

OPPOSITION REPORT

LIVERPOOL FC

Tottenham Hotspur 0–2 Liverpool | UEFA Champions League Final | 1 June 2019

SCOUT Opeyemi Ajimati	FOCUS TEAM Liverpool	VENUE Estadio Metropolitano, Madrid
MANAGER Jürgen Klopp	STARTING SYSTEM 4-3-3	OUT OF POSSESSION 4-5-1 / compact 4-1-4-1

REPORT PURPOSE

PFSA Opposition Analysis 2 final assessment - Assess Liverpool's tactical behaviour, key strengths, exploitable spaces, set-play habits and individual contributions from the 2019 Champions League final.

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01

Match Information

Verified match facts and key events.

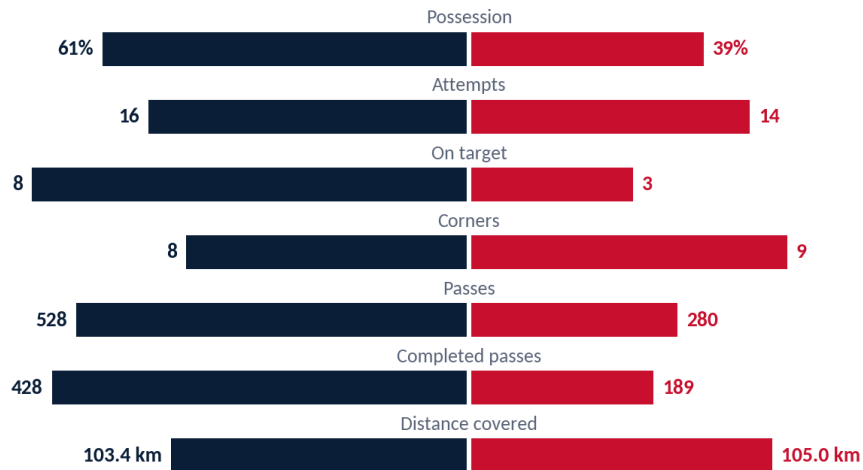
MATCH DETAIL	INFORMATION
Fixture	Tottenham Hotspur vs Liverpool
Competition	UEFA Champions League 2018/19 – Final
Date	1 June 2019
Venue	Estadio Metropolitano, Madrid
Final score	Tottenham 0–2 Liverpool
Goals	Salah 2' (pen), Origi 87'
Managers	Mauricio Pochettino / Jürgen Klopp
Referee	Damir Skomina
Attendance	63,272

MATCH STATISTICS

METRIC	TOTTENHAM	LIVERPOOL
Possession	61%	39%
Attempts	16	14
On target	8	3
Corners	8	9
Passes	528	280
Completed passes	428	189
Distance covered	103.4 km	105.0 km

TOTTENHAM

LIVERPOOL



Share of each match statistic. Bar length shows each team's share; labels show the actual figures.

IMPORTANT MATCH EVENTS

0:21	Mané attacks the left side of Tottenham's box; the ball strikes Sissoko's arm and Liverpool are awarded a penalty.
2'	Salah converts the penalty and Liverpool lead 1–0.
58'	Origi replaced Firmino, increasing the direct threat in behind.
62'	Milner replaced Wijnaldum, strengthening game control and set-play delivery.
87'	Origi scores from the second phase of a Liverpool corner.
90'	Gomez replaces Mané as Liverpool close the game.

02

Game Overview

How Liverpool controlled the match after scoring early.

The opening goal changed the match. Liverpool did not need to dominate the ball and were comfortable allowing Tottenham to circulate in front of them. The priority was central protection, short distances between the lines and control of Tottenham's key receivers.

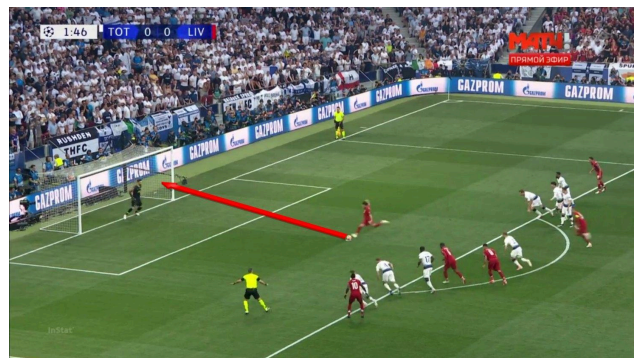
Liverpool's base shape was 4-3-3, but their settled defensive shape was regularly 4-5-1. Salah and Mané recovered to the sides of the midfield line, Fabinho screened the centre, and Henderson/Wijnaldum supported pressure around the half-spaces. When a clear trigger appeared, the nearest player jumped and the rest of the unit squeezed behind him.

In possession, Liverpool were very direct. From deep restarts and deeper circulation, one centre-back was prepared to play early into the front line or into the channel rather than forcing a short build-up. The front players then competed for the first contact and midfielders organised underneath for the second ball.

The second goal reflected Liverpool's concentration on second phases. Tottenham cleared the initial corner poorly, Liverpool kept players around the box, Matip recovered the next action and Origi finished across Lloris.



0:21 Mané drives at the box and forces the penalty action.



1:46 Salah converts the penalty to put Liverpool ahead.

MATCH STATE

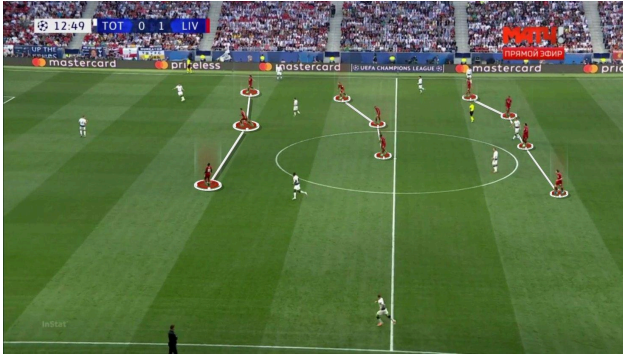
Once 1–0 ahead, Liverpool's decisions became risk-aware rather than passive: defend the centre, press only on good cues, play forward early and keep enough players behind the ball to control Tottenham's transition threat.

03

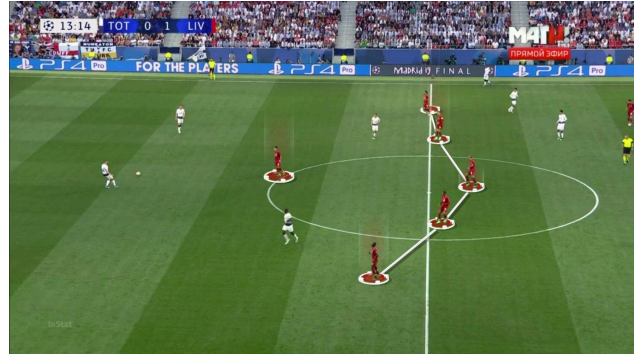
Formation & Team Shape

Starting 4-3-3; 4-5-1 when protecting the middle.

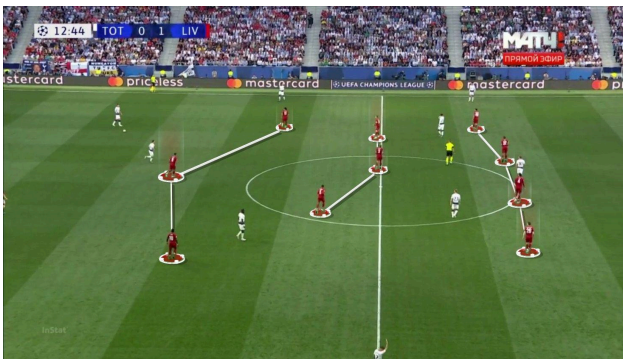
Liverpool started in a 4-3-3 with Fabinho as the central midfielder, Henderson to the right and Wijnaldum to the left. Firmino led the first line with Salah and Mané either side. Without the ball, the wingers dropped and Liverpool frequently formed a five-man midfield line.



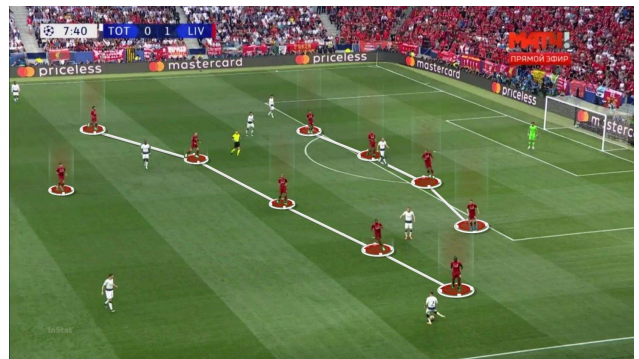
4-3-3 first line: front three set the direction of the press.



4-5-1 recovery shape: wingers drop and central access is reduced.



Higher 4-3-3 press in Tottenham's half.



Deeper 4-5-1: one forward stays high as an outlet.

KEY SHAPE DETAILS

- Central compactness was the first priority; Liverpool were willing to leave low-risk circulation outside the block.
- The midfield line shifted together. The far-side midfielder narrowed early rather than staying attached to the touchline.
- Fabinho protected the space in front of the centre-backs and reacted to second balls.
- The back four stayed connected and were prepared to defend forward when a receiver entered between the lines.

04

Build-up & Direct Progression

Liverpool did not insist on short build-up; the centre-backs were used to play forward early.

A clear theme from the video is Liverpool's willingness to go direct from the back. When Tottenham held an organised first press, Liverpool did not repeatedly invite pressure around their own box. One centre-back became the direct distributor, targeting the channel or a forward positioned against Tottenham's back line.

GOAL-KICK SEQUENCE, 9:20 TO 9:37



9:20 Goal kick: Alisson looks to the centre-back, who has split wide to the edge of the box.



9:23 The centre-back receives wide while Tottenham match up across the first line.

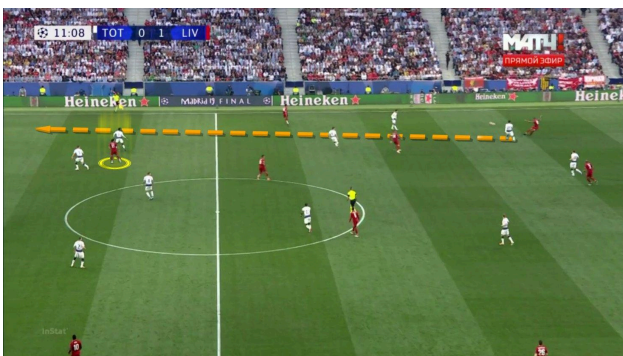


9:27 Second phase from deep: the short central option is covered, so the next pass goes long.

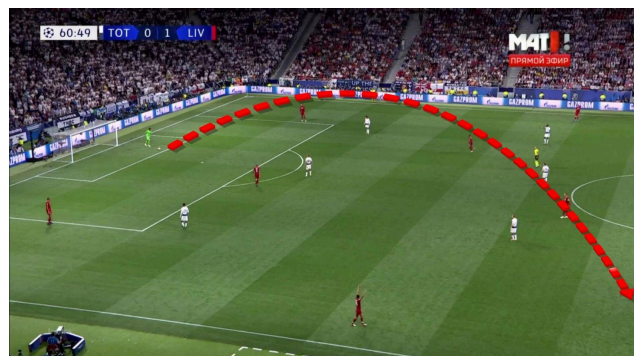


9:37 Centre-back plays an early diagonal/direct pass toward the left-side forward duel.

OTHER DIRECT RELEASES



11:08 Another direct release from the back, bypassing Tottenham's midfield line.



60:49 Alisson goes long straight from the goal kick, bypassing Tottenham's press entirely.



20:10 Liverpool's deeper structure before progression: centre-backs split, midfield positioned underneath and front players occupy Tottenham's last line.

WHAT LIVERPOOL ARE TRYING TO ACHIEVE

- Bypass the first and second Tottenham pressing lines in one action.
- Create a duel against the full-back or outside centre-back rather than circulate under pressure.
- Use Mané/Salah's pace and body strength to secure or contest the first contact.
- Position Henderson, Wijnaldum or Fabinho underneath the duel for the second ball.
- Move the match away from Liverpool's own penalty area and reduce turnover risk close to goal.

05

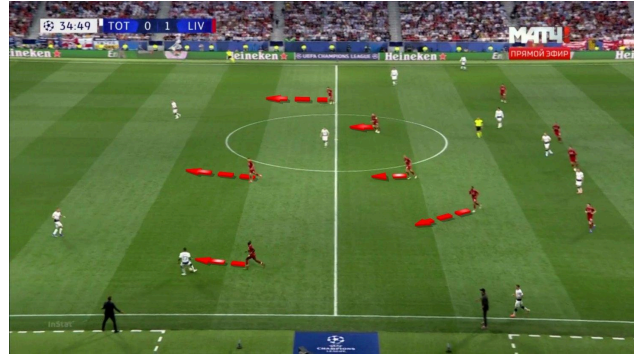
Pressing & Triggers

Selective pressure: jump on a cue, then squeeze behind the press.

Liverpool did not press every Tottenham possession at full speed. They screened central options, allowed low-risk passes and then accelerated when the ball entered a pressable area. The press became much more aggressive on a back pass, a poor first touch, a square pass into midfield or a wide receiver facing his own goal.



High press: front line closes Tottenham's short build-up options.



Back pass acts as a trigger for the unit to step forward.



8:44 Centre-back steps forward into the No.10 when the pass enters the space between midfield and defence.

PRESSING RULES VISIBLE IN THE MATCH

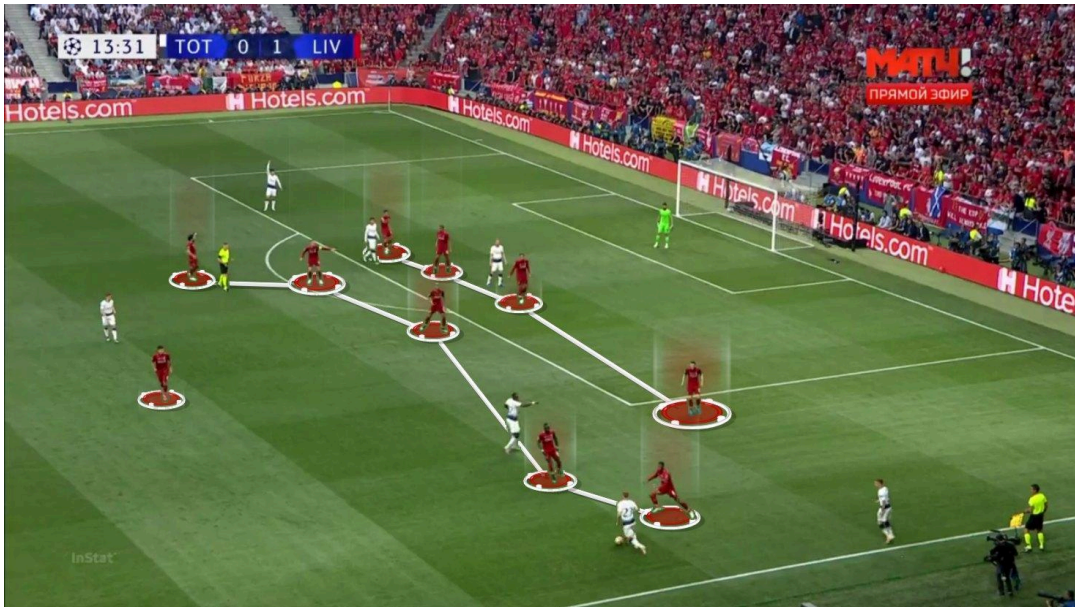
- **Back pass:** front line steps forward and the midfield compresses the next passing lane.
- **Wide receiver closed to the touchline:** winger presses from outside-in, with the nearest midfielder protecting the return pass inside.
- **Central receiver with closed body shape:** nearest midfielder attacks the first touch while Fabinho protects behind.
- **No.10 receives between lines:** centre-back can step out aggressively if cover is in place.
- **Loose touch or bouncing pass:** nearby players collapse quickly and try to win the second action.

06

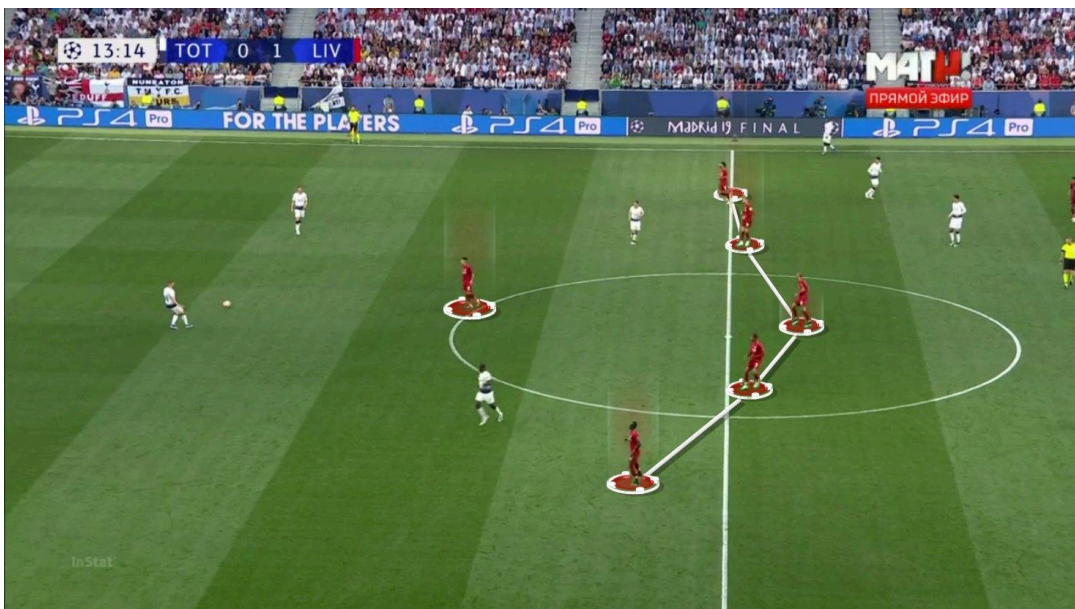
Defensive Block

Compact 4-5-1, strong central protection and front-foot defending.

With the lead protected, Liverpool spent long periods in a compact middle block. Tottenham were encouraged to move the ball outside while Liverpool protected Kane, Alli and Eriksen in central areas. The distance between midfield and defence stayed short, so receiving between the lines normally brought immediate pressure.



Five players across midfield with short vertical distances.



Central lanes protected; one forward remains available for the outlet.

07

Transitions

Forward first after regain; recover into shape if the first counterpress is broken.

ATTACKING TRANSITION

- First look is forward into Salah, Mané or the channel.
- The nearest midfielder supports underneath rather than all three midfielders running beyond the ball.
- If Liverpool go direct, the next action is the second ball; they organise numbers around the landing zone.
- Origi gave a fresher threat in behind once Firmino was replaced.

DEFENSIVE TRANSITION

- Nearest player pressures the new ball carrier if the turnover is close and support is available.
- Fabinho protects the central lane and delays the first forward pass.
- If the immediate counterpress is beaten, Liverpool recover quickly into the 4-5-1 rather than continue chasing.
- The centre-backs are comfortable stepping forward but rely on cover from the remaining line.



72:13 Moments after losing possession: Liverpool recover behind the ball and reform their lines in front of Tottenham's carrier rather than chasing.

08

Defensive Set Plays

Mixed marking with strong protection of the six-yard corridor.

Liverpool's corner defence combines zonal protection in the main goalmouth with contact on key Tottenham runners. The strongest aerial defenders defend the central delivery lane, Alisson holds a central starting position and players outside the first line are ready for the second ball.



Left-side inswing: strong numbers across the six-yard corridor.



Right-side defensive corner: Liverpool protect central space and keep cover at the edge.



5:17 Van Dijk attacks the delivery and makes the first defensive clearance. This is the type of aerial action Liverpool want from the central zone.

OPPOSITION DETAIL

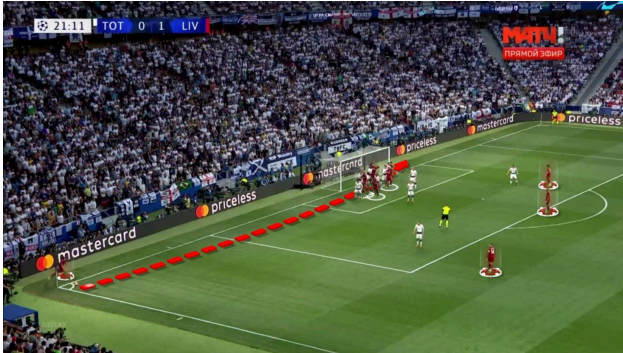
- Avoid repeated floated service into Van Dijk/Matip's strongest zone.
- Use blocks and late movement to disturb the zonal/man-marking connection.
- Keep two players available for the second phase because Liverpool attack the first ball aggressively.
- Short-corner or low cut-back variations may produce a cleaner route than another high delivery.

09

Attacking Set Plays

Strong second-phase presence; do not switch off after the first clearance.

Liverpool carry an aerial threat, but the late goal is the clearest warning about the second phase. Tottenham dealt with the initial corner without completely clearing the danger. Liverpool kept players alive around the box, Matip recovered the loose ball and Origi finished the next action.



21:11 Left-side attacking corner: driven delivery towards the near post, bodies packed in the six-yard area and three players held outside the box.



41:39 Right-side attacking corner: two runners attack the six-yard area while three players hold the edge of the box for the second ball.



86:41 Right-side attacking corner: central runners occupy the box with support held outside.



Second phase: Liverpool react forward around the edge while the ball is recycled.

SET-PLAY THREAT

- Van Dijk and Matip are major first-contact threats.
- Liverpool keep players around the box rather than emptying the area after the first delivery.
- Milner, Alexander-Arnold and Robertson offer different delivery angles.
- The second ball must be defended with the same discipline as the first contact.

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Player Analysis

Match-specific opposition notes. Ratings are scouting judgements, not media scores.

NO.	PLAYER	ROLE	RATING	KEY CONTRIBUTION	AREA FOR IMPROVEMENT
13	Alisson	GK	9.0	Eight saves; excellent handling and positioning. Calm under late pressure.	Quicker release after saves to start transitions.
66	Alexander-Arnold	RB	6.5	Early passing and delivery; can progress quickly from deep.	Recovery position when drawn high; space appeared behind him.
32	Matip	RCB	7.5	Covers behind pressure; steps forward well; important in the second phase of 2–0.	Leaves central space when pulled wide.
4	Van Dijk	LCB	8.5	Dominant aerially; strong recovery defender; clears key set plays.	Could carry into midfield more to break the first press.
26	Robertson	LB	7.0	High work rate, quick recovery and natural width in possession.	Leaves space behind when he jumps to press.
14	Henderson	RCM	7.0	Organises pressure, covers wide areas and supports direct play.	Holding the midfield line when rotations draw him out.
3	Fabinho	DM	8.0	Screens the central lane and wins second balls.	Space opens either side when he is moved laterally.
5	Wijnaldum	LCM	6.0	Disciplined positionally and protects the left half-space.	More progressive involvement on the ball.
11	Salah	RW	7.5	Penalty scorer; remains a constant high outlet.	Effectiveness when forced to receive with back to goal.
9	Firmino	CF	5.5	Screens passes and links the first line of pressure.	Sharpness and involvement after injury.
10	Mané	LW	7.5	Wins the penalty action and carries strong direct threat.	Decision-making when crowded receiving static and inside.
27	Origi	SUB	8.0	Direct runner; decisive finish for 2–0.	Involvement in build-up; impact came mainly in behind.
7	Milner	SUB	7.5	Adds control, duelling and quality set-play service.	Less effective covering large spaces.

11

Strengths & Weaknesses

LIVERPOOL STRENGTHS

- ▶ Central compactness and disciplined 4-5-1 recovery.
- ▶ Aerial control through Van Dijk and Matip.
- ▶ Alisson's shot-stopping and calm decision-making.
- ▶ Direct transition threat through Salah, Mané and Origi.
- ▶ Strong second-ball reaction around direct passes.
- ▶ Set-play quality and second-phase awareness.
- ▶ Excellent management of a favourable game state.

WEAKNESSES / AREAS TO TARGET

- ▶ Space behind the outside midfielder when he jumps.
- ▶ Far-side full-back after quick switches.
- ▶ Gaps created if the first press is beaten with a third-man action.
- ▶ Front line can become separated when Liverpool go very direct.
- ▶ Long spells of lateral defending can pin them close to their own box.
- ▶ Cut-backs are preferable to early aerial crosses.

12

Conclusion

Liverpool won through control of space, game state and key moments.

Liverpool's 2–0 win was not built on possession dominance. The early penalty allowed Klopp's side to choose a more controlled match: protect the centre, press on clear cues, move the ball forward early and trust the centre-backs and goalkeeper to defend the box.

The key opposition problem is that Liverpool can change behaviour without losing structure. They can press in a 4-3-3, recover into a 4-5-1, play direct from the back and still keep enough players underneath the ball to contest the second action. Their centre-backs are comfortable stepping forward, Fabinho controls the central space and the front line gives them an immediate route away from pressure.

The best way to attack them is to move the block laterally, use third-man combinations when the outside midfielder jumps, and switch quickly into the far-side channel. In the final third, cut-backs and late runners are preferable to predictable high crosses. At set plays, the second phase must be treated as part of the original action; Tottenham's failure to finish the defensive sequence led directly to Origi's goal.