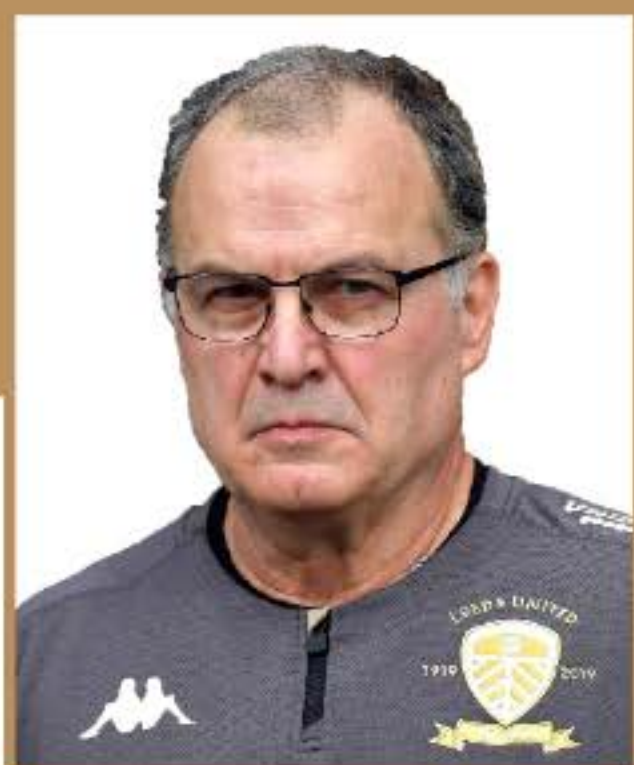


MARCELO BIELSA TACTICAL ANALYSIS



SITUATION 12

Positioning of the Wingers to Receive in Behind the Defensive Line

Content from Tactical Analysis of Marcelo Bielsa's Leeds United team during the 2019/2020 season and the 2020/2021 Premier League season, when they finished in 9th position.

- Analysis based on recurring patterns of play observed in Marcelo Bielsa's team. Once the same phase of play occurred a number of times (at least 10), the tactics would be seen as a pattern.
- Tactical solutions displayed as examples of the team's tactics being used effectively.
- Each action, pass, individual movement with or without the ball, and the positioning of each player on the pitch including their body shape, are presented.
- The analysis is then used to create a training session to coach this tactical situation.

Positioning of the Wingers to Receive in Behind the Defensive Line

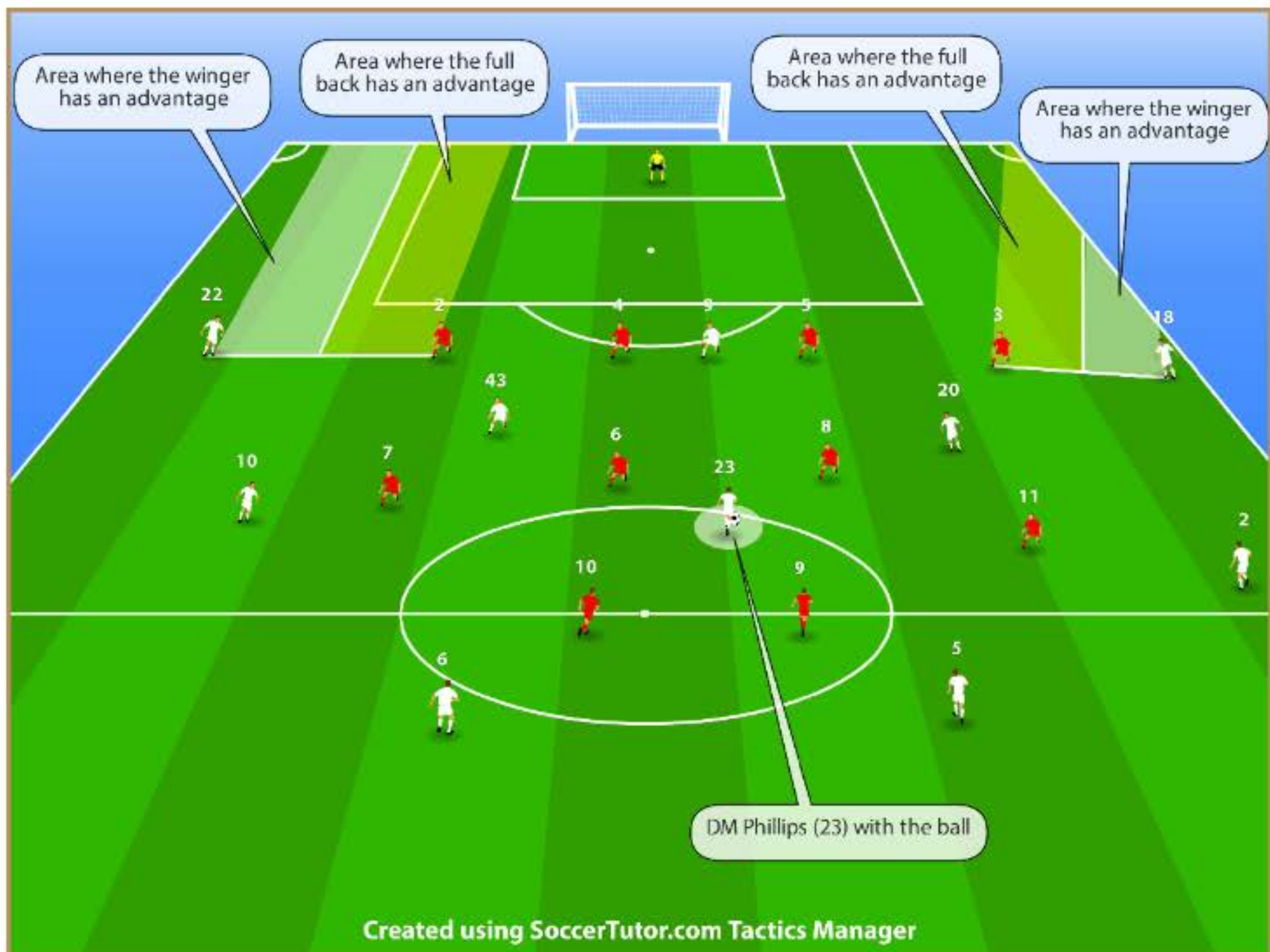
The Leeds United wingers were usually positioned near the side-lines in their attempt to provide width, find the most available space they can and stretch their opponent's defensive line.

However, as we analysed in the previous section, they do not stay wide all the time. Instead, they readjust their positioning according to the positioning of their nearby teammates.

There is a possibility to move towards the inside in coordination with the attacking midfielder who shifts wide (switching positions) in an attempt to create space.

The main aim is to attack the space behind the defenders (to break the last line of pressure), but if this is not possible, they try to find space to receive either by dropping deeper or moving towards the inside and in between the lines.

Advantages/Disadvantages in the Wide Areas According to Positioning



"Ideal Line" for the Winger to Receive in Behind the Defensive Line



The **"Ideal Line"** to receive is behind the opposing full back and along the imaginary line that connects the full back with the centre of the goal

If the winger receives within this area, then he will have put his body between the defender and the goal, and the defender will no longer be able to protect his goal. The closer to this imaginary line the winger receives, the better it is in regard to neutralising his direct opponent.

The point for the winger to receive along the ideal line is normally within the area the full back controls. However, the winger can increase his chances if he applies some principles. These principles are affected by the starting position of the winger.

Taking into account that the Leeds wingers should be in a wide position near the sideline to find available space and stretch the opposition's defensive line, there are two main positions that they can take up according to the position of the opposing full back. They are either in a deeper position or in line with them.

In the diagram example, the **winger Raphinha (18)** manages to receive close to the ideal line, so he is able to neutralise the red left back N°3. **Raphinha (18)** is in a favourable position to deliver a cross into the box or even shoot at goal.

NOTE: It is difficult for a winger to gain an advantage big enough to reach the exact **"Ideal Line"** in this situation.

Weak Side Winger Applies the Same Principles to Receive in Behind (Close to "Ideal Line")

A) Winger Moves Close to the Full Back to Attack the Space in Behind



KEY POINT: The positioning of the opposing full back in relation to his teammates is key for deciding the correct movement and type of pass that should be used to exploit the space in behind.

If there is a wide enough gap between the opposing full back and closest centre back, a ground through pass can be played.

In this example, the **left winger Harrison (22)** applies the previously explained principles to receive close to the ideal line. **Harrison (22)** starts his run from a deeper position than the full back, and there is a gap between him and red centre back N°4.

As a ground through pass can be played, **Harrison (22)** carries out the necessary actions to be able to receive close to the ideal line. He makes a well-timed diagonal run inside before the pass is played to obtain a head start, gets as close as possible to the red right back N°2 and almost in line with him at the moment **Phillips (23)** plays the pass.

NOTE: These actions increase the possibility of controlling more space in behind the full back and receiving close to the imaginary line which connects N°2 with the centre of the goal (the "Ideal Line").

TRAINING SESSION BASED ON TACTICS OF MARCELO BIELSA

Positioning of the Wingers to Receive in Behind the Defensive Line



SESSION FOR THIS TACTICAL SITUATION (4 PRACTICES)

1. Positioning of the Wingers to Receive in Behind the Defensive Line in a Functional Pattern + Cross and Finish (1)

Phase 1/2



Description (Phase 1/2)

- In the first phase of the drill (1/2), the wide mannequins (which represent the opposing full backs) are in wide positions.
- The centre backs start by passing the ball to each other. When one of them decides to move forward with the ball, this triggers the dropping back movement of the **defensive midfielder (23)**. He drops back to receive between the lines and between the 4 central mannequins, to ensure that he finds the most possible available space.
- As soon as he turns and moves forward, the **winger (22)** moves forward to receive behind the right back mannequin. He has to make sure that he starts running early (first arrow), moves closer to the mannequin, and is almost in line with it at the moment the **defensive midfielder (23)** plays the pass.
- The **winger (22)** receives as he runs towards the centre and then delivers a cross for the run of the **attacking midfielder (43)**, who makes a run from the other side to try and score.

PROGRESSION

3. Positioning of the Wingers to Receive in Behind the Defensive Line in a Functional Practice vs 5 Active Opponents



Description

- Using 2/3 of a full pitch, we mark out a high zone as shown and a 35 x 25 yard middle zone with a 5v3 situation.
- The Coach starts and the white players try to move the ball to an **attacking midfielder (20/43)** or **defensive midfielder (23)**, who has available time and space to pass to one of the wingers. The 3 red midfielders try to win the ball and then score in the 2 mini goals.
- The **wingers (22/18)** have to take the positioning of the red full backs (Nº2/ Nº3) into account and choose the best

movements to receive behind them ([see previous practices + analysis pages](#)).

- The **wingers (22/18)** have to finish within 3-4 seconds of receiving within the high zone. The 2 red full backs cannot enter the high zone to defend their goal.

Coaching Points

1. Find the free midfielder quickly.
2. Read the positioning of the full back.
3. Well-timed runs by the wingers (to avoid being offside).
4. Quick and accurate passing + finishing.