At this year’s Euros in France the strongest teams all seem to have a brilliant goalkeeper and a ball-playing defensive midfielder or what we call a pivot. France use Leicester City’s N’Golo Kante, Germany often use Mats Hummels in that position, Spain has Sergio Busquets and Italy has Daniele De Rossi. Look behind them and you find Hugo Lloris, Manuel Neuer, David de Gea and Gianluigi Buffon.

That means finding a way past some of the best players in the world in diamond defences using formations like 4-4-2, 3-5-2 and of course the classic 4-1-4-1 creating a diamond between the centre backs, goalkeeper and the pivot. The pivot will also form a diamond with the other midfielders creating a strong formation right up the pitch.

The role of the goalkeeper is vital with positioning key to stopping any attacks through the defence. This works with things like the Sweeper Keeper personified by Manuel Neuer and his clever positioning in front of goal.

The pivot also needs use a wide range of attacking as well as defensive qualities. The players should:

> Have a good tactical sense.
> Be good at shielding the defence.
> Be good at tackling and intercepting.
> Be able to drop into and hold the defensive line, possessing good defensive qualities.
> Be able to control and direct play from a static deep position, so being a point of reference for the whole team.

> Be able to accurately deliver long passes.

**DEFENSIVE MIDFIELDER PHYSICAL**

- Fitness key to recovery from attack to defence
- Good in the air to jump against attacking players
- Strong lower body to clear balls with both feet
- Quick reactions to transitions
- Agility to press players
- Good body strength for tackling and shielding the ball

**5 TIPS DEFENSIVE MIDFIELDER ATTRIBUTES**

1. Winning the ball in the air and on the ground
2. High Work Rate
3. Link up with simple passes between defence and attack
4. A team player
5. Disrupts the flow of the opposition