

# MARCELO BIELSA

## ATTACKING

*A look at the tactics and style  
of play of one of the world's  
most innovative coaches*

by LUCA BERTOLINI



# **Leeds United and Marcelo Bielsa Attacking phase**

*By*

*Luca Bertolini*

*Published by*

**WORLD CLASS COACHING**

rst published November, 2020 by  
WORLD CLASS COACHING 4015 N 78<sup>th</sup> Street #120, Scottsdale, AZ 85251

Copyright © WORLD CLASS COACHING 2020

All rights reserved. No parts of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without prior written permission of the publisher.

Authors – Luca Bertolini  
Editor - Tom Mura  
Cover Art By - Barrie Smith



## **Table of contents**

Introduction: Leeds United, Brian Clough's Damned United and Marcelo Bielsa from Rosario (Argentina)	3
Marcelo Bielsa, the man behind the coach and his fundamental principles of play	6
Leeds United possession and attacking evolution under Marcelo Bielsa	11
Possession and attacking principles of play in the field	13
Leeds United attacking principles and situations of play	17
Summary	70

## **Introduction: Leeds United, Brian Clough's Damned United and Marcelo Bielsa from Rosario (Argentina)**

**Leeds United Football Club** is a professional football club in Leeds, West Yorkshire, England. The club was formed in 1919 following the disbanding of Leeds City F.C. by the Football League and took over their Elland Road stadium. They will play in the Premier League, the first tier of English football, following promotion in the 2019–20 season. Most of their history has been spent playing in the first tier; their longest continuous spell inside the first tier was a period of 18 years between 1964 and 1982, while their longest period outside of it spanned 16 years between 2004 and 2020. They have won three English league titles, one FA Cup, one League Cup, two Charity/Community Shields and two Inter-Cities Fairs Cups. The club reached the 1975 European Cup Final, losing to Bayern Munich after some controversial refereeing decisions. Leeds reached the semi-finals of the tournament's successor, the Champions League in 2001. The club was also runners-up in the European Cup Winners Cup final in 1973. The majority of the honors were won under the management of Don Revie in the 1960s and 1970s.

### **The golden seasons of the modern era: 1997–2001, Graham and O'Leary**

A statue of former Leeds's captain Billy Bremner stands outside Elland Road sculpted by Frances Segelman. Leeds appointed George Graham as Wilkinson's successor. This appointment was controversial as Graham had previously received a one-year ban from The Football Association for receiving illegal payments from a football agent. Graham made some astute purchases and also helped blood youngsters from Leeds's youth cup winning side. By the end of the 1997–98 season, Leeds had qualified for the following season's UEFA Cup. In October 1998, Graham left to become manager of Tottenham Hotspur, and Leeds opted to replace him with assistant manager David O'Leary. Under O'Leary and assistant Eddie Gray, Leeds never finished outside the top five in the Premier League, and secured qualification for both the UEFA Cup and the UEFA Champions League, enjoying cup runs to the semi-finals of both competitions. However, during the same period, the team's image was tarnished when players Jonathan Woodgate and Lee Bowyer were involved in an incident that left an Asian student in hospital with severe injuries. The resulting court case took nearly two years to resolve; Bowyer was cleared, but Woodgate convicted of affray and sentenced to community service. Additionally, in the UEFA Cup semi-final against Galatasaray in Istanbul, two Leeds fans were stabbed to death before the game.

### **Honors:**

#### **English leagues**

##### **EFL First Division/Premier League**

Champions (3): 1968–69, 1973–74, 1991–92

##### **EFL Second Division/Championship**

Champions (4): 1923–24, 1963–64, 1989–90, 2019–20

#### **English cups**

**FA Cup Winners** (1): 1971–72

**EFL Cup Winners** (1): 1967–68

**FA Charity/Community Shield Winners** (2): 1969, 1992

#### **European competition**

**European Cup/Champions League Runners-up** (1): 1974–75

**UEFA Cup Winners Cup Runners-up** (1): 1972–73

“I wouldn't say I was the best manager in the business. But I was in the top one.”

“If a chairman sacks the manager he initially appointed, he should go as well.”

“They say Rome wasn't built in a day, but I wasn't on that particular job.”

**Brian Clough.**

“Well, I might as well tell you now. You lot may all be internationals and have won all the domestic honors there are to win under Don Revie. But as far as I'm concerned, the first thing you can do for me is to chuck all your medals and all your caps and all your pots and all your pans into the biggest f\*\*\*ing dustbin you can find, because you've never won any of them fairly. You've done it all by bloody cheating.”

**Brian Clough, The Damned United.**

“Do you know what is the problem, Professor? You live soccer 24 hours per day and the rest of us have a life outside the game.”

**Fernando Gamboa, former Newell's defender.**

“A man with new ideas is a madman, until his ideas triumph.”

**Marcelo Bielsa**

Attacking football is the simplest way to victory and success. In Argentina, we are aware of this, which is why we play open attacking football.

**Marcelo Bielsa**

“When I was a coach of Athletic Bilbao we played Barcelona in a final we lost 3-0. I gave all this information I have shown you in Barcelona to Pep Guardiola. He said to me you know more about Barcelona than me!”

**Marcelo Bielsa**

### **What players say about Marcelo Bielsa**

“At first he seems tough and he may even annoy you with his persistence and don't take no for an answer resilience but in the end he is a genius.”

**Fernando Llorente**

“There are days when he doesn't leave the training ground until the small hours, it is insane.”

**Javi Martinez**

“My admiration for Marcelo Bielsa is huge because he makes the players much, much better. Still I didn't meet one guy, a former player from Marcelo Bielsa who speaks no good of him. They are grateful about his influence on their careers in football. He helped me a lot with his advice. Whenever I speak with him I always feel like he wants to help me. He's the best coach in the world.”

**Pep Guardiola**

“He is like my football father. We are a generation of coaches that were his disciples. How he feels football, the passion he has for football, I think we all took that from him.”

**Mauricio Pochettino**

“Marcelo Bielsa's Chile played the most attractive football in this World Cup.” (2010)

**Johan Cruyff**

“I have the influence of several coaches: Bielsa, Eriksson, Basile, they have all left a mark. Bielsa taught me the most.”

**Diego Simeone**

“He made me devour videos like never before. To begin with he put me in front of the videos and I’d fall asleep. But he was happy! I was shocked. After a while I stopped sleeping and told myself go on, I’ll watch two minutes of this thing after all. After that he talked to me, I talked to him and we’d go over moves together. He told me, see, that’s why I let you sleep. You slept, you slept, you slept but the day you decided to watch you got interested on your own. If I’d pushed you to watch you wouldn’t have been interested. Marcelo is just too good.”

**Benjamin Mendy**

“I learned a lot from him and it is because of him that I am who I am. What I remember the most about Bielsa was the mentality that he tries his players to have.”

**Alexis Sanchez**

“This modus operandi has stemmed from Bielsa and I’m sure Guardiola and Pochettino would agree he was a key part of their football education, and if these young English players keep performing and improving under these principles – thus elevating our national team to new heights – then I for one will be raising a glass in appreciation to ‘El Loco’.”

**Liam Rosenior**

“He is a coach that I have admired for many years and when the opportunity arose to bring him to Elland Road, we made it our top priority for the summer. Marcelo has a wealth of experience and he will use that to create a new culture and a winning mentality at our football club.”

**Andrea Radrizzani**

## **Marcelo Bielsa, the man behind the coach and his fundamental principles of play**

El Loco is from Rosario (Argentina) that is also Messi, Di Maria, Mauro Icardi and Tata Martino; he has been largely influenced by Carlos Bilardo and Luiz Cesar Menotti, and he has gone onto influence a huge number of managers (Pochettino, Sampaoli, Guardiola, who signed Bielsa's former players as Mendy, Javi Martinez and Aymeric Laporte, River Plate's coach Marcelo Gallardo) and coaches himself. Jonathan Wilson wrote about him "since the back 4 spread from Brazil in the late 50s' and early 60s', no south American has had such an influence on how the world played as Bielsa has had in the first decade of the 21th century. The list of former players which have become coaches after playing for Bielsa is very long, apart from the deep influenced ones.

He played for Newell's Old Boys, despite his father was a Rosario Central supporter; at the time, he was used to read El Grafico, the most important football magazine and it seems that he convinced his mother to index the magazine. At the age of 25 he was already a coach at University level (they say he scouted 3000 players before selecting his squad's 20 and treating them as professional players.)

The first coach job was for Newell's Old boys youth academy, before signing as first team head coach, winning 3 National titles (Apertura, Clausura and Integration), but losing the Copa Libertadores to San Paolo, after penalties in 1992; he resigned after the defeat. The team stadium is now named after him. He then spent 4 seasons in Mexico, before coming back in Argentina.

He has been the first coach to use the opposition tactical analysis at Velez Sarsfield in 1997 (winning again the Clausura in 1998), asking for a computer to look at footages of the opponents' matches; he was also one of the first coaches all over the world to use a match methodological approach, asking the reserves to play as the previous opponent to fix the issues and as the next opposition's team to find attacking and defensive phases solutions to beat it. His pre-match briefings are focused on specific situations of play which had been drilled during the week before. He never gives 1 on 1 interviews, but only press conferences with his translator.

He then spent 7 years as Argentina National Team head Coach (1994 Olympic gold medal winner), after just 6 matches at Espanyol. Chile National Team until 2011 and 2 seasons as Athletic Bilbao head coach (2013 Europa League and Copa del Rey runner-up) were the further stations of his career. 1 season and 1 game at Olympique Marseilles (resigning after a loss to Caen), 2 days as Lazio's Head Coach and 13 games at Lille confirmed his nickname "El Loco".

Before his first season in charge started at Leeds United (2018/2019) the Argentine coach decided to teach his players a lesson about humility and privilege and told his playing staff to go out and collect all of the rubbish from outside the team's Thorp Arch training complex for 3 hours. He wanted his players to appreciate the efforts the paying public make every week to come to Elland Road to watch the team play, calculating the working hours in relation to the price of a match ticket.

Furthermore, these are few reasons behind his surname "El Loco", and here are some others to understand his distinctive traits:

- He presented a color-coded assessment of Bilbao's matches of the previous season, after signing the contract as Athletic's Head Coach. When he arrived, Bielsa had watched their 38 league games last season, writing all the details on the color-coded spreadsheets. He said: "There are 36 different forms of communicating through a pass."



- He broke down all the English Premier League 2017/2018 campaign, presenting every formation, every approach of every team, when he arrived at Leeds.
- He roped his father in low into making notes, while he was watching matches.
- Once he said he would have spent the Christmas holiday, working out for 2 hours and watching soccer matches 14 hours a day.
- Once he woke up in the middle of the night and he asked his cooks, servants and neighbors to be under his heels to shape a formation in the soccer field of his home's garden.

To understand the character who surrounds the man, the dialog between "El Loco and Zinedine Zidane in 2015 is very indicative; Bielsa was the Head Coach of Olympique Marseille and the former French player was in charge as Real Madrid B Head Coach.

**Bielsa:** "If you have time, after the training, I could, if you are interested, explain in details the training. Is it good for you?"

**Zidane:** "Do you have enough time to explain everything about the training?"

**Bielsa:** "Don't see any vanity in what I'm saying you, but since you're coming, I feel obliged to explain you. I tell you seriously, as other coaches could refuse to explain you, but since you are here, it's good for you to understand. So, just after the training session, I'll come and explain you in details, today's training."

"There are 2 scenarios: on the top pitch, since during the last 20' of the game against Monaco, spaces get narrower, we played inside the opposition's half without creating any opportunity to score. The first group is going to repeat what Monaco did to reproduce it tomorrow [the next training session]. On the second pitch, we are going to repeat the moments of the game and on the lower pitch, the starters are going to be coached on the problems we faced against Monaco. When it's finished, we will continue our speech."

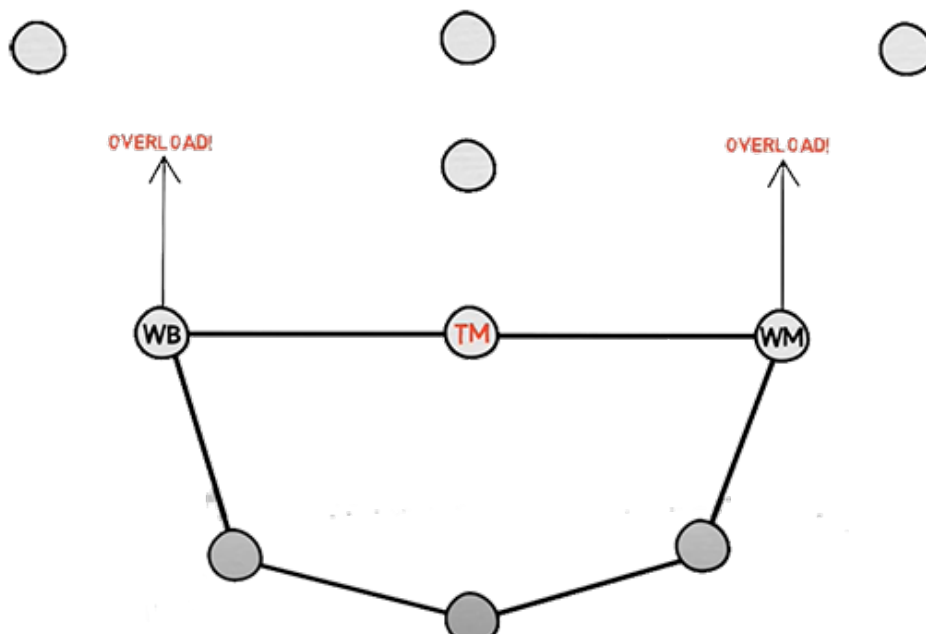
The Argentinian coach had been also involved into a spy-gate story, during his first season as Leeds United Head coach (January 2019), when he sent scouts to watch Derby County's training session on the Thursday head of their Championship's match. "I am responsible for it. It doesn't matter if this is legal or illegal, or right or wrong ... for me, it is enough that Frank Lampard and Derby felt it was not the right thing to do, for me to believe that I didn't behave well." [...] "Yesterday I talked to Frank Lampard and he said I didn't respect the rules of fair play. I have a different point of view on it, but the important thing is what Frank Lampard and Derby think. [...] "I am the only one responsible for it, because I didn't ask for the permission of Leeds to do it. Without trying to find a justification, I have been using this kind of practice since the qualifiers for the World Cup with Argentina. It is not illegal, we have been doing it publicly and we talk about it in the press."

Vice versa, he became a sportsmanship example when he conceded an equalizing goal to Aston Villa, as an opponent walked the ball into the back of the net from the restart, after Leeds scored while another injured opponent was standing on the ground after a tackle. "English football is known for sportsmanship so I don't have to comment on this kind of thing, which is common in England," Bielsa told the media after the game. At the end of the season, this situation revealed as decisive for Leeds United direct promotion, after the 1 – 1 final score, together with the following defeat to Ipswich Town. Bielsa's players were sent to the play-off rounds where, Leeds United lost to Derby County after a 2 matches battle (Derby County 0:1 Leeds United / Leeds United 2:4 Derby County).

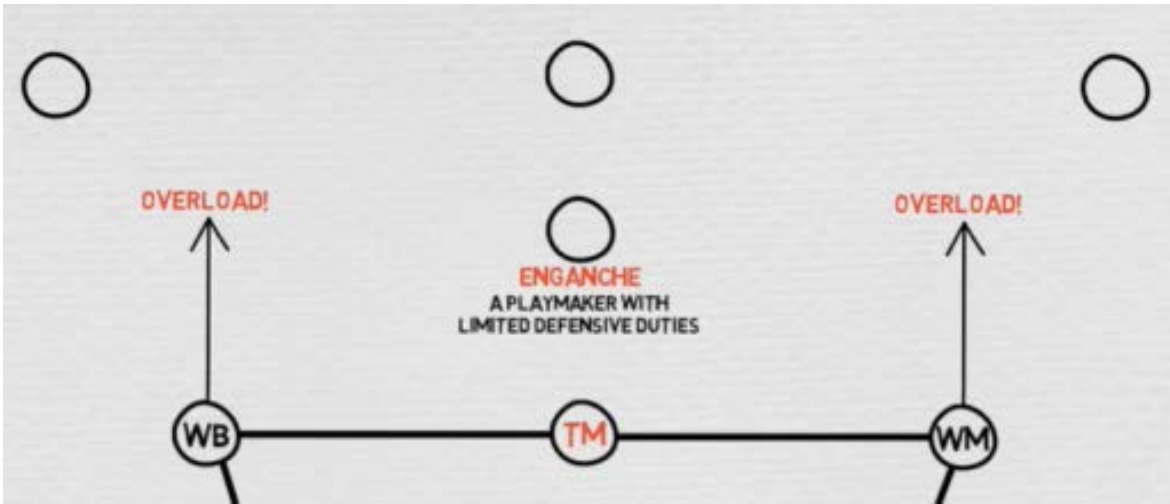
Team	Points	Ex.P
Norwich City	94	77.9
Sheffield United	89	80.5
<b>Leeds United</b>	<b>86</b>	<b>89</b>
W.B.A.	83	75.2
Aston Villa	82	76.2
Derby County	77	60.6

Looking at the final table, 2 points were missing from Aston Villa home match and 3 from the last away game. Analyzing the missing point from a physiological point of view, the spy-gate, the home draw due to a voluntary conceded goal and the last defeat were the crucial points of Bielsa's first English campaign. Open mind, humility, willingness and "no secrets" about the methods are the personal landmarks of the Argentinian coach. Getting into the field, which are the main principles of play which make El Loco one of the philosophers of modern soccer?

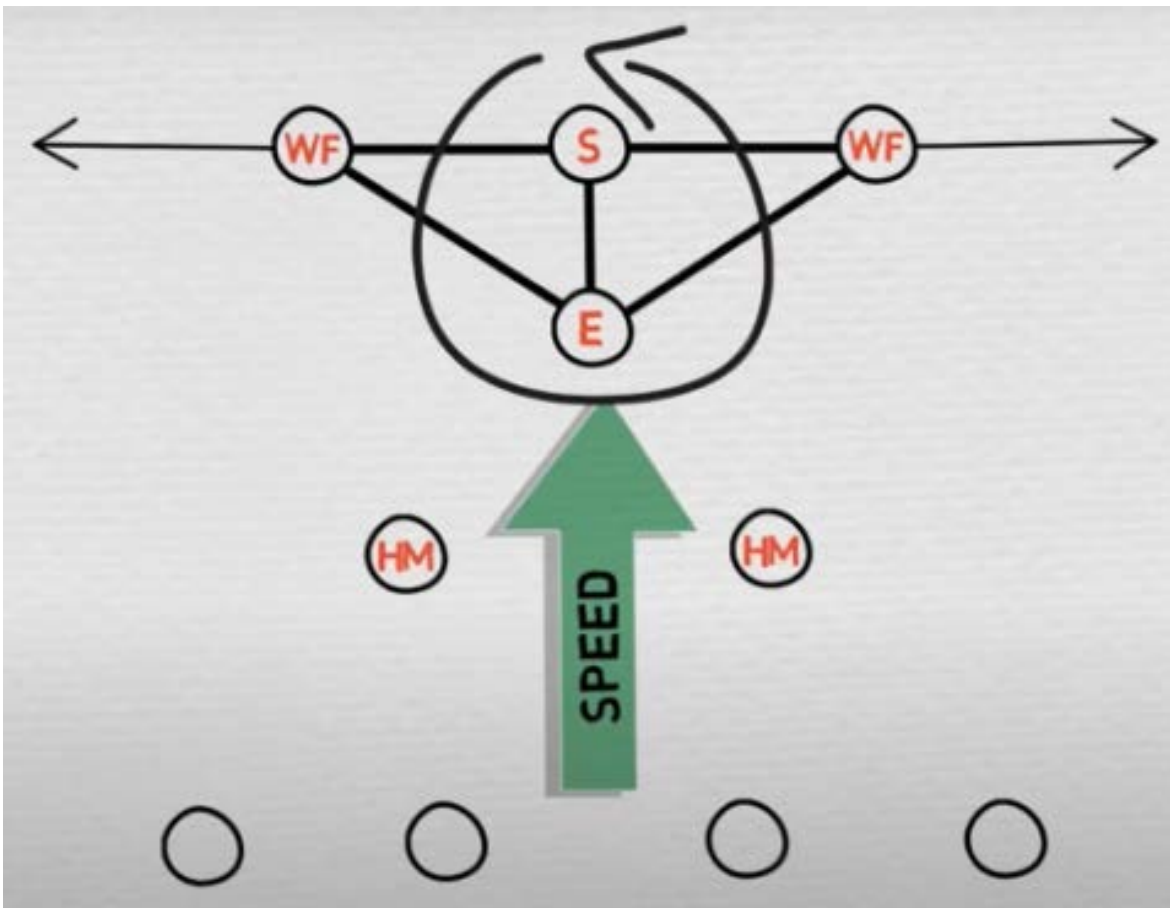
- 29 possible teams' formations that every young player should experience during youth academy years.
- 5 escaping the marker objectives: 1) For an oriented ball's control, 2) For ball reception behind the defender (blind runs and changes of rhythm), 3) to create a gap from the marker (in front of the marker), 4) To receive while dropping back and anticipating the defender, 5) To receive a pass over the marker's imaginary line (aerial pass.)
- Spare man philosophy to overload the first third.
- 1 playmaker (attacking linking player) and 3 forwards in the final third.
- Rotations among the positions (center midfielders in center defensive roles because of their passing skills, fullbacks as center backs because of their ball's forward dribble skills, the wingbacks are the wide midfielders for Bielsa, wide attackers shifting wide to create overloads together with the wide midfielders.)



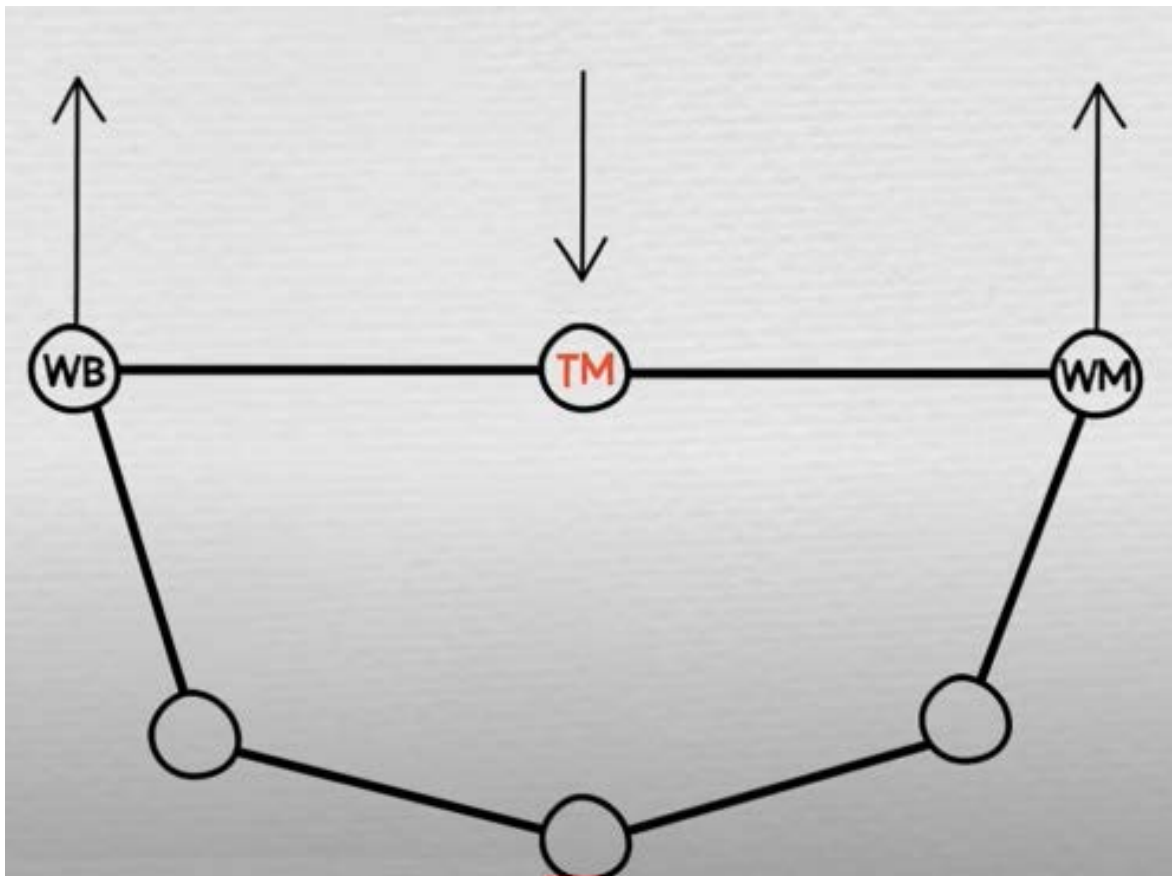
- Advanced playmaker to manage the attacking move.



- 2 holding midfielders, using 4 players at the back, to maintain the 1+3 formation up front with the same shape and rotations.



- Verticality and pace are useful to cut the time in transitions.
- Bowl defensive shape (deep midfielder dropping back to patrol the middle of the pitch and to support the center backs.)



- Pre-planned passing patterns of play (players are required to have high physical and cognitive performances.)
- Opposition's analysis and consequent adaptations which create the positional play for the game.

## Leeds United possession and attacking evolution under Marcelo Bielsa

Despite new signings, the “El Loco” effects on the club is remarkable, thinking about these 2 seasons, as he took in charge of a Championship mid-table team and now Leeds United has won the League, being promoted, after the play-off finals of the first season.

### 2018/2019 transfers

Players in			
	FROM	FEE	DATE
Jordan Stevens	Forest Green	Undisc.	01 Jul, 2018
Barry Douglas	Wolves	Undisc.	28 Jul, 2018
<b>Patrick Bamford</b>	<b>Middlesbrough</b>	<b>£7 mln.</b>	<b>31 Jul, 2018</b>
Xeka	Braga	Unknown	10 Aug, 2018
Kamil Miazek	Feyenoord	Free	23-nov-18
<b>Casilla</b>	<b>Real Madrid</b>	<b>Free</b>	<b>17 Jan, 2019</b>
<b>Total: £7,000,000</b>			
Players out			
	TO	FEE	DATE
Felix Wiedwald	E Frankfurt	Unknown	01 Jul, 2018
Madger Gomes	Sochaux	Unknown	01 Jul, 2018
Marcus Antonsson	Malmo	Undisc.	14 Jul, 2018
Ronaldo Vieira	Sampdoria	Unknown	01 Aug, 2018
Romario Vieira Nan	Sampdoria	Undisc.	01 Aug, 2018
Andy Lonergan	Middlesbrough	Free	02 Aug, 2018
Luke Murphy	Bolton	Free	02 Aug, 2018
Eoghan Stokes	Derry City	Unknown	15-feb-19

### 2018/2019 squad list

Player / jersey number / role	App	Min
Liam Cooper - 28, Di(C)	38	3351
Pontus Jansson - 29, Di(C)	37(2)	3270
Pablo Hernández - 35, Cc(CSD)	39(2)	3515
Luke Ayling - 28, Di(CD),Cc(D)	40	3427
Kalvin Phillips - 24, Di(C),MC	44	3684
Ezgjian Alioski - 28, Di(S),Cc(SD)	44	3667
William Huffer -21, Goalkeeper	1	90
Mateusz Klich - 30, Cc(C)	48	4000
Kemar Roofe - 27, CO(CSD),AC	28(5)	2510
Barry Douglas - 30, Di(S),Cc(S)	21(6)	1988
Patrick Bamford - 26, CO(CSD),AC	16(7)	1450
Samu Sáiz - 29, CO(CS)	15(4)	1370
Tyler Roberts - 21, CO(C),AC	20(8)	1866
Adam Forshaw - 28, Cc(C)	20(11)	1909
Stuart Dallas - 29, Di(SD),Cc(CSD)	12(16)	1424
Jack Harrison - 23, CO(SD)	34(5)	2685
Gaetano Berardi - 31, Di(CSD)	12(3)	1064
Bailey Peacock-Farrell - 23, POR	28	2520
Tom Pearce - 22, Di(S)	0(2)	72
Jack Clarke - 19, Forward	4(20)	814
Aapo Halme - 22, Di(C),MC	1(3)	143
Ryan Edmondson - 19, Forward	0(1)	19
Kiko Casilla - 33, POR	19	1710
Jamie Shackleton - 20, MC	4(17)	595
Leif Davis - 20, Defender	1(3)	91
Lewis Baker - 25, Cc(C)	2(9)	223
Jordan Stevens - 20, Midfielder	0(1)	14
Isaiah Brown - 23, CO(CS),AC	0(2)	11

## 2019/2020 transfers

Players in			
	FROM	FEE	DATE
Josh Galloway	Carlisle	Undisc.	29 Aug, 2019
Elia Caprile	Chievo	Undisc.	21 Jan, 2020
Ian Poveda	Man City	Undisc.	24 Jan, 2020
Helder Costa	Wolves	£16 Mln	07 Jul, 2020
<b>Total:</b> <b>£16,000,000</b>			
Players out			
	TO	FEE	DATE
Oliver Sarkic	Burton	Free	01 Aug, 2019
Bailey Peacock-Farrell	Burnley	£2,5 Mln	02 Aug, 2019
Yosuke Ideguchi	Gamba Osaka	Unknown	05 Aug, 2019
Kemar Roofe	Anderlecht	Undisc.	06 Aug, 2019
Tom Pearce	Wigan	Undisc.	08 Aug, 2019
Clark Odour	Barnsley	Undisc.	08 Aug, 2019
Lewie Coyle	Fleetwood	Undisc.	10 Jan, 2020
Pawel Cibicki	Pogon Szczecin	Unknown	12 Jan, 2020
Eunan O'Kane	Luton	Undisc.	30 Jan, 2020
<b>Total:</b> <b>£2,500,000</b>			

## 2019/2020 squad list

Player / jersey number / role	App	Minutes
Luke Aylin - 28, Di(CD),Cc(D)	35(2)	3177
Pablo Hernández - 35, Cc(CSD)	27(9)	2506
Kalvin Phillips - 24, Di(C),MC	37	3254
Liam Cooper - 28, Di(C)	36(2)	3127
Ben White - 22, Di(C)	46	4140
Jack Harrison - 23, CO(SD)	45(1)	3810
Stuart Dallas - 29, Di(SD),Cc(CSD)	45	3935
Mateusz Klich - 30, Cc(C)	45	3818
Illan Meslier - 20, POR	10	900
Patrick Bamford - 26, CO(CSD),AC	43(2)	3464
Adam Forshaw - 28, Cc(C)	6(1)	585
Hélder Costa - 26, CO(CSD)	33(10)	2959
Ezgjani Alioski - 28, Di(S),Cc(SD)	21(18)	2255
Pascal Struijk - 20, Defender	2(3)	216
Kiko Casilla - 33, POR	36	3240
Tyler Roberts - 21, CO(C),AC	12(11)	1089
Gaetano Berardi - 31, Di(CSD)	13(9)	1126
Barry Douglas - 30, Di(S),Cc(S)	6(9)	644
Ian Poveda-Ocampo - 20, Forward	1(3)	125
Jack Clarke - 19, Forward	0(1)	19
Eddie Nketiah - 21, AC	2(15)	500
Leif Davis - 20, Defender	0(3)	13
Oliver Casey - 19, Defender	0(1)	5
Jamie Shackleton - 20, MC	5(17)	466
Robbie Gotts - 20, Defender	0(1)	6
Jordan Stevens - 20, Midfielder	0(4)	54
Jean-Kévin Augustin - 23, CO(D),AC	0(3)	49
Mateusz Bogusz - 18, Midfielder	0(1)	17

## Possession and attacking principles of play in the field

From possession and attacking points of view, the statistical data confirm the improvements of the team since Marcelo Bielsa arrival. The first crucial information is the increased average of possession per match:

Possession %		
2017/2018	2018/2019	2019/2020
50,52	62,47	62,03

Together with the increased average of possession, passing indexes have improved and changed, as the next passing networks shows, taking a look too the same home match against Stoke City by then end of 2018/2019 and 2019/2020 seasons:



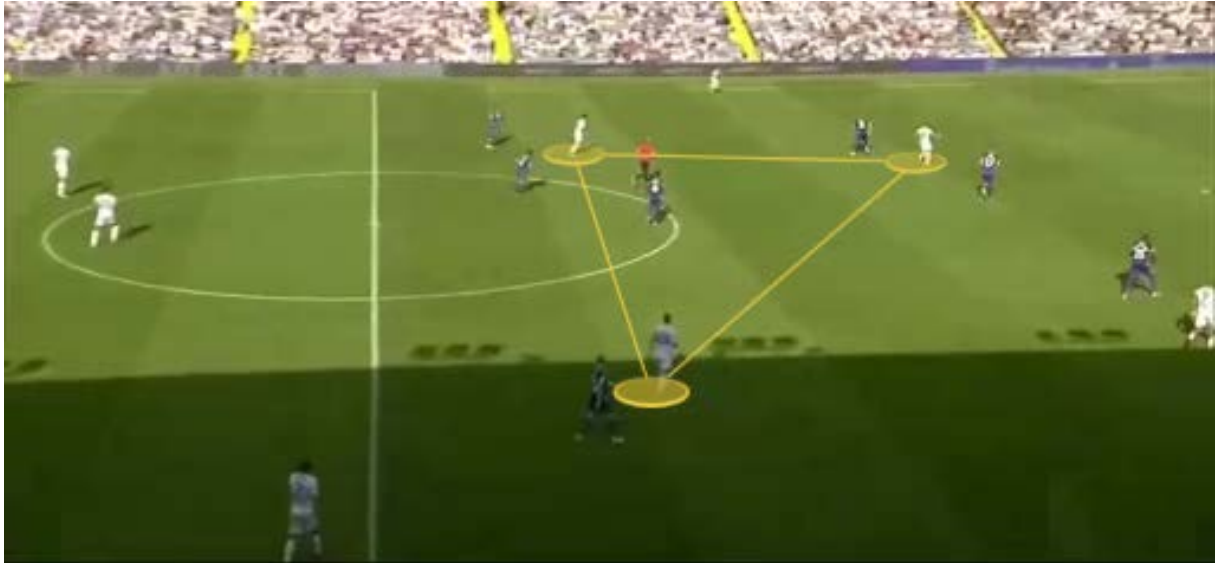
The scheme shows the first Leeds United version with Bielsa's. The team tend to play out from the first third quickly and to involve all the team in the same attacking move, as it doesn't seem to be specific players which are responsible for playmaking, and the passing lanes are equally divided among all the 10 in the field.



The second passing network shows how the back 3 and the holding midfielder are now the actors of the possession phase inside the defensive half, inviting the opposition's pressure out of defensive positions, before trying to play vertically.

Verticality is the main difference between Bielsa seasons and the mid-table team of the previous years; from a center 2-1 positioning, Leeds now places 3 players one in front of the other, with an additional holding midfielder, one offensive playmaker and the center forward:

2018/2019 (at the beginning of the season):



2019/2020 (at the end of the season):



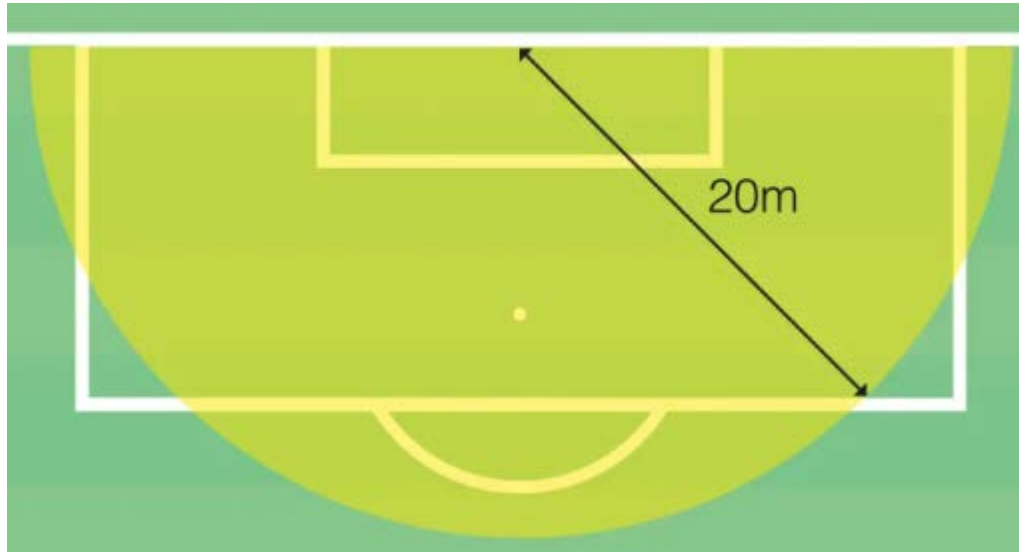
Passes per match			Accuracy	%	Accuracy	%	Accuracy	%
2017/2018	2018/2019	2019/2020	2017/2018		2018/2019		2019/2020	
369,20	506,40	487,30	288,17	78,05	416,19	82,19	398,07	81,69

The total number of passes per match has decisively increased with Bielsa, despite in the second season, the last one that took Leeds United to promotion has a bit decreased; this is the proof of totally different style of play.



Deep completed passes per match*		
2017/2018	2018/2019	2019/2020
8,22	13,71	13,48

\* A non-cross Pass that is targeted to the zone within 20 meters of the opponent's goal.



Possession style and increased number of passes may take to analyze the possession/attacking in a wrong way. Under Bielsa, Leeds United can play a potential decisive passes toward the opposition goal, more than 5 times more than during the last campaign without him; the attacking efficacy has increased, at the same time.

Forward passes per match								
2017/2018	Acc.	%	2018/2019	Acc.	%	2019/2020	Acc.	%
141,09	95,98	68,03	179,04	132,63	74,07	169,65	124,89	73,62

After the building up phase, the possession phase is very vertical; together with the number of total vertical pass per game has increased, Leeds United patterns of play is round 6% more accurate.

Back passes per match								
2017/2018	Acc.	%	2018/2019	Acc.	%	2019/2020	Acc.	%
49,15	44,65	90,84	67,31	61,23	90,96	65,70	61,26	93,25

The back passes increase doesn't have to be confused with a decrease of attacking mind possession phases; vice versa, back passes are a crucial weapon for Leeds to create the right spaces to overcome the pressure lines in the first third, to find the right shape throughout the field (width and depth) and to attack in the final third. Passing combinations and fix pattern of play to play out from the defensive half are the crucial tactical stuff which have made Leeds the most attractive team of the Championship these last 2 seasons. Combinations among center backs, lower center midfielder and the goalkeeper are the landmarks of Bielsa's teams (Leeds isn't an exception) as well as those out wide between the second and the third lines of 3 players, to find space along the channels.

<b>Lateral passes per match</b>								
2017/2018	Acc.	%	2018/2019	Acc.	%	2019/2020	Acc.	%
125,48	105,48	84,06	187,48	164,42	87,70	186,15	160,80	86,38

The lateral passes average have increased, but this data doesn't have to be confused with a possession style just for the sake of it; lateral passes are a tool to allow exchanges of positions before playing vertical and in behind passes.

<b>Long passes per match</b>								
2017/2018	Acc.	%	2018/2019	Acc.	%	2019/2020	Acc.	%
56,13	28,30	50,43	55,04	30,40	55,22	53,41	28,59	53,52

Leeds performed 3 passes less per match than the last season before Bielsa arrival; at the same time the accuracy has increased and it shows the improvement of the counter-attacking skills of the team, as building up and possession phases are made of short and quick passes.

<b>Passes to final third / accurate</b>								
2017/2018	Acc.	%	2018/2019	Acc.	%	2019/2020	Acc.	%
58,33	35,54	60,94	67,63	46,40	68,61	59,90	38,90	64,94

During 2019/2020 promotion campaign, Leeds has shown a tendency to a more rationalized possession style, playing toward the final third with more patience, avoiding losses of possession (5 ball's losses less in 2019/2020 season in relation to the previous season) and risking decisive passes only with a safe defensive shape (the challenge intensity and the defensive duels have decreased in the second season); this is also the reason why the accuracy has decreased.

<b>Progressive passes / accurate</b>								
2017/2018	Acc.	%	2018/2019	Acc.	%	2019/2020	Acc.	%
77,24	55,83	72,28	96,83	73,73	76,14	87,15	65,63	75,31

Progressive passes (a forward pass that attempts to advance a team significantly closer to the opponent's goal) are a proof of the clear Leeds's change of style under Marcelo Bielsa and of a vertical soccer idea; on the other side, again, Leeds has become a more rational team during the second season under El Loco reign, as the nearly 6 progressive passes per match less in 2019/2020 season have than the previous season show.

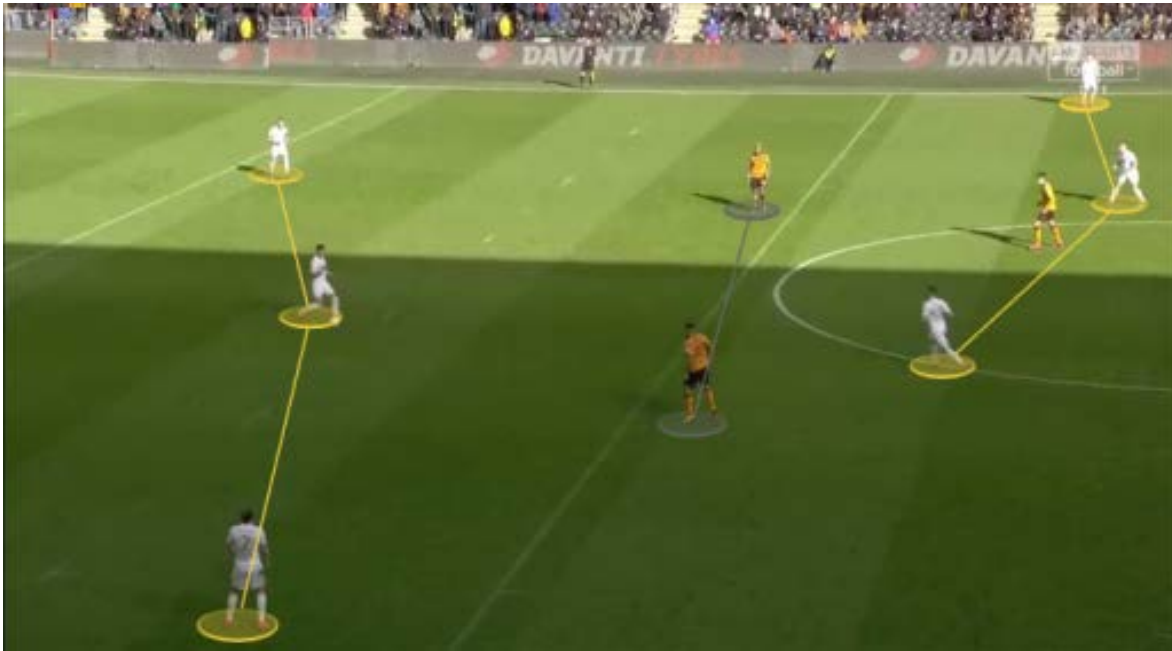
<b>Smart passes / accurate</b>								
2017/2018	Acc.	%	2018/2019	Acc.	%	2019/2020	Acc.	%
7,39	2,35	31,76	8,90	3,81	42,86	8,93	4,07	45,50

Smart passes accuracy, creative and penetrative passes that attempts to break the opposition's defensive lines to gain a significant advantage in attack, and the variety of solutions, are other signs of the decisive improvement of the team during possession phases; assist passes come from many areas of the field, exploiting the never ending runs off the ball throughout the final third.

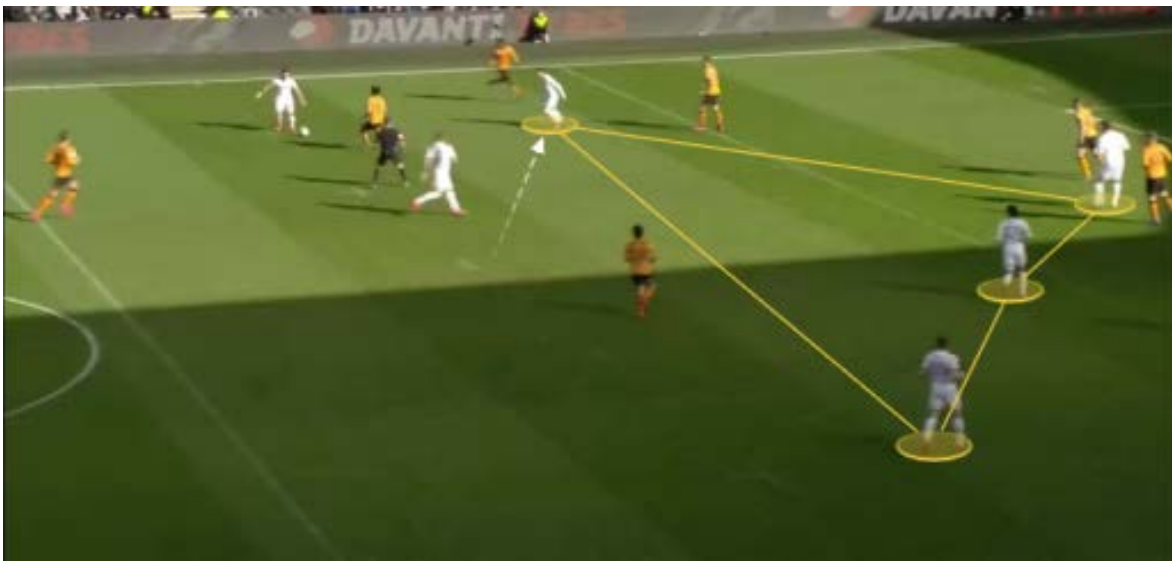
## Leeds United attacking principles and situations of play

- Opposition study to determine the team shape and tactics

The 1-3-3-1-3 attacking formation (the second line as tool to overcome the first opposition's defense line) against 2 strikers



[The center back White has the possession and the holding midfielder Phillips stands between and behind the pressing opponents.]

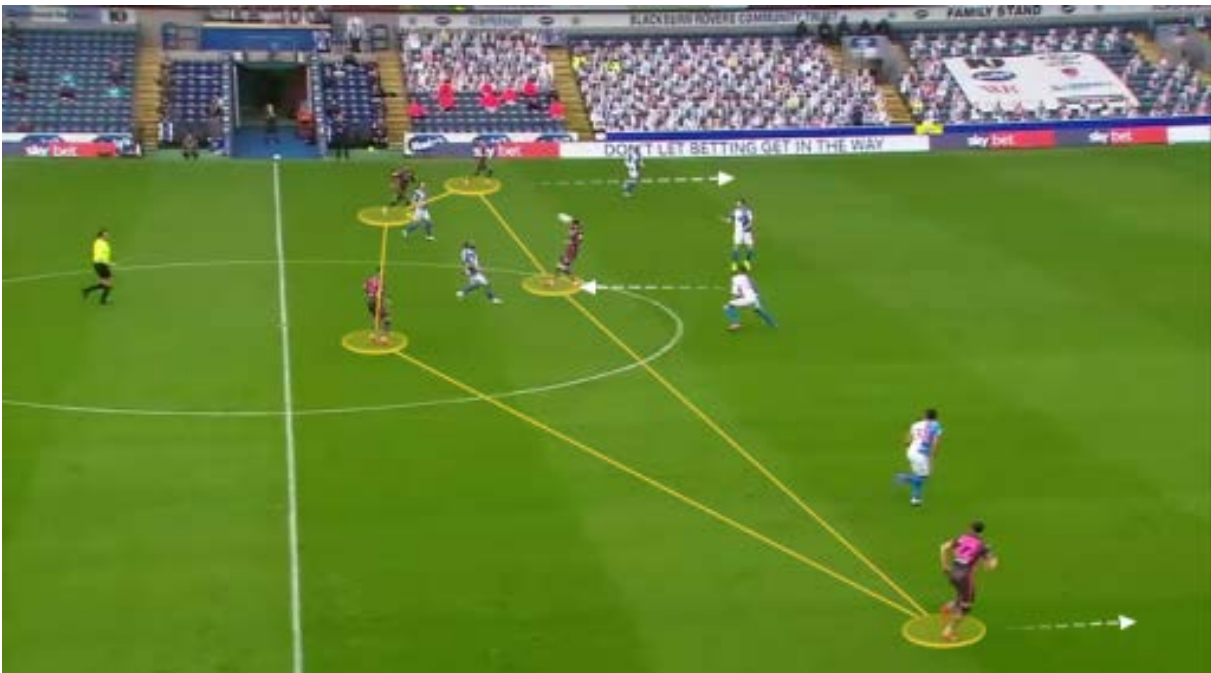


[Once the first line of pressure has been cut off, the attacking shape becomes fluid, with interchanges of positions, always looking for numerical advantages around the ball and spaces to move off the ball.]

## The 1-4-1-4-1 basic formation against 1 striker opposition



[The goalkeeper has the ball, only 1 opposition's forward is standing in front of the center backs Cooper and White, but a second opponent is screening the holding midfielder Phillips and the left fullback Douglas is man marked. The holding midfielder moves again behind the pressure line through the space between the opponents.]



[With the 1-4-1-4-1, when Leeds can play direct attack through "open field", the shape is more recognizable, with the wingers pushing up and the wide midfielders supporting the attacking move.]

- Building up from the back (solutions with through passes)



[3 v 2 duel at the back, the center back White has the ball and the right player of the first line of three, Ayling makes a blind run at the back of the opposition's forward (the opponents are just trying to close the distribution passing lanes, but their pressure action is not properly supported by the teammates) and receives higher up in the field.]



[The attacking playmaker Hernandez drops back and he helps the center back to overcome the opposition pressure line, receiving and passing out wide on the right. The opposition is marking the second center back and the holding midfielder. A passing option out wide to the right wingback Ayling is available, and the attacking playmaker works as link player, overcoming the pressure and inviting his direct marker out of position.]





[The center back White has the ball and the opponents are not pressing directly, but they are standing between the center defender and the other 2 of the first line (Ayling on the right and Cooper on the left). The left midfielder Dallas shifts across too to be an available passing option behind the opposition pressure line.]



[Leeds is trying to play out through the opposition's high pressure; 2 forwards are standing inside the 18 yds. area with the aim to force a long ball. The holding midfielder Struijk receives between 2 opponents from the goalkeeper Casilla and he exploits the distance from them to control the ball and to overcome their pressure attempt turning forward while receiving.]



[The opposition's ultra-offensive pressure is not supported by the rest of the team, and the right fullback Ayling can receive out wide and dribble the ball up in the field.]

- Building up from the back; 3 v 2 duels against opposition's forwards



[The center back has the possession and Leeds's first line of 3 must overcome the positional pressure of 2 opposition's forwards; the holding midfielder Phillips is man marked at the beginning. He shifts wide toward the left, forcing the opponent to create a gap behind the pressing forward, where the left midfielder Klich can drop back and receive without immediate pressure.]



[Klich can turn and despite the 3 pressing opponents retreat to shape a defensive triangle again, Phillips and the left fullback Dallas are available passing options out wide.]

The vertical passing patterns of play to build up forced the opponents to get narrow in the center (both lines of 3 are saving the center spaces of the middle third.)

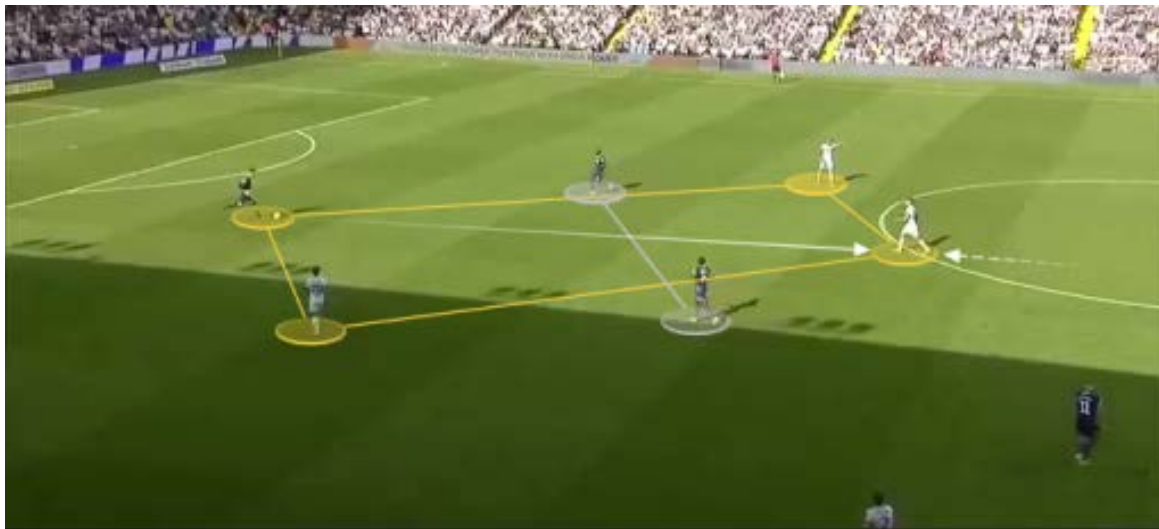


[Phillips can receive having enough time and space to play out wide to the fullback, even his nearest marker is trying to retreat and recover the space.]



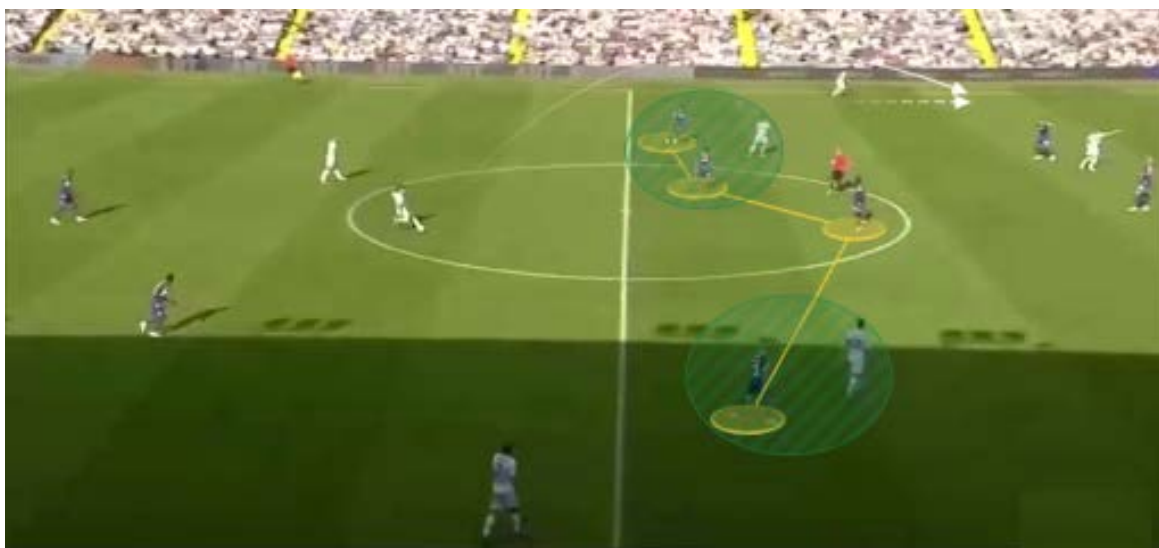
- Building up from the back; 2 + goalkeeper and holding midfielder at the back of the pressing forwards

When Leeds has to play out against 2 forwards which are not aligned, the center backs (Berardi and White, in this example), the goalkeeper and the holding midfielder (Cooper in this match) shape a rhombus to force the opponents to choose which passing lane or space to cover, leaving 1 option free.



[Casilla has the possession, but the passing lane to the center back White is screened by the first opposition's forward; the second forward could press Berardi while receiving; Cooper, who is playing as holding midfielder, drops back and can receive without pressure.]

Here again, the verticality of the pattern of play and the positions of Leeds's midfielders in between the lines forced the opposition to get narrow in the center to check them, opening channels along the flanks.



[The left fullback Dallas pushes up along the flank and he receives behind the opposition's midfield line and along the line of the forwards.]

Positional play to look for numerical advantage is one of Leeds's main weapons in the final third.



[Dallas receives and the left midfielder Hernandez and the center forward Bamford overload the ball area shaping a 3 v 1 duel near the ball.] This duels forces the defense to momentarily condense the right side of the defensive third, opening up a gap in front of the box.

Verticality, placing men in between the defensive lines and attacking the opposition's box in numbers often force the opposition defensive line to retreat deep



[Bamford receives as target player with time and space to turn and look for a decisive pass, due to the opposition's deep defensive position. Hernandez acts again in between the lines, pushing up off the ball and he can receive on the run, facing the opposition's goal. Both center backs are too late to try a direct defensive action against the ball carrier.]



Hernandez can receive and score without pressure, as the center backs are late, as we already stated due the deep center backs and thanks to Helder Costa who has kept the opposition left fullback busy along the penalty area border line.

- Playing out from the back and overloads when the opposition presses in numbers

In this situation, Leeds recovers the possession in the middle third after a pressure phase and a defensive duel 2 v 1, but the only solution to keep the possession is to play backward.



[Alioski and Hernandez counter the opposition ball carrier and they win the ball back; the right center back receives. The opposition has already placed 6 players inside Leeds's defensive half and they stand high in the field to press the playing out phase.]

As the center back receives, a 3 v 1 duel is created around the ball to keep the possession safe.



[The right fullback Ayling receives, as the second center back is man-marked and the nearest pressing opponent is overcome.]

Bielsa's 3-3 deeper lines are often useful to overcome the opposition's high pressure and to place men in between the lines. As the forwards line is overcome, and Alioski can receive acting as holding midfielder, the high line of 4 that was standing on the other side of the defensive half retreats but 1 player, to cover the space from the defensive line.



[The advance line of 3 retreats toward the ball position, but they are late in relation to the ball carrier, as well as the opponent at the back, who tries to close the receiver down toward his own goal. In addition, Alioski plays a one touch long pass toward the final third, and all pressure attempts are nullified.]





[Bamford receives along the right flank with a positional advantage against his marker, who can't defend goal-side, and who can only try to recover the space to stand along the goal's path.]

The opposition wrong defensive shape is very clear in this picture and the moment of the long pass is the key action that lead Leeds to score.



[The only 2 defenders who are saving the final third are far from each other and Alioski as enough time and space to play. Bamford is in play with space in front of him, and his marker starts on the other side of the receiver. 2 opponents are standing in front of the 3 defenders at the back, but they make different movements that cause loss of time. The one in the center decided to run forward and he loses time for retreating action, the second move back at first, but he stops his run and leave the fullback into a 1 v 1 duel along the flank.]

The defenders who were trying to save the final third when Leeds recovered the possession are late and they can't double team the opponent due to the initial distance between them at the moment of the decisive long pass.



[Bamford can enter the penalty area and he scores to the far post.]

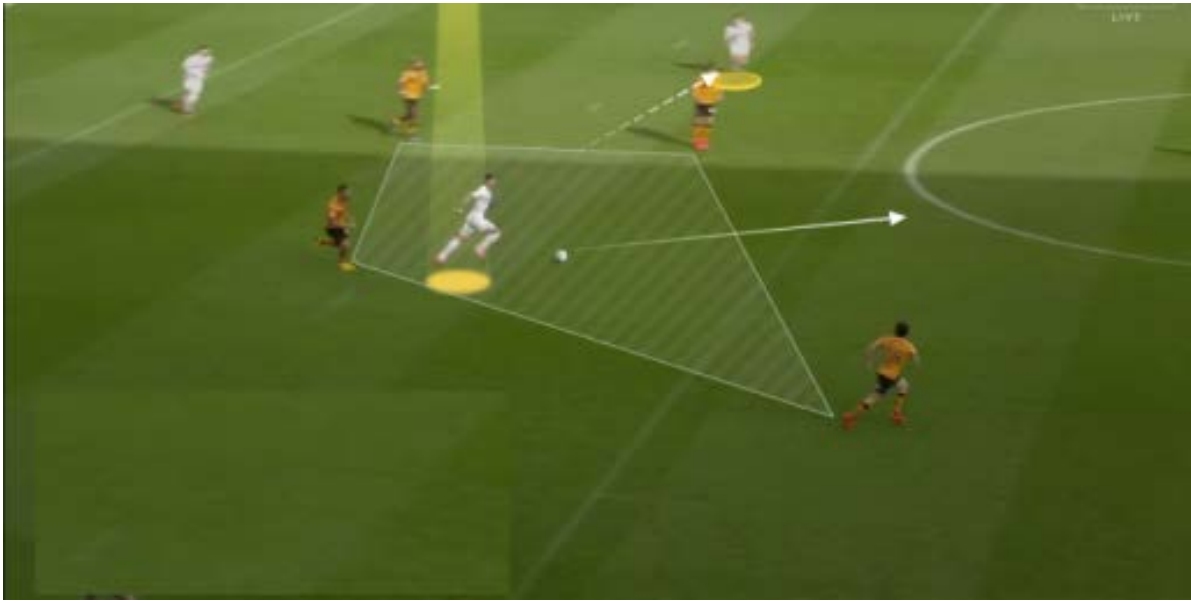
- The lower midfielder takes a proper position to overcome the pressure or shift wide along the flank

Leeds is playing out in this situation, but the short options are covered; one forward is standing along the passing path to the left fullback Dallas, another forward is ready to counter a switch of side and, furthermore, the holding midfielder is man-marked.



Bielsa requires his player to rotate and create new options while the ball is being distributed at the back; the recurrent solution is the holding midfielder to shift wide, inviting the marker out of position and creating space in the center for the ball carrier to dribble through and up in the field.

After rotation and distribution, the holding midfielder shifts wide again and he creates space in the center for the fullback. The opposition was previously marking the second center back and screening the passing paths to the right flank. The runs off the ball of the holding midfielder and the action's timing of the ball carrier overcome the opposition's pressure.



[White has the possession, and Phillips shifts wide toward the left and he creates space in the center of the opposition pressure shape. White can move the ball forward.]

The distribution sequences at the back have concentrated the opposition's pressure in the center and a clear available space is created along the left flank; the left fullback Dallas receives and 3 players (Hernandez, Klich and Harrison are placed in between the lines. At the same time, 5 pressing opponents are overcome.)



Despite the opposition midfield sector retreats, the advanced players can move in between the lines and combine.



[Klich shifts across in front of the ball carrier as target player, and he invites one center back out of position, and Hernandez can move toward the gap free from markers.]

- Direct attacking football (direct ball progression with pace) / No passes between static players

This next sequence is very explicative to analyze and to provide a clear example of Bielsa's direct soccer made of exchanges of positions among the players. 2 + gk v 1 to build up, fullbacks providing width and holding midfielder who creates space in the center and a vertical passing option shifting wide.



[The right center back White receives; the easiest wide passing option to the right fullback Ayling is screened and the receiver may be easily pressed. The holding midfielder is man-marked, but he shifts wide in front of the ball carrier with a blind run.





[Phillips receives a vertical pass out wide and the direct marker tries to close him down; meanwhile, Harrison, tuck in from the right flank and he creates the space for another vertical pass along the flank, as the opponents which were trying to press him lose time while changing direction.]

The double vertical sequence allow Leeds to overcome 2 pressure lines and cut 6 opponents off through the field.



[Helder Costa feints to control the ball and he prevents the opposition's fullback from winning the ball. Roberts, the right midfielder is placed as right forward and he runs toward the ball, beating the opponent thanks to a positional advantage, at the beginning. Furthermore, Alioski, Hernandez and Harrison are free to support the attacking move, creating a 4 v 4 inside the final third.]



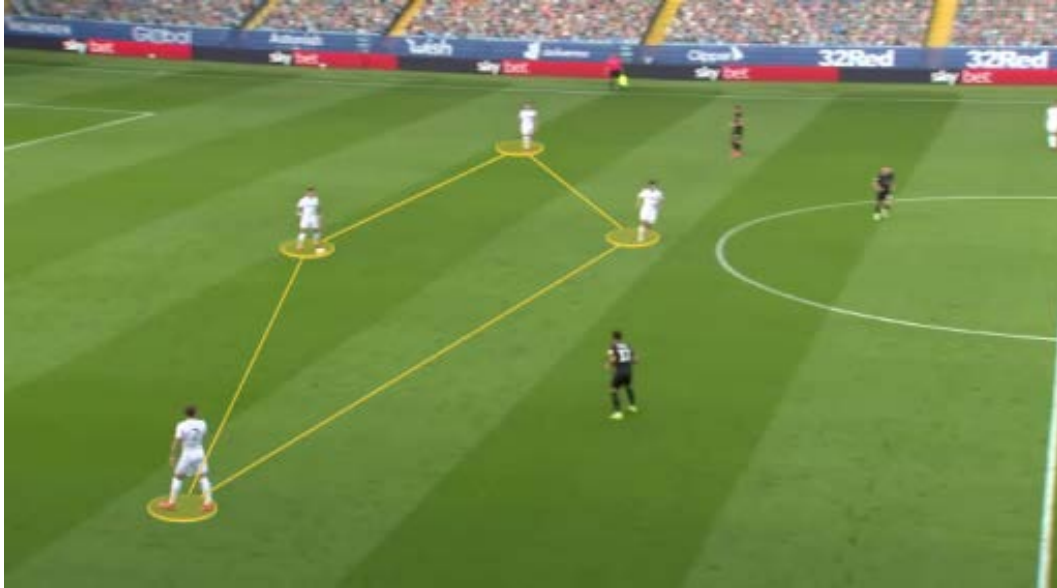
[Roberts receives and dribbles the ball down the flank; he plays a cut back cross pass, exploiting the position of the marker, who finds himself on the other side of the ball line while attempting to block a long aerial cross pass.]



[Aliosky and Hernandez force the opposition's defensive line deeper inside the penalty area and create space along the 18 yds box for Harrison to receive free from markers and with enough time and space to finish, exploiting the decision of the fourth opponent to try a double teaming action out wide first and an interception of the cross pass instead of covering the space in the middle of the penalty box.]

- Use the field's width

The 1-3-3-1-3 formation is always very fluid thanks to the exchanges of positions among Leeds players; the ball carriers have always direct (or through link players) wide passing options.



[The center back White has the possession in this example, Ayling (No.2) could receive on the right and Cooper, the third defender could receive on the left. In addition to these options, if the holding midfielder Struijk received, Leeds could overcome the opposition's pressure line thanks to a vertical pass or a run off the ball along the flank of the wide defenders.]



[Klich has dropped back to receive, in this sequence and he is forced to dribble the ball backward; Hernandez on the right and Alioski on the left could receive out wide after a layoff pass, overcoming the pressing opponents along the field's half line.]



[Harrison provides width on the right, creating a 2 v 1 duel around the ball; meanwhile, Alioski on the left, Bamford and Hernandez shape the front 3 line, forcing the opposition defensive line to stand aligned and narrow in the center.]

- Use the field's depth

The attacking shape and the exchanges of positions also create deep and vertical passing options and the player who starts the move from the back is also the one who support the offensive patterns of play, receiving a direct through pass at the back of the pressure line or acting as back support for the dropping back teammates.



[Hernandez plays a 1-2 combination with the left fullback Aylin, who receives and passes to Harrison, who is acting as holding midfielder, in this situation.]





[Hernandez receives from Harrison back to the nearest opponents, but he passes back again to Harrison, moving forward off the ball.]



[Klich receives a long pass from Harrison in the final third, but the opposition defensive shape closes all the passing options to progress the moves at the beginning. Hernandez has previously moved forward to be a safe passing option, inviting the opposition's center midfielders pressure and the awareness of the back 4 line. All the 4 defenders are looking at the ball, and Bamford can receive back to the last line, moving off the ball between the center back and the fullback.]

Apart from the formation shapes, he direct attacking play of Bielsa's Leeds expects the player to provide and alternate deep and support passes to progress the move and to perfume assists to the center forward or the incoming teammate.

- Rotations to find numerical advantages

As Bielsa stated very often, “There is no reason why a player doesn’t move off the ball”; rotations off the ball in the middle third are the key factors to find numerical advantages and they involve all the attacking lines (3-1-3).



[The center forward Bamford drops back to receive in the middle of the opposition defensive rhombus; meanwhile, Hernandez shifts wide diagonally to receive to be a useful option to play out of the condensed area in the middle.]



[Ayling has pushed up along the flank first and then tucks in diagonally to receive a pass from the center, cutting off 2 opponents; meanwhile Alioski shifts across to provide a passing option behind the defender who Ayling is able to anticipate with a one touch pass.]



[Harrison arches his run to escape the marker sideways and to move off the ball toward the opposition's goal and Hernandez acts as a center forward in the place of Bamford, who dropped back before. A 3 v 2 duel is then created by Alioski, Harrison and Dallas, who is acting as center forward.]



[The previous rotations in the center have condensed the opposition defensive to stay narrow, and Harrison can receive out wide, playing a 1 v 1 duel against an isolated opposition's fullback, turning backward and changing direction of play before shooting on goal with his wrong left foot.]

[This next sequence shows the creation of a numerical advantage situation on the left flank, condensing the area, as through passes options are closed and switches of side are not immediately possible.]



[The left center back Cooper has the possession high up in the field, Klich provides a back passing option; meanwhile Alioski tucks inside the field from the sideline and Bamford moves to escape the marker in the center.]



The opponents concentrate the defensive shape around the ball. Bamford moves deep off the ball, arching his run, trying to cut off 2 defenders, and Hernandez shifts across the field to condense the ball area. Klich and Cooper play a 1-2 combination to try to move the opposition defensive shape. Dallas provides a back passing option in the place of the holding midfielder.





[Bamford moves backward from the deep area where he tried to run before; Hernandez moves closer to the ball position and Phillips helps to condense the ball area.]

A 5 v 3 duel is then created along the left flank (3 v 2 in front of the ball and deep along the flank and 2 v 1 behind the ball line).



[Cooper passes inside to Hernandez, who is the nearest and easiest passing option; meanwhile, Bamford moves deep at the back of the last defender of the condensed area.]

- Fullbacks in the middle third

When the outer midfielder join the attacking line, the fullbacks become inverted, covering the space as holding midfielder, moreover when the role-playing holding midfielder (usually Phillips) has shifted out wide during the building up phase.



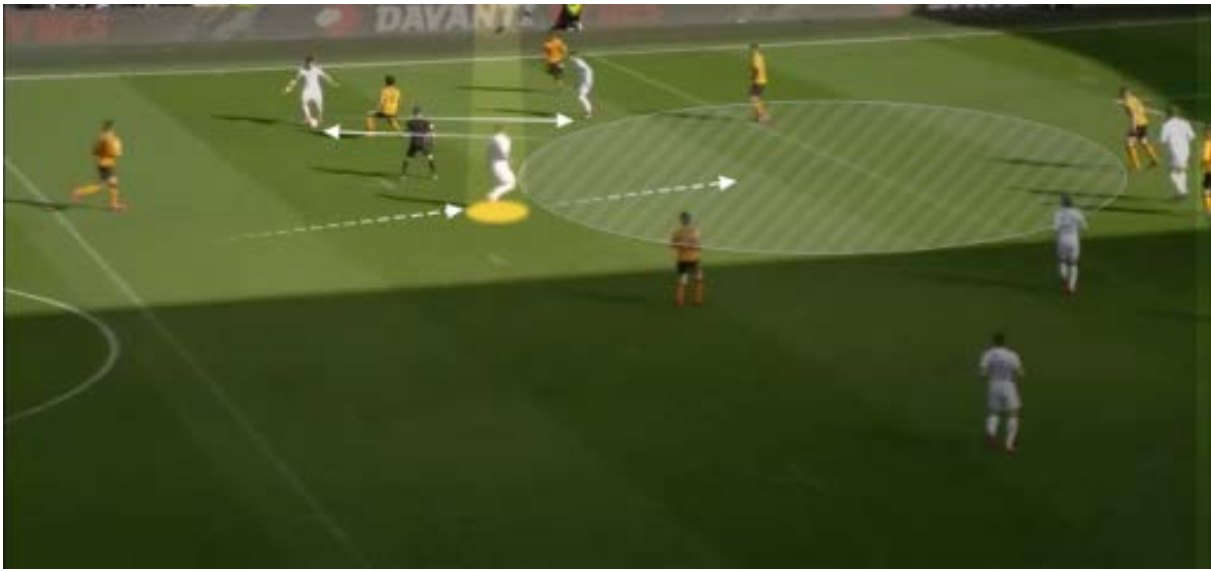
[Ayling, the right fullback distributes out wide along the left flank.]

- Midfield rotations and blind side movements to receive from the back teammates

3<sup>rd</sup> men's runs off the ball are crucial for the direct and vertical attacking style of play.



[Cooper has the possession and he plays out wide along the left flank to Dallas; meanwhile Harrison runs out wide as well to provide a further passing option to overcome the opposition's middle third line.]



[Hernandez and Harrison combine together in this sequence to invite the opposition center midfielder near the ball out of position, and opening up a gap in front of the back 4 line, where Phillips can move onto as 3<sup>rd</sup> man back to the opposition holding midfielder.]



[Phillips receive between the lines, cutting the middle third line off and acting as No.10 behind the front 3; Helder Costa, Bamford and Hernandez.]

- Rotations of central midfielders out wide and wide strikers tucking in

Apart from the formation shape, midfielders and strikers are interchangeable inside the opposition final third; the midfielders are used to move along the half spaces or to exchange the positions with the wide strikers to invite the opposition's fullbacks or midfielders out of position, creating gaps in the defensive shape.



[Harrison has the possession inside the field, in this sequence, and Hernandez moves as third man behind the defensive line with a diagonal run off the ball out wide along the channel.]



[Bamford receives a layback pass from Hernandez and he passes inside to Harrison; meanwhile, Hernandez arches his run to act a right forward along the flank.]



- Switch the channel to exploit the space in the opposition weak side playing out from pressured phases



[Alioski dribbles the ball inside the field through the right half space; meanwhile, Hernandez runs forward off the ball to create space for the teammate in the center and Klich overlaps.]

When through passes are not possible, the switch of side is forced, but the aim is now to condense the opposite half space to create a gap along the flank, before attacking the opposition's goal.



[Harrison receives the switch of side along the left flank, and Roberts provide a back passing option. Alioski moves toward the ball in the center and Hernandez and Klich attack the opposition's goal from the opposite half space in relation to the ball position.]



[Harrison dribbles the ball inside the field again, and Alioski moves off the ball along the half space; meanwhile Klich and Hernandez have opened a gap along the right flank, where the opposition left fullback could be involved in a 1 v 1 duel.]



[Harrison passes to Klich, who has invited his direct marker out of position and can pass out wide along the flank to the support teammate Ayling.]

- Underlapping runs through the channels

The half spaces are crucial in the final third and any player behind the ball line is free to move through them to cut defensive lines off.



[Hernandez has the ball out wide along the right flank, and he passes toward the right half space where the right midfielder Klich is moving toward. 2 opposition's defenders are cut off and he the teammate can receive inside the 18 yds. box.]



[Dallas moves backward inside the half space, Hernandez has the ball around the corner of the 18 yds. box and Harrison overlaps. Dallas receives from Hernandez.]



[Harrison runs through the half spaces and he receives behind 3 defenders, which are cut off , and he can receive and shot on goal inside the box without pressure.]

- Outer midfielders along the same line of the forwards



[Alioski, Bamford and Harrison, who is tracking a long aerial pass under pressure, are shaping the strikers line; Klich and Roberts follows the move behind the front 3.]





[Harrison dribbles the ball inside; meanwhile, Roberts stands along the same line of the center forward Bamford and of the left striker Alioski and Klich moves as back passing option just out of the opposition's box.]

- Outer midfielders as wide strikers

The rotations of the players inside the opposition half take the outer midfielders to become active factors of the finishing phase and to stand along the forwards' line very often.



[Hernandez wins the ball back inside the first third and he passes back to the center defender Cooper, making the possession safe.]

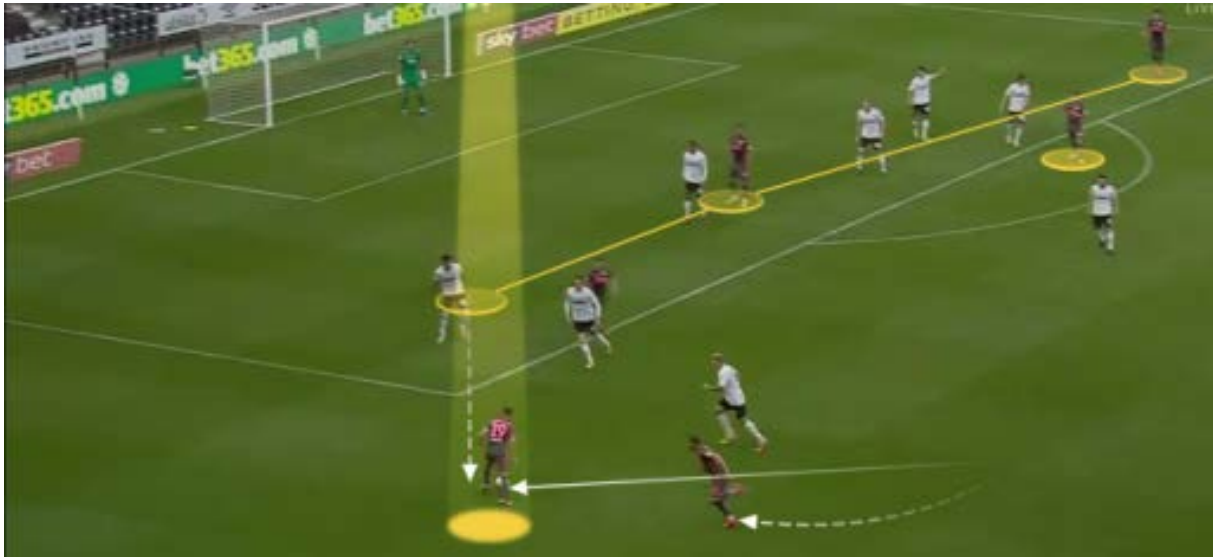


[Klich runs forward to receive the aerial long pass from the teammate and he progresses the move with one forward touch, meeting Struijk's forward run.]

As the possession phase can't be turned into a finishing phase quickly, Leeds place players in number in the final third, asking them to support the move and to rotate to create gaps.



[Klich has the possession, Hernandez, Shackleton, who is pushing up from the middle third and Poveda on the right are shaping the forwards line



[Hernandez moves out of the defensive line and he receives from Kilch, who overlaps along the left flank. Shackleton replaces Hernandez along the strikers' line. Struijk supports the attacking move on the opposite side just out of the 18 yds. box.]

- Attack the half spaces between the opposition center back and fullback



[Hernandez has the possession in the middle third Phillips and Aylin attack the final third from the back, giving time and space to the ball carrier.]



[Harrison receives out wide along the right flank, and Phillips changes direction from the center through the right half space to receive in behind the opposition's fullback and center back, cutting them off.]

- Attack during opposition is in the transitions to defend phases

Vertical style of play and quick passing combinations allow Bielsa's Leeds to be effective during the transitions to attack phases, even when the moves can't be considered as proper counter-attacks. The multiple lines disposition allow the ball carriers to find through passing path easily, when the opposition is not properly shaped defensively or make mistakes during transition phases.



[Klich and Roberts force the opposition's ball carrier to play a quick but wrong aerial pass forward; and White wins the ball back.]

The opposition shapes a line of 4 behind the ball line and back to the 3 players second line of Leeds.



[The center back plays out wide to the fullback Aylin, overcoming a first counter-pressing attempt.]



[Hernandez receives in the middle and he invites on opponent out of the line, and only 2 recover the space, retreating their positions.]

This is the first mistake of the opponents, as 2 players are now late and they will not be able to act efficiently from a defensive point of view.





[Harrison receives along the right flank and Alioski supports the move along the opposite side, attacking the opposition's 18 yds. box.]

From this picture the defensive mistakes of the opposition become clear, as well as the reasons why Leeds is so efficient in transitions to attack.



[When Hernandez receives in the middle, only 2 opponents are saving the first third, and the nearest player put pressure too late to prevent him from passing forward. Furthermore, the second opponent in the middle is far from the teammate, and he moves backward first and then he stops the run, losing time to help the receiver's direct marker. Harrison moves off the ball along the flank with positional advantage against his marker, who doesn't start the defensive action goal side.]





Leeds right Striker can control the ball inside the box and score to the far post.

- Fast Counter-attacks even from deep areas

Leeds vertical passing style becomes decisive also during counter-attacking phases, as the first aim is to cut the defensive lines off. This next sequence that start from the goalkeeper after a corner kick for the opposition is very explicative.



[The goalkeeper saves the ball, but the defensive 18 yds. box seems to be too much overloaded to organize a counter-attack.]

The first line of opposition's forwards is easily overcome with an aerial hand pass toward the right flank.



[Harrison along the side line and Kilch, who is shifting wide are available forward passing options.]



[Klich becomes the target player, receiving the ball behind 2 opponents and cutting them off; the opponent in the center is too late to counter him and the outer one must follow Harrison along the flank (his body position would be useful to counter a direct pass along the flank, but it reduces the defensive efficiency, as the receiver is the Leeds's center player and Harrison can move off the ball facing the field. The defender is then forced to turn before tracking the opponent.)



[Klich receives in front of the opponents and between him and his teammate along the flank; he plays a one touch pass along the right flank and toward the available space behind the defenders for Harrison to run onto.]

The passes are decisive, as they cut off a first line of 2 opponents and also a second line made of the outer defender and the left center back, who is standing in the center and who can't shift across with the right timing to close the winger down the sideline.



[Harrison can run toward the ball exploiting his speed quality superiority in relation to the opponents.]

This picture clarifies how the opposition's defensive triangle has been cut off with 2 passes; Klich receives in front of the direct marker, who is too late to counter him while receiving and Harrison receives along the flank with positional advantage (in addition to the speed quality advantage), as the direct marker is not properly positioned to track the opponent with the right timing (flat body position and along the same line of Leeds winger).



Furthermore, the left center back doesn't decide if to double team Leeds winger or if to save the center with the right timing; this he stands between the ball's area and the 18 yds. box and he can't counter the cross pass.



All the defenders are late behind Leeds forwards; Alioski and Klich can move toward the opposition's 18 yds. box without pressure and facing the goal. Again, the late defensive line is cut off thanks to a cross pass from the right flank.



The left center back can't defensively effective and all defenders are too late behind the forwards.



[Alioski receives the cross pass inside the 18 yds. box.]



[Despite the defenders try to recover the space in the middle of the box, they are out of time to try to clear it, and Alioski can finish shooting along the line of the penalty cycle.]

- Strikers and wingers are responsible for stretching the opposition's defense (vertically and horizontally) + space for the No.10



[Hernandez has the possession on the right side of the middle third; meanwhile, Alioski and Harrison shift wide to invite the opposition wide midfielders out of position to open a space in front of the opposition's 6 players defensive line.]

Following the move, Hernandez moves toward the opposition defensive line, exploiting the wide movements of the wingers. This way, the previous 6 players defensive line has been stretched (the left wingback is forced to move wide and 2 opponents must follow Hernandez's run off the ball.)



[Harrison receives, the fullback is then forced to move out, and Hernandez runs deep off the ball to be a through passing option, inviting the wide midfielder and the left center to follow him.]



This next picture shows a typical attacking shape of Bielsa's teams; a line of 3 in front of the opposition's defensive line, a No.10 behind them and a ball carrier, who joins the attacking line.



[Harrison and Alioski are standing out wide, Phillips is carrying the ball out wide, Bamford and Kilch are standing along the same line.]

Coordinated movements are the keys of positional attacks for Leeds.



[Hernandez has the possession and he concentrates 3 opponents in the center; Harrison cuts inside from the right flank to create space for Klich, who is acting as right midfielder, after a rotation in the middle third. Meanwhile, Bamford moves toward the goal, inviting 2 defenders to track him inside the box.]

- Strikers runs off the ball

The ball carrier has always 4 passing options; inside, outside, a dropping back and a running forward teammates.



[Shackleton has the ball, Ayling is overlapping, Dallas is shifting wide from the center, Roberts drops back first and then move in behind the defenders, Poveda moves away first and then he drops back...



...To receive from the teammate, cutting 2 defenders off.



[Poveda receives and turns before switching channel to move the ball away from the condensed area; Alioski shifts across and receives.]



[Bamford, Ayling and Roberts move inside the opposition's box, inviting the defensive line deeper inside.]



[Shackleton receives in the middle of the area, with numerical equality against the second line of defenders, as the first one has been cut off by the pass...



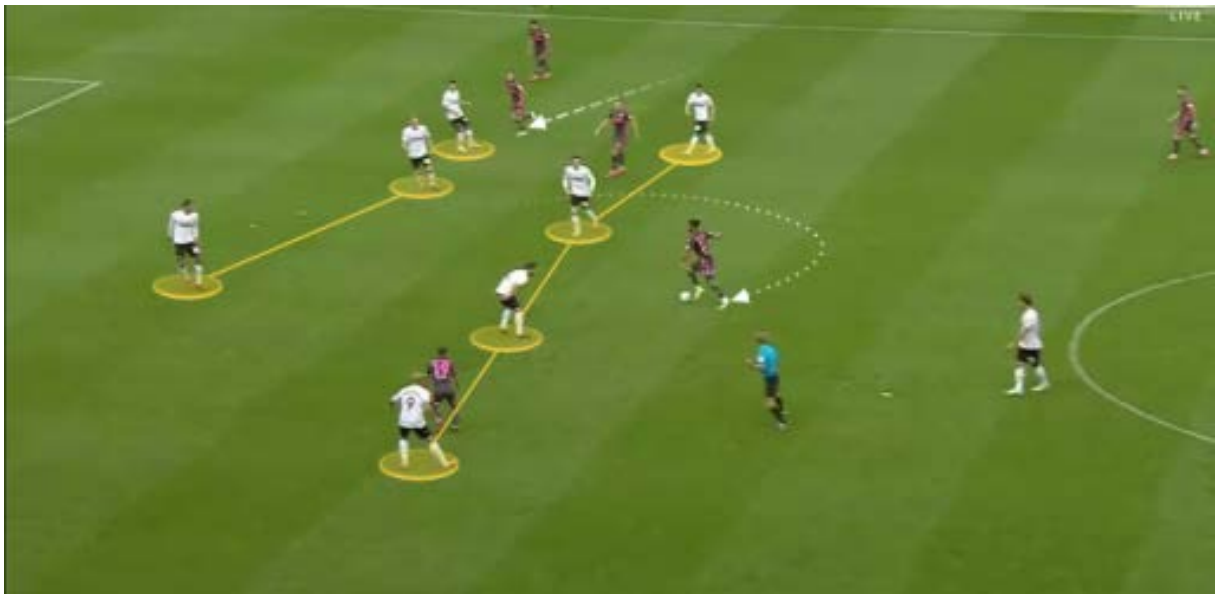
...And he scores to the goal's far post.]



Leeds main weapon to finish the moves is to combine dropping back and in behind movements between the opposition lines, exploiting the space among the opponents with blind diagonal runs.



[Struijk dribbles the ball up in the field and he passes forward to Roberts, who drops back from the opposition's defensive line.]



[He receives and he can turn without pressure, as the defenders stand still and aligned behind the ball's line.]





[Shackleton makes a blind run behind the opposition's left fullback and Roberts can exploit the space between the center backs to play a through pass.]



[Shackleton receives in the middle of the area and he can receive anticipating the direct marker and shooting on goal to the far goal's post.]



[Roberts drops back and receives facing the opposition's defensive lines.]



[Shackleton makes a blind run behind the opposition's left fullback, and Alioski is ready to do the same from the other side.]



[Roberts receives behind the last defensive line and Roberts can cut off two defensive lines of the opposition.

## Summary

Bielsa is the philosopher of modern soccer; El Loco's principles of play are the fundamental factors of the way of play that all teams are using nowadays.

This book aims to analyze Leeds style of play (2018/2019 and 2019/2020) that has led the team to the Premier League promotion after 16 years as deep as possible.

These are the main principles of play that analyzed in the book:

- Building up from the back (solutions with through passes)
- Building up from the back; 3 v 2 duels against opposition's forwards
- Building up from the back; 2 + goalkeeper and holding midfielder at the back of the pressing forwards
- Playing out from the back and overloads when the opposition presses in numbers
- The lower midfielder takes a proper position to overcome the pressure or shift wide along the flank
- Direct attacking football (direct ball progression with pace) / No passes between static players
- Use the field's width
- Rotations to find numerical advantages
- Fullbacks in the middle third
- Rotations of central midfielders out wide and wide strikers tucking in
- Underlapping runs through the channels
- Attack the half spaces between the opposition center back and fullback
- Attack during opposition is in the transitions to defend phases
- Fast Counter-attacks even from deep areas
- Strikers and wingers are responsible for stretching the opposition's defense (vertically and horizontally) + space for the No.10
- Strikers runs off the ball

Together with the tactical analysis, the book provides stats and data to show the improvement of possession and attacking abilities improvement as team; the direct and vertical style and the exchanges of positions among the players have made Leeds the most outstanding Championship's team of the last 2 seasons.

Apart from the systems of play, the connections among the players, the team's spirit and the tactical study and performances could allow El Loco's Leeds to be prepared for the 2020/2021 Premier League campaign, where the team could fight for something more than a safe stay in the top English league.