 11 to Friday, December 15. The following day, Saturday, December 16, Juventus won 3-2 against Lazio in Rome. We thank Mr. Ranieri and his staff for their superlative availability, which has given us the opportunity of living a very interesting week "inside" of the Juventus family.

The Vinovo training center is very new, beautiful, but off-limits for everybody. Yet, we were received with a style typical of Juventus and experienced an unexpected family atmosphere.

Juventus' working style is quite different from the typical Italian clubs, due in particular to Ranieri's International experiences, to the French approaches of assistant coach Damiano, and to a methodological approach regarding athletic preparation absolutely different from the common methodologies.

In summary, here are some interesting characteristics, different from what we normally see in Italy:

- 1) great quality and quantity of technical work.
- 2) training sessions mostly in the morning, and no double sessions.
- 3) tactical training with no exasperated insistence and several exercises with a
- 4) theme.
- 5) flexible system of play, based on available players.
- 6) athletic workout absolutely different.
- 7) priority to own system of play and minor concern about opponent's approach.
- 8) short sessions (max 75 minutes), but carried out with intensity.

Juventus: Technical Staff

In addition to Claudio Ranieri, Juventus' technical staff includes the assistant Christian Damiano, the responsible for athletic preparation Prof. Riccardo Capanna, supported by Prof. Andrea Scanavino, the goalkeepers trainer Giorgio Pellizzaro, the assistant on the field Paolo Benetti.

INTERVIEW WITH CLAUDIO RANIERI

First, we like to underline the great courtesy and sincerity displayed by coach Ranieri in discussing his style of soccer and the team Juventus.

Mr. **Ranieri** invites us in the large meeting room of the Vinovo Training Center to discuss soccer on a very broad base.



"One of the aspects that we take into great consideration is technique, both on an individual basis and in the context of the game.

To this effect, I get input from my first assistant, Mr. Damiano, who applies the French method of Clairefontaine national school.

In Italy we are too obsessive about "tactics". I feel that one has to work more on technique, as it



relates to the individual role that each player has in the game.

Even in Spain, training is done always with the ball, whereas in England there is more focus on the intensity of the work.

We try to use the ball at the least in part of the physical workout.

Tactically, I do not limit myself to one system of play; on the contrary, I look for the system which I consider more appropriate for the characteristics of my players.

Lately, I have been playing with four defenders; in the past I played even with five defenders.

At the beginning of the season, we have spent quite a bit of time on the synchronisms of the four defenders. Now we are concentrating on the midfielders. By the way, I do not ask to double-team of my midfielders.

It's important to defend as a team, forming a compact group, that includes even the forwards, who have to come back to "shorten" the team, therefore closing the spaces. In fact, I do not ask particular movements of the forwards, but I want for them to help the rest of the team when we defend.

When we attack, the starting point is dictated by the characteristics of the individuals, not by the scheme. For this reason, we make limited use of 11 vs 0 training.

In general, I do not like to be tactically obsessive and prefer brief, but frequent repetitions of what needs to be improved upon.

I try not to talk much about the opposing team and concentrate more on my team, in that I am interested in projecting a propositional and active mentality. I don't like to condition my game after the opponents, and, particularly for the attacking phase, I try to take advantage of the individual abilities of my players.

If, in the course of the game, there is a need to make changes (as it happened in the game against Lazio), we are able to adopt other schemes, since we are not rigid in our tactical approach.

Our typical week schedule gives us the opportunity to work well because we are not participating in Cup games.

The first training session takes place on Tuesday afternoon, followed by Wednesday morning: these are two "loading" (heavy work-out) sessions.

On Thursday morning we have next session, with focus on "unloading" (lighter work-out). Sometimes, those who did not play in the last

game will play 1-hour game against the U20 team.

The sessions on Friday morning and Saturday morning are more tactical and less intense. On Saturday morning (last session before the Sunday game) we also review set plays.

I prefer to train in the morning because the biorhythms are more regular that time of the day.

This allows the players to recover in the afternoon and spend time with the family. I started following this approach in Spain upon a request from the Valencia players.

I do not indicate ahead of time who will play or sit out in the next game, in that I want for everybody to be ready to go. To achieve this, I frequently "mix" the groups during training. Same approach is followed even during the training of set plays, which are rehearsed in situations of 11 vs 11.

I am convinced championships are won first of all by the players who play less, who should never consider themselves as "second string" players or "cut" by the coach.

I never had big problems with the group, neither here nor elsewhere, because the players know that my choices are made for the good of the team. I talk openly with the players all the times; I am available for everybody, then I observe and evaluate performances to finally decide who is going to play.

Here, in Italy, there is a lot of pressure. The media follow whatever happens, on the field and off the field. On the contrary, in England newspapers give limited space to soccer...and everything is simpler.

To be successful in coaching abroad, I consider it counterproductive to impose immediately the Italian method, it is important to understand culture and habits of the new country and gradually make changes as one wishes. Soccer is expression of the local culture in each country: this cannot be ignored".

...In the meantime, it's 2:15 pm. Ranieri skipped lunch in order to stay with us. We thank him for his availability and sincerity. At the Juventus center there is a general atmosphere of incredible serenity: Mr. Ranieri and his staff are primarily responsible for that.



INTERVIEW WITH MR. DAMIANO

Ranieri's comments about **Christian Damiano's** role elicited our curiosity. Therefore, we asked to talk with the latter.

Mr. Damiano is the first assistant, but in reality he is responsible for the technical part of training. Actually, one of the things that surprised us mostly in the programs of Juventus is the great quality and quantity of work on technique, individually and for specific roles, despite the fact that the team counts on very technical players.

Damiano is very involving. He begins in explaining to us the importance and the function of the French school and in particular of the Clairefontaine center (comparable to our Coverciano center), and explains to us his working principles with great enthusiasm and conviction.

"First of all, technical training is always carried out in situations of "difficulty", between obstacles, poles, cones, etc.. Even more importantly, technical moves are practiced in the zones of the field corresponding to the role of each player, and with moves specific for each position on the field.

We use a progression for training the technical moves of all 11 positions on the field. Everybody executes typical technical moves that he carries out in the course of the game. The players link together these moves and put together an exercise that always ends with a shot on goal.

The days dedicated to technical workout are at the beginning of the week (Tuesday-Wednesday), followed by "unloading" workout on Thursday, and tactical work on Friday and Saturday.

An other important factor during technical training is the implementation of the technical move in the right context of difficulty, space and orientation (know where is the forward direction and the backward direction...).

We ascertained that this technical workout enhances the players' confidence, their initiative and enthusiasm. Great familiarity with the ball encourages players to get involved in the game.

We thank Mr. Damiano for his enthusiastic comments and depart with the promise that we plan to see him again during a training session, not only with the first team, but even with the youth team, that he visits from time to time to establish continuity of technical methodology. We plan to prepare a detailed article on technical

exercises, especially those from the French school.

INTERVIEW WITH RICCARDO CAPANNA

Riccardo Capanna is the athletic trainer for Juventus. He has written several books on the subject (last one "The four golden rules", edited by Calzetti and Mariucci). Capanna collaborates with Ranieri since last season.

The methodology proposed by Prof. Capanna is extremely different from what is followed by many professional teams and express the convictions matured by the personal experiences of Prof. Capanna, first as athlete (track and field), then as team trainer (volleyball and soccer). We meet Prof. Capanna after the Friday session and before the team's departure for Roma (where next day Juventus will play against Lazio).

"My approach is based on the scientific advances regarding the human body. Clearly, new studies, new knowledge can change the "rules" considered valid up to know. The athletic trainer must be ready to introduce changes into established methodology, in order to incorporate conclusions of new discoveries".

I consider that a man, and naturally even a player, is not just a container, but an integrated subject. The work with the ball, or without the ball, the work in the gym, etc. are like fillings that we use to staff the "container" (player) every week. I see the player as an integrated subject, for whom all types of work must be integrated among themselves. My approach aims at utilizing exercise always correlated with the playing activity. Whether they are done with the ball or without the ball, these exercises must improve the movements in function of an objective. Just through the improvement of the "technique without ball", and therefore an increase of the coordination moves required, it is possible to decrease the requirements of strength and resistance. My work includes 8 types of exercises, related to the degree of preparation achieved or demonstrated by the team. These exercises are proposed in the training sessions of Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday. In the course of the season, each exercise must be repeated with continuity and by progressively increasing the level of the stimulus. The exercises that I propose aim at stimulate the athlete in expressing some of the moves typical of the game, such as short sprints, rapid decelerations, quick stops, restarts, etc. Through this type of exercises I manage to put



into motion the kinetic chain utilized by the soccer player. When an exercise is proposed, the specific coordination must take absolute priority over the bioenergetic aspect. Ultimately, my objective consists in training the movement in order to improve the specific performances (technique without ball) required of the player and trying to lower the incidence of injuries with a specific work of the accessory muscles. During the sessions of a typical week, from Tuesday on, the exercises must be characterized by progressively increased muscular stretching. With the Juventus players we utilize the gym only partially, and we don't schedule periodic athletic tests to identify the level of preparation achieved by the team. The integrated evaluation of the training sessions helps me to assess how the athletic performance correlates with the technical/tactical aspect of the game. The value and importance of each aspect cannot be considered separately: all aspects mesh together. In an integrated subject everything is part of the whole. If the technical/tactical performance is satisfactory, even the athletic performance is adequate. If, instead, we assessed the importance of each individual aspect in terms of percentage, we would go back to the concept of player as a container. Our objective, therefore, is not the incidence of each aspect, but the evaluation of the performance as a whole. This can be achieved by evaluating the overall performance of the team.

In the course of the season, the team works on a resistance regimen. The quantity of work increases and the pauses decrease, except for adjustments dictated by the overall performance of the team.

I realize that my proposals are substantially different from what is the "typical" approach, but this does not imply that my approach is wrong. I appreciate and respect different ideas and methods, and in no way I criticize the work of my colleagues".

Tuesday, December 12, 2007 (11:07am to 12:26 pm)

WARM-UP WITH THE BALL:

The players execute juggling, dribblings and other individual technical moves alternated with stretching.

TECHNICAL COURSE:

This exercise is executed inside of a technical course including 10 stations. The players go through different technical moves (slalom, pass the ball under a small hurdle and jump over the hurdle, precision passes on targets, etc.).

TECHNIQUE IN PAIRS:

The players execute technical exercises in pairs.

TECHNIQUE WITH THREE PLAYERS:

The players execute a series of short and long passes.

GAME WITH A THEME 11 VS 11-FLANKS

Game on a 65x40 field, with the flanks of the field marked by flat cones. Free play on the flanks in the attacking zone, whereas in the middle there is a 2-touch or 3-touch restriction.

Two periods of 12 minutes each.

PHYSICAL WORKOUT:

Exercises of technique without ball and training runs:

a) 4 minutes run alternating fast pace to moderate pace (15 sec. fast, 15 sec slow, then 10 sec fast, 10 sec slow...).

b) Training run- 6 series:

10 meter fast and slow come back

20 meter fast and slow come back

30 meter fast and slow come back.

Total 360 meter.



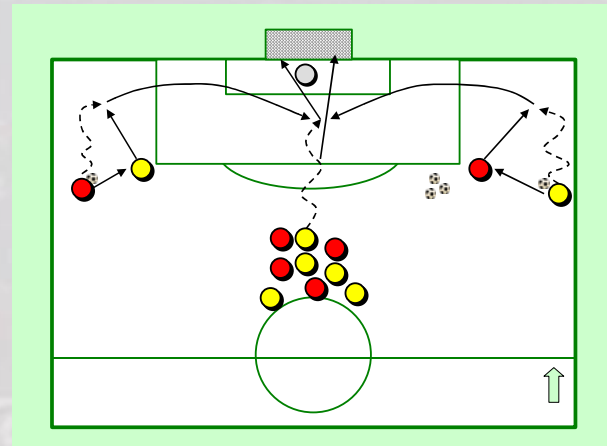
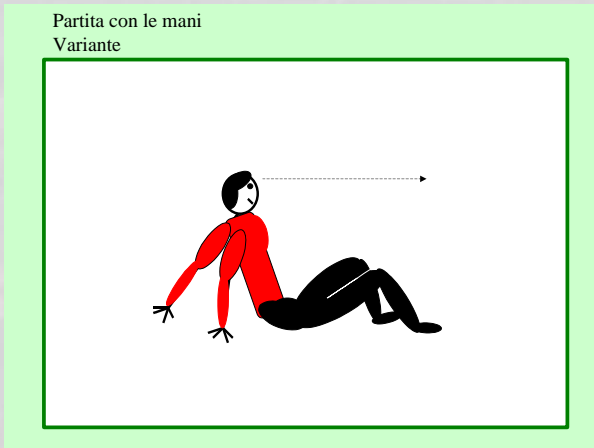
Wednesday, December 12, 2007 (from 11:10 to 12:12)

HAND-BALL (9 VS 9):

field 30x20, score with header. Goals marked with poles. Various types of passes, forward, backward. Duration 10 minutes.



HAND-BALL VARIATION:
sitting down as shown in figure and score with header. Duration 4 minutes.

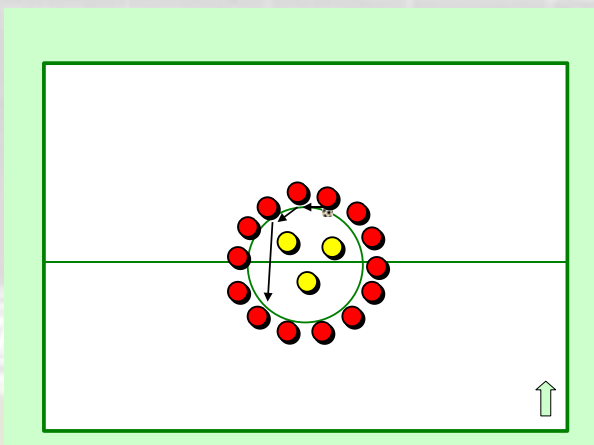


VARIATION:
each player receives two crosses (one from the right, one from the left).

Note: this is a “Thursday” session, therefore it falls in the “unloading” category. Possibly, on Thursday, players who have not played the previous Sunday, play for 1 hour in a scrimmage against the U20 team.

SERIES OF PASSES SHORT AND LONG:
the players are spread out at midfield and execute freely a series of short and long passes.
Duration 5 minutes.

TORELLO (“KEEP AWAY”):
whole team (except GKs) on the midfield circle plays 1-touch possession, with 3 players in the middle who have to intercept the ball.
Duration 15 minutes.

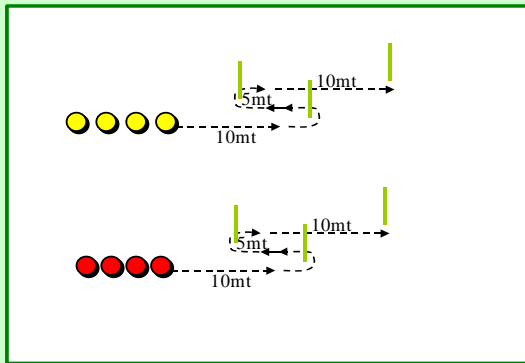


Thursday, December 12, 2007 (from 11:08 to 12:25)

TECHNIQUE. SERIES OF CROSSES AND SHOTS ON GOAL:
the players cross from the flanks, after a wall pass exchange.
The players in the middle finish with a shot “first time” or after short dribble.

WARM-UP WITHOUT BALL
(directed by Prof. Capanna):
the players on two lines run at slow pace for 3 min along the long side of the field, alternating different movements of arms and legs. Then, they execute various mixed runs (skip, kicking...), followed by muscular stretching.
Duration 8 minutes.

ADDITIONAL RUNS:
the players are positioned in two lines (next to poles at 5 meter intervals) and go through the following sequence:
- 1 acceleration
- 1 stop with 180 degree change of direction
- 1 restart (forward, backward, forward)



Then the exercise envisions a double “forward, backward” (forward + backward + forward + backward + forward) and finally a triple (forward + backward + forward + backward + forward + backward + forward).

Note: forward is always 10 meter, backward 5 meter.

Total 2 repetitions for each sequence.

Duration: 7 minutes

TECHNIQUE:

a) players, arranged in two lines facing each other, execute series of passes, one-touch on the ground, first time in the air, headings, two-touch on the ground, simulating a dribbling, dribbling the ball to the opposite line.

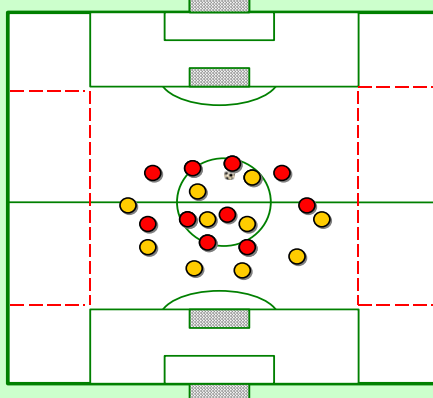
b) The players finish with a series of free, long passes.

Duration 18 minutes.

FLANKS:

movable goals are positioned on the edges of the penalty boxes. Game 10 vs 10 (no keepers) on field arranged as in the Figure (4-4-2 vs 4-4-2).

Rules: goals to be scored with header. Three touches inside own half of the field, no touch restrictions in attacking half.



Later (after 6 min.) the GKs are added; now goals can be scored even with regular shots, following cross.

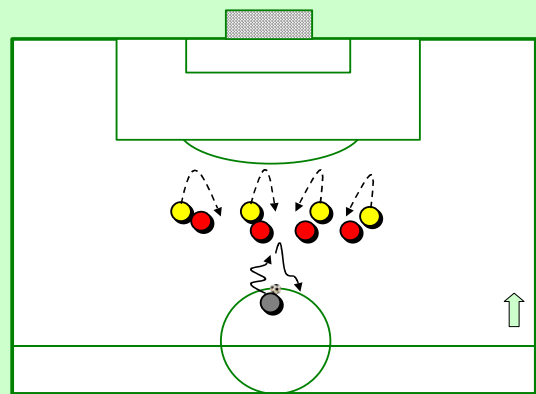
The defending team cannot have players in the flanks in its half of the field.

The attacking team can occupy the flanks in the attacking half, but only alternating players.

Duration: two halves of 12 min. each.

TACTIC BY SECTIONS (DEFENSE):

the defenders train their movements with 4-men defense and the ball carrier in different positions (each defender is matched up with a forward as a reference point).

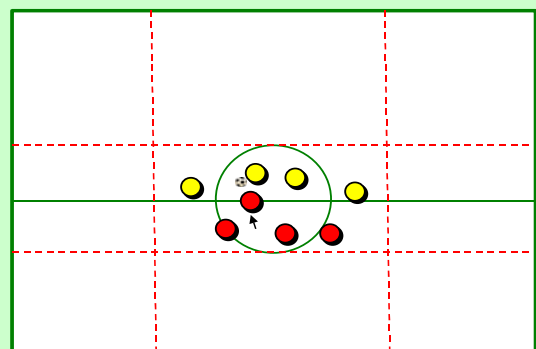


TECHNIQUE BY SECTIONS (DEFENSE):

defenders practice heading away crosses coming from the flanks.

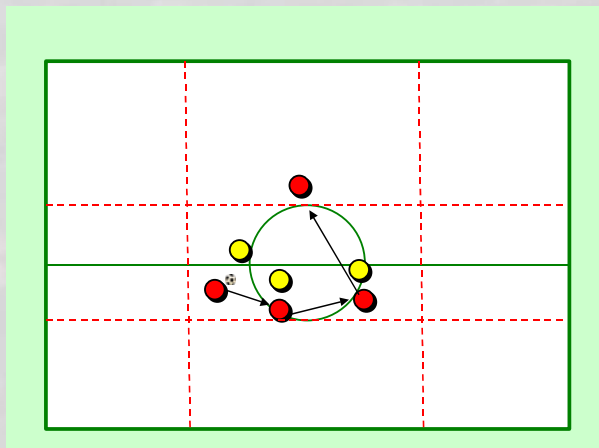
TACTIC BY SECTIONS (MIDFIELD, 4 VS 4):

four midfielders move in coordination in the defensive phase to avoid the filtering pass attempted by the opposing four midfielders (diagonal alignment when ball on the outside, pyramidal alignment when ball in the middle).

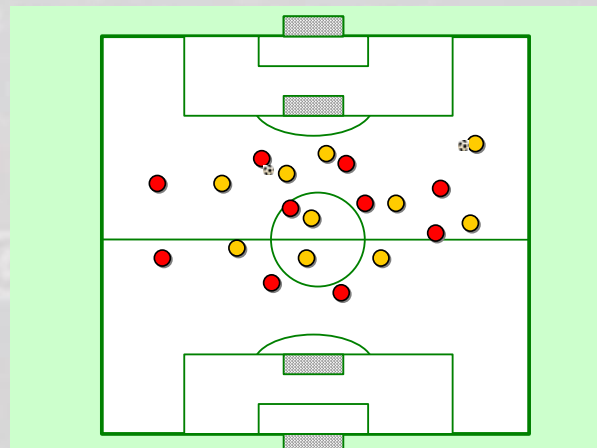




VARIATION (3 vs 3+ target player)
 three players pass the ball among themselves and try to connect with a target player.
 Duration 15 min.



penalty box. Two teams are on the field at the same time, each attacking the opposite goal.
 Duration 8 min.



VARIATION:
 on the same field, the two teams, aligned with a 4-4-2 formation, face each other (first one-touch, then two-touch restriction).
 Duration 15 min.

SET PLAYS:
 the same two teams face each other in a series of 4 corner kicks and lateral free kicks (photo).



Friday, Dec. 12, 2007 (from 11:08 to 11:55)

WARM-UP. HAND-BALL GAME (9 vs 9):
 Field 30x20 with no defined keeper. Goal to be scored with header.

VARIATIONS:

- passing on the ground and last pass in the air for heading goal;
- pass over the head to teammate behind "without looking";
- passing behind and sideways, rugby style;
- passing with feet, on a volley;
- passing on the ground with feet, first time.

TACTIC:

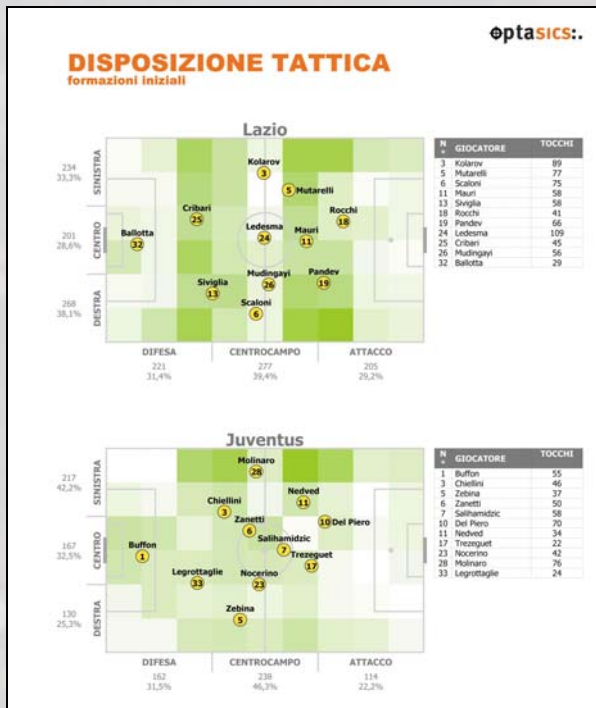
the players, lined up with the 4-4-2 formation, pass the ball around going from one goal to the other (one-touch and two-touch), type shadow game 11 vs 0. Penalty box areas are not included, and the goals are positioned at the edge of the

Friday, Dec. 13, 2007
League game: Lazio – Juventus

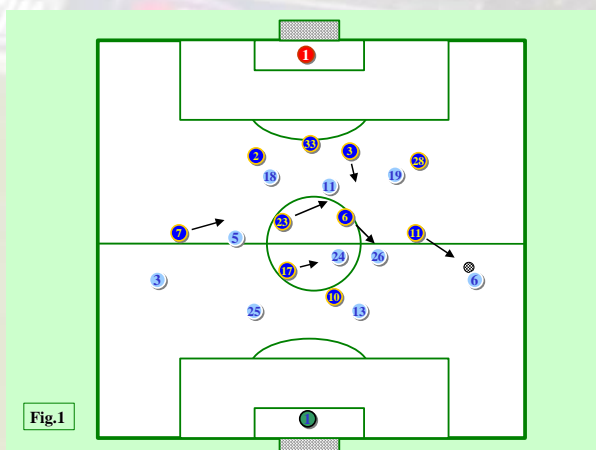
Lazio, coached by Delio Rossi, and Ranieri's Juventus face each other at the Olympic Stadium in Rome in an official Serie A game (15th turn). Lazio returns from a loss by Real Madrid that meant elimination from the Champions League, and hopes to rehabilitate itself after the season's shaky start. Juventus must win to stay close to Inter and Roma in the battle for the Serie A title. Lazio is aligned with a 4-3-1-2, with Mauri in support of the two forwards Rocchi and Pandev. Juventus presents the typical 4-4-2, with Del Piero as starter for the injured Iaquineta.

(below are the statistical data for the two teams kindly made available by OPTASIC, Bassano del Grappa).

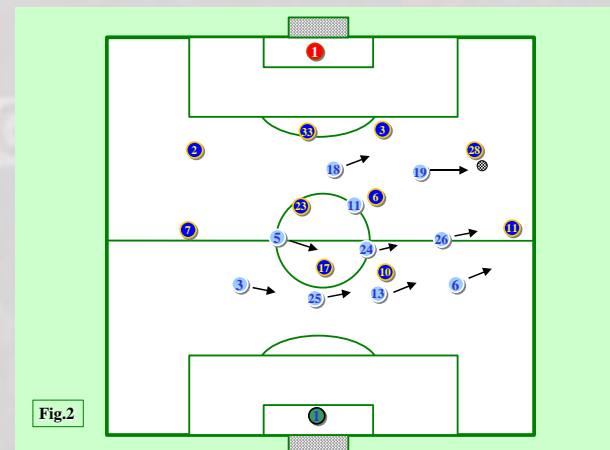
Tactical Arrangement



In the defensive phase, Juventus contrasts the opposing diamond formation at midfield, pinching in the outside midfielders to control the opposing outside midfielders. Ledesma, Lazio's defensive central midfielder, is marked by a forward coming back or by a central midfielder moving up, depending on circumstances. Same principles are used to control Mauri, marked by a central mid dropping back or a defender moving forward. Juve does not use much the offside trap and maintains the defensive line close to its penalty box, in order to avoid cuts into space for Pandev and Rocchi.



Lazio opposes Juventus' 4-4-2 by asking constant support from Mauri and Pandev in the defensive phase. In particular, Pandev goes wide the right to control the opposing left fullback (Molinaro), whereas Mauri controls the opposing support central midfielder. This way, Lazio keeps Mudingayi close to Ledesma and ready to support Scaloni against Nedved.



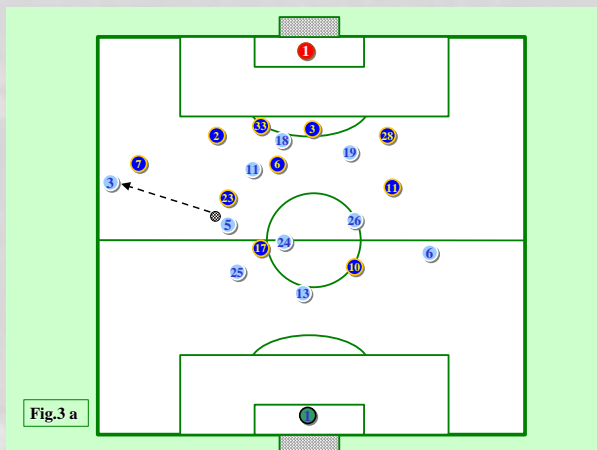
Tactically, Lazio's game is more effective than Juventus'. In fact, the latter has difficulties in stopping the opposing midfielders. This makes it problematic for Juventus the implementation of the style that it usually uses when playing away from home, i.e., recovery of the ball past midfield and quick counterattack.

Lazio plays with great determination, yet it cannot manage to get easily around Juventus' attacking unit to organize a coordinated build-up maneuver; this forces its defenders to use long passes to connect with the forwards.

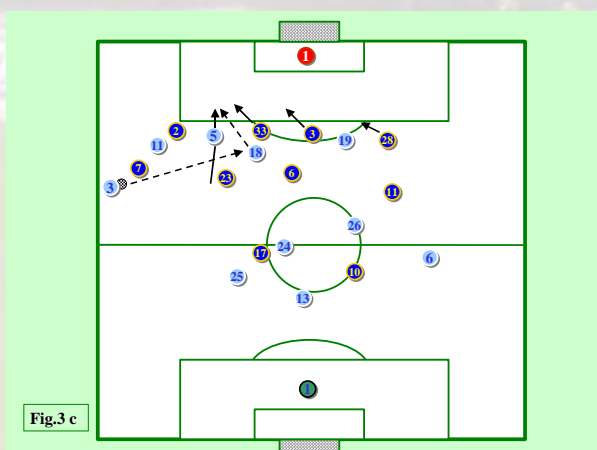
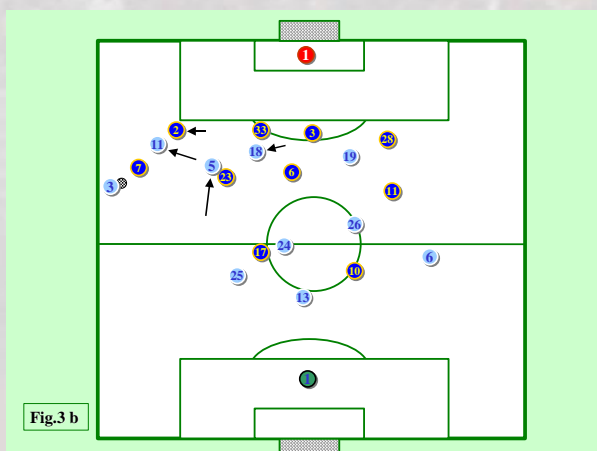
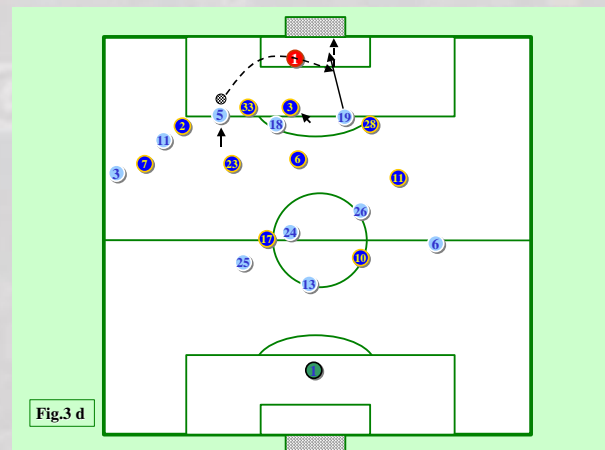
Juve, on the other hand, has similar problems. After getting possession of the ball with its defenders, has difficulty in the build-up phase: in particular, the central midfielders do not get adequately involved to open wide and change of side of attack by involving the attacking fullbacks. Consequently, even Juventus ends up operating too much with vertical moves, thus facilitating the task of Lazio's defenders. The game is definitely not exceptional from the tactical standpoint; however, it goes at a fast pace.

Scoring opportunities on either side derive from defensive errors more than ability of the attacking players. Juventus almost scores with Chiellini as a result of a Lazio defense's error on a free kick, whereas Lazio goes close to goal with Mauri, who takes advantage of Nocerino's wrong clear. The goal that opens the game is scored by Trezeguet

on the 29th minute on a corner kick taken by DelPiero. Lazio ties few minutes later with Pandev with a tactically spectacular goal: a double exchange in its half of the field between Mutarelli and Ledesma enables the Lazio team to get around the Juventus' attacking unit and move into the other half of the field. Zanetti attacks Mutarelli, who is forced to pass to Kolarov (advancing on the left flank – fig.3a).



After the pass, Mutarelli continues his vertical run in the zone freed by Mauri, who moves wide and takes the opposing defender Zebina with him (fig.3b). The maneuver continues with Kolarov feeding Rocchi, who serves the advancing Mutarelli beyond the opposing defensive line (fig.3c). The latter crosses for Pandev in front of the goal mouth, who has no problems in heading in. The first half then ends 1-1 (fig.3d).



In the second half, Ranieri replaces the injured Nedved with Tiago. Also the team now changes the organization at midfield by switching to a diamond formation: Zanetti is the defensive center half, Tiago the offensive center half, with Nocerino and Salihamidzic on the outside. After 3 minutes, Juventus takes the lead again. Lazio's defenders are slow to get back to their positions, after coming forward for an attacking corner kick. Del Piero takes advantage of a mistake on the part of Lazio's central defenders and beats Ballotta with a diagonal shot from inside of the penalty box. Lazio has a chance to tie the game at the 20th minute with Rocchi from close distance: Buffon makes a superb save. Indeed Lazio deserved to tie the game; in the second half it puts continuous pressure on Juventus, with the wing fullbacks continuously on the attack, which forces the Juventus team to drop the center of gravity close to its penalty box. Nevertheless, Juventus scores again in the 26th minute in a situation similar to the one of the previous goal: long verticalization by Zanetti for DelPiero, left unmarked (!), who dribbles forward and beats Ballotta with a left diagonal shot. Lazio then scores one more goal with Pandev in the make-up time.