

MARCELO BIELSA



View the sessions and
philosophy behind the
coach
revolutionizing
English Football

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MARCELO BIELSA

UNDERSTANDING THE ENGLISH FOOTBALL REVOLUTION

First Publication: August 2019

Publication Location:

<http://www.Thefootballcoach.net>

info@thefootballcoach.net | <http://www.thefootballcoach.net>

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T&C Available from [TheFootballCoach.Net](http://www.TheFootballCoach.Net)

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The use of Marcelo Bielsa is to share the work and the methodology
Of one of the worlds best coaches with coaches through out the
world, the likeliness and names are used with the greatest intent and
No information has been illegally obtained in the making of this book.
For any enquires please email info@Thefootballcoach.net with the
subject "Likeliness"

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UNDERSTANDING THE ENGLISH FOOTBALL REVOLUTION

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Marcelo Bielsa

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Who Is
Marcelo
BIELSA?



Marcelo Bielsa

Who Is Marcelo Bielsa



Individual Roles

Marcelo Alberto Bielsa Caldera, nicknamed Loco Bielsa. Which is Spanish for Madman Bielsa, was born in Rosario, Argentina. He played as a central defender and sometimes as a wide defender at Newells Old Boyds as well as other Argentinian clubs, before retiring after just under 4 years and 65 games.

Following his retirement as 25 Bielsa took on the dream of becoming a football manager, he made his way through youth football at Newell's, and eventually went on to manage the first team in 1990 winning the Torneo Apertura, and finishing runner up to São Paulo in the Copa Libertadores. In the early 90's Bielsa Continued his success story in Argentina winning another league title this time the 1998 Clausura.

Marcelo then made the move to Europe and worked with Espanyol, however this was cut short due to the opportunity to become Argentina national team manager, his reign was seen as chaotic with defeats to Columbia in the Copa America, as well as failure in the 2002 world cup, however his reign will always be remembered for his success of bringing Argentina the 2004 Olympic Gold Medal.

Bielsa next move was to Chile, his style of football was seen on the worlds stage at this point as he gained qualification for Chile's first world cup in a decade, his football became clear to see for those in northern Europe and his intense philosophy gained more and more respect.

Following a period in international football Bielsa returned to club football in Europe, starting with Athletic Bilbao

Coaching Career To Date:

1990–1992	Newell's Old Boys
1992–1994	Atlas
1995–1996	América
1997–1998	Vélez Sarsfield
1998	Espanyol
1998–2004	Argentina
2007–2011	Chile
2011–2013	Athletic Bilbao
2014–2015	Marseille
2016	Lazio
2017	Lille
2018–	Leeds United

Marcelo Bielsa

Who is Bielsa?

Personal History

Bielsa's career continued to be of note to clubs across Europe as he guided Bilbao to a Champions League Semi-Final beating Manchester United home and away, convincingly beating Sir Alex Ferguson's side, his use of possession based football and attacking pressing entertained the British audience as Manchester United were removed from Europe's elite club competition. As things started to diminish for Athletic, and players were sold making life more difficult, Bielsa's contract was not renewed, which led to him being appointed Marseille head coach on the 2nd May 2014.

His time in Marseille began positively with the side finishing in the Europa League places during his first season, they started well but faded as more financially backed clubs made strides later in the season. However, during Bielsa's second season, political tensions and conflict occurred and after losing the first game of the season, Bielsa walked away from Marseille. Political issues are a theme throughout Bielsa's coaching career, his next role with Lazio, only lasted two days, after disagreeing on failed promises with players, Bielsa decided to walk away, with the shortest tenure in top class football.

Since this role Bielsa has worked at both Lille and Leeds United, both of these tenures have also been filled with controversy, involving a suspension at Lille and a spy scandal at Leeds United, however, at both clubs his high intensity beliefs and possession dominant beliefs have been evident for everyone to see.



"My admiration for Bielsa is immense. I have never met a player who has worked with Bielsa and has spoken badly of him. For me he is the best coach in the world."

Pep Guardiola



"For me what Bielsa has done (at Athletic Bilbao) is worthier than what Simeone has. Marcelo made a team out of nothing."

Diego Maradona



"Bielsa taught me the most."

Diego Simeone

Marcelo Bielsa

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The
Philosophy
The Man

Understanding Marcelo

Develop Principles through Games

Who Is Marcelo Bielsa?

“A man with new ideas is mad until he succeeds” - Marcelo Bielsa

The Person

“El Loco” the man has been idolized for his unique and inquisitive approach to tactical situations and the set up of his teams, whilst further respected for his ability to coach these specific and demanding tactical structures with his players at both club and international level.

Although Bielsa may not have had the success he desired in Europe, his influence has still stretched far and wide, Guardiola. Pochettino and Siminoe have all spoke of their admiration and even Guardiola has described him as the worlds greatest coach



Bielsa has also been a coach very well known for his attention to detail, his adaptability to his opponent is interwoven with his in depth understanding of how the team he is playing behave in all elements of the game in possession out of possession in transition and in complex and emotive situation, trying to understand the people as well as the players and the behaviors that influence the decisions. This investment in analytics has also helped design his sessions and session design has been

11v11 Grid Game

Develop Principles through Games

Bielsa's Basic Principles

“If the Opponent attacks with 2, then why I need to defend with 4 instead of 3..... the extra player we will miss elsewhere on the pitch” - Marcelo Bielsa

The Principles

1.) Work Rate - Bielsa's team's are renowned for their work rate and consistency in high levels of physical performance, often achieving high levels of high speed running

2.) Overload +1 - Bielsa is adaptive to his opponent and believes during build up play you should match the opponent +1 extra player I.e create a 3v2 or a 2v1 not a traditional 4v2

2.) Rotation - Bielsa is reliant on rotation, rotation amongst individual, players should be able to play key positions, more offensive players in defensive positions. But movement and interlinked double movements are key to his philosophy, creating space an playing through

2.) Pressing - Bielsa is famous for football for creating highly creative and energetic pressing systems that are complex in nature and extremely effectively stopping teams play successfully



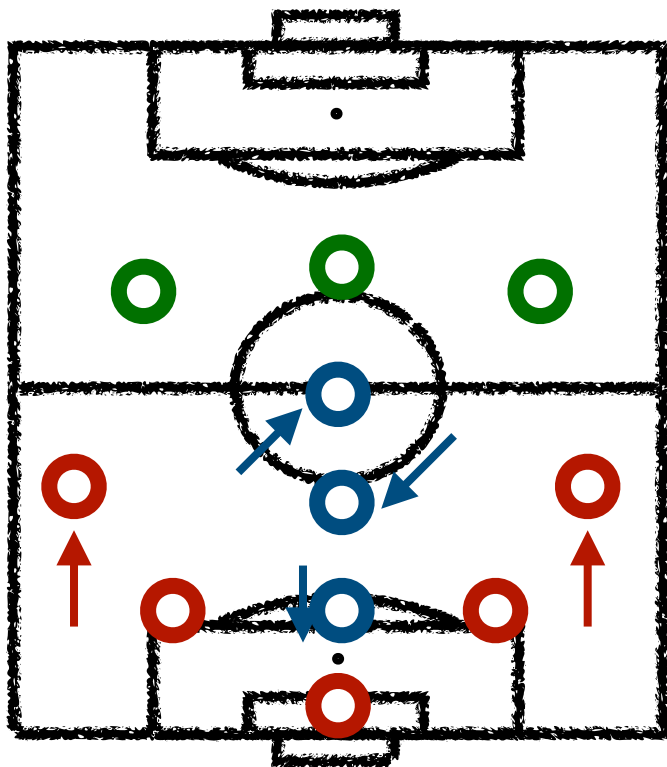
Creating a 1-3-3-1-3

Formations and Animations of Play

The Formation

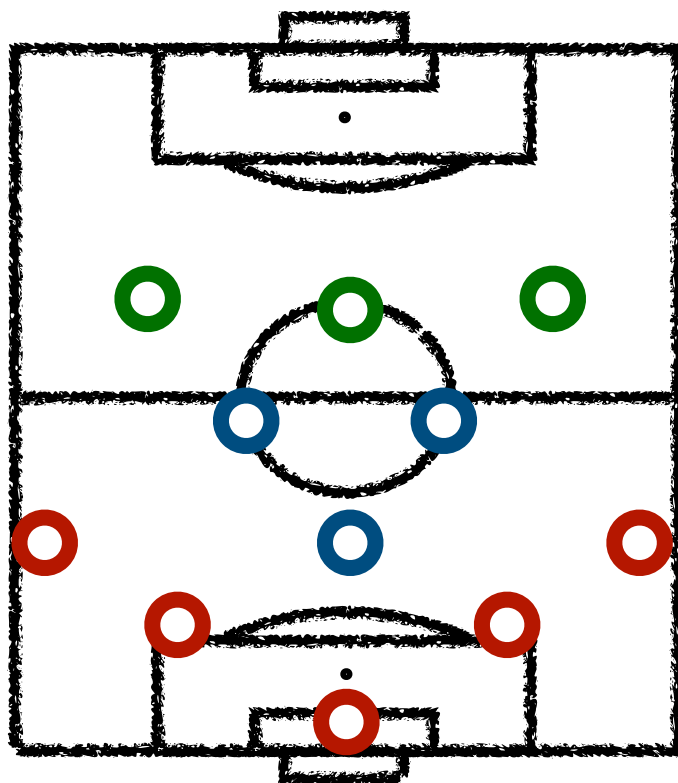
“El Loco” has often been associated with his famous 1-3-3-1-3, however this is not commonly a formation you will see at set up, this is more commonly the shape that the team will adapt through Bielsa’s rotation. Commonly Bielsa’s teams will start in some kind of 1-4-3-3 formation.

Becoming 1-3-3-1-3



between the opposition and the front 3 stay high.

As the team begin the build up process the full backs push higher becoming part of the second unit, the more defensive midfielder drops between the two centre backs to create a 3 in the defensive line, whilst one midfield player drops in with the full backs to create a 3, the other midfield player plays on a separate line to create extra passing lines



However Bielsa’s team will often compact one side of the pitch with the green, red and blue players (Pictured below) will come towards the ball to create a compact area where passing lines are much shorter allowing the team to move the ball quicker, shorter passes but also, this allows for counter pressing to take place, a key element of the Bielsa Philosophy

The Press

Develop Principles through Games

The Press

In his most recent coaching role with Leeds United, Bielsa's pressing system that he has been revered for through his career, has played a huge role in his teams success.

Bielsa's pressing system is often described a zonal-Man marking system, this often confuses coaches as it is directly a mix of two pressing systems, combined with an extremely high defensive line, their system looks to overload the opponent in all areas of the pitch and making any kind of forward passing extremely difficult .

His pressing system provides a flexible man-to-man system, with a clear spare player, this allows for what is referred to as a 'cover press' this ensures that if players lose the 1v1 that the man-to-man system creates, the covering player will be able to deal with that, in the diagram below this can be seen with the key 'Shadow Cover' sitting on the shoulder of the right back to ensure that the opponent can not travel towards goal.

Bielsa's Pressing is extremely reliant on the mentality of his players, the German pressing term

'Gegenpressing' is

extremely similar to the system used by Marcelo

Bielsa, this type of

pressing occurs very

quickly after the

defensive transition, this

Genenpressing. System

challenges players to

make quick mental

reactions to the loss of

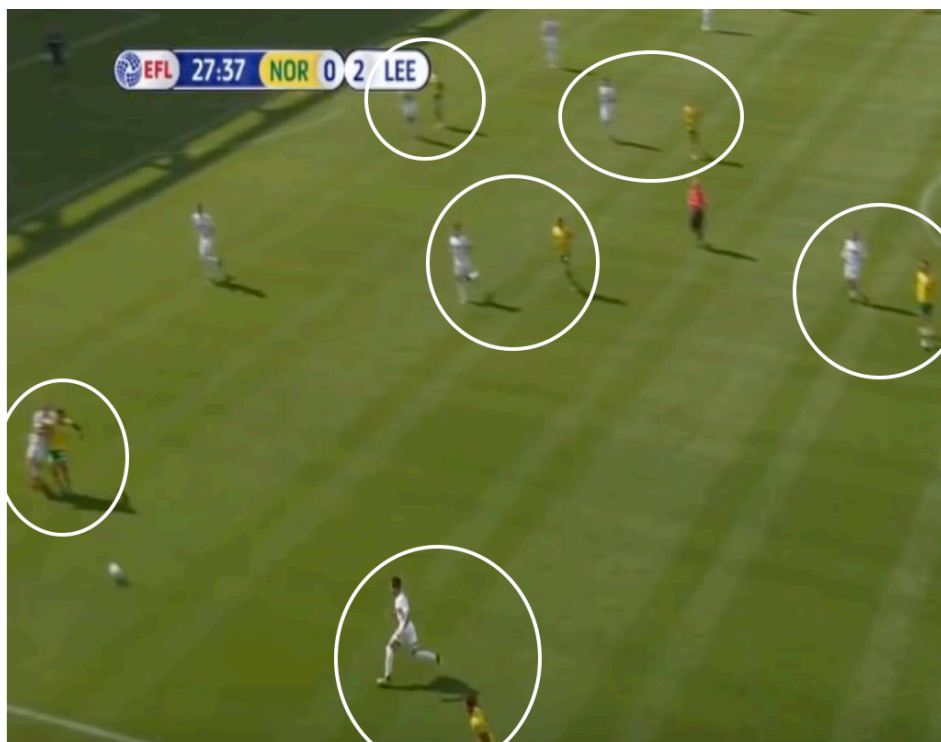
possession, and to

instantly apply pressure

to the player who has

gained possession for the

opposition, by applying



The Press Continued

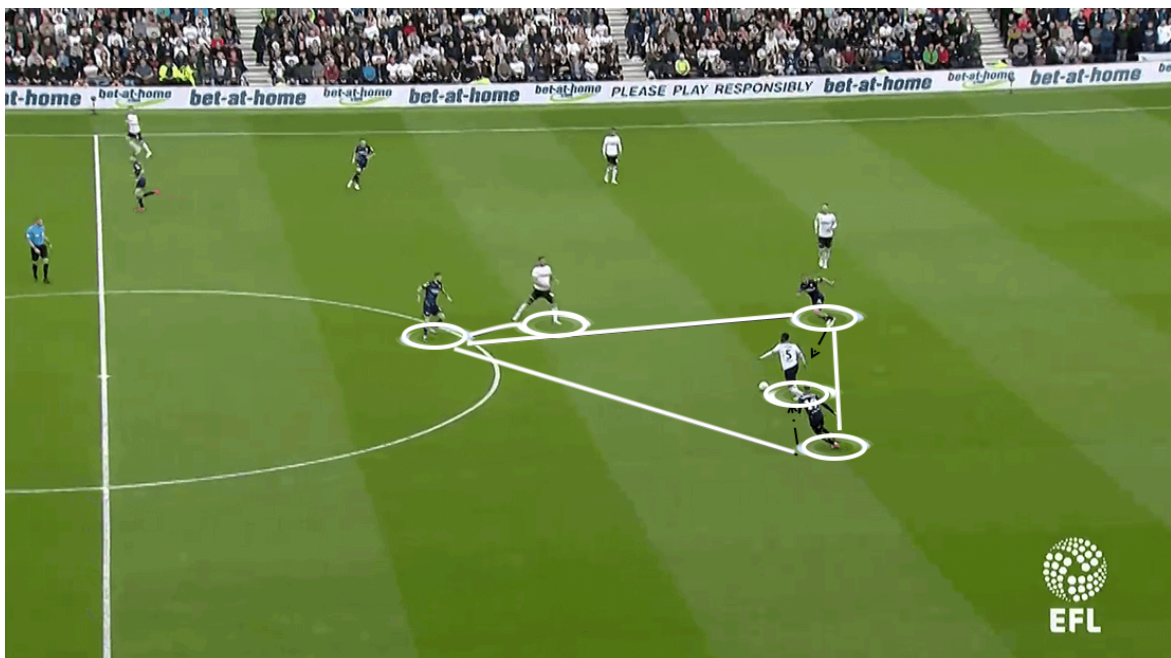
Develop Principles through Games

intense and immediate pressure, the opponent risks losing the ball due to the lack of structure in their attack and the lack of time in possession of the ball.

Gegenpressing systems rely on players to perform a mental task very quickly and apply pressure, but his team mates around him must perform highly important roles, when transitioning towards the opponent, the player must not only apply pressure to the man in possession, but must also block passing lanes and prevent the opponent finding a pass, especially a forward pass.

If the supporting press, is not quick enough, or fails to block the passing lanes, the opponent will play through the press, if the opponent is able to play through the press, the space left behind will be an overload for the opponent and thus leaving them the opportunity to attack Bielsa's teams goal.

Pressing is a moment of the game that requires consistent training and the principles must be enforced consistently, his outlandish and emotional personality helps instal the identity in his pressing that he requires, the players should work as hard in the pressing moment's as any other moment of the game it should be a principle to your team, that defines them.



The Rotation

Movement Throughout the Team Effects The Opposition

The Rotation

Bielsa's rotations play a key part in his philosophy, the rotations are key in causing chaos in the opponents structure. El Loco states there are two reasons for the consistent rotations,

1.) To create opportunities to play forward, to create space within the oppositions shape to allow the passes between the opposition lines and opposition units

2.) The second reason is to allow for counter-pressing to exist, by ensuring that players are placed closer together on one side of the pitch.

You naturally create an overloaded area of the pitch, this shortens the pass length, naturally making it easier to try and win possession back if the ball is lost, this create a strong side and a weak side.



This then dictates the way in which Bielsa plays in the strong and weak side are created, the team will likely build up using short passes and quick passing combinations, if the structure isn't created and the counter attack is available the ball will likely be hit direct.

Rotation Continued

Rotation confuses the opponent and creates space

The Rotation

Rotation is also key within the playing system, in order to create the overload +1 rule that Bielsa so commonly relies on, midfield players have to be comfortable dropping in to different lines to create this overload, this is also asked of the '10' within the 1-3-3-1-3, how can he drop in to the 3 to create a 4, and also how can the wide players rotate with the full backs to create overloads against the opponent (Explained further in to the book)

Players are also challenged within the philosophy as Bielsa commonly plays more attacking minded midfield players in his defensive unit, Bielsa is a huge believer that these more creative players can have a more attacking approach when passing out through the thirds and these individuals can perform this with a greater level of performance



Freedom within Framework

Develop Principles through Games

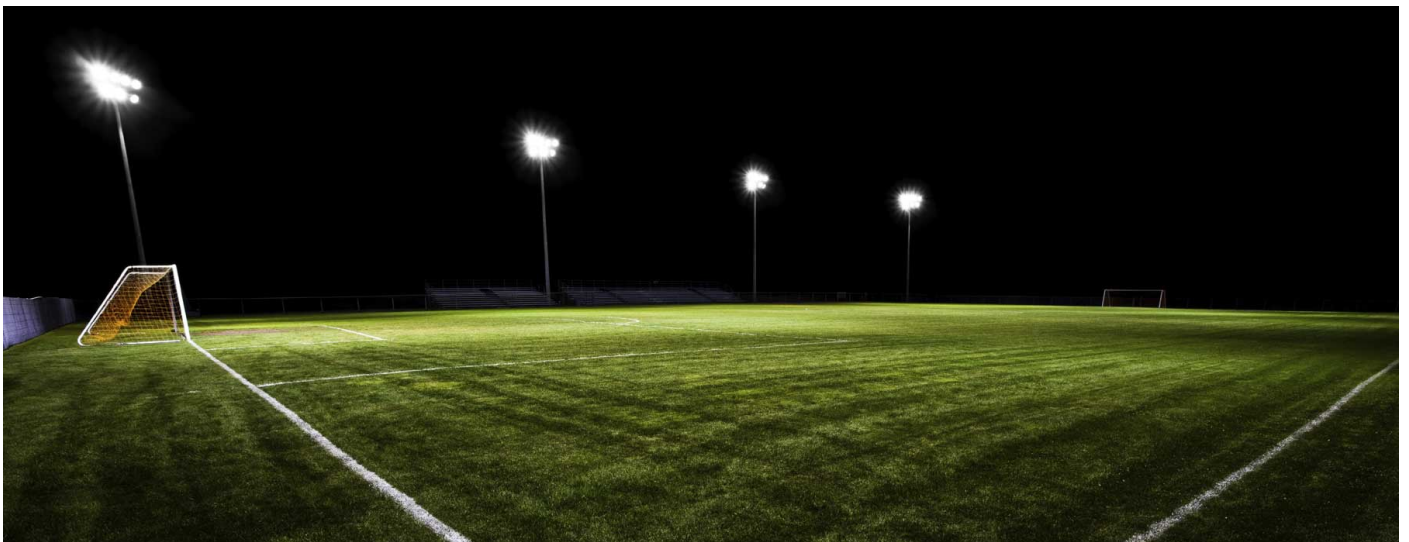
The Structure in Freedom

Bielsa has made many comments about how he believes his system is unbeatable but it's the human element of performance that limits the performance level, famously he once said "If football was played by robots, I'd win everything".

However this statement doesn't do justice to who and what Marcelo Bielsa is his information and level of detail may provide an almost robotic approach, however this can have quite the opposite influence, Maricio Pochettino once said that Bielsa inspires a lifelong love and interest for the game, and this relates to his level of detail.

The information overload and the detail that Bielsa provides players on their opponent, both technically, emotionally and tactically helps fire a life long drive to want to learn and to be inspired to understand more about the opponent.

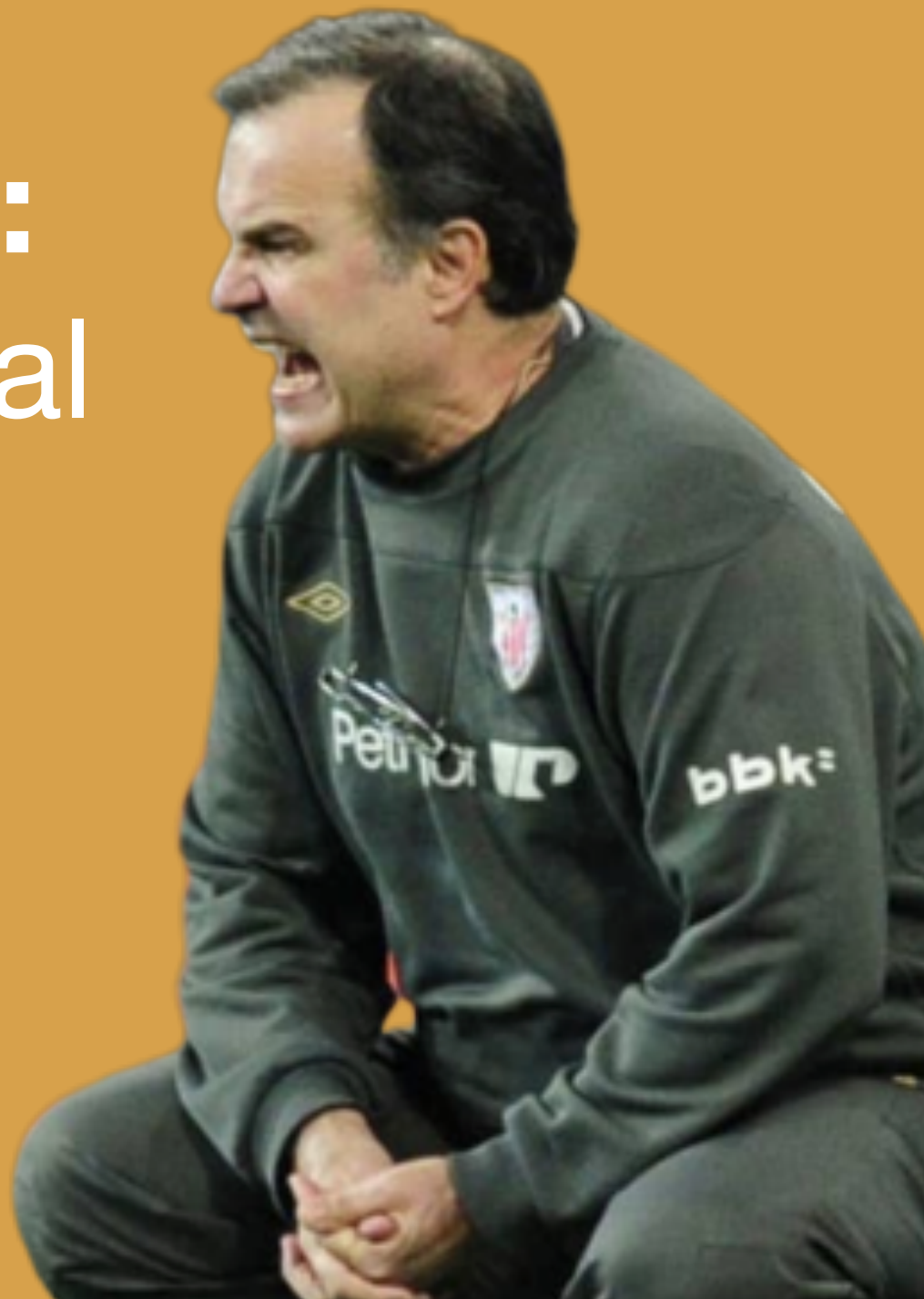
This creates a real mixture of mechanical and automated players with the ability to be creative and to respond to moments in the game that are unique and random, Bielsa himself has commented to say that "Totally mechanized teams are useless" and this is because within his philosophy he is completely aware of the lack of 'Script' That football provides.



Marcelo Bielsa

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BIELSA: Individual Roles



Marcelo Bielsa

Personal Profile

Goalkeeper

The Goalkeeper requires fundamental technical ability, they must be able to play passes under pressure and receive the ball and able to play out both ways. Decision making is a fundamental part of the Goalkeepers

Centrebacks

Centre-backs are the target players within Bielsa philosophy, these players must be confident receiving and playing of both feet, they must also be able to make decisions under pressure and recognize where to play passes can they find the area of numerical domination

Full Backs

Full-backs are often the spare players within the philosophy, and find themselves in open space. These players must be able to make decisions as to what space to occupy and when to play forward, having positive full backs will be key to the development of individual players

Central Midfield

The Central midfielder looks to stay close to possession during build up play and support the build up from the center backs to the attacking players, they must be confident playing between lines as well as be able to stay on the ball under pressure.

Individual Roles



Attacking Midfielders

These players play a key role in linking play between the attacking defensive area of the field. These players must be confident receiving between lines, so require good receiving skills and the ability to play confidently in compact areas.

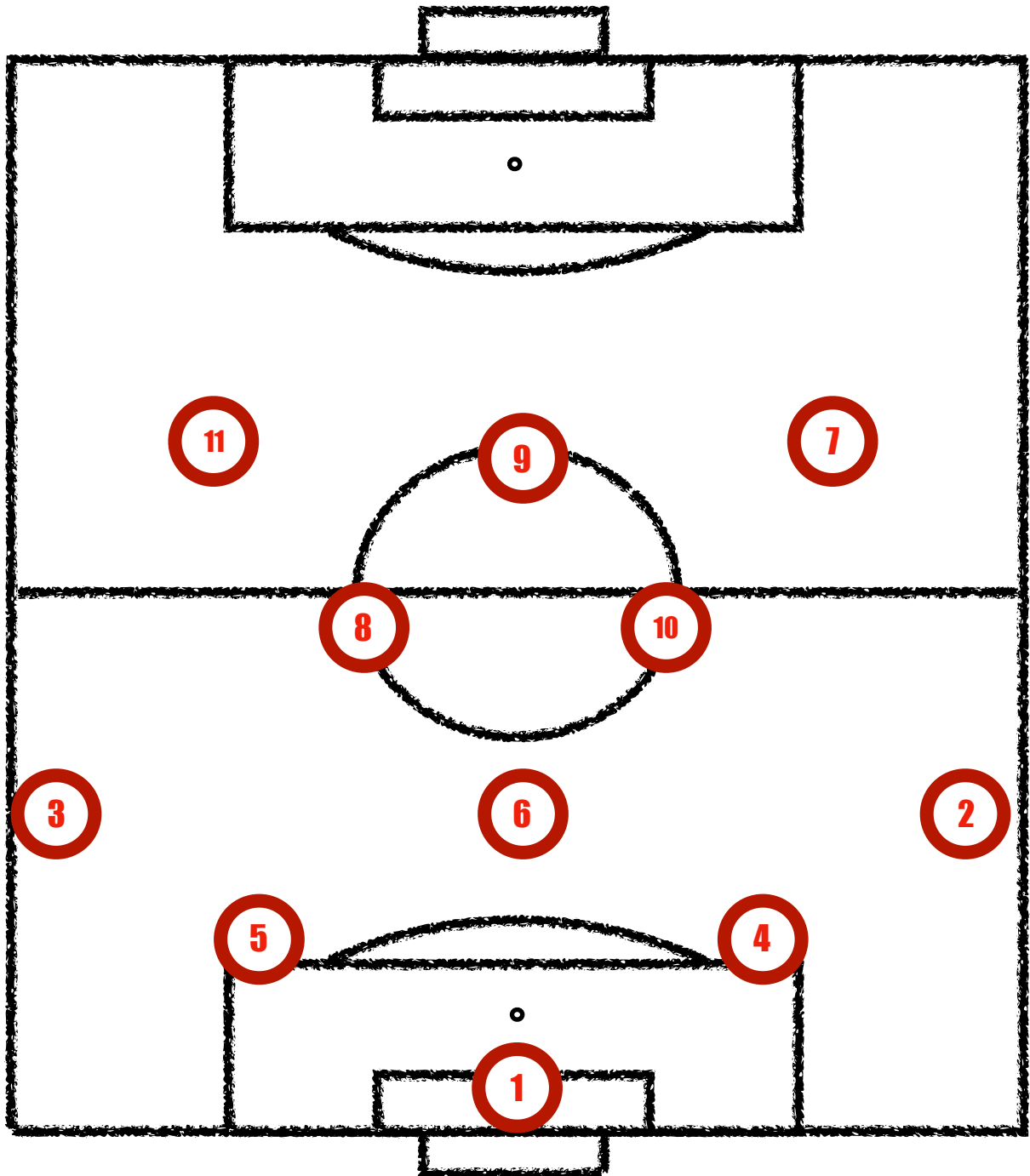
Forward

The forward will often shift across the attacking line during the attacking phase, as possession materialized the attacker will shift across to create a numerical overload on the strong side of the pitch

Marcelo Bielsa

Player Individual Roles

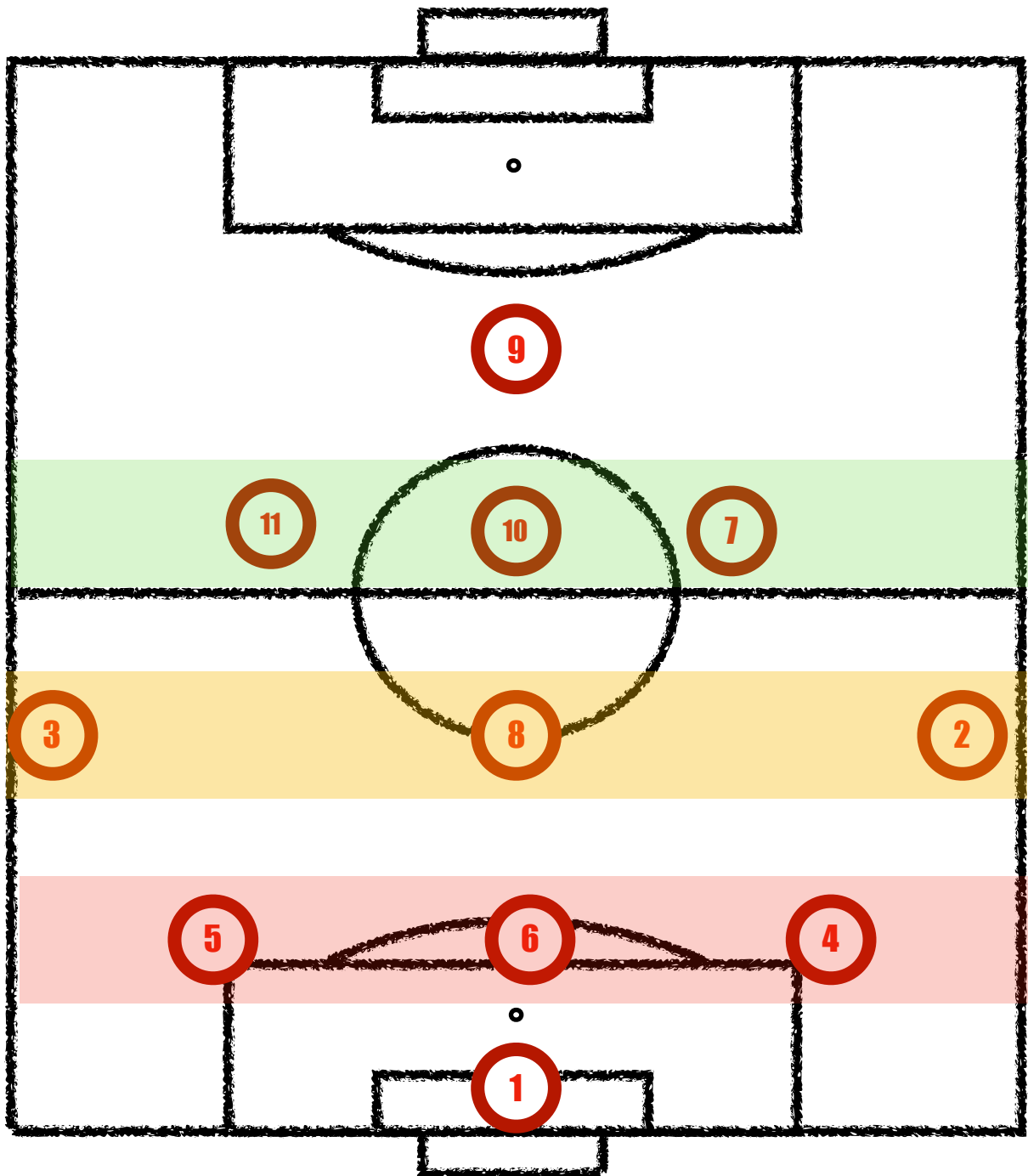
- 2| Right Full-Back
- 3| Left Full-Back
- 4| Right Sided Centre Back
- 5| Left Sided Centre Back
- 6| Deepest Midfield Player
- 7| Right Sided Attacking Midfielder
- 8| Central Midfield Player
- 9| Central Striker
- 10| Central Attacking Midfielder
- 11| Left Sided Attacking Midfielder



Marcelo Bielsa

During Build Up Play

- 2| Right Full-Back
- 3| Left Full-Back
- 4| Right Sided Centre Back
- 5| Left Sided Centre Back
- 6| Deepest Midfield Player
- 7| Right Sided Attacking Midfielder
- 8| Central Midfield Player
- 9| Central Striker
- 10| Central Attacking Midfielder
- 11| Left Sided Attacking Midfielder



Goalkeepers Role

"Understand the recruitment requirements for each position"

Goalkeeper

Marcelo Bielsa's goalkeepers play a key role in the Bielsaball system, The goalkeeper's role extends far beyond just the ability to keep the ball out of the net, the goalkeeper is expected to be able to play under pressure, receiving the ball under pressure from centre forwards and still able to make good passing decisions. The goalkeeper is also challenged within Bielsa's system to be able to play passes over a long distance as Bielsa's teams can be very direct and look to play over teams when required. With this in mind it is still important that the goalkeepers range of passing is vast as the spare player within the philosophy can be in a variety of places.

Summary

Comfortable playing under pressure

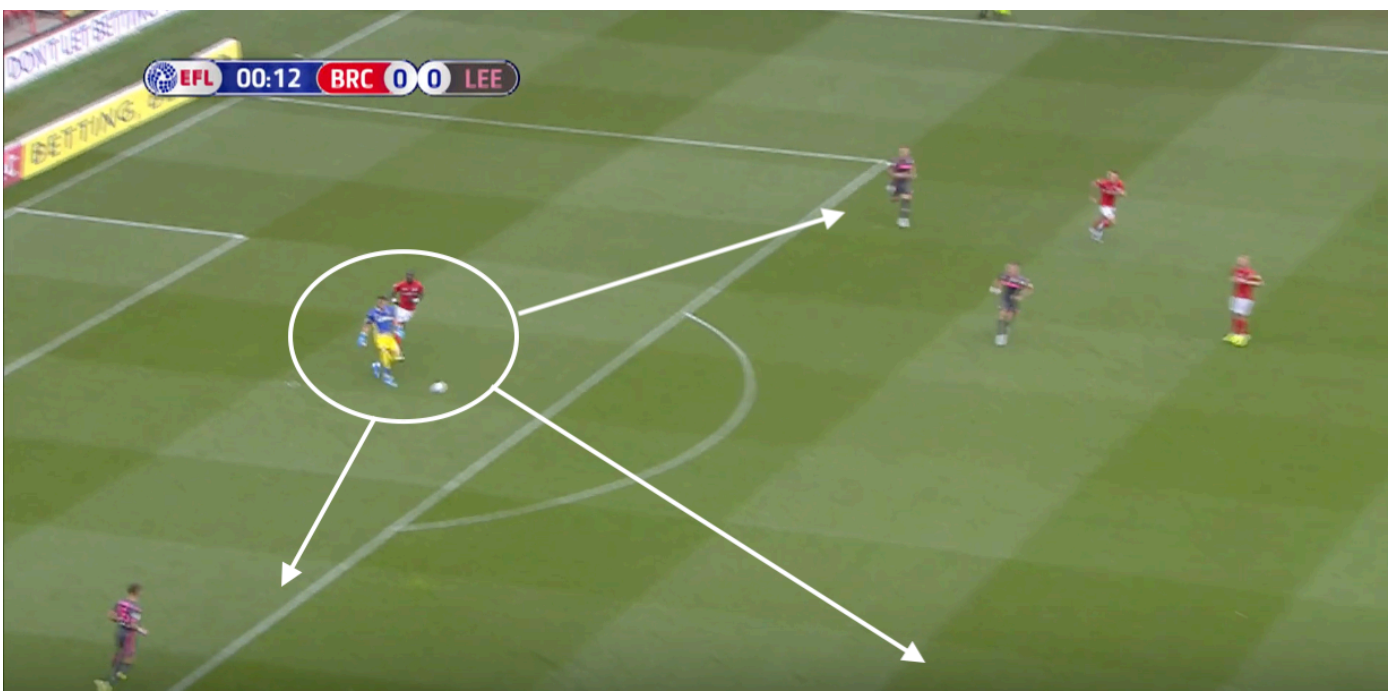
Must be able to receive on both feet

Must be able to play direct in to and beyond the striker

Must be able to play passes under pressure when being pressed by the opponent

Must be comfortable 'clipping passes to wide areas'

Be comfortable playing in a side that press high





Full-Back Role

"Understand the recruitment requirements for each position"

Full-Back

The full back role is a challenging role within Marcelo Bielsa's system, Marcelo is renowned for playing more attacking players in these roles, he likes to play players who are comfortable playing forward and understand the importance of playing forward under pressure, however as expected Bielsa is highly demanding of the full-back and these full-backs can have a variety of roles including playing inside infant of the defensive unit with the 1-3-3-1-3. And sometimes will play much higher and wider and create the width within the system. This requires a player with a vast tactical understanding of the game as well as a strong technical ability.

Summary

Comfortable playing under pressure

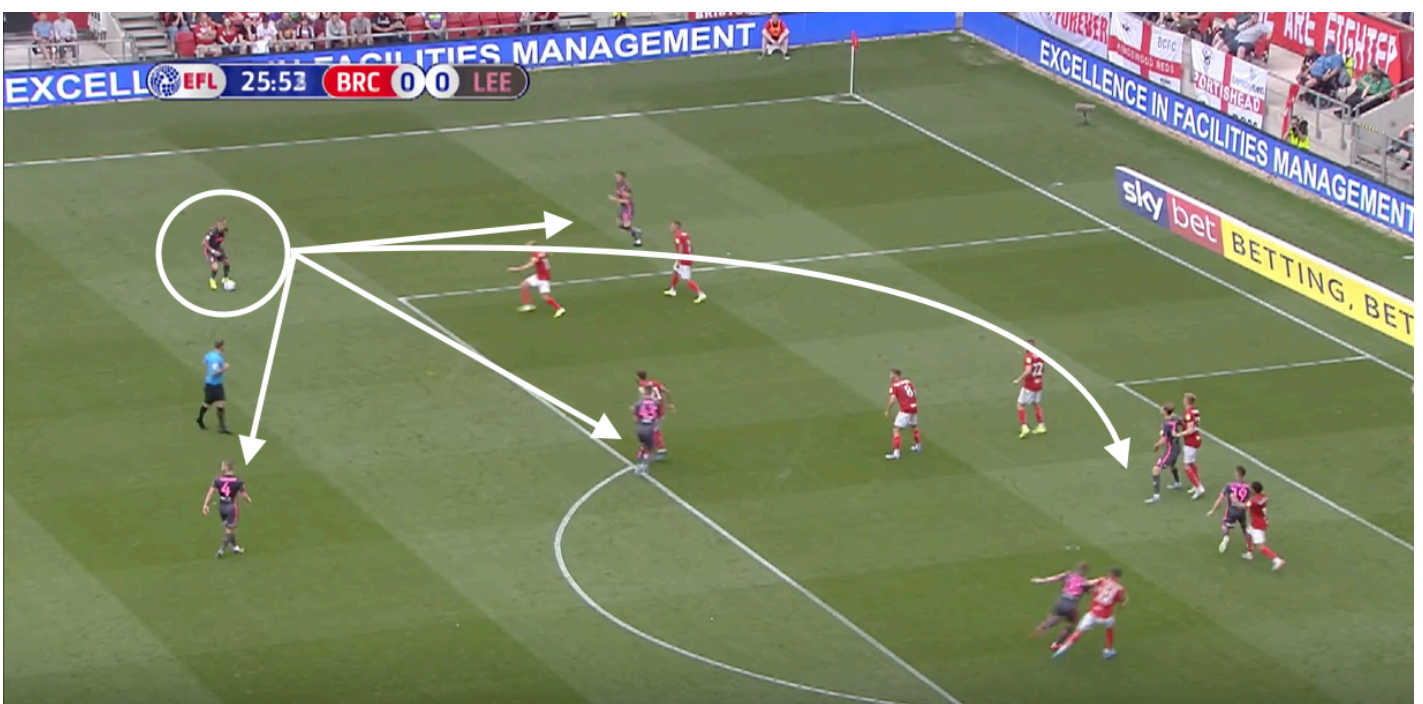
Must be able to receive on both feet

Must be able to understand various roles within the team

Must be able to cover large amounts of high intensity running

Comfortable counter pressing (Gegenpressing)

Understand the importance of forward passes



Centre Back Role

"Understand the recruitment requirements for each position"

Centre Back

The centre back within Marcelo Bielsa system does require a degree more flexibility than a centre back in a standard 11, Marcelo Bielsa has famously played midfield players in the position asking them to become playmakers from deep and requiring them to try and play through the opponent from the first line of defense, this means that the player must be technically competent and have a range of passing that allows him to play through multiple lines and dominate the opponent, whilst having the tactical understanding required to understand how to manipulate the out of possession formation to create the 1-3-3-1-3 that Bielsa so requires to create overloads in all areas of the opponents shape

Summary

Comfortable playing under pressure

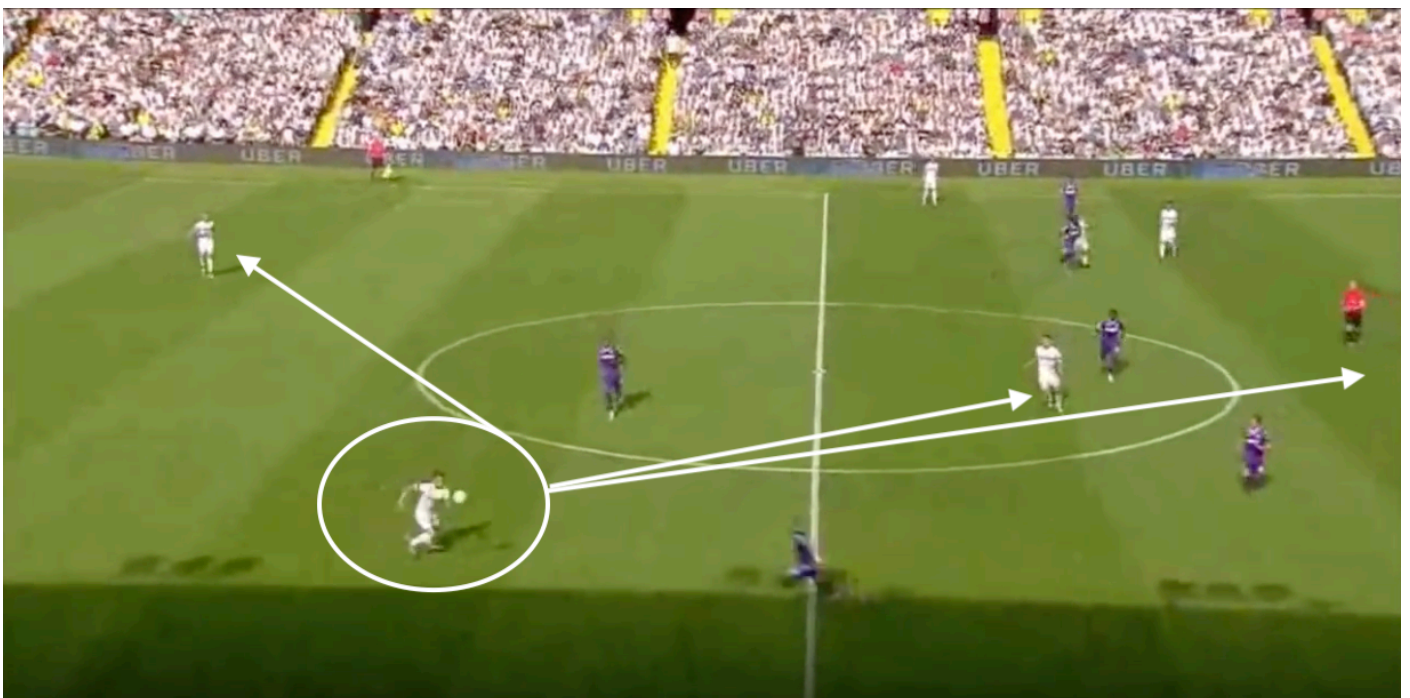
Must be able to receive on both feet

Must be able to understand various roles within the team

Must be able to organize and ensure the overload principle is maintained

Comfortable providing shadow cover

Comfortable defending 1v1



“10” or “Trequartista”

"Understand the recruitment requirements for each position"

Number 10

The 10 has a key role in and out possession In Bielsa system, often seen as the player with the most importance in the attacking part of the game, the Trequartista plays between the attacking 3 and the midfield 3, he is challenged to play between lines and look to play forward when receiving, the player needs to be very comfortable receiving on the half turn and must be competent in most technical qualities, in fact it is essential that this player is extremely technical competent. Out of possession it is often said the the “10” has the least defensive responsibility, this was more true in Bielsa’s time in south America however in his European roles the 10 has been key in the Gegenpress as the 10 commonly plays in central areas, the 10 also plays a key role in switching with the 9 to prevent the opponent playing out from the back

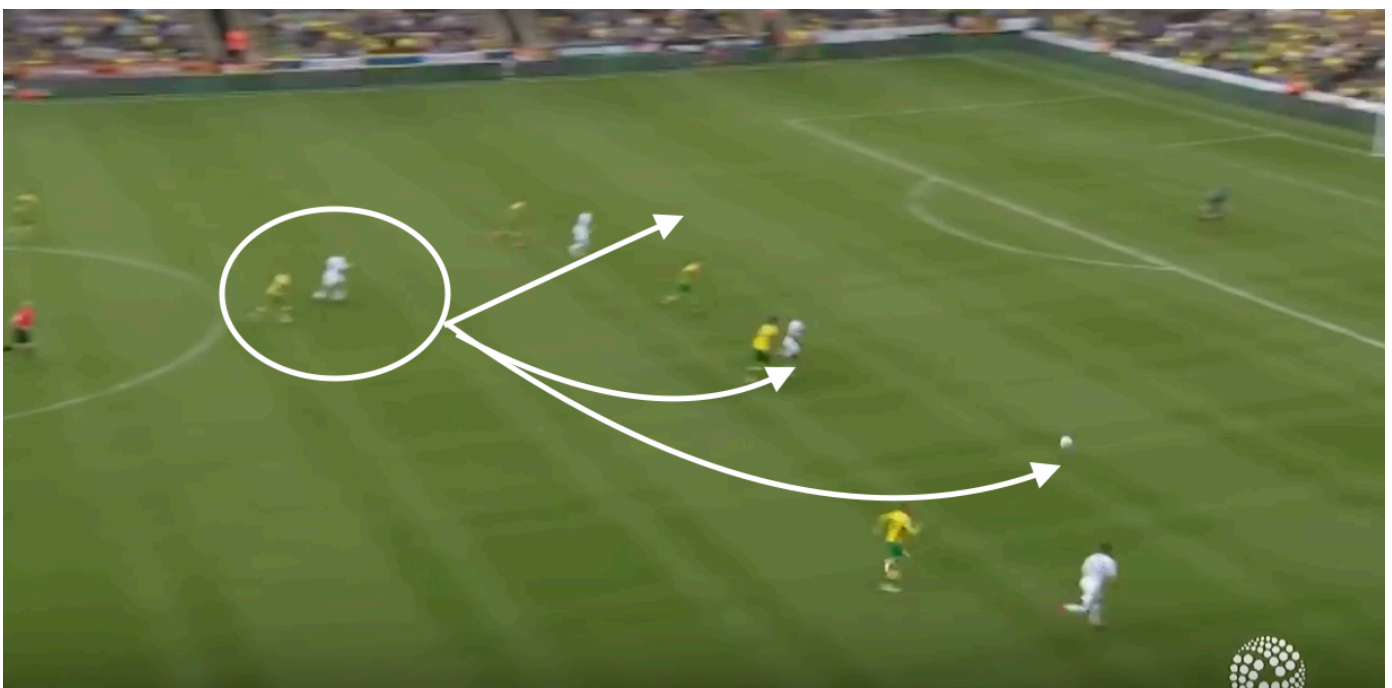
Summary

Shows an understanding of the transition and can influence the counter press

Comfortable playing between lines and moving the ball quickly

Comfortable changing position in relation to the game to create overloads

Understand the roles in build up play as well as roles during opposition build up play



Marcelo Bielsa

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Sessions:
Developing
Build-Up
Play

Putting Value To The Type Of Pass

The importance of **Technical** passing detail

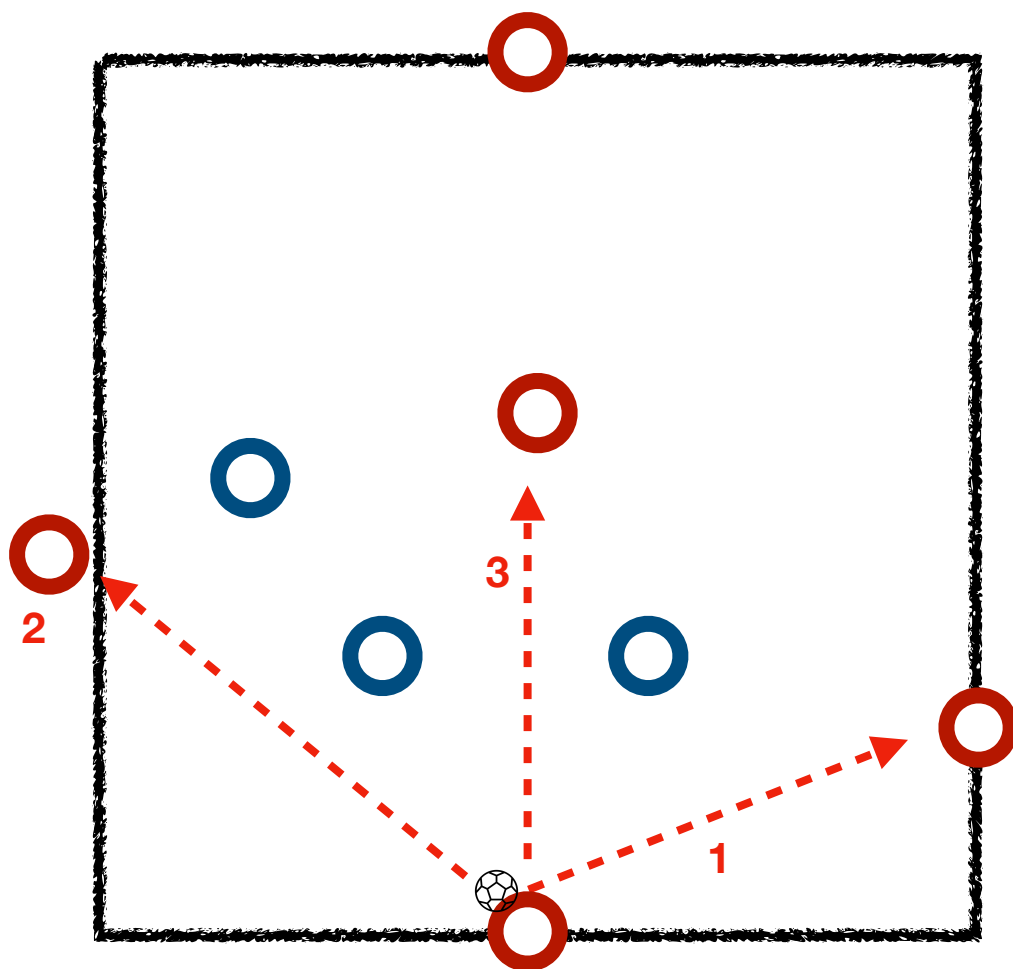
Passing example 1

Pass example 1 shows a passing that moves the point of attack but doesn't break any passing lines, although this maybe the correct pass try to reward players who attempt to play through lines and look to break the opponents defensive lines

Passing Example 2

Passing example 2 shows the attacking player breaking the first attacking line, this pass might not allow the receiving player to turn and play forward but does allow him to receive between the opponents front line and this pass is more valuable because of the danger it posses, once a player receive between the lines they are able to combine with other attacking players and create over loads against the opponent, who has players who can not effect the game

Creating Better Passes



Passing Example 3

Passing example 3 demonstrates a pass that breaks multiple defensive lines, this means the attacking players has played through at least two lines, this pass is the most dangerous pass for the defensive team, simply because it allows the opponent to play inside their defensive shape, it also means the overload the Reds have will be deeper in to the defensive shape of the blues. Reds should be praised for the effort when they try to break multiple lines, the more lines the offensive team can break, the closer to the opponents Goal the reds are able to attack

5 v 3 Boxed Rondo

Rondo to develop the receiving skills of players between the opposition defensive lines

“Use Width to Play Forward”

Setup

The session is simply set up in a 15 x 15 yard space, the players set up with a 4 on the outside, one player pre side of the square, and then a 1v3 in the middle of the area, reds look to keep possession away from the blues, if blues win the ball then reds transition in to pressure the opponent, this will demonstrate the need to be comfortable playing within a 3 and provide opportunity between the lines

Team Detail

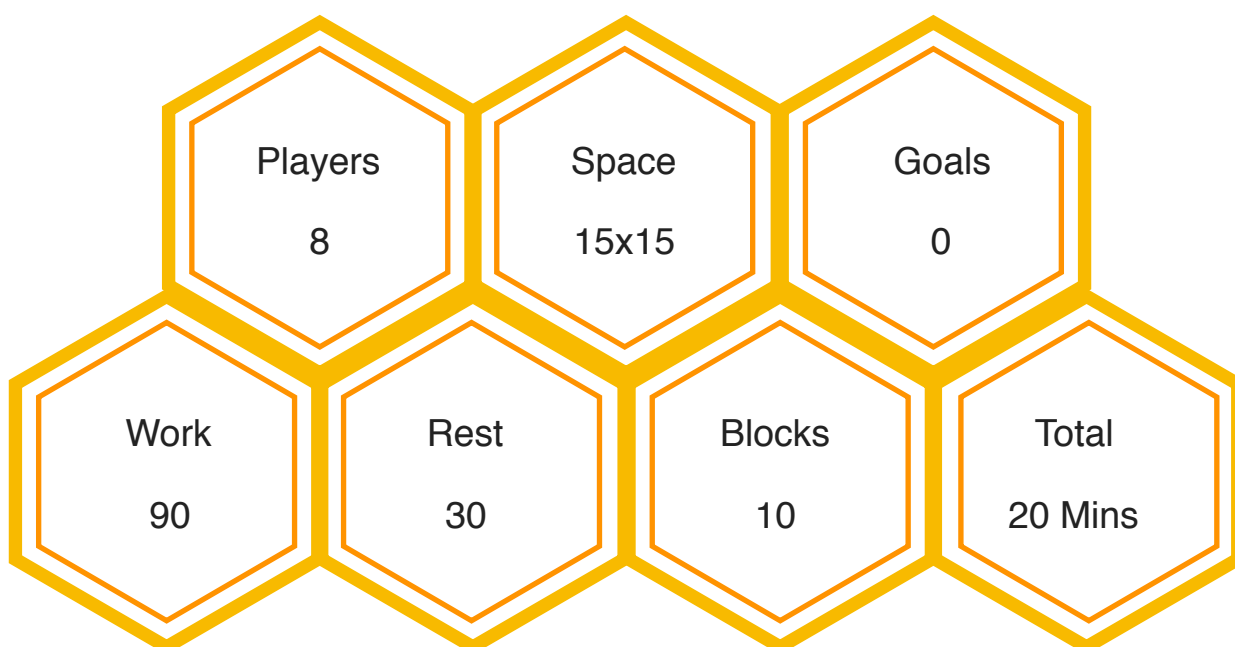
- Ensure the players keep the intensity on the inside and outside to make the practice realistic and competitive
- Encourage players to move the ball quickly to beat the press and try and play through the opposition whilst you have a numerical overload, this is the point in working in a opposition number +1 philosophy

Individual Detail

- Can players move the ball away from the opponent when there is not the opportunity to play between the lines
- Can individuals play first time when under pressure from the opponent
- Can the players out of possession make play predictable and keep the ball outside

Progression

- Narrow Space to make passing more difficult
- Limit outside players touches
- Add two boxes together to provide a more difficult and more advanced practice

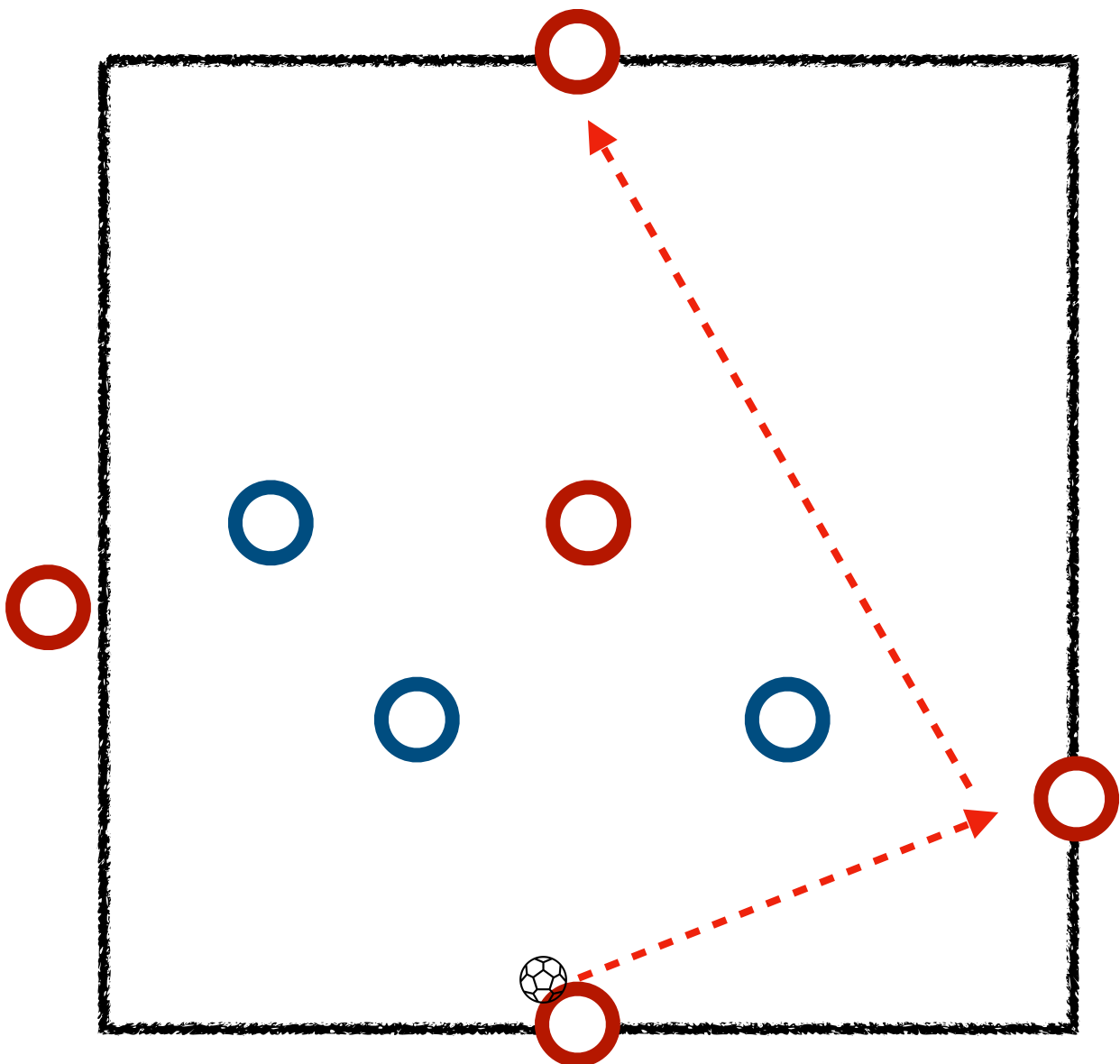


5 v 3 Boxed Rondo

Rondo to develop the receiving skills of players between the opposition defensive lines

Bielsa Specific

This session is fantastically simple with clear opportunities to practice some of the key principles to Bielsa's system and beliefs, with two fixed wide players and a central player, this naturally builds a 3, working within a 3 is naturally important in a philosophy that only wants to create situation where it is the opposition number +1, as this will allow for greater numbers ahead of the ball, the practice also replicates the importance of the technical elements of performance, can players demonstrate efficient passing techniques, playing on one touch or multiple touches. Can players receive ahead of the opponent. Can players receive and retain when under pressure.



8 v 6 Bielsa Rondo

Rondo to develop the receiving skills of players between the opposition defensive lines

“Play Through to Cause Carnage”

Setup

The session is simply set up in a 20x30 yard area, with a central area 5 yards wide with two defensive players stuck inside that zone. The players then play 4 v 2 in each half with 3 outside players and a 1v2 in central areas, the idea of the practice is to move the ball quickly and try to play through the opponent quickly and take advantage of the overloads in central areas.

Individual Detail

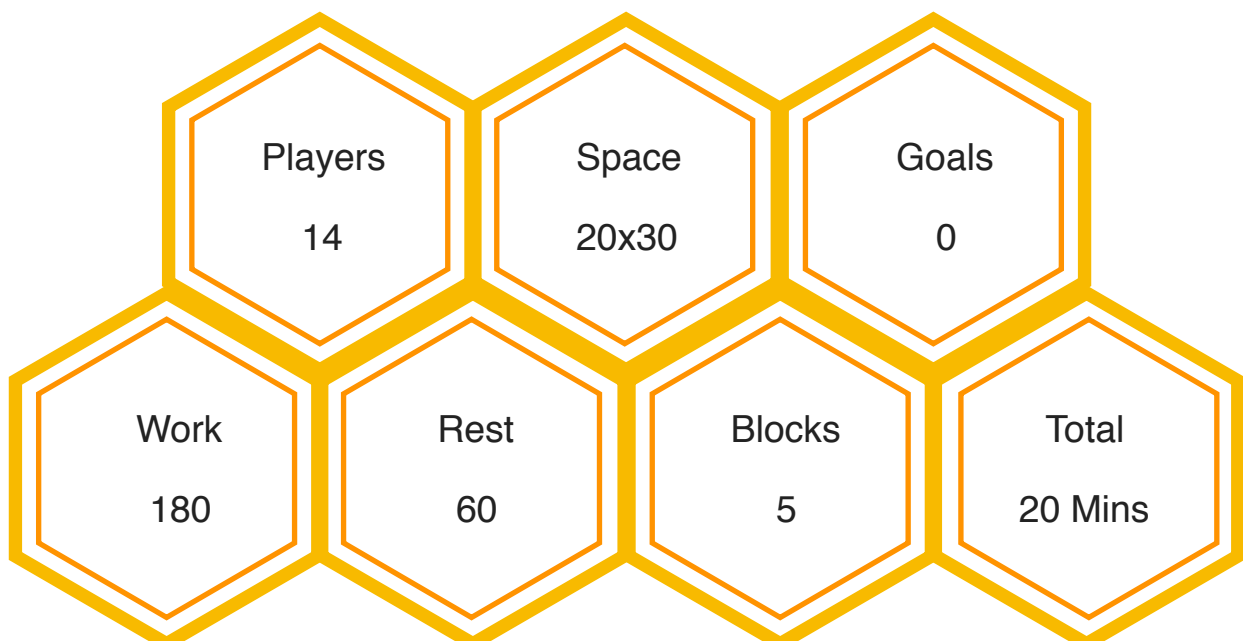
- Can players move the ball away from the opponent when there is not the opportunity to play between the lines
- Can individuals play first time when under pressure from the opponent
- Can the players out of possession make play predictable and keep the ball outside

Team Detail

- Ensure the players keep the intensity on the inside and outside to make the practice realistic and competitive
- Encourage players to move the ball quickly to beat the press and try and play through the opposition whilst you have a numerical overload, this is the point in working in a opposition number +1 philosophy
- Encourage players to receive above the opposition line and then play wide

Progression

- Allow central players the opportunity to leave central zone and attack the team in possession
- Limit central players to touches in possession to ensure the practice is quick

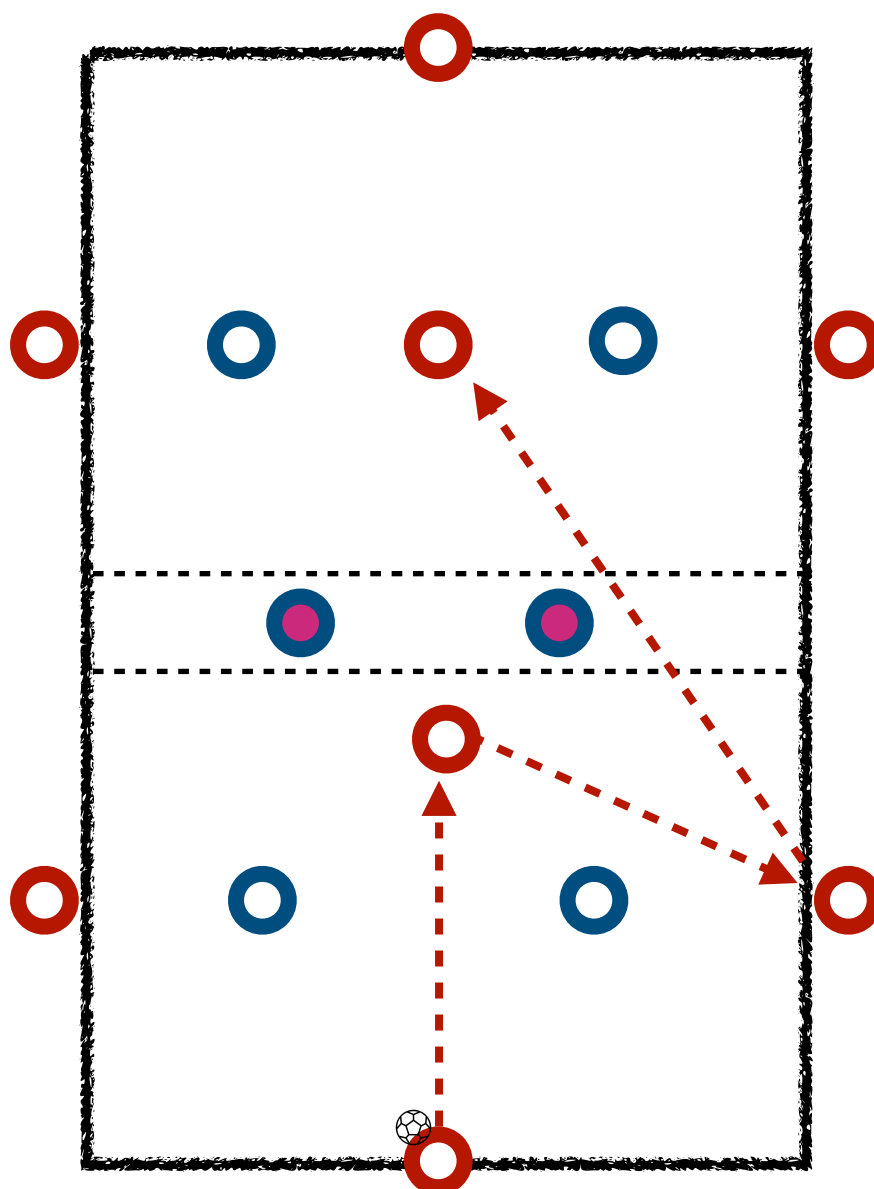


8 v 6 Bielsa Rondo

Rondo to develop the receiving skills of players between the opposition defensive lines

Bielsa Specific

This session is fantastically simple with clear opportunities to practice some of the key principles to Bielsa's system and beliefs, with two fixed wide players and a central player, this naturally builds a 3, working within a 3 is naturally important in a philosophy that only wants to create situation where it is the opposition number +1, as this will allow for greater numbers ahead of the ball, the practice also replicates the importance of the technical elements of performance, can players demonstrate efficient passing techniques, playing on one touch or multiple touches. Can players receive ahead of the opponent. Can players receive and retain when under pressure.



5v5+4 SSG

Using Wide players to play forward and finish

“Use Unit’s of 3 for numerical advantages”

Setup

The Session is a fantastic way to train the principles of Bielsa’s work, the session offers the opportunity to work in units of 3, play begins with the GK, and the team look to play out in the first 3v2 with the two wide zones separating the pitch, possession I maintained using the central player who can switch sides, before looking to play in the attacking half and looking to score, the practice goes end to end, so goalkeepers effectively switch teams when the game changes ends. (Blues are always defending)

Team Detail

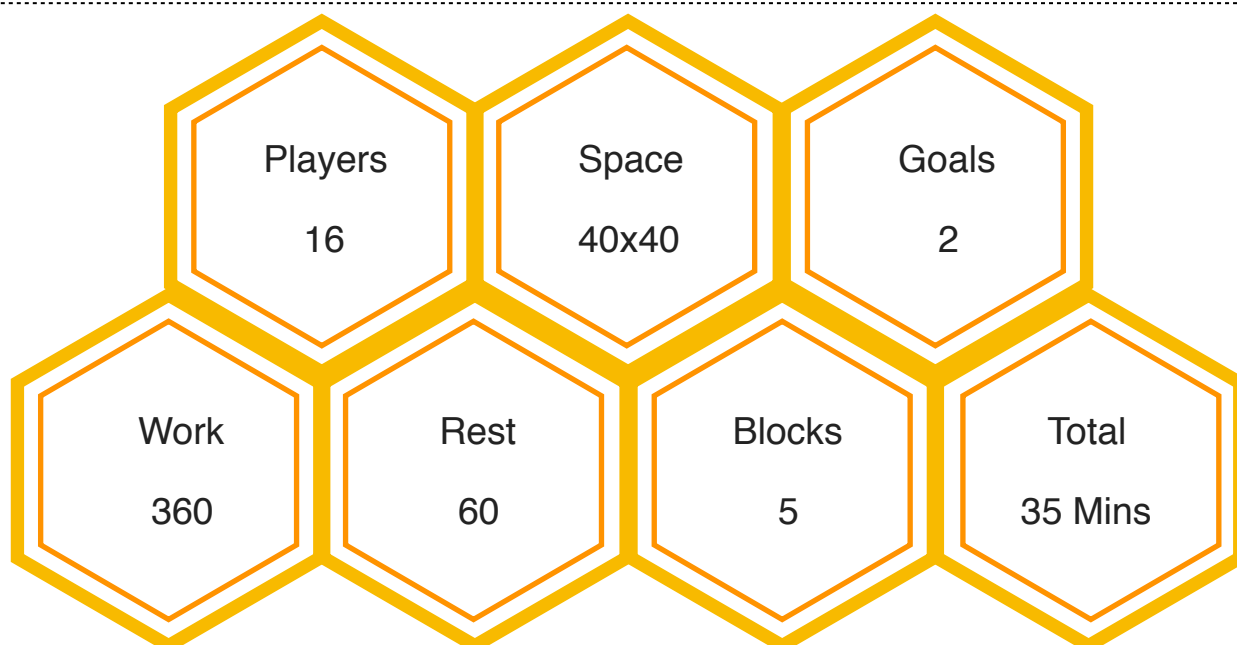
- Ensure the team recognize the need to cover different areas of the pitch to create a practice where space is occupied and the opponent is stretched to make the space difficult to defend
- Ensure players recognize the need to work in 3’s, this against most formations will allow for a 2v3 overload in central areas, where the opposition drops 3 in then the system can be adopted by moving the central player to create a 3v4.
- To ensure ball circulation is maintained challenge the central player to move quickly from half to half.

Individual Detail

- Can the central player of the 3, drop between the two deepest players to receive possession
- Challenge players to turn with the ball, be brave enough to create chaos in-between the opposition lines
- Encourage players to recognize the damage they can cause to there opponents structure by receiving between lines

Progression

- The session can be opened up space wise to ensure the wide areas are taken away and the width is not enforced but players must look to keep this width to provide structure to the practice
- Removing the half way line is another way to manipulate this practice however when the half way line is removed the practice can quickly remove its depth and make it false and difficult for the team in possession to be able to play through the opponent

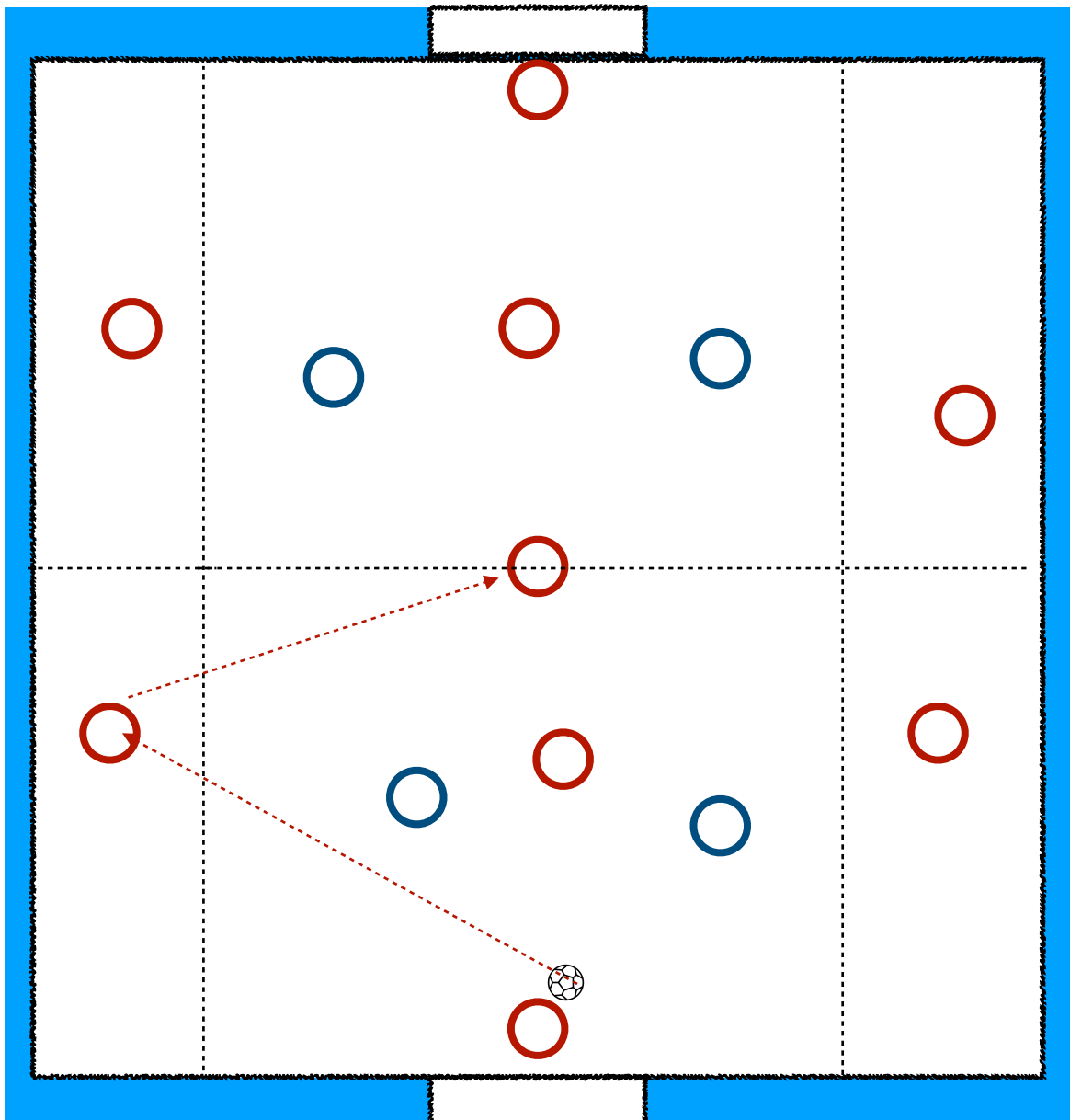


5v5+4 SSG

Using Wide players to play forward and finish

Bielsa Specific

The session is very demanding physically and trains the clear principles Bielsa lays out in his requirements from his players, tactically the players are set up with two units of 3, which is the same as his philosophy, even when playing a 4-2-3-1 the players create units of 3 for the majority of the time. Within this session players will be bale to create natural overloads through the system allowing 2v3 and 2v3 in the attacking half. The central player will allow a greater overload of required, this central player will also represent the playmaker that is so important in Argentinian football, this player will be challenged with linking the two halves and the two areas of the game.



Playing Through Principles

Use Mannequins to create the pictures players may see during the Build Up Phase

“Playing Consistently towards principles”

Setup

The passing practice is very simple and doesn't require massive amounts of equipment, the session requires a setup of 3-4-3 in mannequins, the players then pass around that in a pattern that represents the passing patterns required to play out using Bielsa's philosophy. The patterns can be altered to provide solutions to different tactical problems.

Team Detail

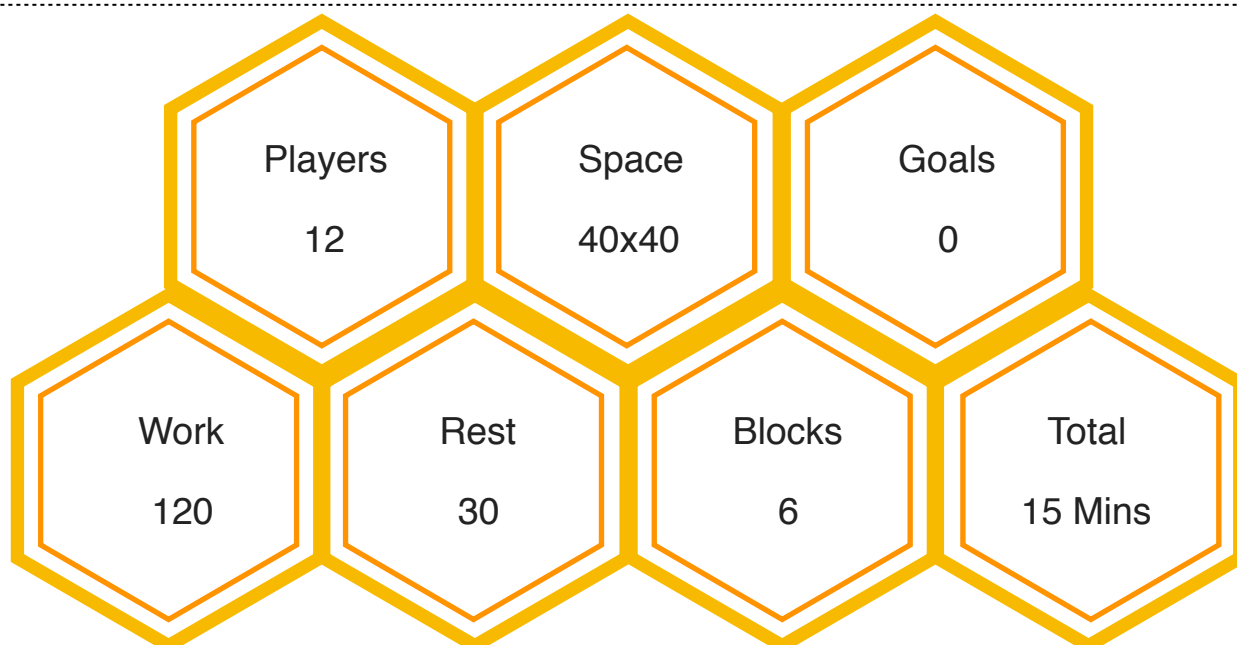
- Ensure the patterns used are specific to the philosophy, trying to find the spare player in the initial phase. Before turning and building through the next phase of the pitch
- Ensure the players ahead of the ball are patient and understand the philosophy and what is happening and why it is happening before them in the build up process
- Ensure players are well aware of what their role is within the philosophy in all moments

Individual Detail

- Can the central midfield player receiving the ball look to move laterally to receive between the opponents lines
- Can that same central player make good decisions as and when to play on one touch and when to play on two touches
- Can the outside players make movements in to the space left wide, as the central player narrows the opponent
- Can players focus on the quality of passes, the next player should be able to play first time or turn with the ball with their first touch because of the quality of the pass

Progression

- Remove the fixed passing pattern and allow players to make their own decision, however ensure that the players are making decisions that suit the philosophy, players who make decisions that are similar to the philosophy show a understanding of the way in which the manager works
- Instead of players 1 and 2 performing a bounce pass, 2 can look to turn on his first touch and play to the wide player to add an increased intensity and increase the attacking intent

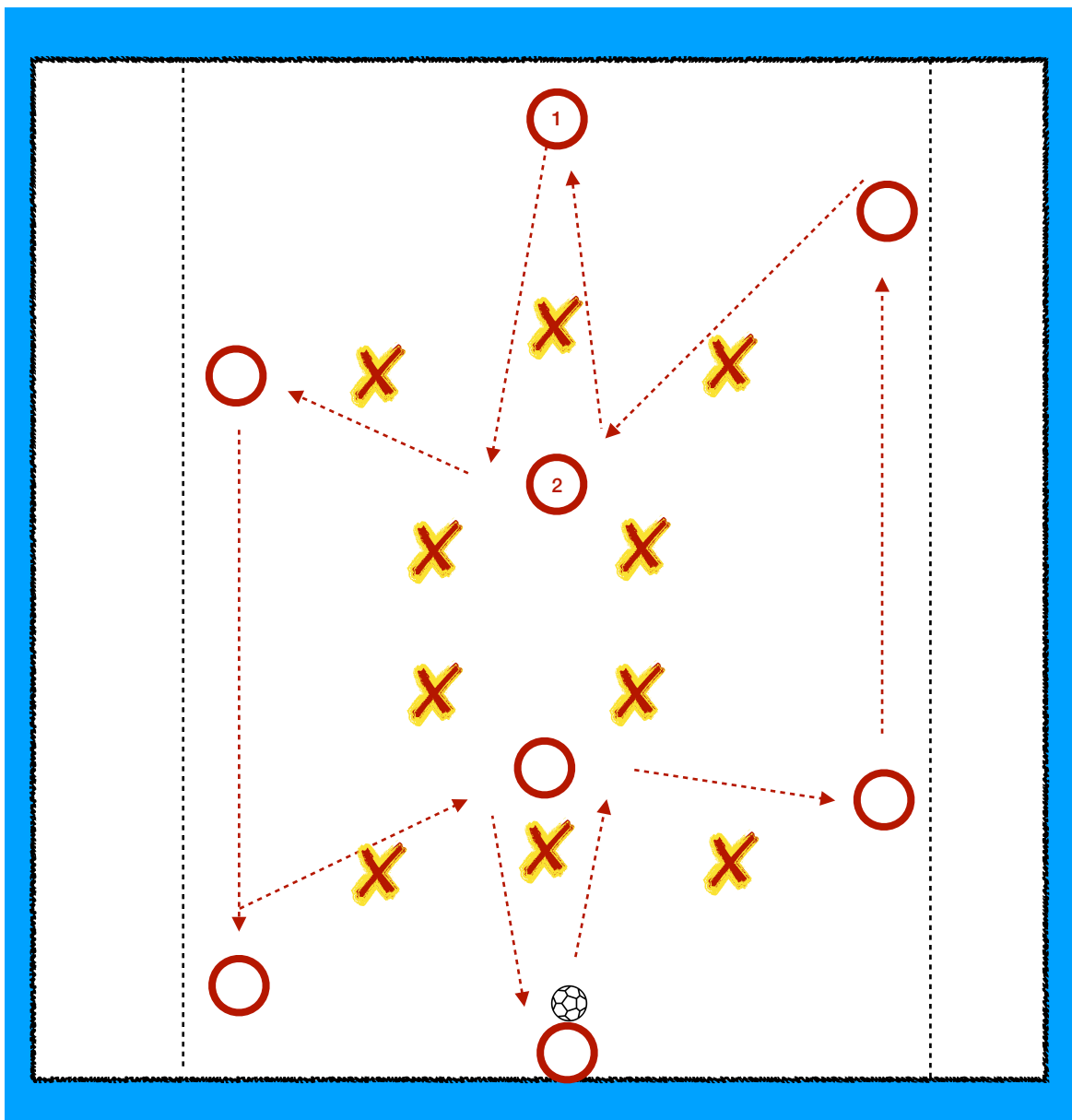


Playing Through Principles

Use Mannequins to create the pictures players may see during the Build Up Phase

Bielsa Specific

The session shown below is a generic Bielsa session that trains the units ability to play between position lines using Bielsa most common formation involving 3 units of 3 (3-3-3). This session trains the belief that players must be confident receiving between lines, in order to play forward, this demonstrates that the wide players can receive reverse passes from the central players and that movement of the shoulder and back of the opponent is key when building up. One principle of Bielsa's work is that you must have the same number of players as the opponent when playing out +1, so this means build up must be 3v2 or 4v3, this practice can be manipulated to ensure that this principle is always trained within this session.



5v5+4 SSG

Using Wide players to play forward and finish

“Use Unit’s of 3 for numerical advantages”

Setup

The Session is a fantastic way to train the principles of Bielsa’s work, the session offers the opportunity to work in units of 3, play begins with the GK, and the team look to play out in the first 3v2 with the two wide zones separating the pitch, possession I maintained using the central player who can switch sides, before looking to play in the attacking half and looking to score, the practice goes end to end, so goalkeepers effectively switch teams when the game changes ends. (Blues are always defending)

Team Detail

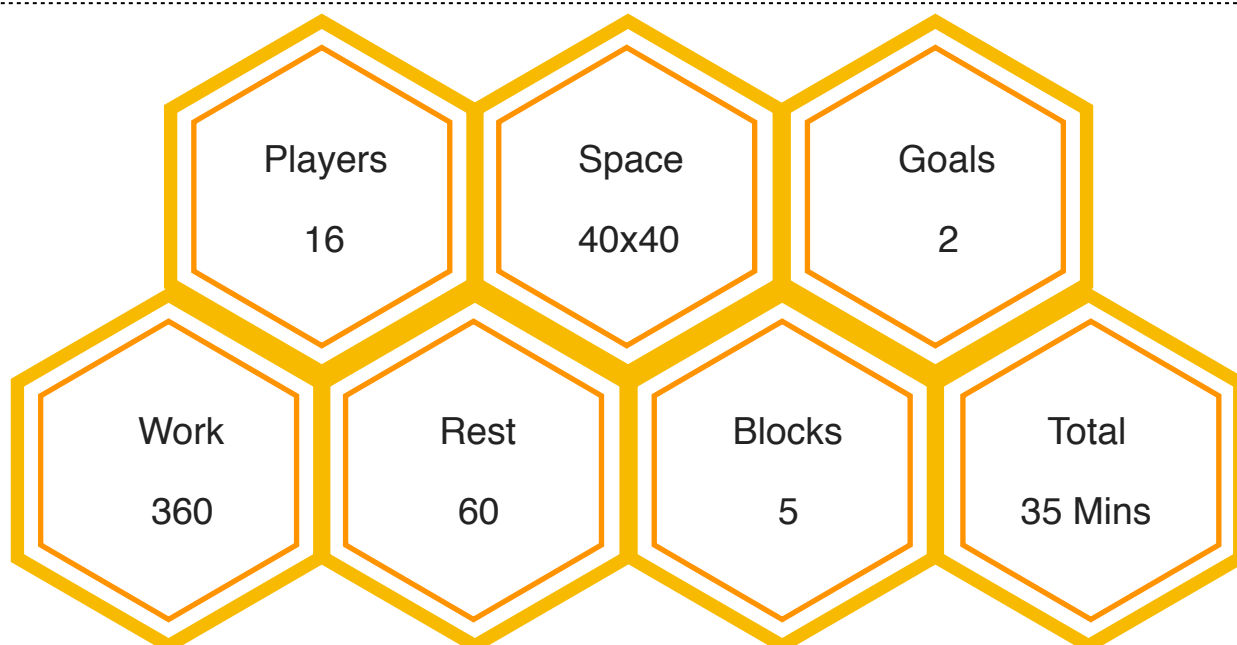
- Ensure the team recognize the need to cover different areas of the pitch to create a practice where space is occupied and the opponent is stretched to make the space difficult to defend
- Ensure players recognize the need to work in 3’s, this against most formations will allow for a 2v3 overload in central areas, where the opposition drops 3 in then the system can be adopted by moving the central player to create a 3v4.
- To ensure ball circulation is maintained challenge the central player to move quickly from half to half.

Individual Detail

- Can the central player of the 3, drop between the two deepest players to receive possession
- Challenge players to turn with the ball, be brave enough to create chaos in-between the opposition lines
- Encourage players to recognize the damage they can cause to there opponents structure by receiving between lines

Progression

- The session can be opened up space wise to ensure the wide areas are taken away and the width is not enforced but players must look to keep this width to provide structure to the practice
- Removing the half way line is another way to manipulate this practice however when the half way line is removed the practice can quickly remove its depth and make it false and difficult for the team in possession to be able to play through the opponent

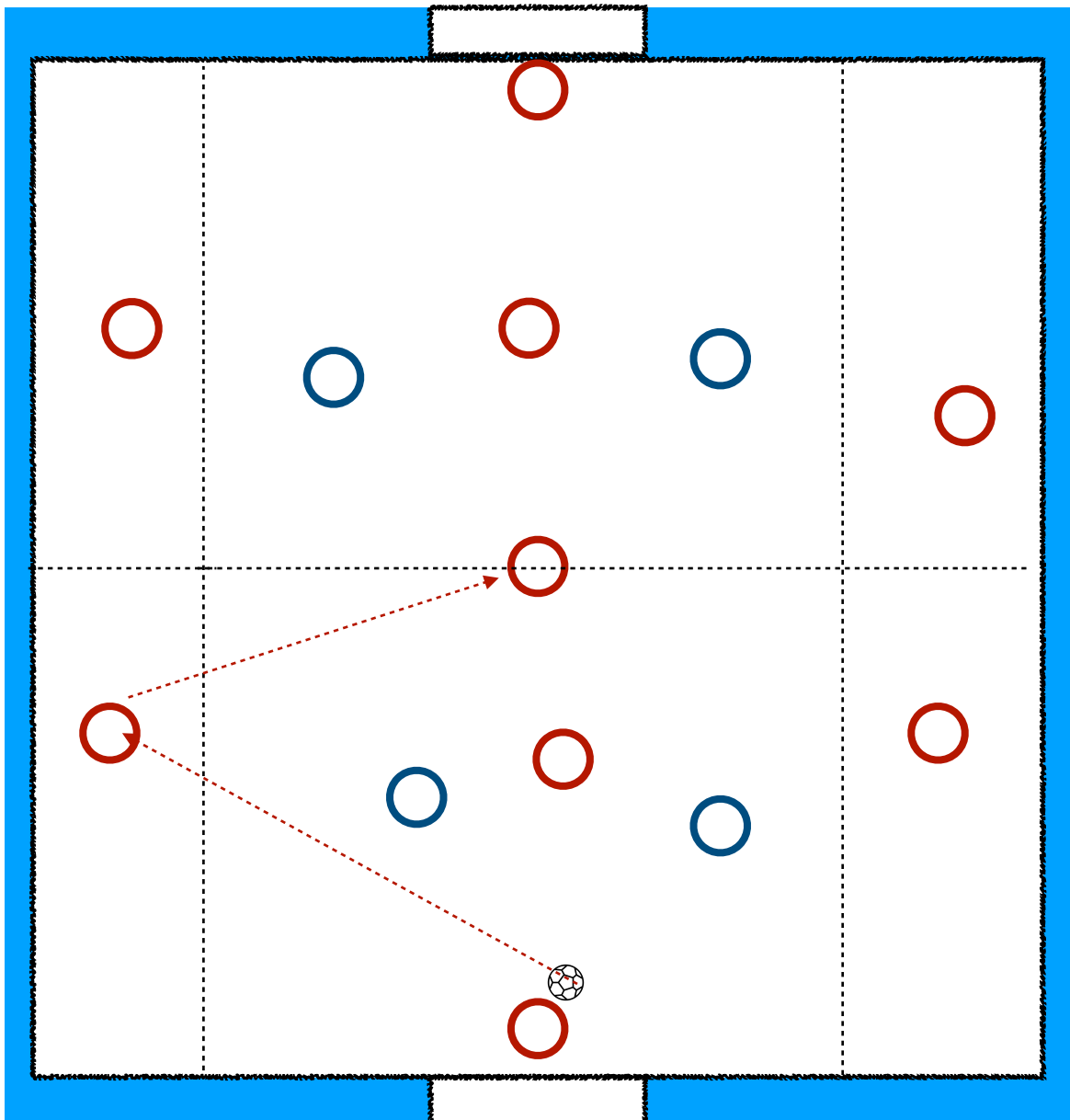


5v5+4 SSG

Using Wide players to play forward and finish

Bielsa Specific

The session is very demanding physically and trains the clear principles Bielsa lays out in his requirements from his players, tactically the players are set up with two units of 3, which is the same as his philosophy, even when playing a 4-2-3-1 the players create units of 3 for the majority of the time. Within this session players will be bale to create natural overloads through the system allowing 2v3 and 2v3 in the attacking half. The central player will allow a greater overload of required, this central player will also represent the playmaker that is so important in Argentinian football, this player will be challenged with linking the two halves and the two areas of the game.



Overloading the Full-Back Area.

Develop an understanding of how to overload the wide area.

“Create Players Confident Enough To Play Under Pressure”

Setup

The session is set up on a half of a relevantly sized pitch. The goalkeeper starts with possession and plays in to one of the first 3, before playing in to one of the two overloads 3v2 on either side, if they can't play forward they can switch in to the other wide zone and look to play forward and score that way, if this isn't successful the blues can pinch possession and look to attack the reds and the reds must look to prevent the counter attack

Team Detail

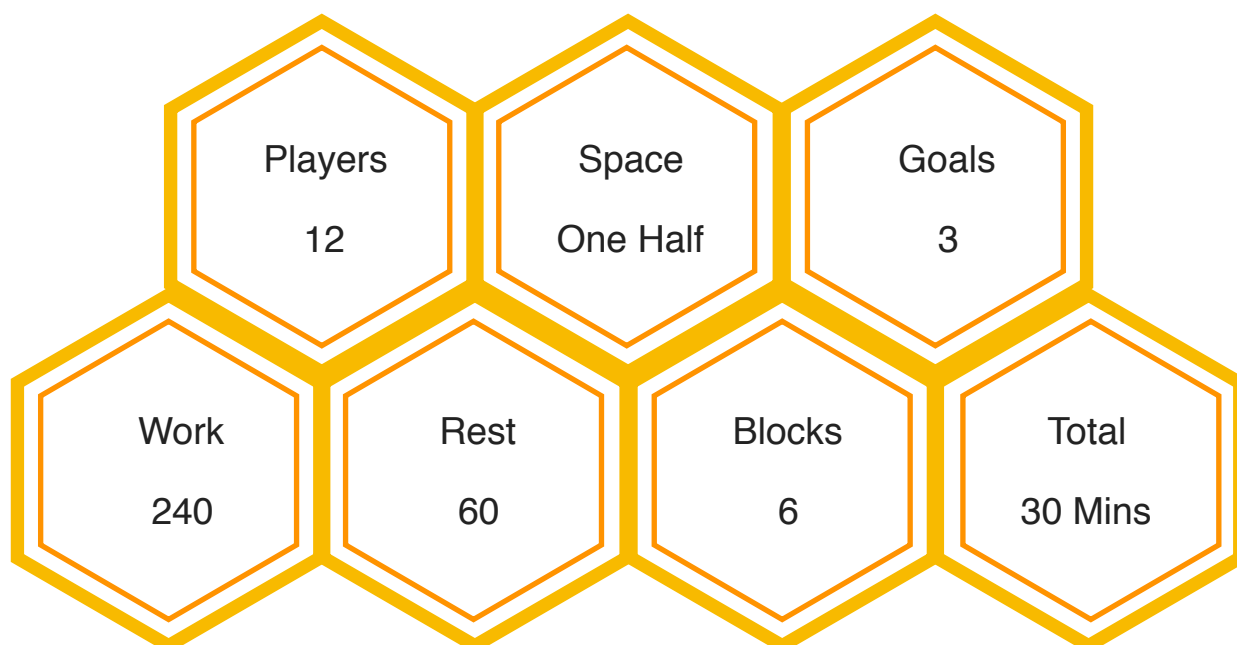
- Ensure the players keep the intensity on the inside and outside to make the practice realistic and competitive
- Ensure that the width is kept through out the practice
- Try and encourage wide players to get beyond opponent to encourage passes beyond the opponent lines
- Challenge the central player to play with a variety of passes

Individual Detail

- Decision making is now key for the players when and where can we play forward, which players can see the forward passes which players struggle to see it, this will help structure your positioning of individuals
- Can individuals disguise passes to ensure that opposition players aren't able to cover space quicker

Progression

- Play two balls at the same time to create to separate practices
- Increase opponent numbers and challenge the overload approach
- Create variety in opponent numbers to create decision making in players

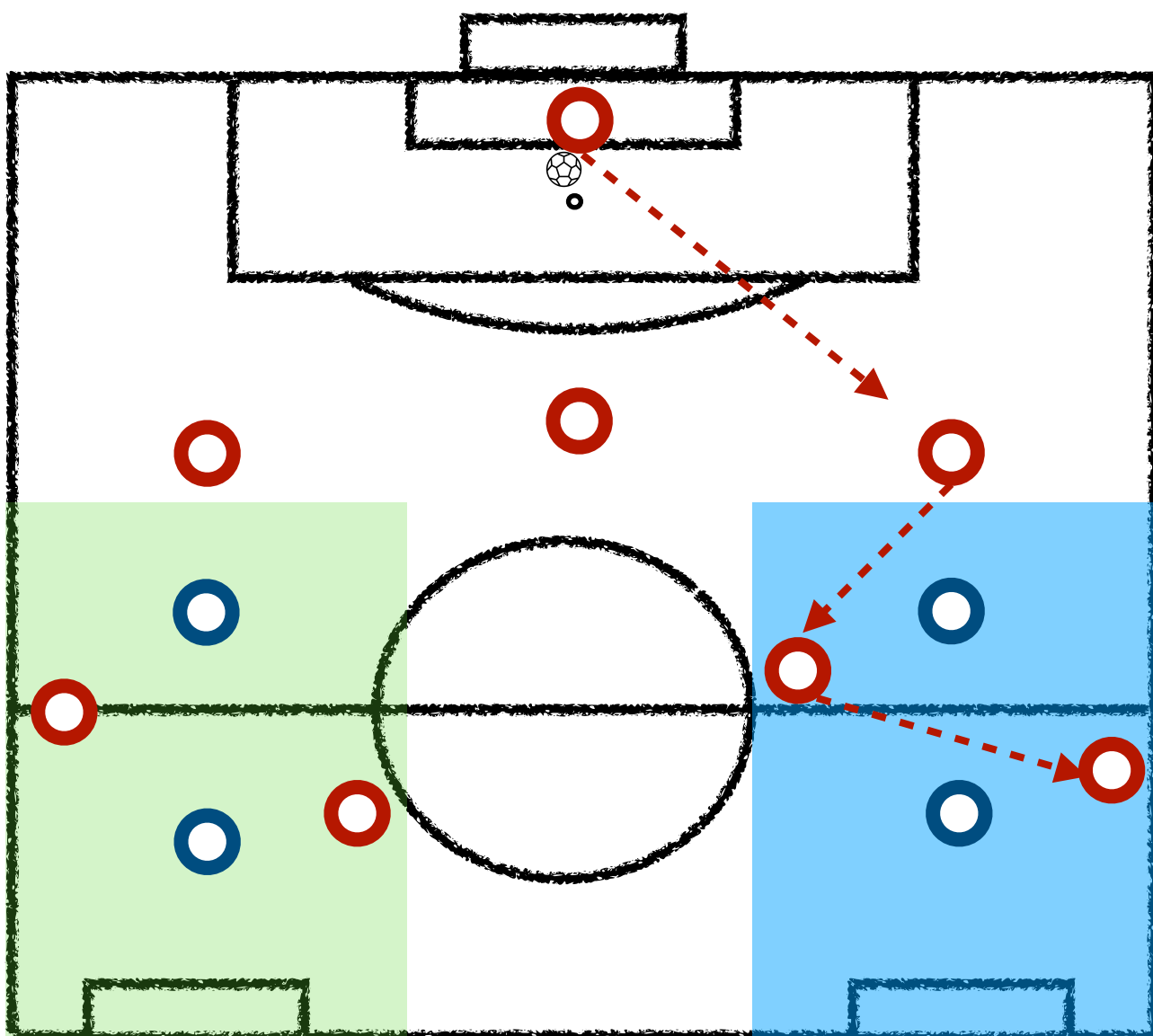


Overloading the Full-Back Area.

Develop an understanding of how to overload the wide area.

Bielsa Specific

This session demonstrates some of the key principles within Bielsa's philosophy, the reds look to play in to one of the wide areas where they create a 3v2, again this creates the overload of +1 Bielsa is always looking to create in order to dominate the pitch and the game. This also trains the players to learn to deal with the transition from the build-up phase structure where the team is very open, to protecting against a counter attack, as the blue's will look to transition when they regain possession from the reds, looking to attack the Goal at the top of the practice.



Create Space Through Timing

The timing of the run can be chaotic in the opponents system

“Disrupt the opponent with Delayed Movement”

Setup

The session is set up on a half of a relevantly sized pitch. The team in possession set up 1-4-3 and then move into a 1-3-3-1 formation as the practice develops, the team out of possession look to prevent the reds playing forward, if they win possession they are challenged to play through the reds as quickly as possible and score before the reds regain structure

Individual Detail

- Decision making is now key for the players when and where can we play forward, which players can see the forward passes which players struggle to see it, this will help structure your positioning of individuals
- Can players recognize the timing of their movement, can they look to move in to space quickly and manipulate the team out of possessions positional structure with late movements

Team Detail

- Ensure the players keep the intensity on the inside and outside to make the practice realistic and competitive
- Ensure that they recognize how to drop in to units of 3
- Try and encourage players to join the attacking 3 to overload opponent
- Challenge the group to move the ball quickly

Progression

- Play with 3 zones for more controllable practice
- Decrease width in pitch to make the practice more difficult

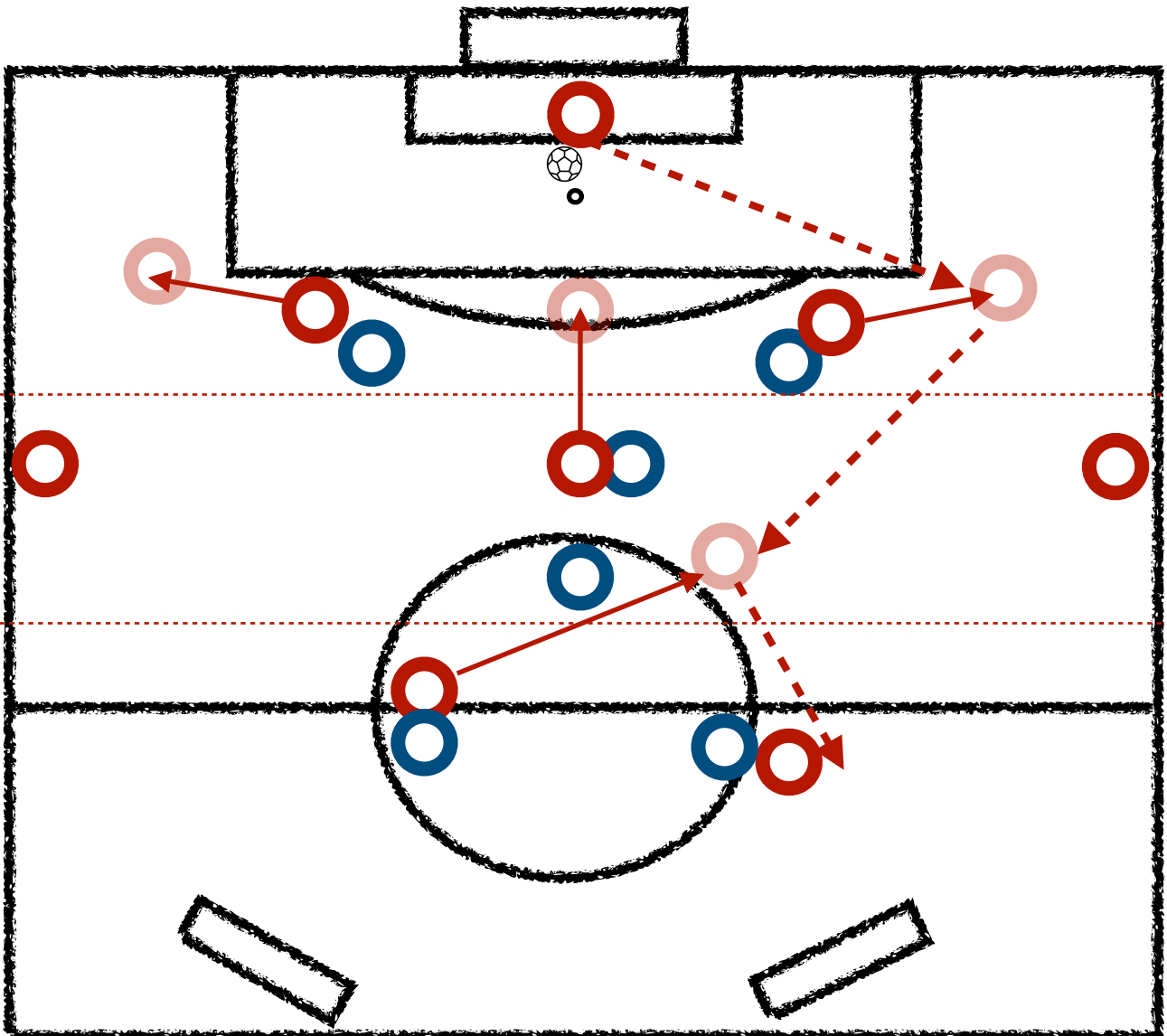


Create Space Through Timing

The timing of the run can be chaotic in the opponents system

Bielsa Specific

The session provides a guideline and framework for players to demonstrate their understanding of the philosophy when playing out from the back. The lines are a guideline for players to allow them to have a reference point when playing out but not a requirement, players must work from a 4-3-3 set up to a 3-3-1 shape where the first two lines are 3's, this demonstrates an understanding on how players understand the Bielsa system, the end goals are set narrow to challenge the attacking players to combine, whilst the lack of numbers forces the players to move forward and support the player in possession and create another line of 3 to keep in structure with Bielsa's system.



Playing forward through Overloads

Numerical advantages can create territorial advantages

“Recognising the methods of Overloading the Opponent”

Setup

The setup is 40 yards long and 30 yards wide, or relevant to your age or ability level, the play begins in a structured 3v2 in the first area before entering a compact 3v3 central area, and then looking to play in to the final zone which is a 1v1. Each area can be manipulated with overloads dependent on the coaches requirements, allow movement between the ones as you see acceptable, the decision will need to be specific to the way you play and what you would expect to see

Individual Detail

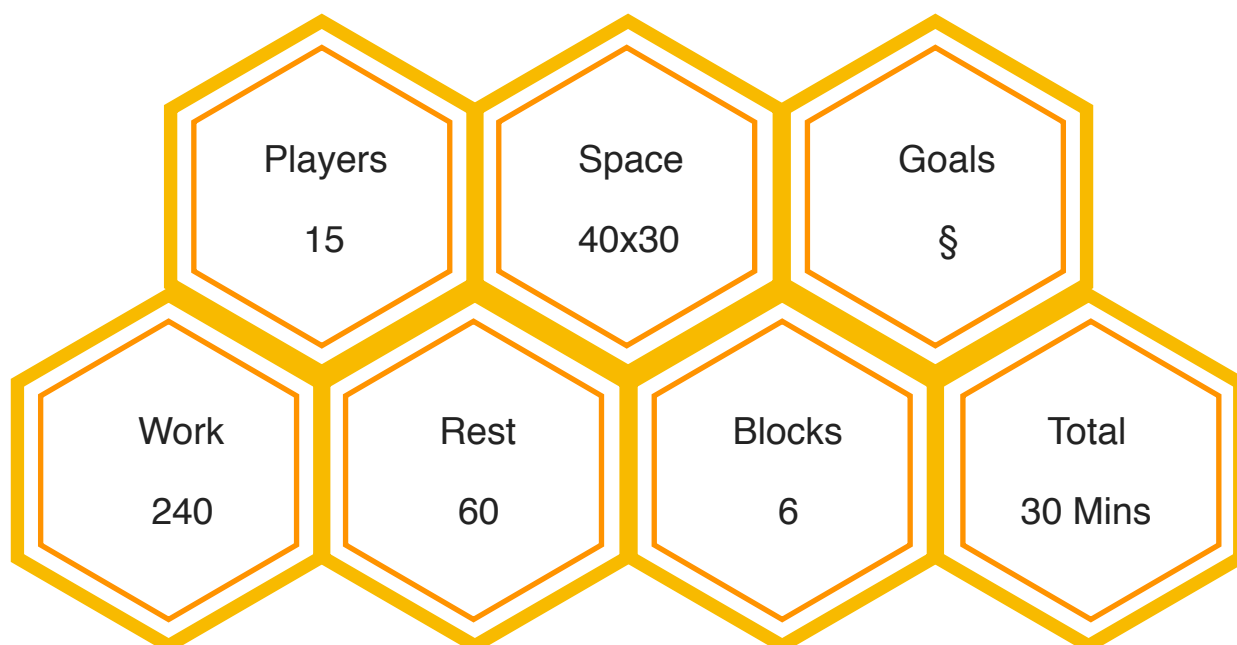
- When and where do individuals make movements across the zones to encourage the opposition to move away from areas of strength
- Can individuals look to recognize the movement of their team mate, realize when space is open and the occupy that space in order to disrupt the opponent.

Team Detail

- Ensure that defensive stability is maintained, overloads can not compromise the defensive structure
- Recognize the importance of play though through the opponent
- Develop an understanding of the importance of winning the ball back early through good coverage of the pitch
- Team must not forget the importance of the practice and the im of the practice, this is very simply to find a way of scoring through the philosophy’s frame work

Progression

- Allow overloads in the first zone
- All overloads in the middle zone with full backs or attackers moving zone
- Allow players to overload the attacking half to create 2v1
- Limit touches of players in a specific zone

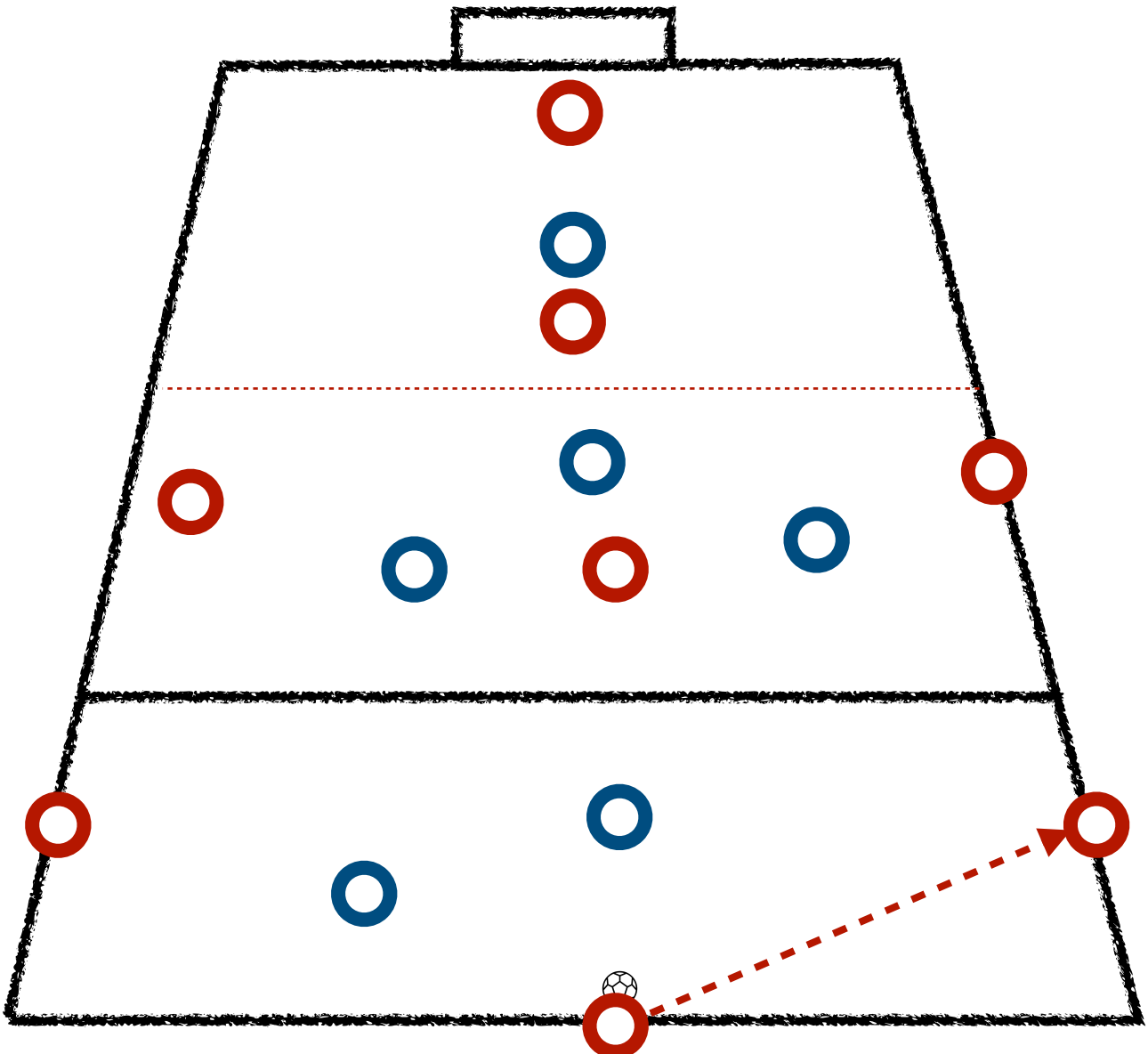


Playing forward through Overloads

Numerical advantages can create territorial advantages

Bielsa Specific

This practice creates the Bielsa system within a semi structured environment. The first part of the practice requires the build up play to take place in a **3v2** this can be manipulated to create a **3v3** this can be manipulated tactically to match the demands that the opponent may demand from your team, Bielsa tends to work to the previously mentioned overload of +1, to create this a midfield player maybe required to drop in to create a **4v3** this overload will allow build-up play to occur successfully in the defensive third, if in the middle third the 3v3 becomes difficult the defensive third can push a player in to create a **4v3** and give numerical dominance



Marcelo Bielsa

Tactical Case Study:



Exploiting The Full Back With Rotation

11v11 Grid Game

Develop Principles through Games

“Create Players Confident Enough To Play Under Pressure”

Setup

The session is played 10v10 with 3 zones, only the red team must obey the zones, however the reds can switch with team mates to move to and from zones. The blues look to defend in their shape but can rotate with other team mates to create chaos in the opponents shape. The practice also involves a neutral player who can drop between the lines and create more defensive and structural issues to the opponent.

Individual Detail

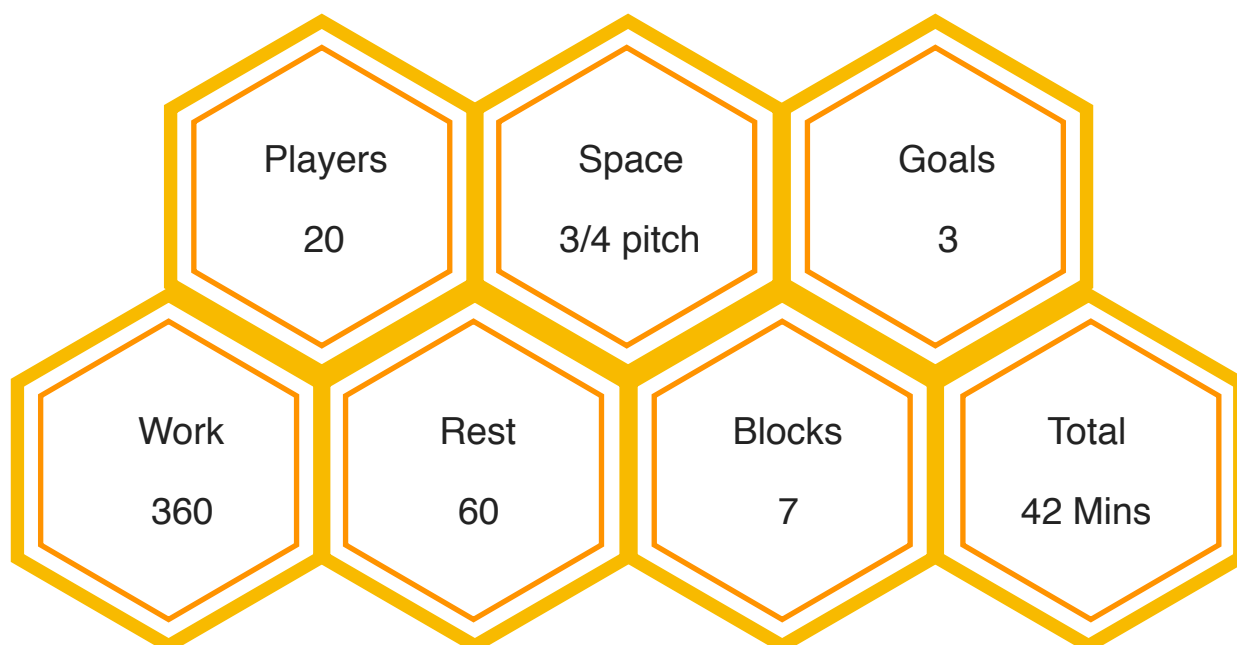
- Can the wide player recognize when to stay wide and create width for the midfield 3 to play inside and when to come short and leave the wide area for the full back
- Can the natural 10, drop back in and look to receive between the lines and turn in possession of the ball and look to play forward
- Can the midfield 4 look to see how the opponent presses and understand if he needs to drop deeper to create a 4v3

Team Detail

- Can we keep an overload of +1 during the build up phase
- Can the striker keep the depth for the team in possession
- Encourage the two widest players to ensure width is kept in the team shape
- Challenge central players to make movement on different lines to keep the shape challenging to defend against and opportunities to play through the opponents shape

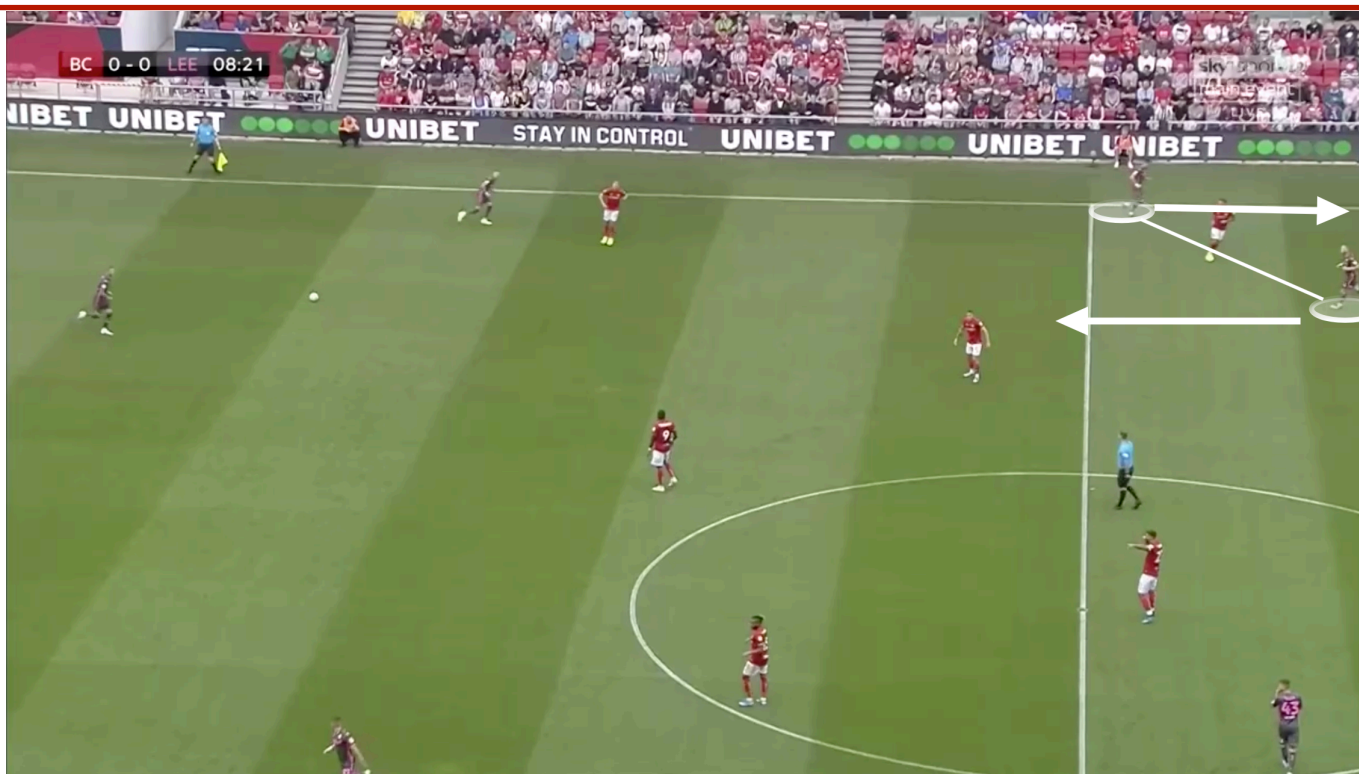
Progression

- Manipulate space to ensure that the challenge is physically relevant
- Remove natural 10 in the practice
- Start the Blue team in possession to make the practice more realistic.



11v11 Grid Game

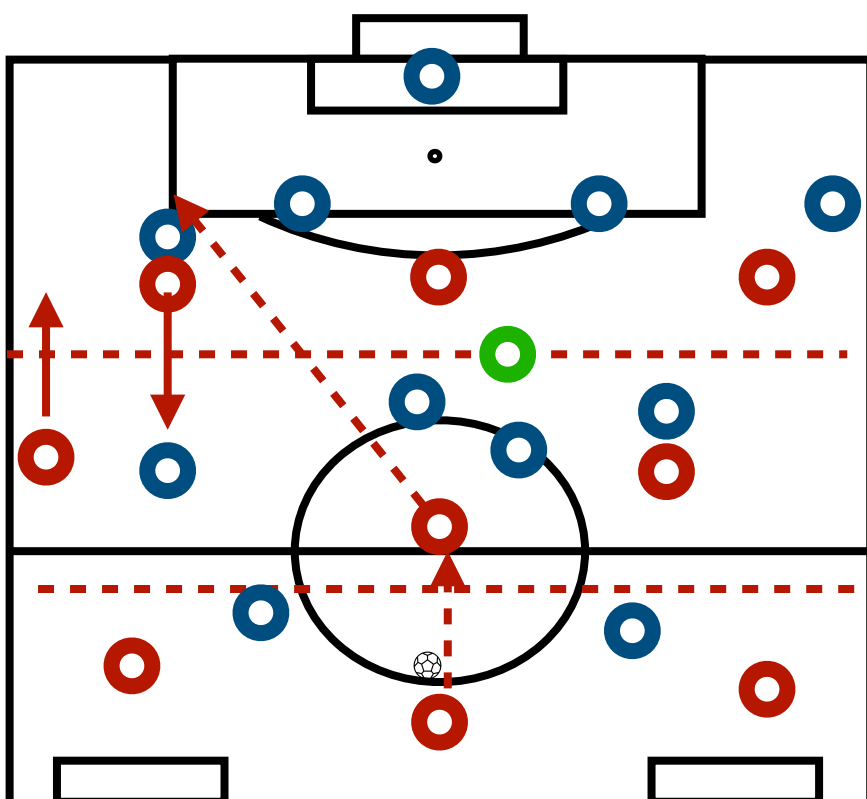
Develop Principles through Games



Bielsa Rotation

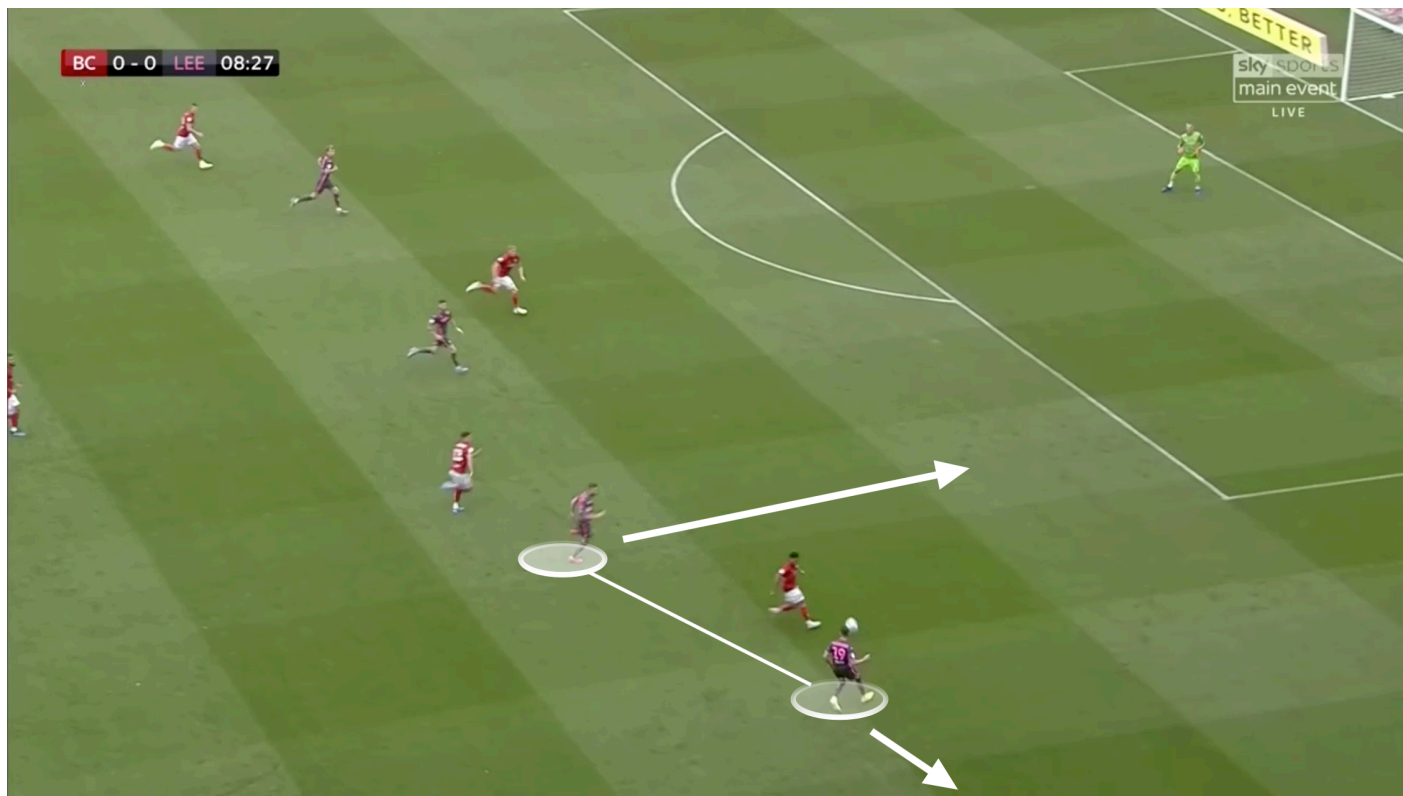
The Picture above shows one of the most common tactical rotations used within Bielsa system and how this can be used,

This involves the player in possession being on the inside channel so a pass can be played wide, the highest player moves towards the ball with a sharp movement, the detail is very important as this happens the midfield player moves in to the space left behind, it is vital that the dummy run is an act, it is an opportunity to try and sell this to the opponent, try and ensure they follow the dummy run and leave the space behind for the team to occupy.



11v11 Grid Game

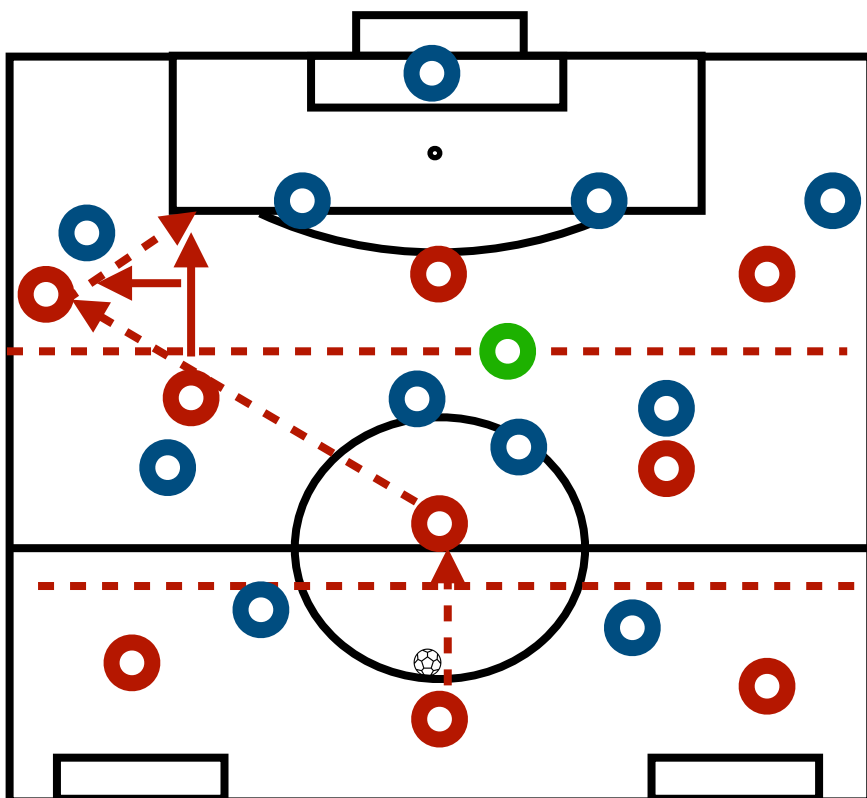
Develop Principles through Games



Bielsa Rotation

The Picture above shows one of the most common tactical rotations used within Bielsa system and how this can be used,

The second rotation looks to try and disrupt the deep block employed by teams this involves the attacking wide player making a sharp movement towards the touchline and attacking the full back leaving space inside, the ball is then played wide as the full-back travels, as the ball travels the midfield player inside must recognize the trigger to make a run in behind the full back creating a 2v1 overload and allow the wide player to play the ball through to the midfield player.



Marcelo Bielsa

Tactical Case Study 2:

Playing Through The Opponent

11v11 Grid Game

Develop Principles through Games

“Create Players Confident Enough To Play Under Pressure”

Setup

The session is played 10v10 with 3 zones, only the red team must obey the zones, however the reds can switch with team mates to move to and from zones. The blues look to defend in their shape but can rotate with other team mates to create chaos in the opponents shape. The practice also involves a neutral player who can drop between the lines and create more defensive and structural issues to the opponent.

Individual Detail

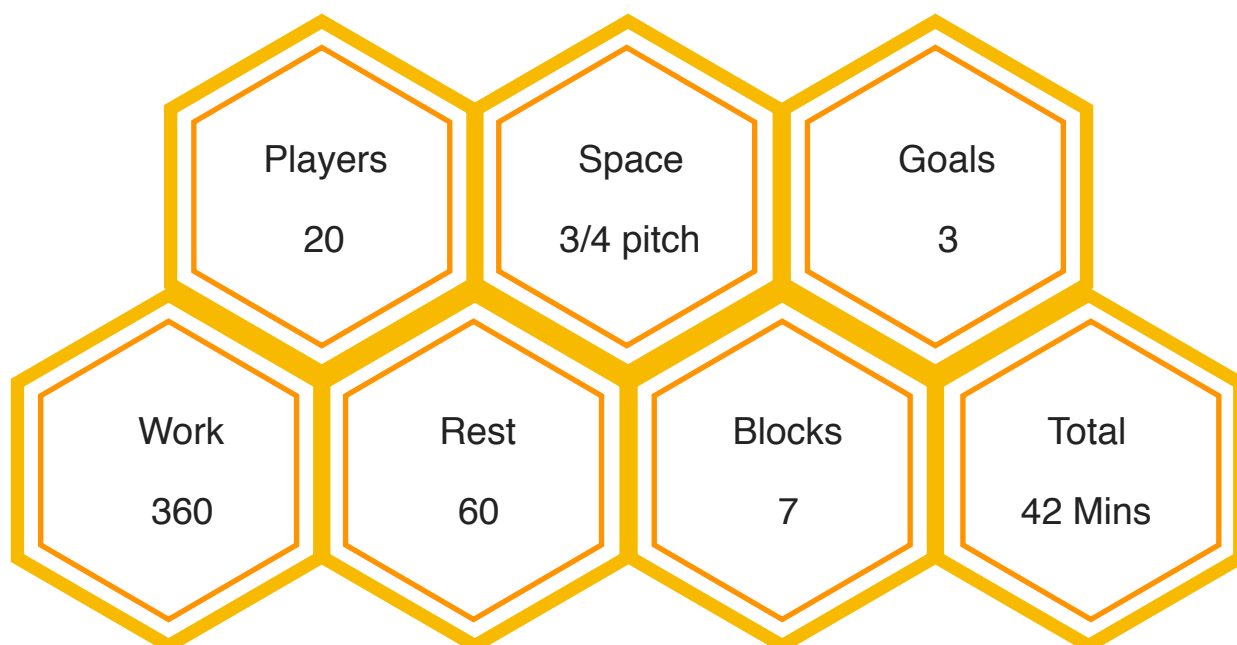
- Can the wide player recognize when to stay wide and create width for the midfield 3 to play inside and when to come short and leave the wide area for the full back
- Can the natural 10, drop back in and look to receive between the lines and turn in possession of the ball and look to play forward
- Can the midfield 4 look to see how the opponent presses and understand if he needs to drop deeper to create a 4v3

Team Detail

- Can we keep an overload of +1 during the build up phase
- Can the striker keep the depth for the team in possession
- Encourage the two widest players to ensure width is kept in the team shape
- Challenge central players to make movement on different lines to keep the shape challenging to defend against and opportunities to play through the opponents shape

Progression

- Manipulate space to ensure that the challenge is physically relevant
- Remove natural 10 in the practice
- Start the Blue team in possession to make the practice more realistic.

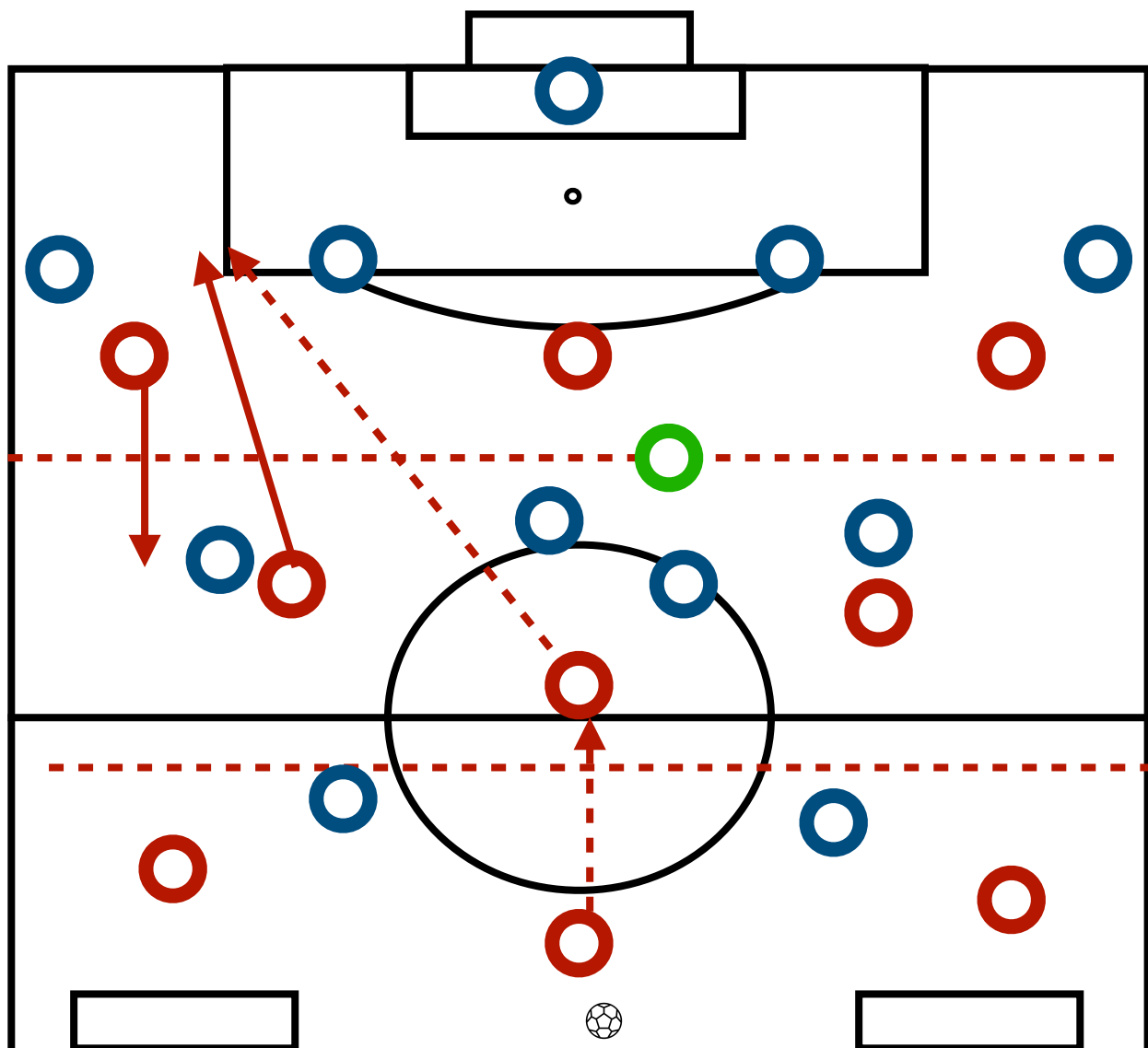


11v11 Grid Game

Develop Principles through Games

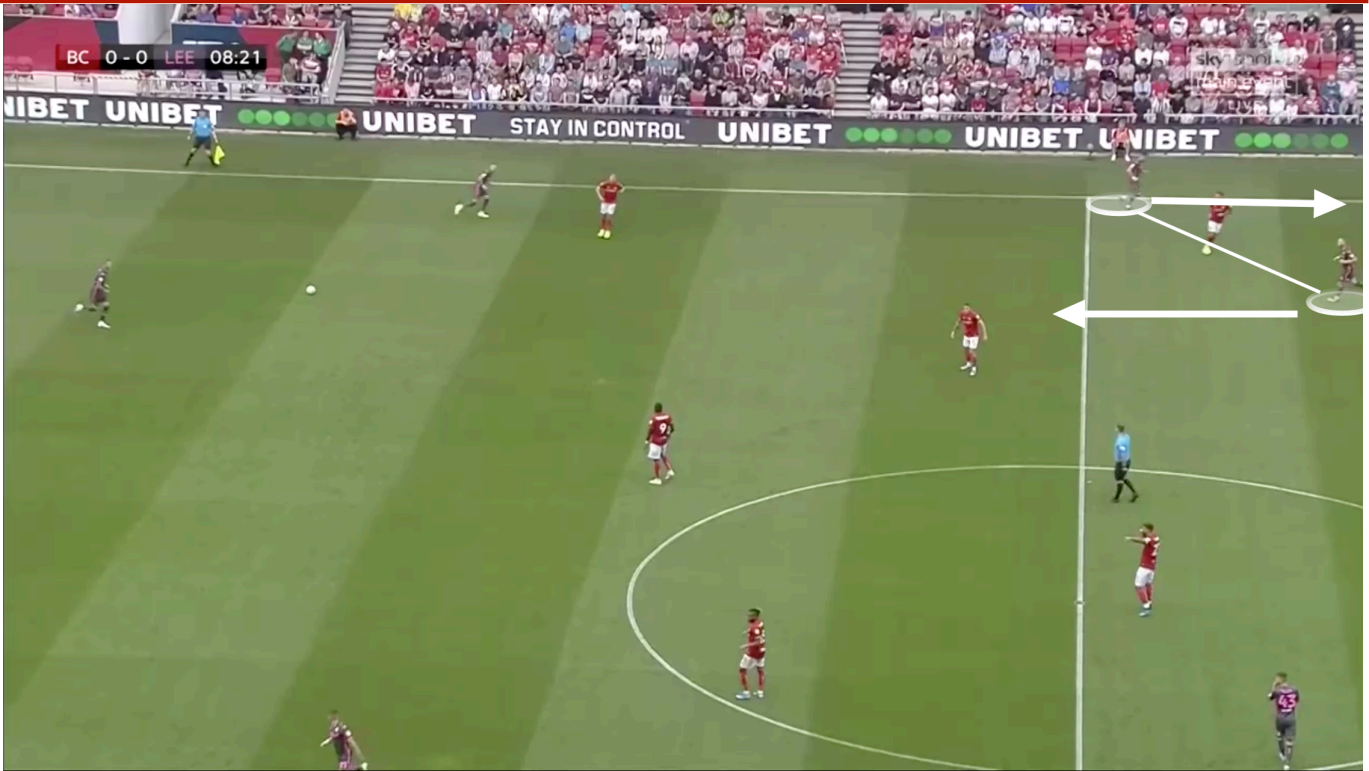
Bielsa Specific

This Session Demonstrates the way in which Bielsa tends to play his teams, can the reds manipulate the space through movement to penetrate the opposition, this example shows the widest player making a fainted run towards goals and then backwards his own goal, as this occurs the central players runs in to the space left, the Blues are not forced to stay in an area and can defend as required, though the principles of +1 must be applied during build up play, so if the blues drop a third attacker in to the first zone, the reds must drop in to create a 4v3 and maintain consistency to the principle of Overload +1



11v11 Grid Game

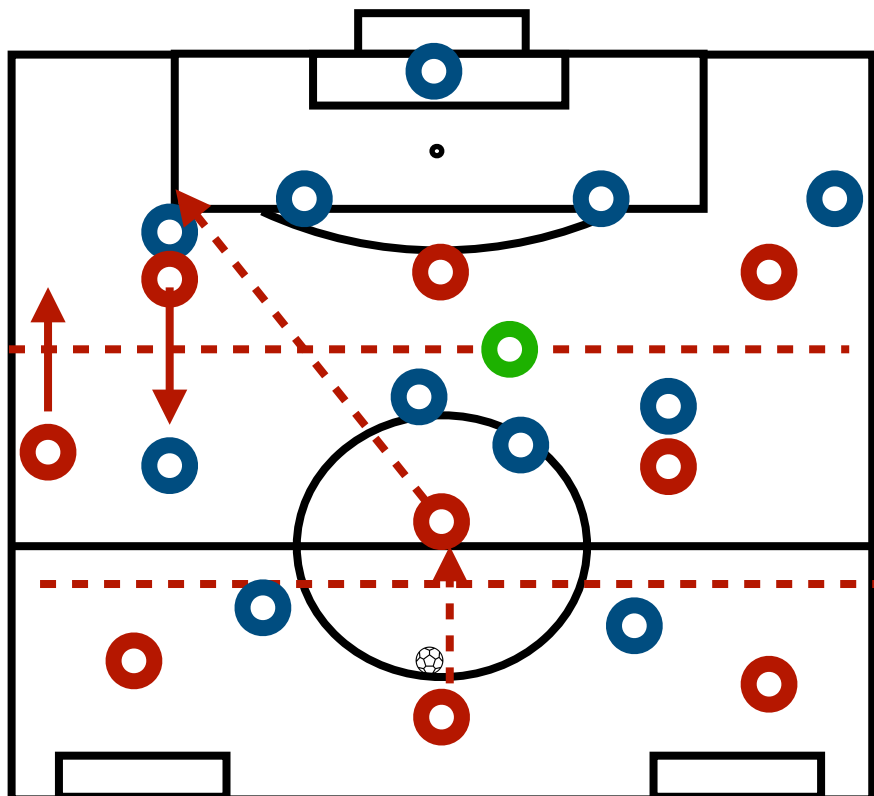
Develop Principles through Games



Bielsa Rotation

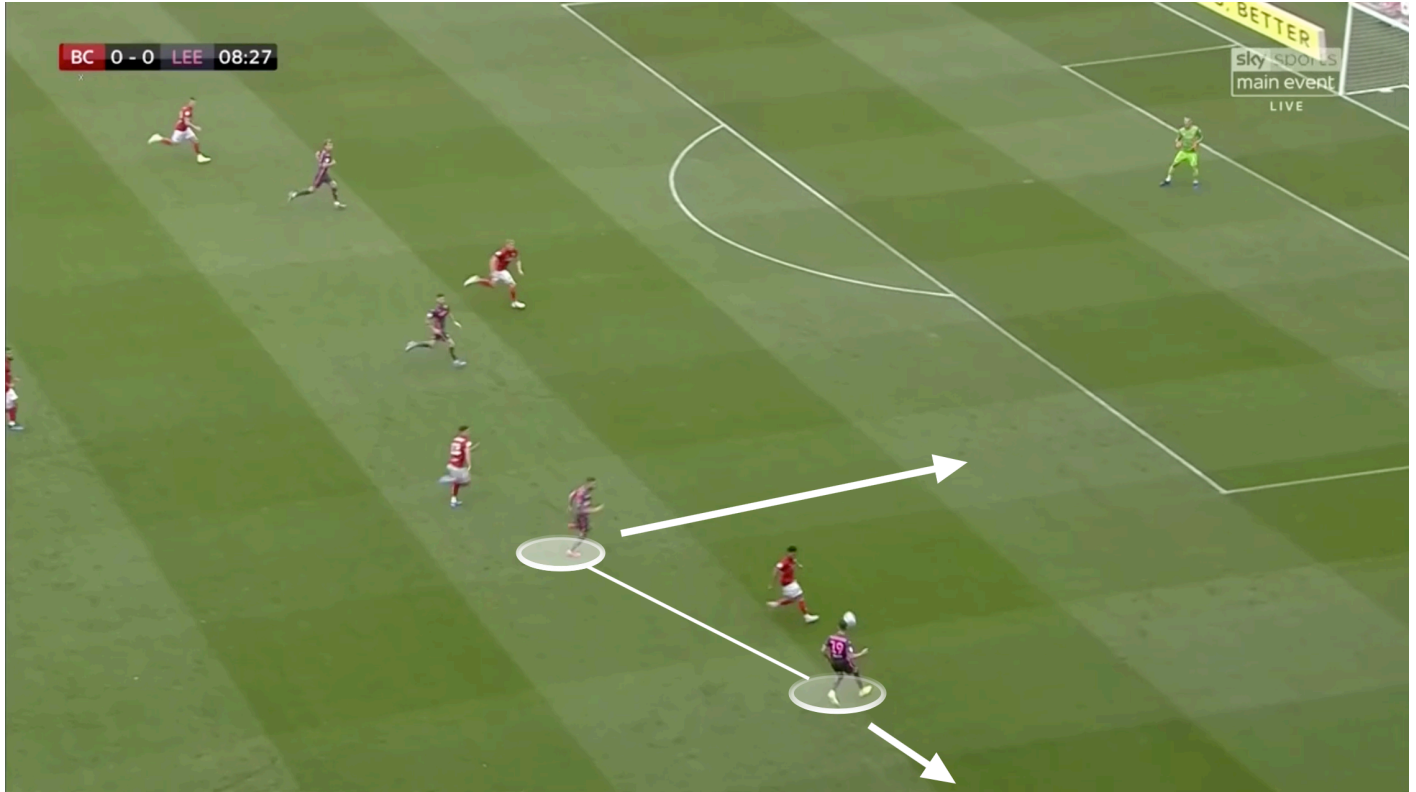
The Picture above shows one of the most common tactical rotations used within Bielsa system and how this can be used,

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11v11 Grid Game

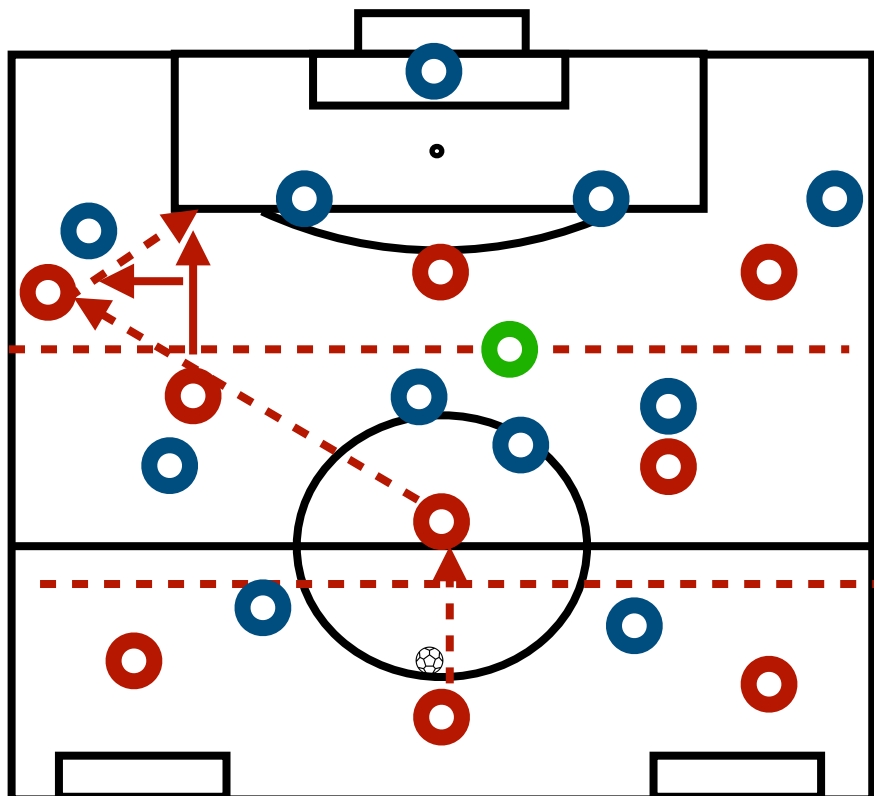
Develop Principles through Games



Bielsa Rotation

The Picture above shows one of the most common tactical rotations used within Bielsa system and how this can be used,

The second rotation looks to try and disrupt the deep block employed by teams this involves the attacking wide player making a sharp movement towards the touchline and attacking the full back leaving space inside, the ball is then played wide as the full-back travels, as the ball travels the midfield player inside must recognize the trigger to make a run in behind the full back creating a 2v1 overload and allow the wide player to play the ball through to the midfield player.



Marcelo Bielsa

Tactical Case Study 3:

Pressing Against a 4-3-3

Pressing a 1-4-3-3

Develop understanding of the methodology and mentality needed

“Create behaviors through repetition”

Setup

The session is played in a realistic half, the team in possession setup with a goalkeeper back 4 and midfield player in front with 2 target players next to the goals near the half way line, the blues look to play out whilst the reds press matching Bielsa’s structure. If the reds win possession back they look to score, whilst the blues can score in the far goals once two outfield players have touched the ball

Team Detail

- First player dictates the team in possession play by setting up closing down one passing angle
- As the ball travels to the centre back the 9 presses, at this point the wide player on that side also presses
- The 10 blocks the passing lane to the midfield player and every other player goes man to man.
- If the centre back manages to switch the ball, then the 10 raises out to press the other centre back and the 9 picks up the midfield player and the opposite wide players goes and presses as quick as possible

Individual Detail

- Individuals need to understand the behaviors associated with pressing, it must be compact and aggressive blocking passing lanes and forcing the opponent backwards and away from the goal.
- The first pressing player needs to force the man in possession to get his head down and prevent him from playing forward at all costs

Progression

- Progressions are detailed over the next few slides

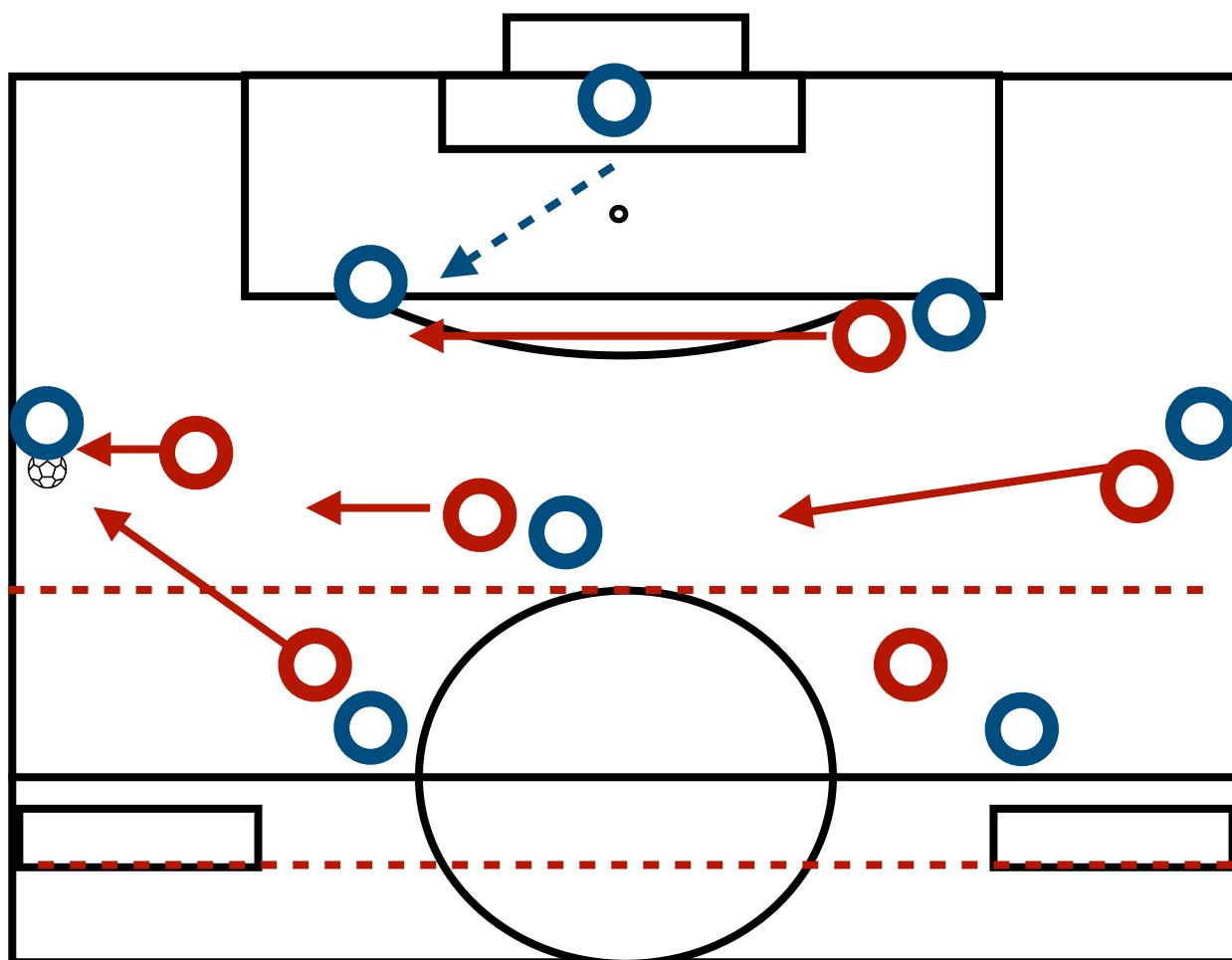


Pressing a 1-4-3-3

Develop understanding of the methodology and mentality needed

Bielsa Specific

In order to progress the session the rest of the opponents midfield can be added. This means that the blue players now have the complete units of defensive and midfield, now the reds in the midfield are expected to man mark their opponent but, within Bielsa's Zonal-Man marking system they still have another role, if the ball makes its way to the full back, the midfield player is expected to race out and press the full back denying the space inside, whilst the higher midfield player should recover inside towards to player preventing a pass inside



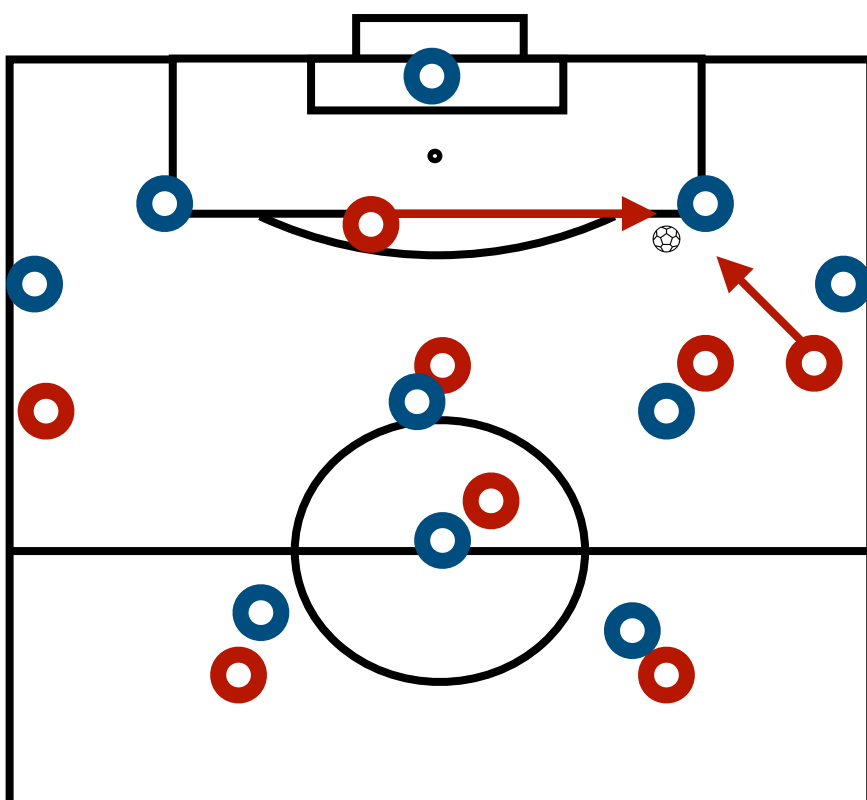
Pressing a 1-4-3-3

Develop understanding of the methodology and mentality needed



Bielsa Rotation

The photo above and diagram below shows the structure to Bielsa's pressing, can we dictate the way the opponent is playing, the answer is Yes, once they play in to the trap the press can win possession back by forcing the opponent to play risky passes or stay on the ball for too long whilst they are in this moment, the behavior must be instinctive and must look to apply as much pressure to the man in possession and ensure that every passing lane is blocked and there is no opportunity to play forward. The diagram shows Bielsa using this successfully as Barcelona with his side and putting the players under pressure whilst keeping zonal making

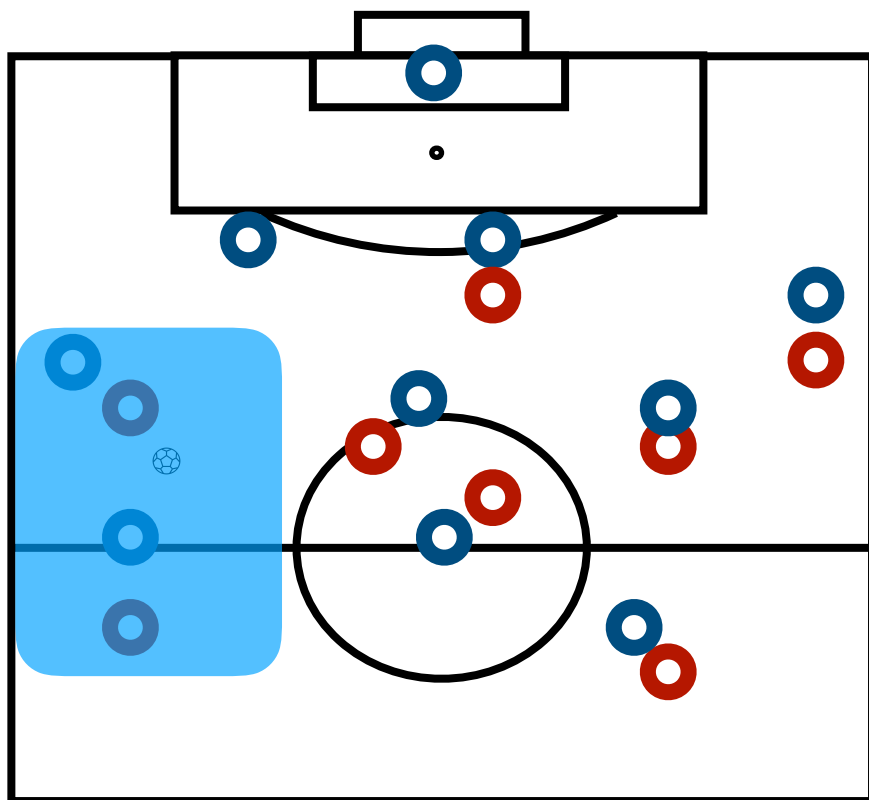


Pressing a 1-4-3-3

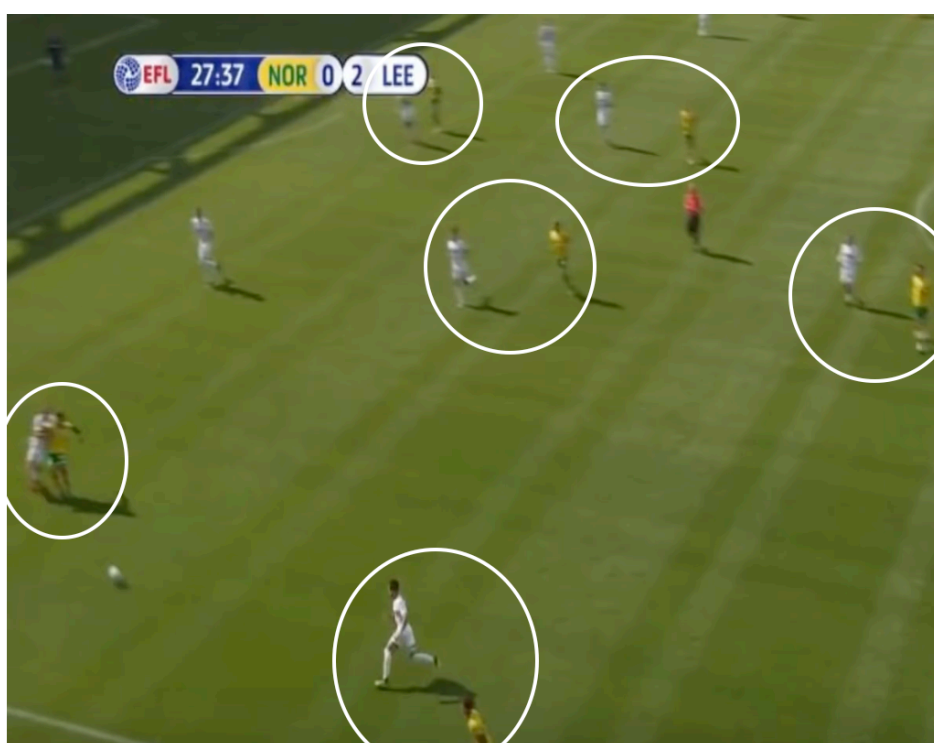
Develop understanding of the methodology and mentality needed

Bielsa Rotation

This diagram shows the use of Gegenpressing or counter pressing as it is called, this shows a mixture of high intensity pressing of the man in possession, and man to man marking in the other areas, as you can see here a 2v1 is created around the player in possession to ensure there is a high opportunity to win possession back, whilst the opponent is unable to play forward and is delayed, Bielsa's team quickly become organized and ensure that the man to man marking is completed with the spare man on the strong side to ensure that they're able to defend without the risk of losing in the wide area as the cover is behind (This is explained further in the pressing chapter back earlier in the book).



Bielsa Team in Blue here



Marcelo Bielsa

Tactical Case Study 4:

Pressing The Goalkeeper

5v5 Bielsa Load

Understand when to overload the opponent

“Train as you Play to Progress How You Play”

Setup

The session is setup in a 30 x 30 yard area with a 8 yard central area, the play is explained in more detail over the next two pages, but the practice creates a rondo like practice that players look to play through and make their way through in to the attacking half and look to keep the ball for as long as they can before the other team transition and play back through them.

Individual Detail

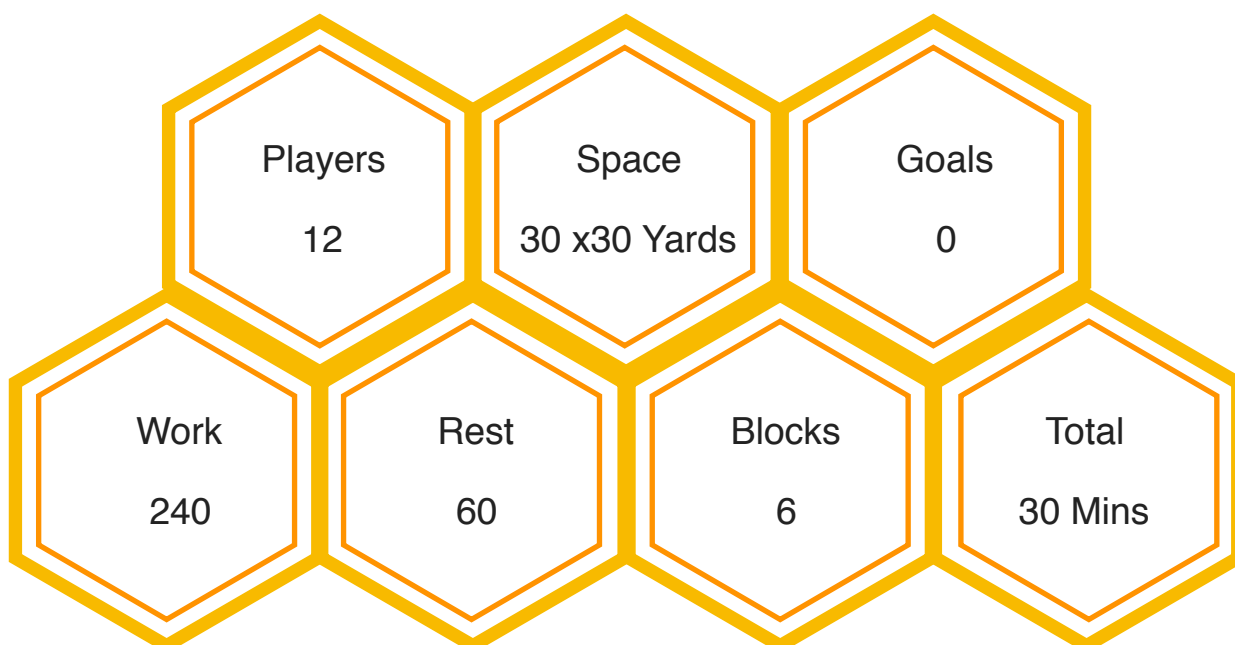
- Can individuals recognize when to play forward
- Can individuals recognize when to turn with possession and when to play bounce passes to move the opponent
- Out of possession can we consistently prevent switches of play and lock the opponent in to the wide area
- Out of possession can individual apply an intensity and get touch tight preventing the opponent from turning in possession

Team Detail

- Can we keep an overload of +1 during the build up phase
- Can the striker keep the depth for the team in possession
- Encourage the two widest players to ensure width is kept in the team shape
- Encourage the forward pass, in to central areas where we can find the furthest forward player
- Encourage speed of play in and out of possession

Progression

- Manipulate space to ensure that the challenge is physically relevant
- Remove natural 10 in the practice
- Start the Blue team in possession to make the practice more realistic.

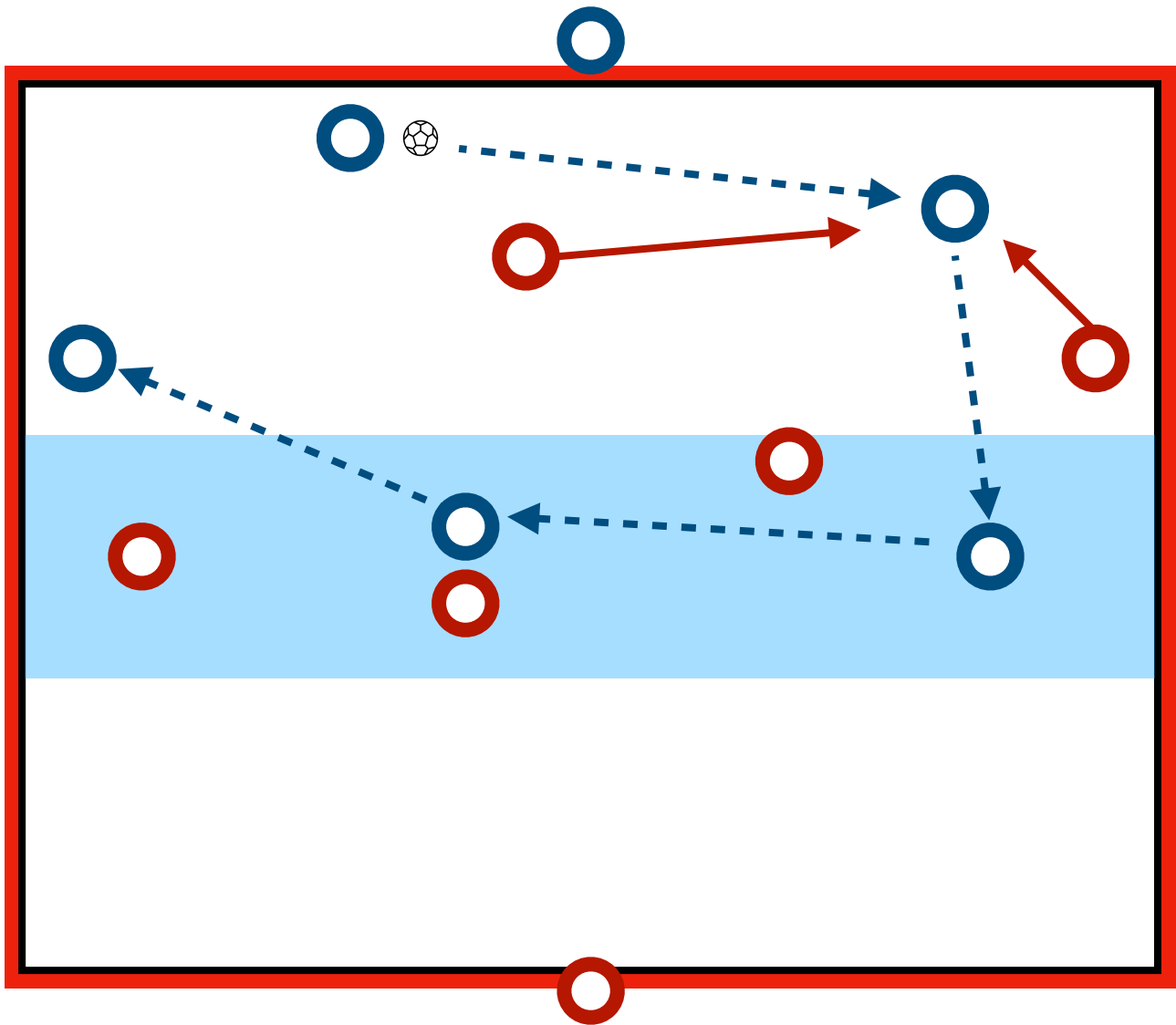


5v5 Bielsa Load

Understand when to overload the opponent

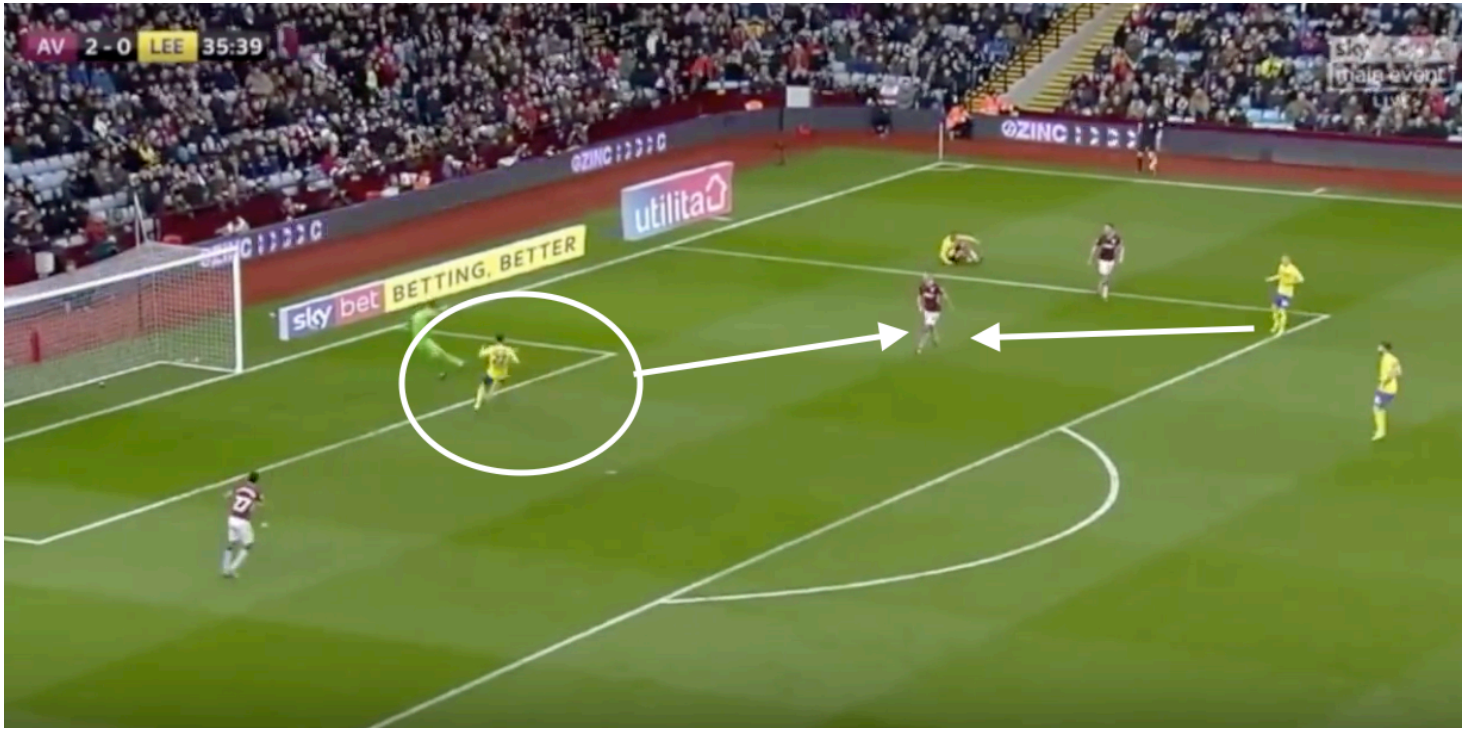
Bielsa Specific

This practice is a fantastic way to practice playing out under pressure with an overload of just, the blues look to keep the ball using the space + the blue area, they have a 3v2+GK in the first area and then a 2v3 in the middle area. This continues until the Reds win possession, when the reds win possession they instantly look to break in to the other half where they play with a 3v2 and a 2v3 in the next half, reversing the practice, they must transition quickly and can use their GK (Outside Player) to play forward quickly, this is practicing another one of Bielsa's Key Principles



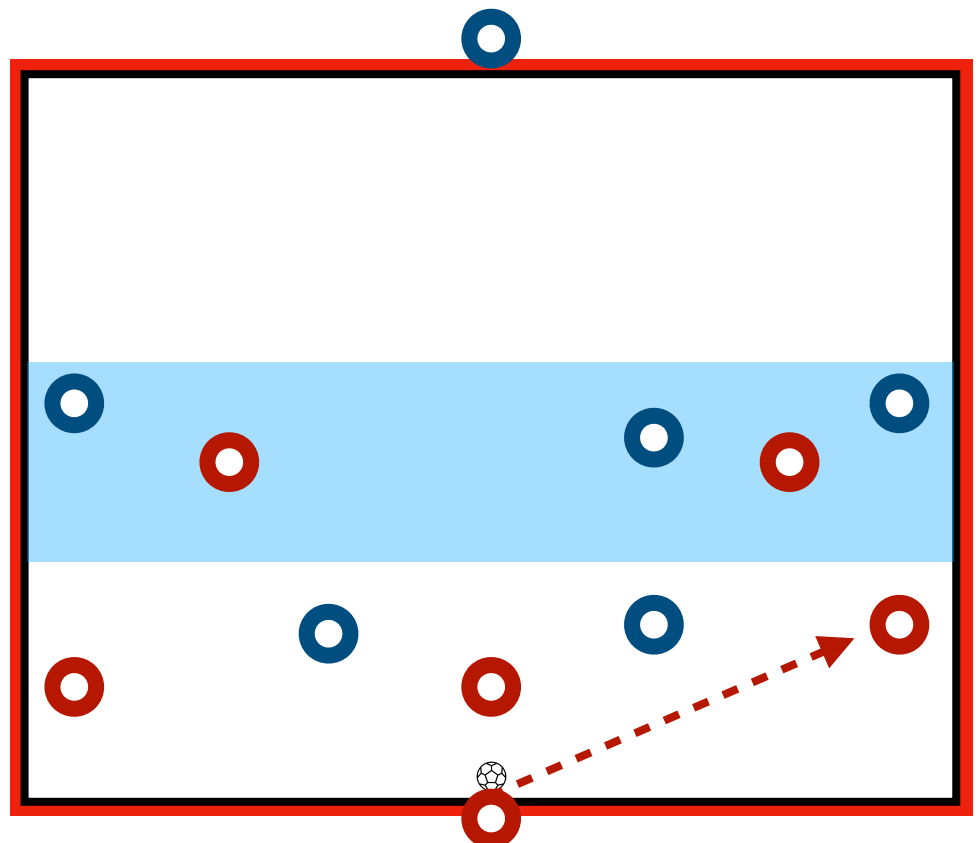
5v5 Bielsa Load

Understand when to overload the opponent



Bielsa Specific

This represents the second part of the session and shows the importance of this practice, demonstrated by Leeds Bielsa's current team, imploring a high defensive line with an overload of players in the opponents build up play, cutting passing lanes and preventing the opponent playing through the thirds. This is linked to the first practice.



Marcelo Bielsa

Tactical Case Study 5:

Counter-pressing

The Transitional Circle

Develop an understanding of the transition through this practice

“Create Players Confident Enough To Play Under Pressure”

Setup

The next session is setup with a 20 yard diameter with a 5v5+2 practice, the session takes part within the circle with the team in possession having to have 4 of their players on the outside and 1 on the inside, who can use the two natural players to create a 7v5, when a transition occurs the team who win possession must look to score in 1 of the 4 goals, whilst the team out of possession must run in to the circle and look to win possession and block the side in possession from scoring in 1 of

Individual Detail

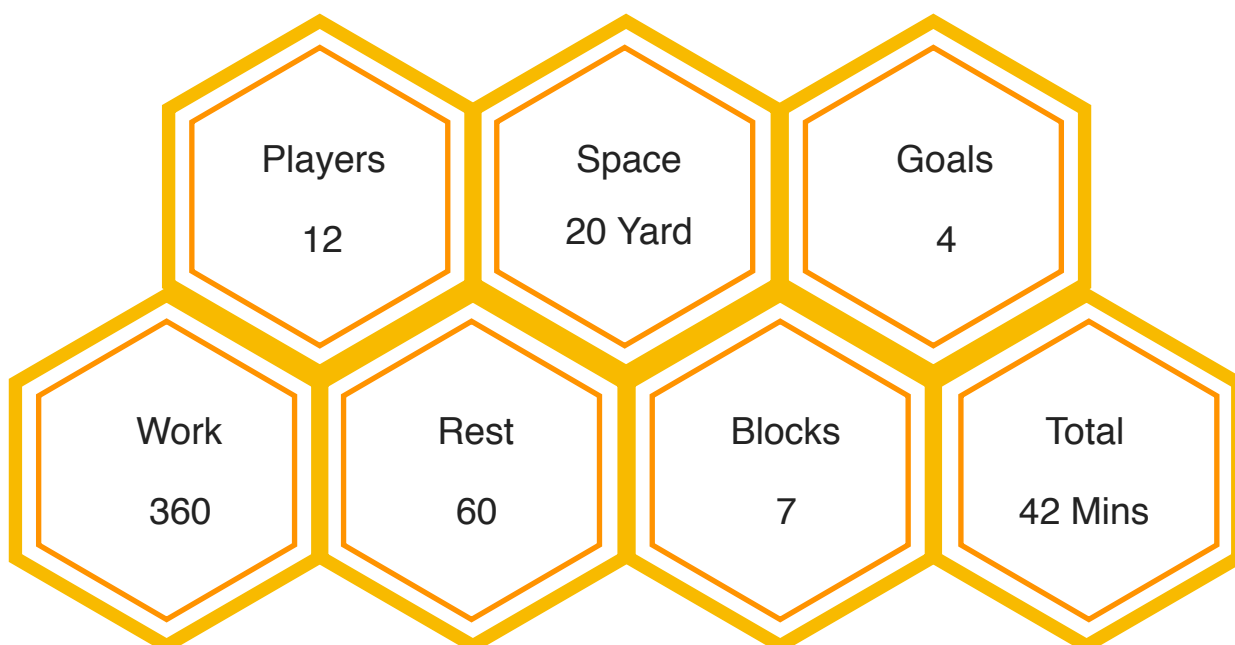
- Recognize the defensive transition, and apply pressure to the ball, but also block passing lanes in to the goal, this demonstrates some of the traits required to be successful
- During the offensive transition can players quickly find moments to play forward in to one of the four goals, demonstrating the calmness to play under pressure

Team Detail

- Ensure the team appreciate the importance of dominating the ball when in possession
- Develop consistency in the teams ability to dominate space when in possession to ensure the opponent can't steal possession of the ball.
- Ensure the team out of possession are aware of how quick and intense the transitional moment needs to be, when coaching hammer home the importance of these moments
- 2 Neutral players play key roles in maintaining possession, ensure they can provide a consistency and calmness to possession moments

Progression

- Manipulate the goals in to targets that move to make the transitional moments more challenging
- Change size of shape to make transition moments more difficult
- Split natural players in to both teams to make it more realistic and more difficult to maintain possession.

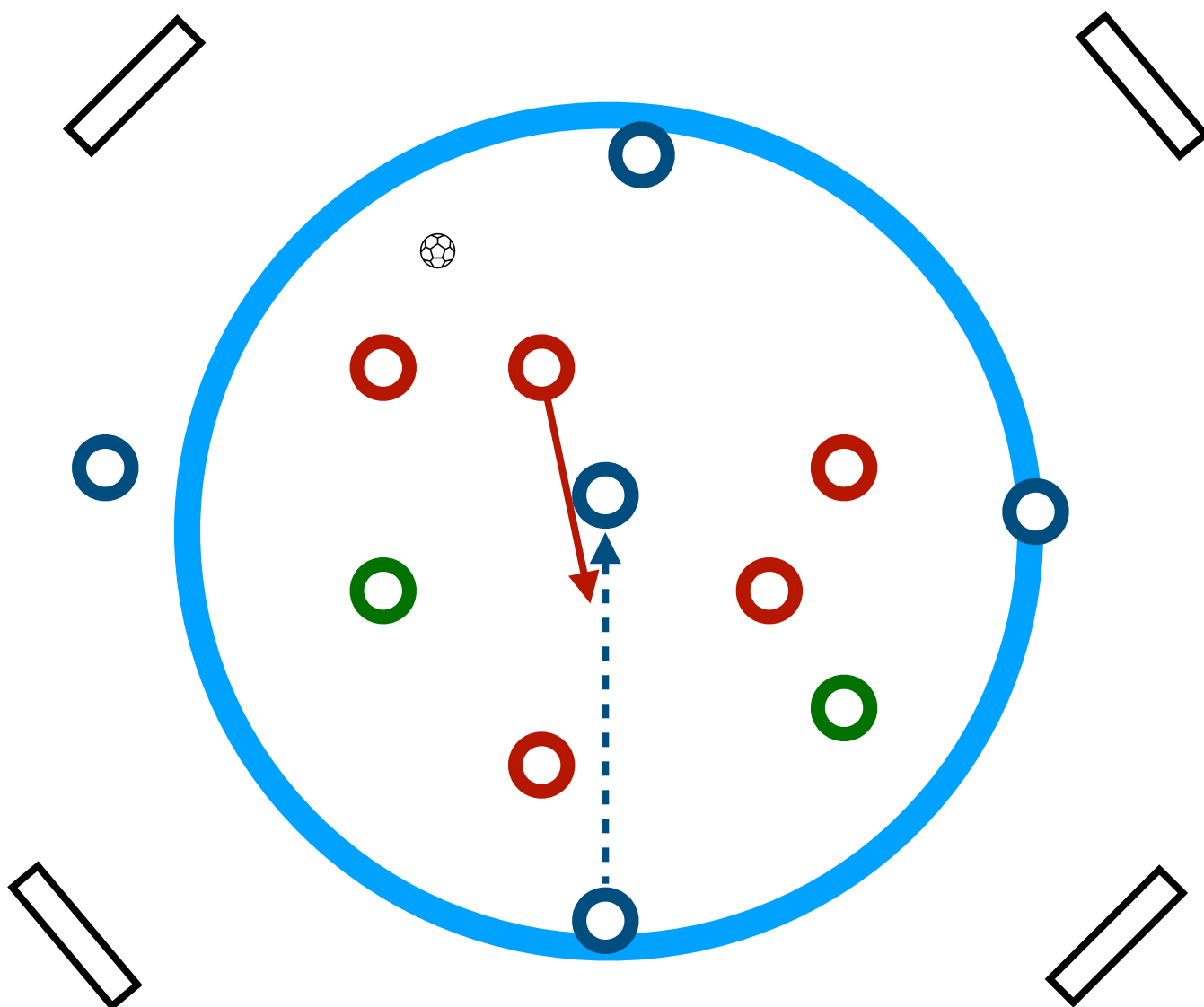


The Transitional Circle

Develop an understanding of the transition through this practice

Bielsa Specific

When you think of Marcelo Bielsa you instantly think of pressing and intensity, this practice provides the opportunity to demonstrate the key principles of pressing, quick reaction, intense pressure and overloads in high numbers. The coach has the opportunity within this practice to stay close to the practice and drive the behaviors that are mandatory, and critiquing the individuals who don't consistently demonstrate them, in games it will be the moments where the behavior is not consistently demonstrated where the opponent is able to take advantage and play through the team and cause damage because of the local of unity.



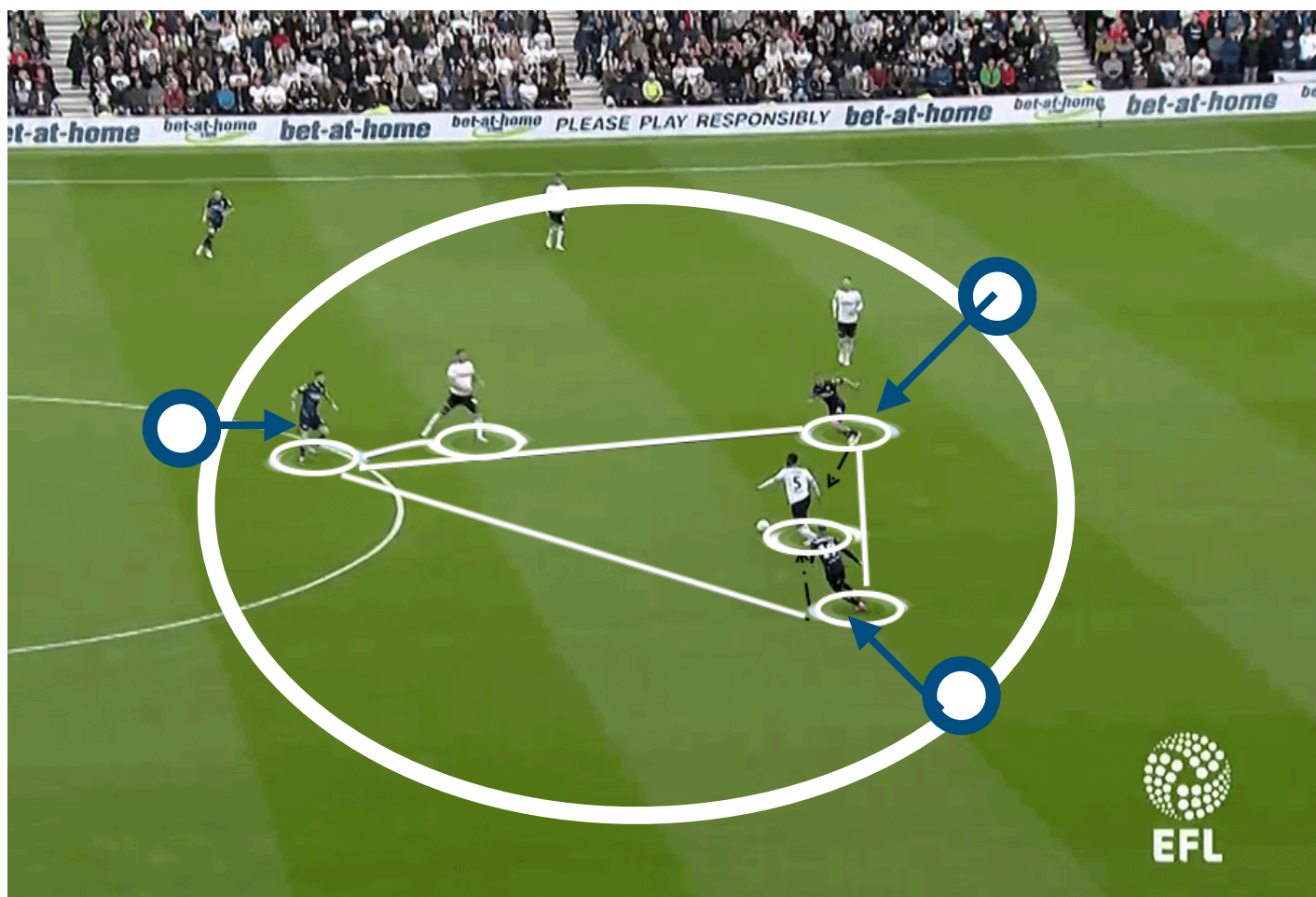
The Transitional Circle

Develop an understanding of the transition through this practice

Bielsa Specific

The below diagram shows what moment of the game is training in this practice and easily explains the impact the session can have on the players involved, as the diagram clearly demonstrates Bielsa's compact central areas within his 1-3-3-1-3 allow counter pressing to occur at a very early point to ensure that the best chance to win possession is maximized.

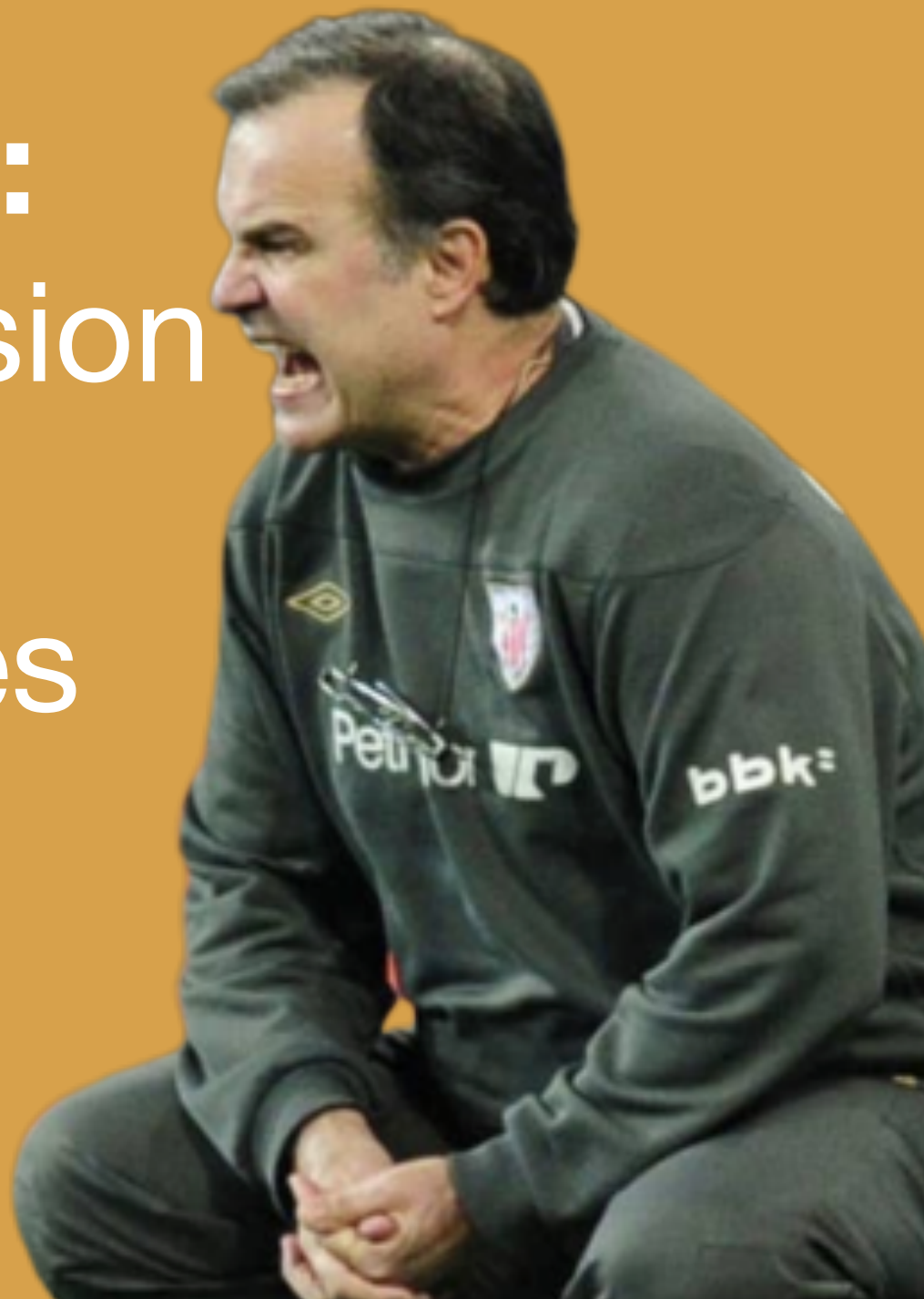
This moment is one of the most significantly important within Bielsa's philosophy, more important than the technical skill is the players behaviors, and creating players who are consistent in these behaviors.



Marcelo Bielsa

THEFOOTBALLCOACH.NET

BIELSA:
Possession
Based
Practices

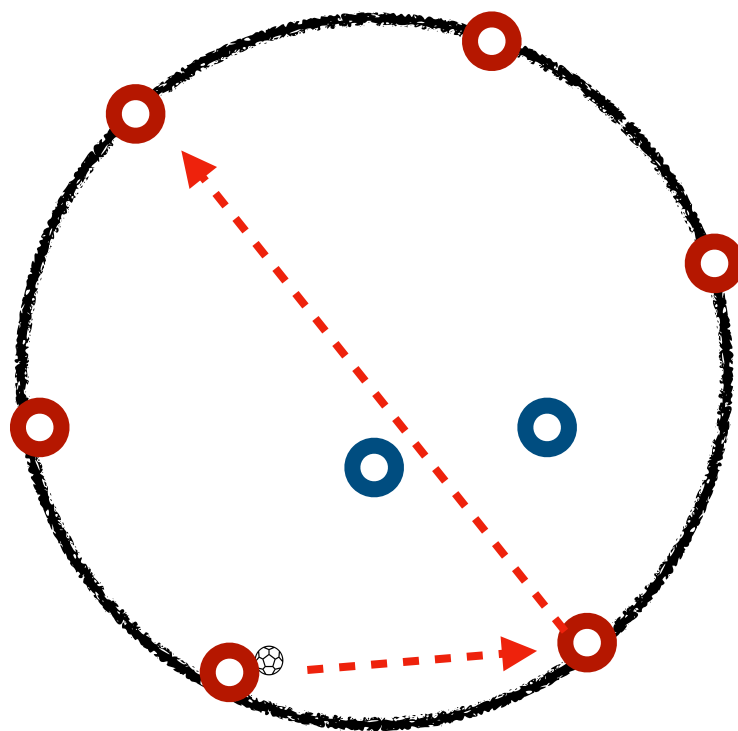


Traditional 6 v 2 Rondo

The most traditional of Rondo's 6 v 2 develops players to find the pass between the opponents lines

Setup:

- The traditional 6 v 2 rondo takes place over a 20 yard diameter circle with quite simply the 6 players on the outside and the 2 on the middle, the ball is moved quickly around the outside of the practice, the inside players are challenged to apply pressure and try to win the ball with out the opponent playing between them. The players in possession are challenged to play passes between the opponent lines.



Team Detail:

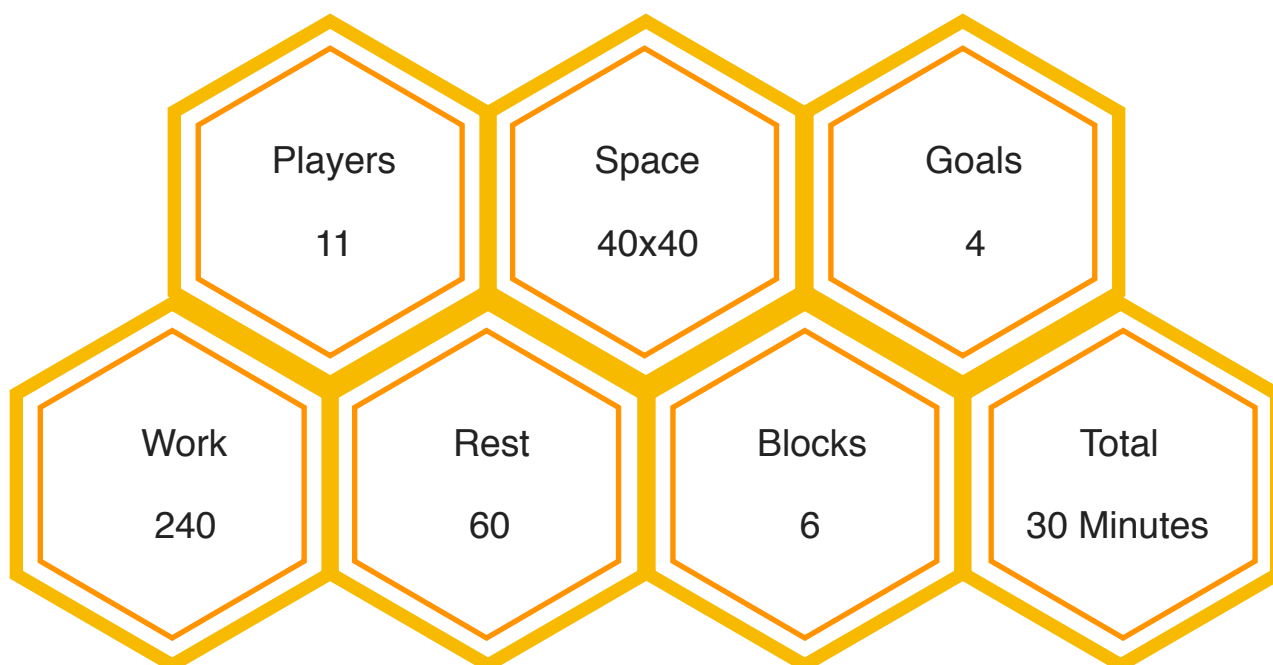
- Ensure players out of possession press high and force play in to a wide player and try to block the forward pass
- Can players value possession and try to prevent the blue team getting touches on the ball

Coaching Detail:

- Can players disguise passes and find split passes between the opposition lines
- Can the blue's work together to keep play outside
- Weight of pass is key when to lower the weight and invite pressure, when to kill the pressure with a strong pass

Progression:

- Narrow space
- Limit Touches

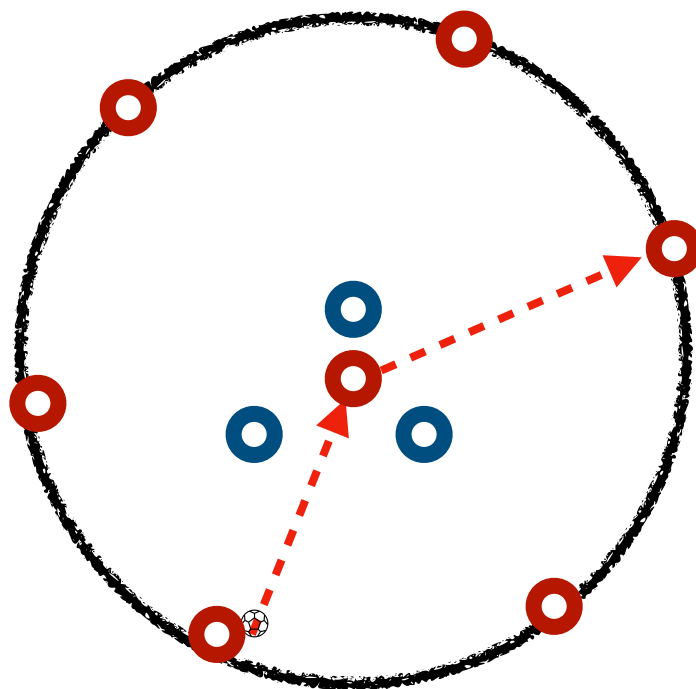


Modified 6 v 2 to 7 v 3

This is a slightly manipulated version of the traditional 6v2

Setup:

The session is set up in a 40x40 area divided by a line splitting the practice in half, with a centre area including 3 players, the other half contains a 3v0 with possession of the ball, and a 3v2 in the attacking half, the greens play out from the bottom side, before the reds press, the greens then look to play forward in to the attacking half where they have a 3v2 attacking overload



Team Detail:

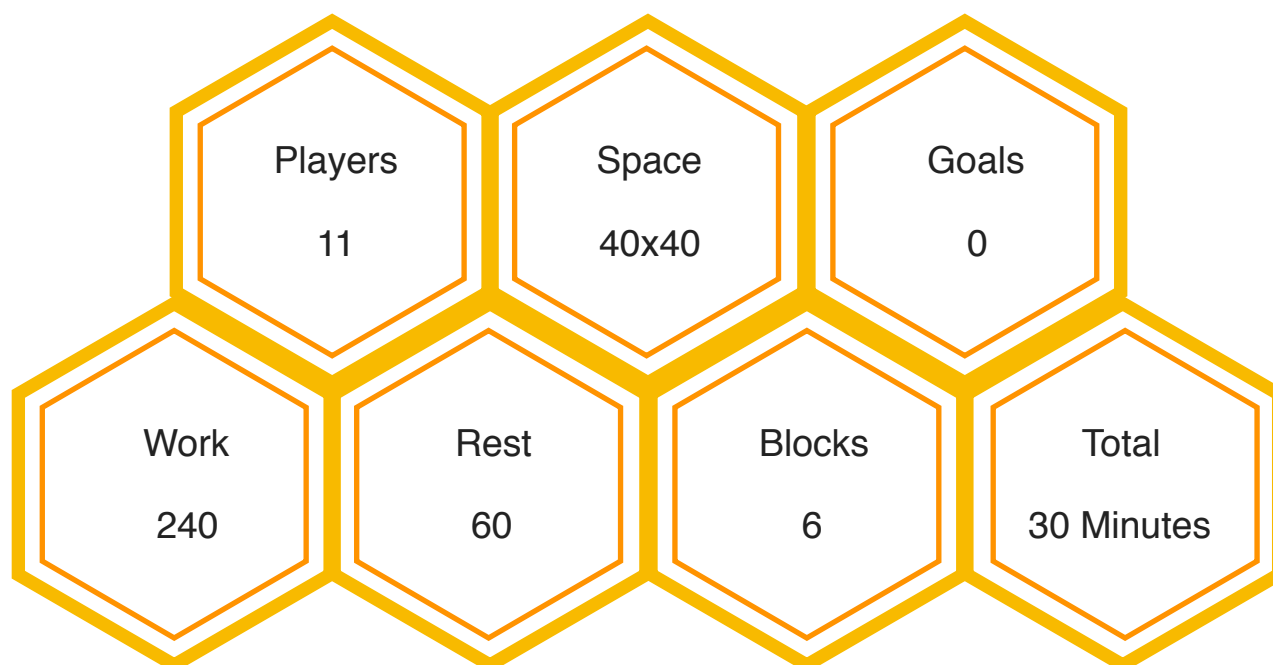
- Ensure players out of possession press high and force play in to a wide player and try to block the forward pass
- In possession the greens need to look to play through the opponents attacking line, this will demonstrate composure under opponent movement

Progression:

- 3v3 in the attacking half
- Narrow pitch by 10 yards

Coaching Detail:

- Can the players in the attacking Half move to receive between the lines
- Out of possession can the first play give everything to stop the forward pass



4 v 6 + 2 Long Pass Rondo

Develop combination play when overloaded

Setup:

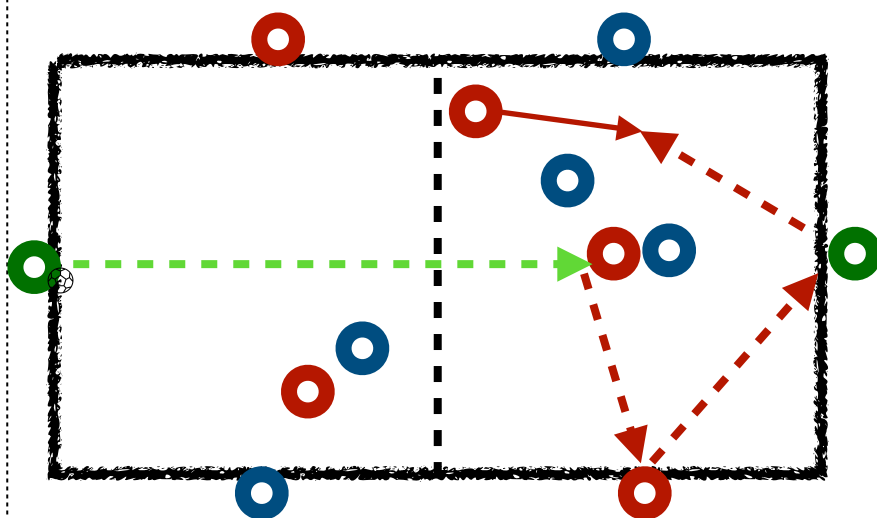
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Team Detail:

- Ensure players out of possession press high and force play in to a wide player and try to block the forward pass
- In possession the greens need to look to play through the opponents attacking line, this will demonstrate composure under opponent movement

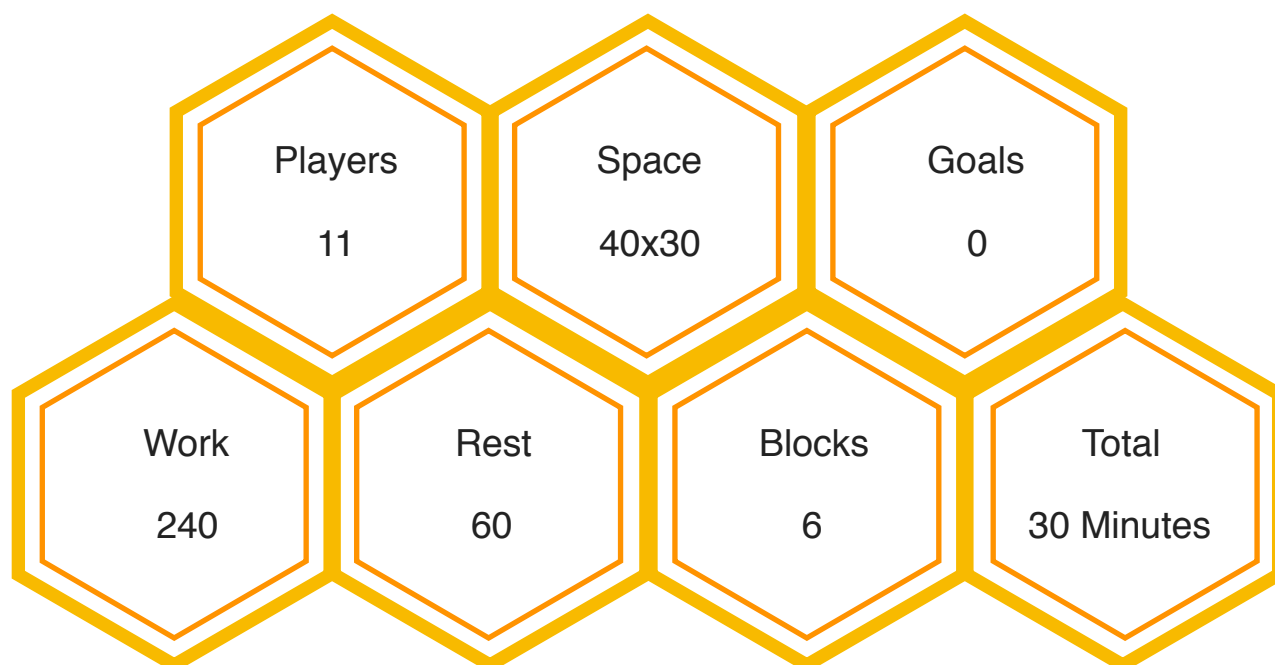
Progression:

- 3v3 in the attacking half
- Narrow pitch by 10 yards



Coaching Detail:

- Can the players in the attacking Half move to receive between the lines
- Out of possession can the first play give everything to stop the forward pass

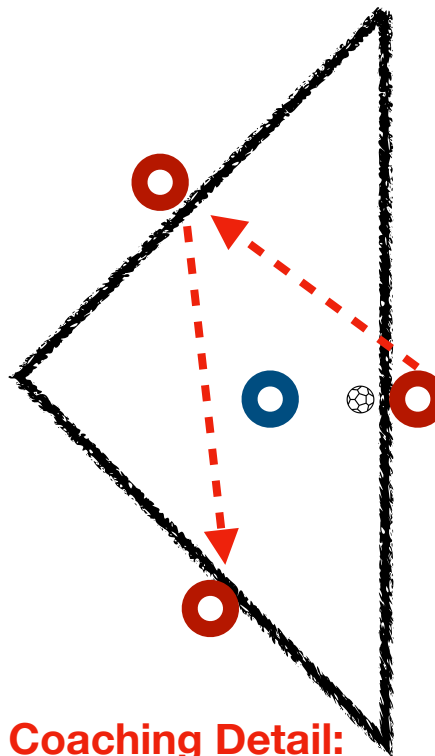


4 Man Rondo

A Rondo for low physical exposure and

Setup:

This an easy set-up rondo, 3 on the outside of a square or triangle with 1 central man, the ball is then moved quickly until the central player touches the ball, once the ball is touched the players rotate, this creates a high intensity practice.



Team Detail:

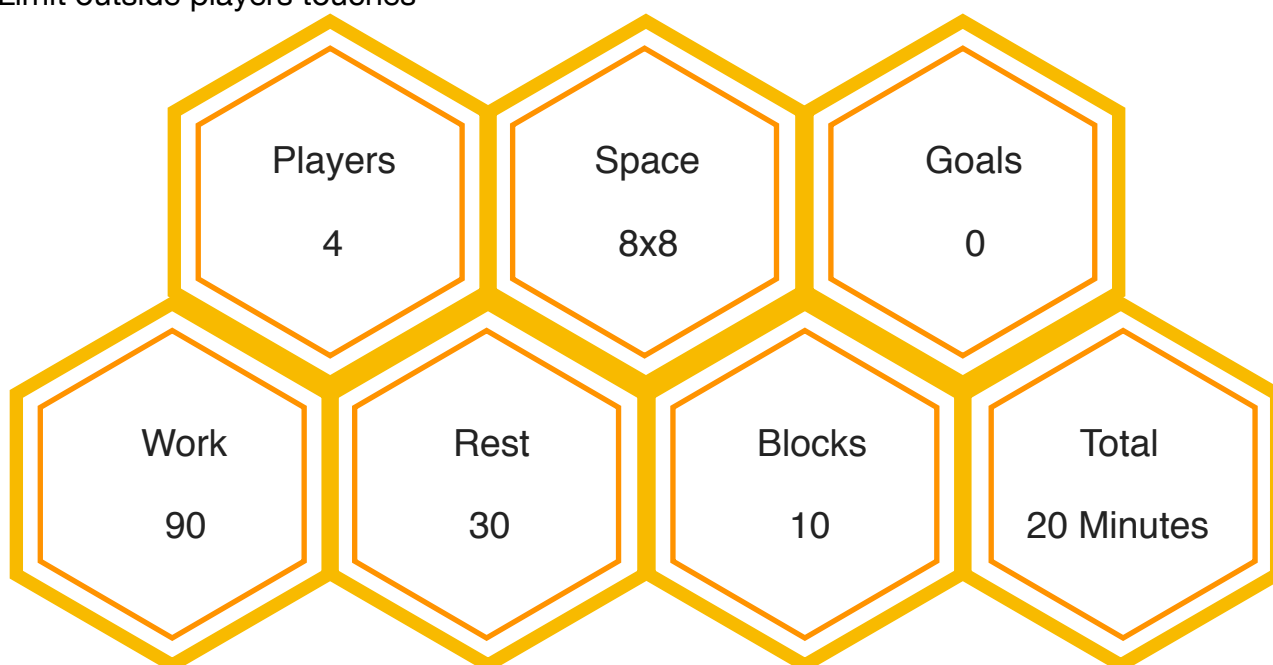
- Can players move the ball away from the opponent when there is not the opportunity to play between the lines
- Can individuals play first time when under pressure from the opponent
- Can the players out of possession make play predictable and keep the ball outside

Progression:

- Use a triangle instead of a square space
- Limit outside players touches

Coaching Detail:

- Ensure the passes are firm to prevent the opponent touching the ball
- Ensure passes are punched through the middle of the ball to prevent the ball bouncing during the passing role
- Central player challenged to work off two paces to

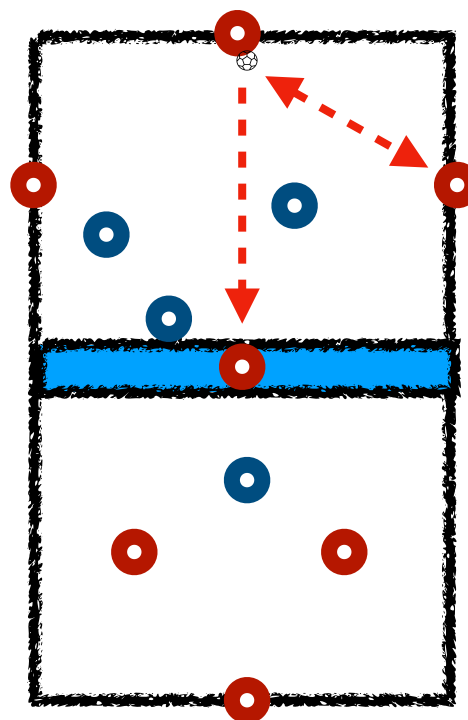


4 v 4 +1 Rondo

Rondo to develop the receiving skills of players between the opposition defensive lines

Setup:

The template for this is very simple a 40x20 area the two halves should 20x18 allowing for a 4 yard central area. The idea of the practice is to play through a team using full backs in wide areas and wide players inside. Once the ball is transferred from one half to the other the opposite wide players go to the outside and the other wide players go inside



Team Detail:

- Ensure the players keep the intensity on the inside and outside to make the practice realistic and competitive
- Encourage players to move the ball quickly
- Recognize The transitional movement and the moment to perform it

Progression:

- Allow outside players to stay inside
- Allow central play to leave zone

Coaching Detail:

- Can the players out of possession make play predictable and keep the ball outside
- Can we play directly through the opposition in to the inside wide players
- Can the ball be moved with 1 touch.

