

LF=Left Forward, RF=Right Forward, LM=Left Midfielder (Mid), OCM=Offensive Center Mid,
 DCM=Defensive Center Mid, RM=Right Mid, LD=Left Defender,
 LOD=Left Outside Defender, RD=Right Defender, ROD=Right Outside Defender, G=Goalie

Discussion Points

Explanation of positional responsibilities:

- All players should go only as far forward and backward as the red arrows show

(DEFENDER RESPONSIBILITIES)

- Left and Right (also called Interior) Defenders stay closer to the center of the field than the Right Outside and Left Outside (also called Outside) Defenders
- Interior Defenders always stay behind the Outside Defenders
- Outside Defenders stay toward the outside of the field and slightly in front of the Interior Defenders
- All Defenders can move beyond the center line only if the ball is fairly close to the other team's goal
- All Defenders should move forward as the ball goes toward the other team's goal and move back when the ball enters your own end of the field

(MIDFIELDER RESPONSIBILITIES)

- A Midfielder's main job is to play defense, and only gets into the offensive zone when the ball is controlled by our team
- When the your team's Defenders control the ball, the Midfielder's main job is to get into a passing lane to receive the pass from your Defender
- Once a midfielder gets control of the ball, the Midfielder's main job is to pass the ball to the Offensive Center Midfielder and the Forward(s) once you get an open passing lane to pass through
- Right Outside and Left Outside Midfielders (also called Outside Midfielders) cover from just on our side of the center line, and toward the other team's 18 yard line, and stay closer to the middle of the field to eliminate open space for the other team to attack in
- Outside Midfielders have the main responsibilities to 1) come back and support the Defenders when needed, and 2) advance the ball up to the Offensive Center Midfielder or the Forwards for creating scoring chances, and 3) scoring as game conditions permit



Discussion Points

Explanation of positional responsibilities:

- All players should go only as far forward and backward as the red arrows show

(MIDFIELDER RESPONSIBILITIES - CONTINUED)

- Offensive Center Midfielder always stays in front of the Defensive Center Midfielder and stays closer to the other team's goal than the Outside Midfielders and Defensive Center Midfielder
- Offensive Center Midfielder is to play a similar role to the Forwards as an attacker, but also is to be able to position themselves to accept passes from the Defenders and Outside Midfielders to advance the ball to the Forwards
- Defensive Center Midfielder always stays behind the Offensive Midfielder and the Outside Midfielders
- Defensive Center Midfielder's main responsibility is to 1) come back and support the Defenders when needed, and 2) advance the ball up to the other Midfielders
- Defenders and Midfielders should focus on staying on their side of the field all the time, unless you need to move into the closest zone temporarily to help a player from your team

(FORWARD RESPONSIBILITIES)

- Forwards go all the way to the other team's goal but do not come back to our defensive end of the field and only go to the edge of the center circle on the offensive end of the field
- A Forward's main responsibilities are to 1) get into a passing lane to receive the pass from your Midfielders, and 2) score as game conditions permit

Discussion Points

Coaching Notes (for coaches only):

The graphical drawing of the player positioning on the first page assumes you as coach have chosen to use a diamond strategy with your Midfielders (note the blue diamond depicted on the first drawing). This formation is most common. This entails playing with Offensive and Defensive Center Midfielders, and adds the offensive capability of this mostly defensive 4-4-2 formation.

Common strategies for placing players in a 4-4-2 (with a diamond) formation are as follows:

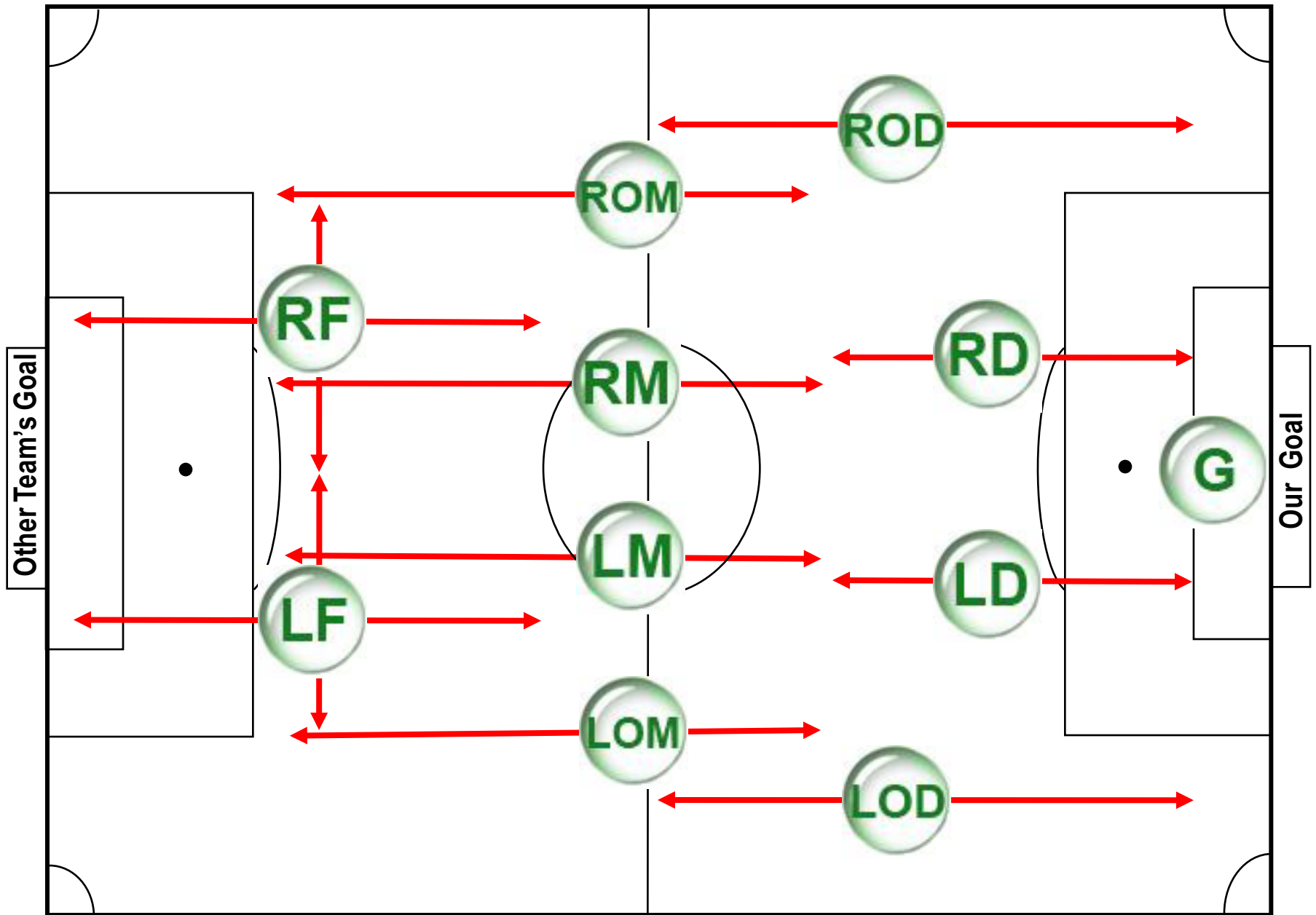
- Interior Defenders are most often 1) bigger, 2) stronger, 3) slower, 4) better tacklers 5) better passers/dribblers
- Outside Defenders are most often 1) faster, 2) have stronger kicks, 3) weaker passers/dribblers
- Defensive Center Midfielders (sometimes called a “holding position/role” or “holding defender”) are most often 1) more defensive minded than Outside and Offensive Center Midfielders, 2) faster, 3) better dribblers/passers, 4) stronger than other Midfielders, 5) have stronger kicks, 6) have better lateral movement
- Offensive Center Midfielders are most often 1) more offensive minded than Outside and Defensive Center Midfielders, 2) better shooters, 3) better play makers and 4) play under control in pressure situations
- Outside Midfielders are most often 1) good passers, 2) have strong/accurate shots, 3) don't panic in scoring situations
- Forwards are most often 1) accurate shooters, 2) good ball trappers, 3) have better evasive moves, 4) have good timing receiving the ball (and shooting one-timers) on passes, 5) don't panic in scoring situations.

Discussion Points

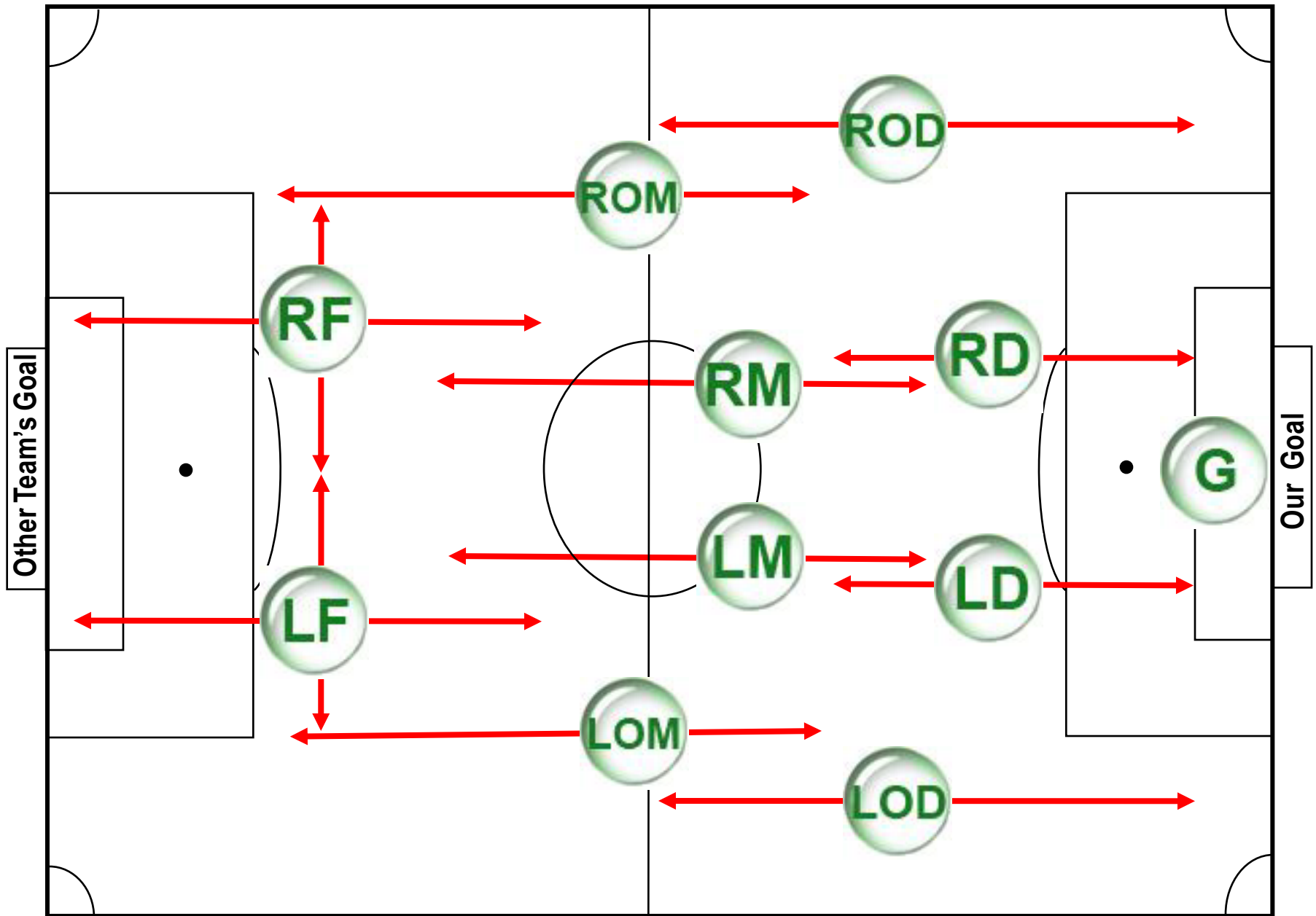
Coaching Notes (for coaches only):

Additional Notes:

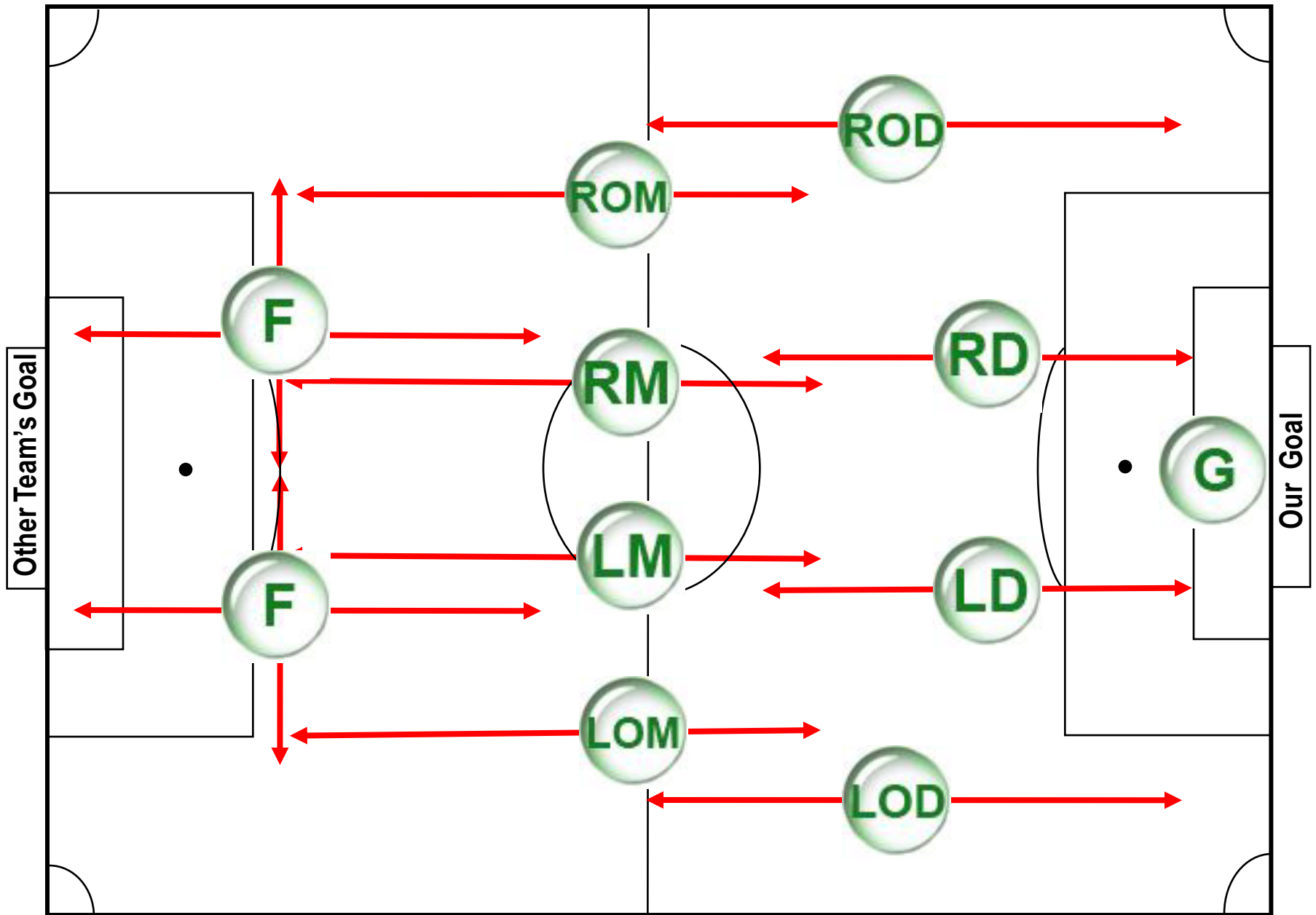
- Some variations on this formation should be used depending on whether you believe your team is much stronger offensively or defensively. If your team is stronger on Offense and weaker on defense, you may want to play with four Midfielders in a straight row, so as to support your defense better. Or, to further support the defense even more, you can drop the two Interior Midfielders back behind the two Outside Midfielders. We have included two more positioning diagrams on the following pages for these two variations.
- Many coaches, including Coach Mark, believe that one of the strengths of the 4-4-2 is making it hard to defend. Because of its defensive nature, this 4-4-2 formation requires a little imagination to allow it to be an attacking / offensive formation. Many 4-4-2 coaches will not describe the two Forwards as “Left” or “Right” Forwards, encouraging them to roam, create scoring opportunities and make it hard for the opposing team to predict their responsibilities and positioning. For this reason, a final graphical drawing is included that does not depict the Forwards as “Left” or “Right”.
- Getting the most scoring out of this formation will ultimately be based on your Forwards. They must not play predictable positioning, not go too wide, cut off passing lanes from the other team, get in passing lanes for their Midfielders, and be totally aware of each other’s position at all times.
- The real keys to making this formation work are the Midfielders. Working as a team, supporting each other, overlapping when possible, and having the same instincts and strategies will make or break the success of this formation.



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Understanding This Document

How this document was developed:

- Coach Mark writes these documents so they can be used in the first person, as you would be talking to your players. As coach, you could literally read the discussion points directly to your team.
- The terminology is intentionally kept standard and very simple, so as not to confuse youth soccer players who might not be familiar with more advanced terminology
- As coach, you should feel free to use other terminology as your team evolves and understands more common / advanced soccer terminology
- This specific document was intended to be used for an older range of age groups, so it may not fit your exact situation
- As always, please use this document as a guideline, and modify how you use it to best serve your particular team's needs at any moment
- These documents are designed to be easily used on a clipboard, providing blank space along the left edge.

To your soccer success,

Coach Mark



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