



Bologna vs. AC Milan

Opposition Analysis

Tue, Feb 3 - 20:45 | Stadio Renato Dall'Ara | Ref: Gianluca Manganiello

Weather risk: ~6°C, ~40% rain
Pitch: same dimensions as San Siro

0) The Brief: What success looks like

Lock the decisions before video/data: plan to score, plan to control threats, plan for game-state flips.

A) Match context + risk level

- Competition: Serie A / must-win (3 points).
- Acceptable risk: pragmatic control (win is priority; entertainment is irrelevant).
- Expected script: absorb early press "storm" -> punish transitions.
- Target outcome: 1-0 / 2-0 managed win.

B) Our non-negotiables (AllegriBall 3-5-2)

- Primary structure: 3-5-2 -> 5-3-2 low/mid block.
- Rest-defense: "3+2" (no double-8 both high at once).
- Press is selective: trigger-based, not constant.
- Transition rule: regain -> 3-4 passes to a shot (vertical first look).

1) Match context & constraints

Load management, availability, and what Bologna is bringing into the week.

AC Milan - availability / load

S. Giménez (inj) - Pulisic (inj) - Saelemaekers (inj)

- Last match: Roma 1-1 AC Milan (Jan 25).
- Next match: AC Milan vs Como (Feb 8).
- Rotation intent: "First XI"

Match logistics

- Venue: Stadio Renato Dall'Ara.
- Weather: ~6°C, ~40% rain -> ball speed + footing risk.
- Pitch: same size as San Siro.
- Referee: Gianluca Manganiello.

Bologna - snapshot / constraints

- Manager: Vincenzo Italiano.
Base: 4-2-3-1 / 4-3-3 hybrid.
- Last five (internal): W*-L-D*-L-W
(*Europa League matches included).
- GK: Lukasz Skorupski suspended -> Federico Ravaglia likely starts.
- Style constants: high press, high line, man-oriented midfield.
- Reference matches: Verona 3-2 • Fiorentina 1-2 • Genoa 2-3 • Juventus 0-1 • Inter 3-1.

2) Opponent identity (fast scan)

What Bologna are, what repeats, and where they crack.

Bologna in 60 seconds

Base behaviors (stable)

- High possession + "U-shape" circulation when central lanes are screened.
- Right-side overloads (Rowe) -> cutback to Zone 14.
- Cross-heavy when frustrated (36 crosses vs Fiorentina).
- Defensive transition vulnerable behind aggressive fullbacks.

Main weakness (the gift)

- Back-up GK in build-up + set pieces (Ravaglia) -> test early, crowd aggressively.
- High line lacks recovery speed under pace (run them backwards).

Key metrics (from match notes)

Match	Poss%	Shots	Crosses	PPDA	Def line(m)
Fiorentina	60.6	18	36	5.47	38.3
Genoa	50.6	13	14	5.49	35.18
Verona	61	15	15	6.16	37.77
Juventus	50.6	11	17	9.38	31.16
Inter	42.5	6	8	5.55	31.92
Typical (5)	53.1	12.6	18	5.55	35.18

- Press is extreme (PPDA ~5-6).
- Volume shooting/crossing is high -> we manage box + second phase.
- They concede from errors/turnovers -> bait and punish.

3) Level 1 / Match-defining principles

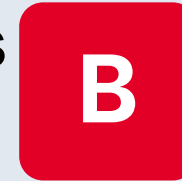
If we execute these three, we win the match.

The "Ravaglia Trap" (Targeted Pressing)



- Invite back-pass to GK; cover #6.
- Jump on risky vertical pass --> win high turnover.
- Test him early: shots + crowd on set pieces.

Exploit man-mark gaps (Wide switches)



- Use WCB --> diagonal to free wingback.
- If FB jumps, attack channel behind him.
- Skip midfield scrap; go over/around.

Lock Zone 14 (Anti-cutback rules)



- Mids protect "D"; CBs own crosses.
- Stop cutbacks to arriving 8/10.
- Accept wide crosses -> win first ball.

Principle A - The "Ravaglia Trap"

Prepared by [R.Berk Karatas](#)

Selective pressing: invite the GK, cover the 6, jump on the risky ball.

What we do (coaching actions)

- Base: sit 5-3-2; allow CB->GK. Do NOT waste energy on constant high press.
- Trigger: GK opens body to play into #6 (or clips to FB under pressure).
- Press cue: nearest striker jumps GK; far striker blocks return; #8 steps to screen #6.
- Outcome we want: forced long kick -> win 2nd ball OR direct turnover in their 40m.
- Early test: "shoot on sight" (low-to-mid xG shots) to stress decision-making.

Evidence cluster

Clips (3):

- "Ravaglia Distress Signals", backpass-> hesitate -> forced long/out.
- Cover #6 -> no vertical outlet, panic decision.

Staff cue:

"Let him have it - then trap the first vertical."

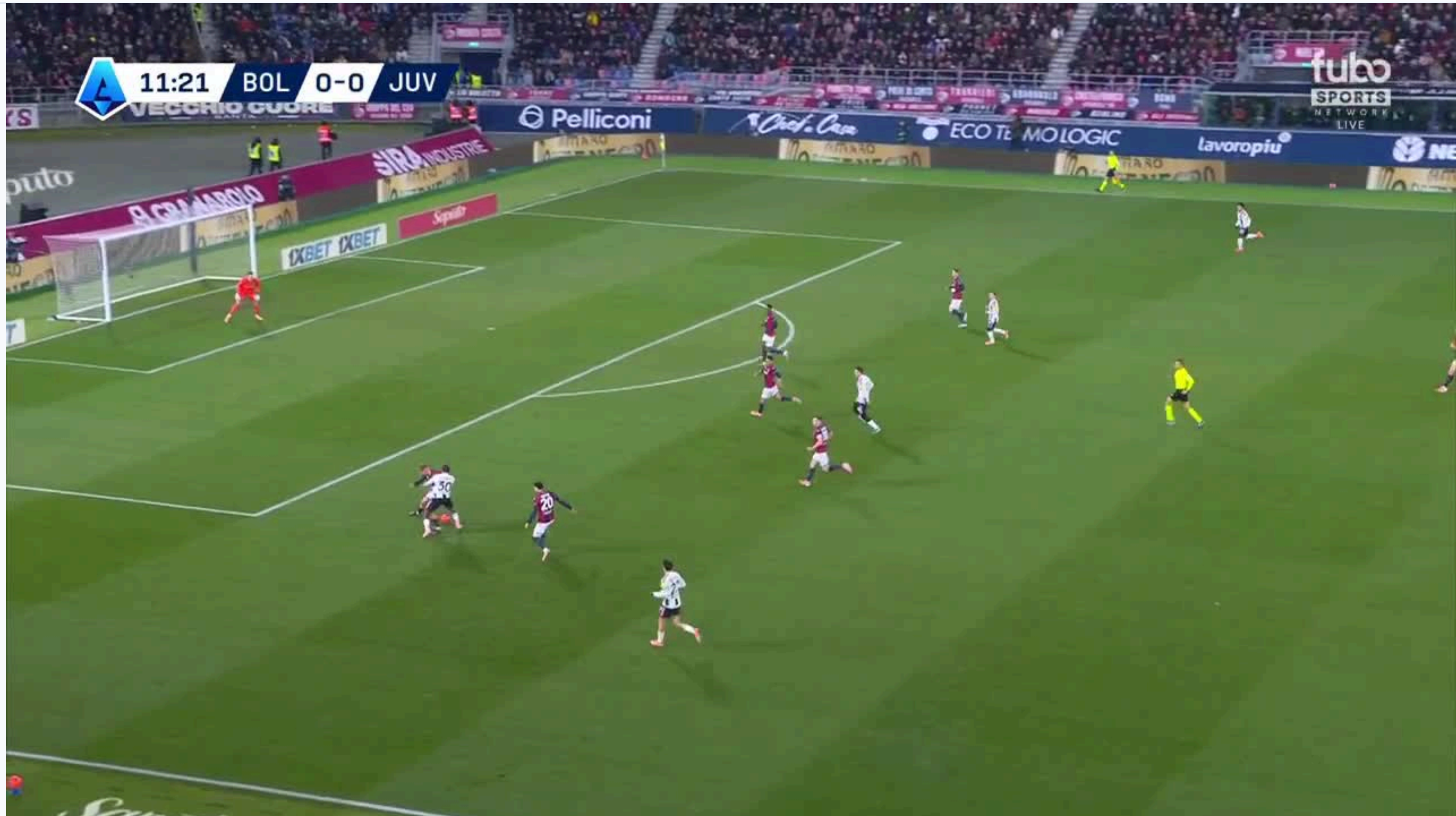
Responsibilities (who owns it)

- STs: jump + block return
- CM: screen #6, attack loose ball
- WBs: lock touchline outlet
- Back 3: squeeze on long kick

Principle A - Clip 1

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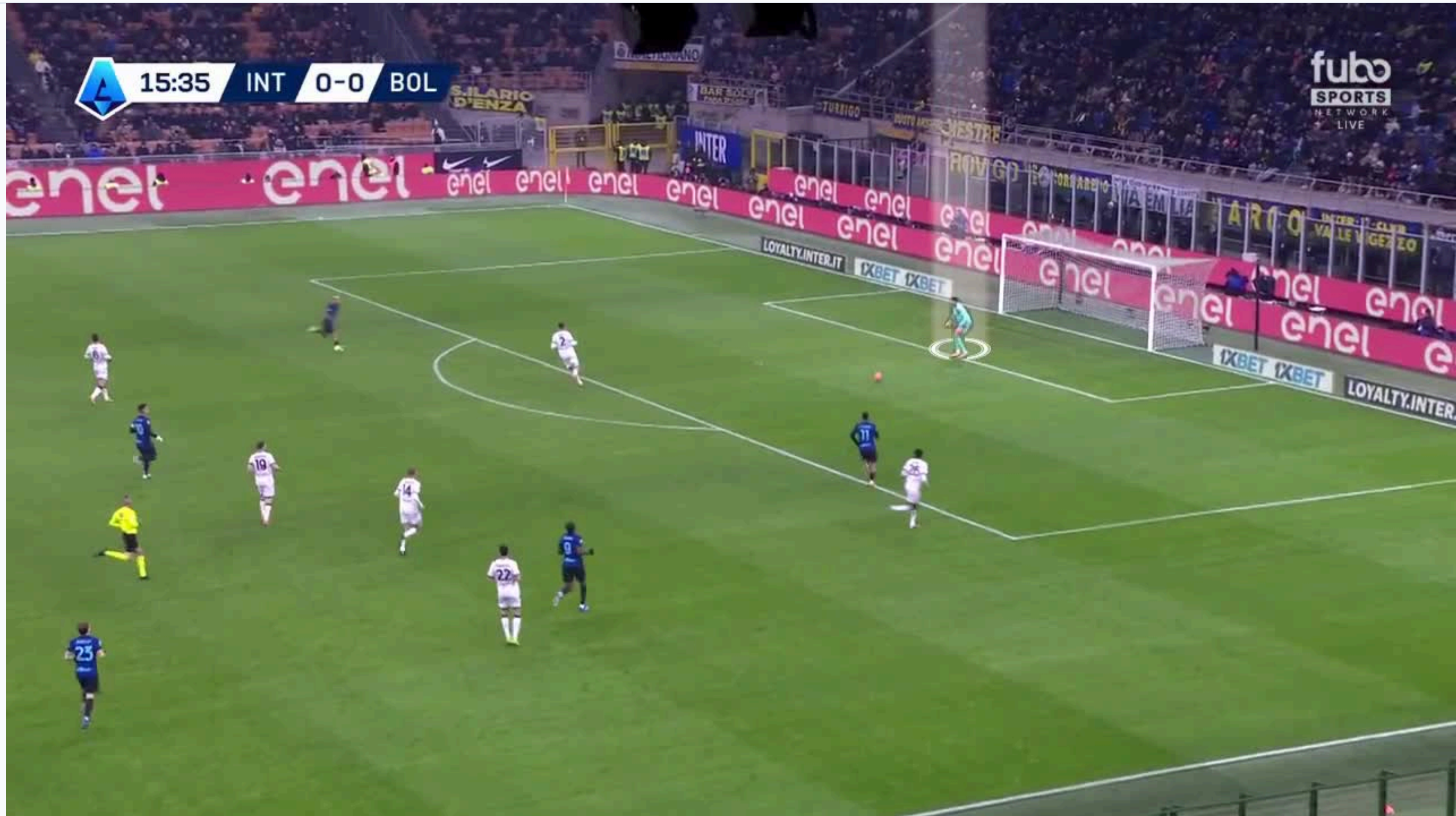
Selective pressing: invite the GK, cover the 6, jump on the risky ball.



Principle A - Clip 2

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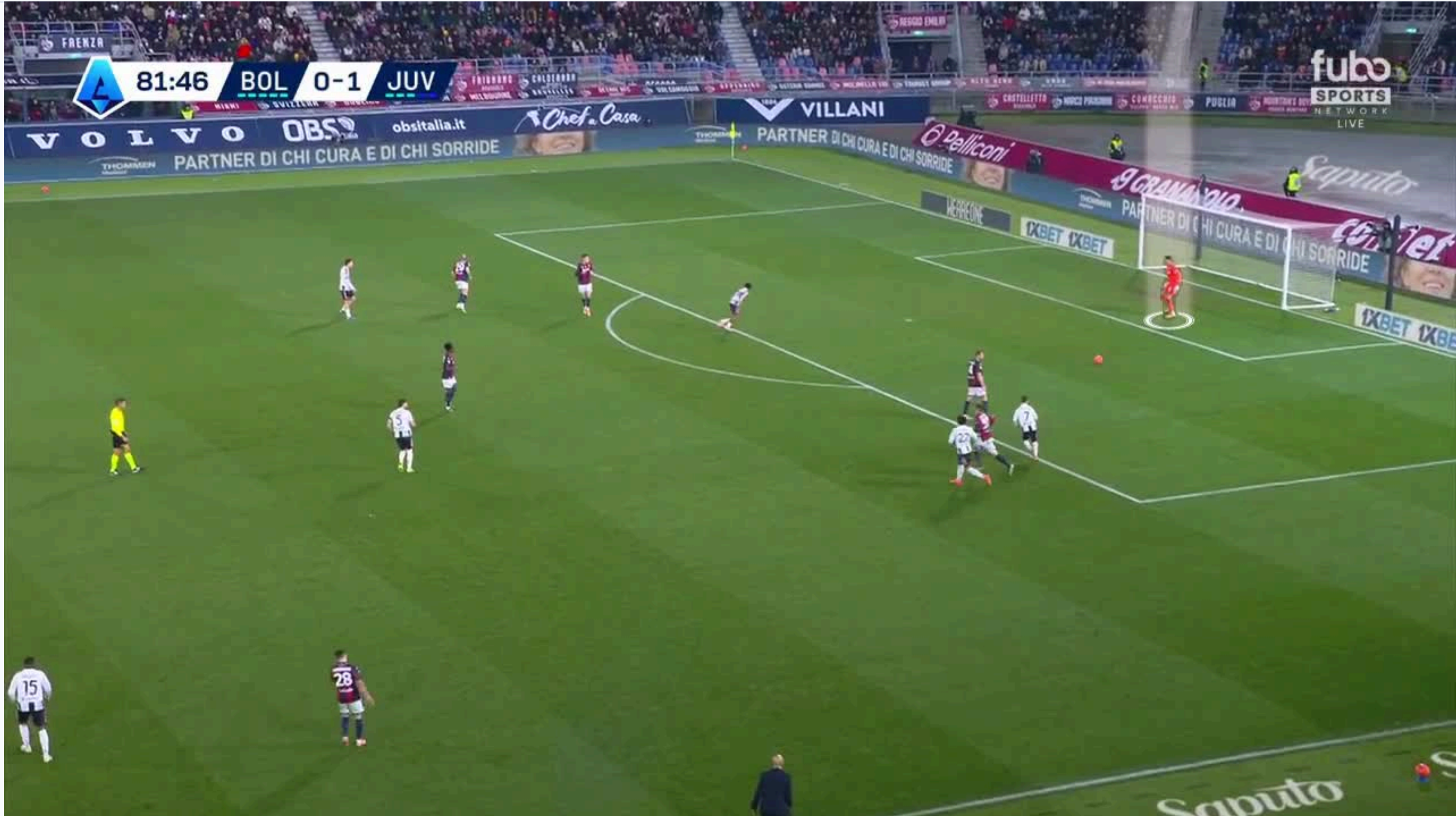
Selective pressing: invite the GK, cover the 6, jump on the risky ball.



Principle A - Clip 3

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Selective pressing: invite the GK, cover the 6, jump on the risky ball.



Principle B - Break their man-oriented press with switches

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Their press creates a "free man" on the far side. Find him early.

How we score from it

- Build in a calm 3+2: bait the winger jump onto WCB.
- WCB plays early diagonal to far WB (free man).
- If their FB jumps the WB -> immediate channel run (near striker) behind FB.
- If their FB holds -> WB drives to final third for cutback/cross.
- Option to skip: Modric-type "killer pass" over the top into half-space for Leão/Nkunku.

Evidence cluster

Clips (2):

- "Breaking the Man-Oriented Press" - Juve/Inter reference.
- One switch breaks their midfield marking chain.

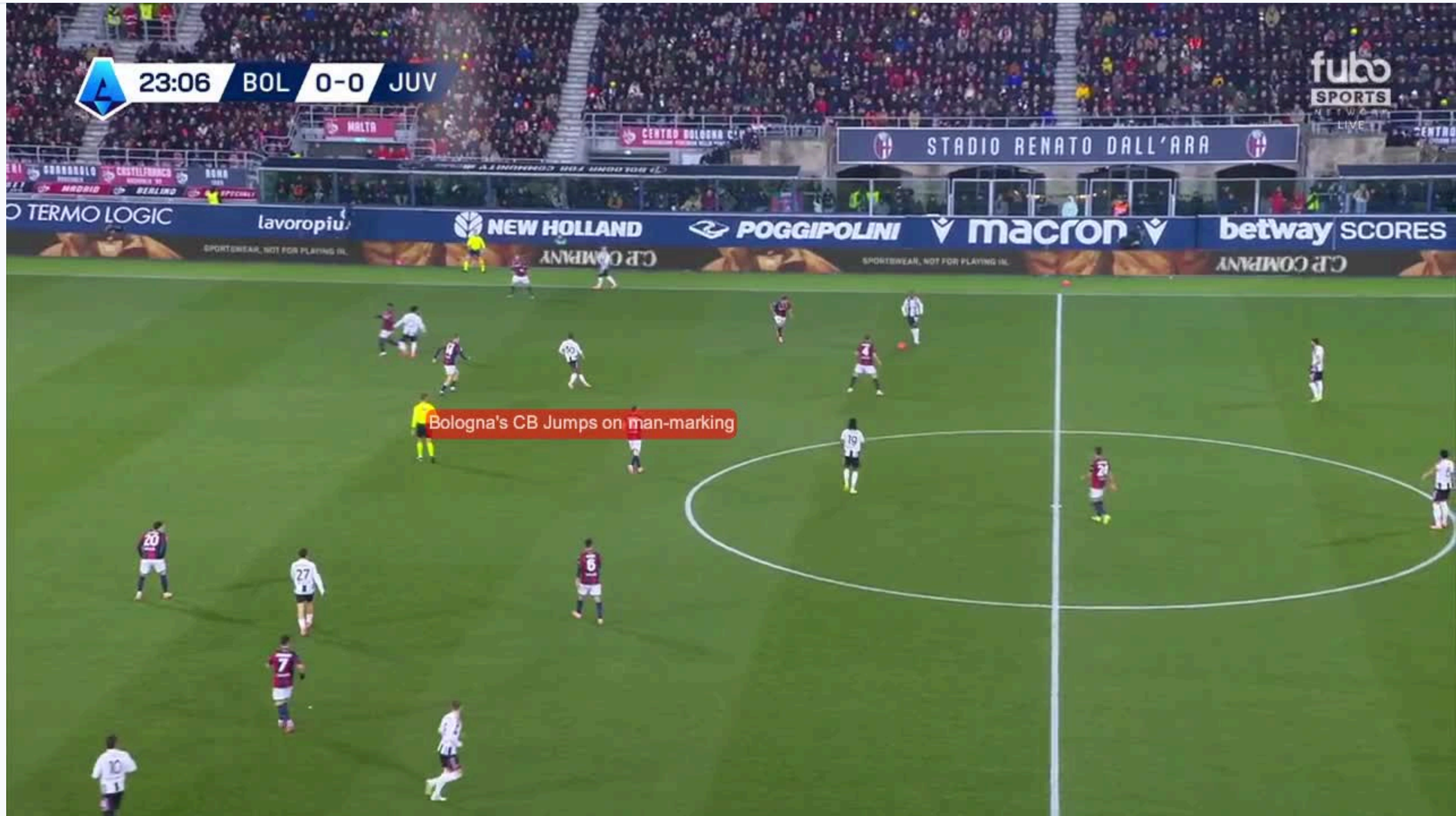
"Do not do" list

- Do not force central bounce under pressure.
- Do not play slow into marked WB on touchline.
- If trapped: go long early (target channel), then squeeze second ball.

Principle B - Clip 1

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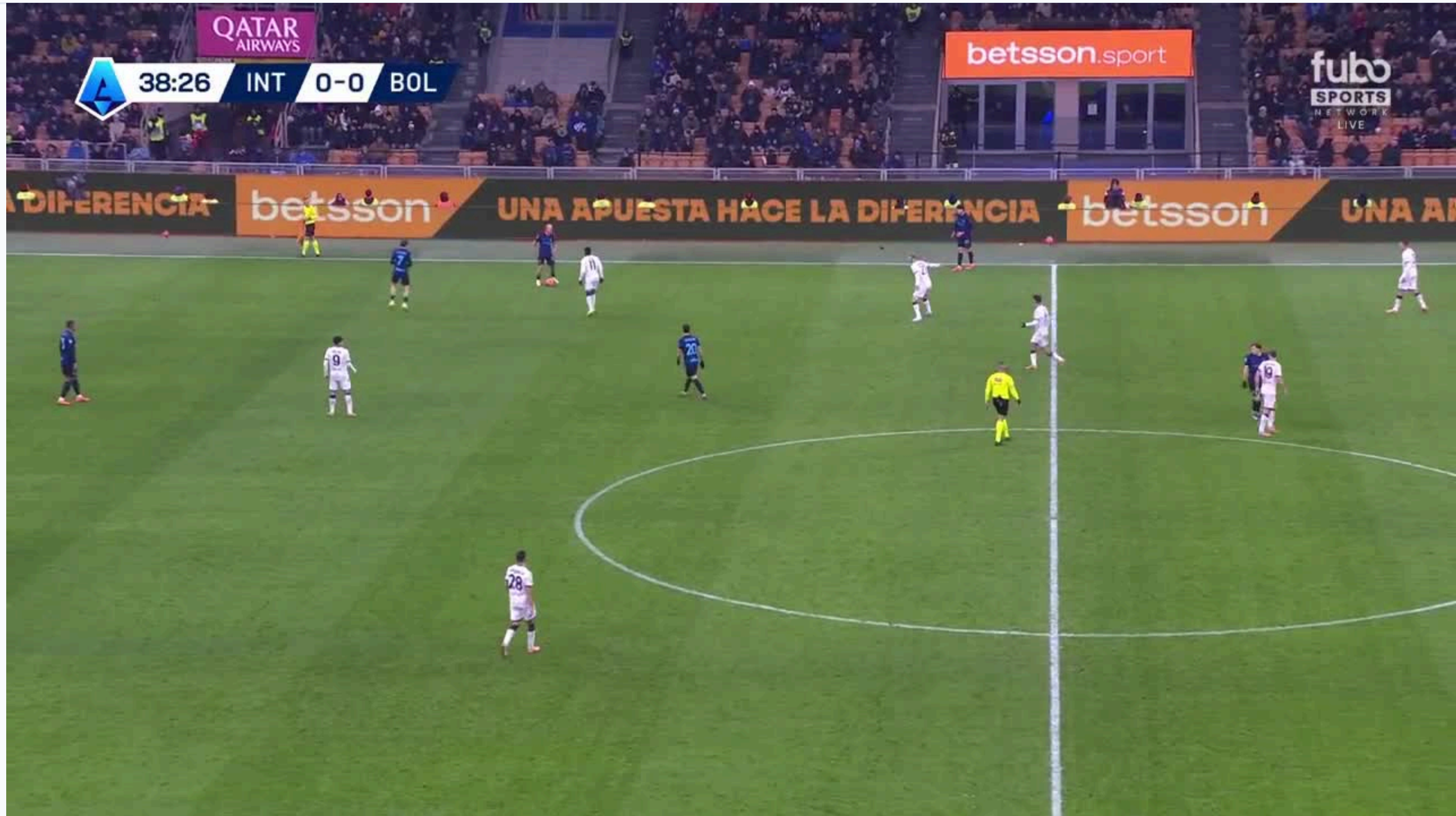
Their press creates a "free man" on the far side. Find him early.



Principle B - Clip 2

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Their press creates a "free man" on the far side. Find him early.



Principle C - Zone 14 lockdown (anti-cutback)

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Let crosses happen; do not allow the cutback to the "D".

Defensive rules in 5-3-2

- Back 3 own the box: near-post + central + far-post zones. Win first contact.
- Mid 3 protect Zone 14: do NOT sink into the 6-yard box on wide attacks.
- Wingbacks: delay, don't dive. Force outside -> block cutback lane with body angle.
- Track late runners (Ferguson type) to the edge, not to the goal line.
- Accept low-xG shots from distance; protect the "D" + penalty spot.

Evidence cluster

Clips (3 + 1 contrast):

- "Zone 14: The Kill Zone" - 3 examples (opponent cluttered Zone 14 → Bologna sterile).
- 1 contrast: goal from cutback when midfield dropped too deep.

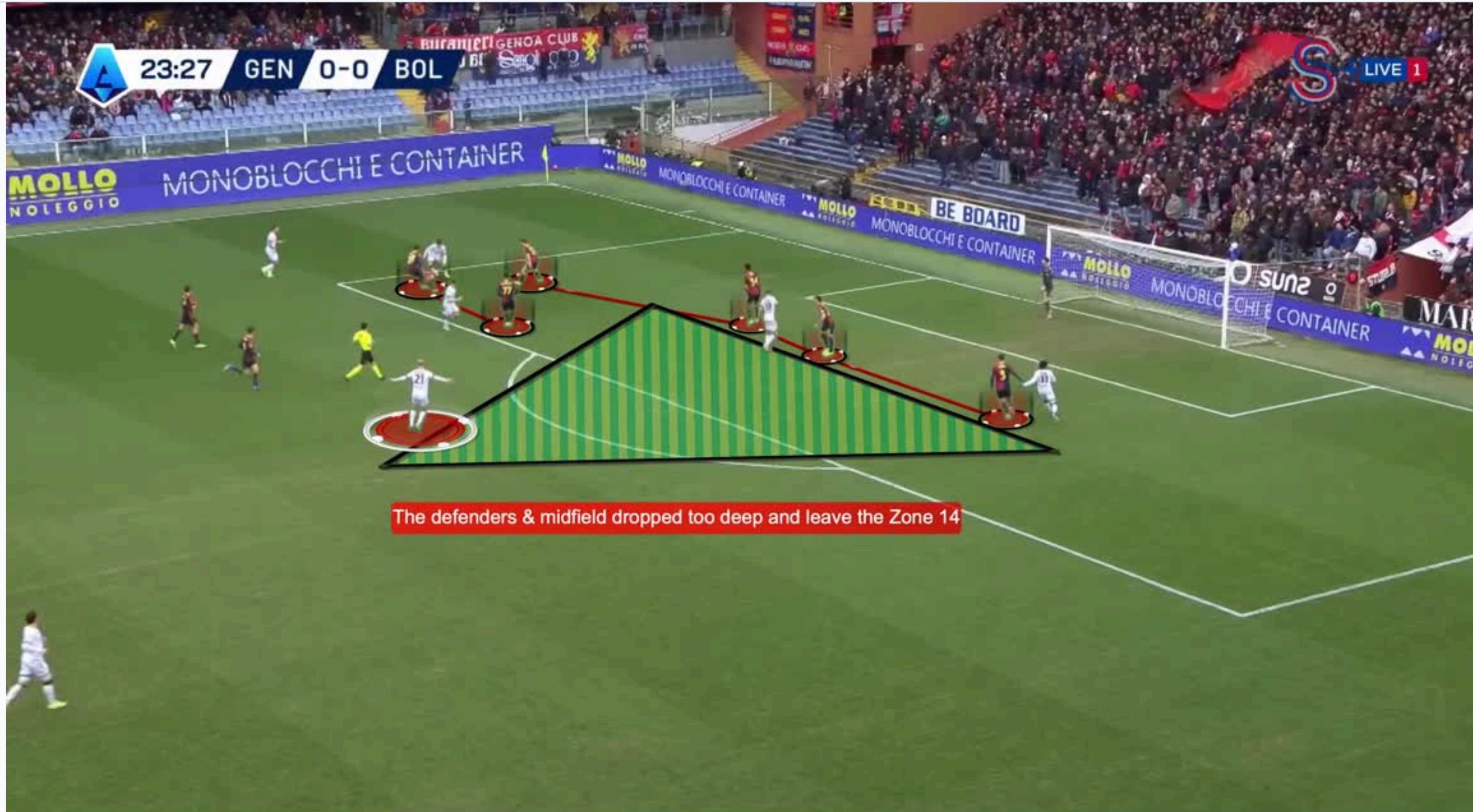
Unit owners

- Midfield 3: protect "D" + track late runs
- WBs: delay, block cutback lane
- Back 3: win crosses + control far post

Principle C -Clip 1

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Let crosses happen; do not allow the cutback to the "D".



Principle C - Clip 2

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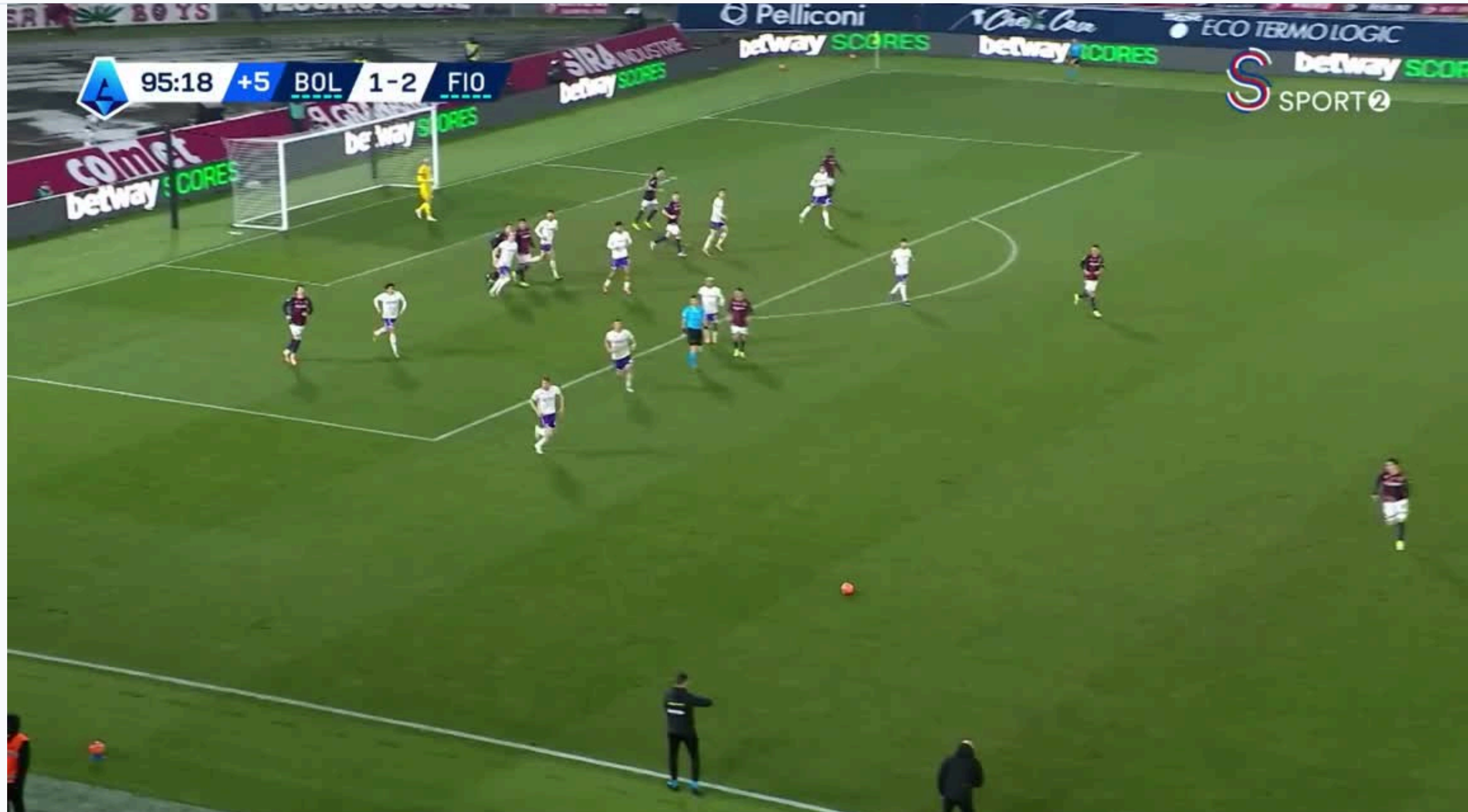
Let crosses happen; do not allow the cutback to the "D".



Principle C - Clip 3

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Let crosses happen; do not allow the cutback to the "D".



Principle C - Clip 4

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Let crosses happen; do not allow the cutback to the "D".



How do we score vs Bologna?

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Four primary routes; keep it simple, repeatable, coachable.

Route map (primary)

1) Transition into channels (behind fullbacks)

Win it -> first look vertical to Leão/Nkunku in half space/channel. 3-4 passes to shot.

2) Press-to-shot: the Ravaglia stress test

Selective trap -> high turnover -> immediate shot.
Crowd GK on dead balls.

3) Wide switch -> far-post occupation

Break man press with diagonal; attack far post with wingback/striker timing.

4) Set pieces: near-post crowding + second phase

In-swingers to near post; screen GK; attack rebounds (most conceded in 2nd phase).

Targeted matchups

- Leão/Nkunku: attack space behind Miranda/Zortea when they step.
- Strikers: pin CBs; trigger runs when FB jumps to WB.
- Midfield: first-time forward pass on regain (no extra touch).
- Wingbacks: be the "free man" on switches; deliver early cutback.

How do we stop Bologna?

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Control their repeatable mechanisms: right overload → cutback, plus transition chaos.

Their threats -> our controls

Threat 1: Right-side overload -> cutback to Zone 14

Control: show Rowe outside; delay; midfield protects "D"; stop cutback lane.

Threat 2: High volume crosses + aerial target (Dallinga)

Control: back 3 dominate first contact; WB blocks delivery angle; clear 2nd phase.

Threat 3: Defensive transition (they lose it high, then panic)

Control: our rest-defense "3+2"; foul zones if needed; sprint priorities set.

Threat 4: Press traps wide (they funnel to their left/our right)

Control: switch early; avoid slow touchline receipts; go long if trapped.

Key players - "stop / hurt" cues

Rowe (RW):

Stop: show outside, don't dive
Hurt: attack space behind his FB

Ferguson (CM):

Stop: shadow to kill build-up rhythm
Hurt: press him on second balls

Ravaglia (GK):

Stop: force long/forced errors
Hurt: test early shots + crowd on corners

Non-negotiable control:

Zone 14 stays protected all match.

Set pieces - non-negotiable workstream

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Backup GK + second-phase issues = opportunity.

Attacking set pieces (our opportunities)

- Target Ravaglia: crowd the 6-yard, screen his launch.
- In-swinging corners to near post (flick + chaos).
- Attackers: one attacks near-post zone; one blocks; one attacks 2nd phase edge.
- Shoot-rebounds: be ready (they concede "cheap" from confusion).

Suggested routine (simple)

- Near-post in-swing -> flick to back post runner
- Edge shooter set for clearance recycle (Zone 14 discipline)

Defensive set pieces (top risks)

- Know their aerial target (Dallinga) - stop first contact.
- Protect back post + edge: their 2nd-phase reactions can create shots.
- Counter threat: identify who they leave high; assign stopper + cover lane.
- Clear roles: first ball, second ball, outlet runner.

Weather note

Wet surface -> more spills/second balls.
Be first to loose balls.

Contingency plans (if game state flips)

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Pre-wire the "if/then" responses so the bench is calm.

If Bologna adjust...

- If they chase game (4-2-4 / ultra-wide): protect Zone 14 even more; accept crosses; counter into vacated fullback lanes.
- If they drop into mid/low block: increase wingback width; use switches + far-post occupancy; set-piece pressure.
- If they swap to direct GK distribution: squeeze second balls; CM shadows Ferguson-type collector.
- If Rowe moves inside: pass him on (CB takes) - do not let him turn in Zone 14.

If we adjust...

- If leading: keep 5-3-2, slow tempo, selective press only on Ravaglia trigger.
- If level late: add runner behind their line; keep "3+2" rest-defense.
- If trailing: raise wingbacks, but keep one CM as anchor; press higher on GK/CB with same cover-6 principle.
- Sub windows to anticipate: Italiano tends to add wide attackers chasing (Orsolini/Cambiaghi-type). Be ready for overloads.

Golden rule: The "D" stays protected - even when we chase.

Staff recap (1-page)

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Use this as the meeting script: identity → principles → actions.

Opponent identity

High press + high line | Right overloads -> cutbacks | Volume crossing/shooting | Transition-fragile | Backup GK

3 principles

A) Ravaglia Trap | B) Switches vs man press | C) Zone 14 lockdown

How we score?

- Transition to channels
- Press-to-shot on GK trigger
- Switch -> far-post
- Set-piece chaos vs backup GK

How we stop them?

- Show Orsolini outside
- Protect Zone 14 (mid 3)
- Win crosses + second phase
- Rest-defense 3+2 vs transitions

Clips: A1 - A2 - A3 - B1 - B2 - B3 - C1 - C2

To reach **original clips & analysis files** please click [this link](#).

This analysis prepared by [R.Berk Karatas](#) as a **Independent Performance Analyst**