

Revolución: The Philosophy of Football in the Shadows of Marcelo Bielsa

My Notes

The objectives of football:

1. Score a goal
2. Assist a goal
3. Assist an assist
4. Break the opposition's lines
 - a. Behind the opposition Center backs
 - b. Behind the opposition's full backs
 - c. In front of the opposition's central defenders
 - d. In front of the opposition's full backs
 - e. Behind the opposition's central midfielders
 - f. Behind the opposition's wide midfielders

****Every action (movement/decision) communicates a larger intent to our teammates. Can we get players to make decisions not just because they are simple (for example, passing to a teammate because he is open), but because they work to achieve a larger goal?**

Bielsa's implementation of the philosophy of the game:

- Movement
- Rotation
- Concentration
- Improvisation (breaking the order of objectives)

More Notes...

- **Advanced Area Actions (AAA):** Any action that allows penetration into or takes place in the space behind the opposition's midfield line (and in front of or behind their defensive line).
- **Advanced Platforms (ADVP):** A player with the ball facing forwards with the ability to play...
 - In between the opposition striker and midfield
 - In between the opposition's midfield
 - Behind the opposition's defensive line
- **Initiatives:** Any pass that occurs in between the opposition midfield and defense or behind the opposition defense.
- We want players to become **unconsciously competent**. In other words, they are able to execute skills without conscious thought, or with only intuition.
- **Action scripts in football:** The techniques executed out of intuition to...
 - Pass
 - Shoot
 - Cross

- Dribble
- Run with the ball through space, etc.
- **Action scripts vs improvisation:** We want to develop these techniques in players comprehensively enough so that, in games, they can improvise, or choose which techniques to use in order to execute the above actions based on the situation. For example, we want a player to be capable of running with the ball using both feet, different parts of each foot, various weights of touches, various touch-to-touch patterns, etc., but in a game, be able to realize that the situation calls for him to use two heavy touches with the outside of his left foot and do it.
- 80-90% of a player's actions in football follow the **Recognition Primed Decision (RPD) Model**
 - See chart on p. 34
 - What are the "patterns" in football?
 - A combination of intuition (subconscious) with analysis (conscious)
 - Final product = action scripts
 - These actions can be trained through repetitive exposure to and coaching in game-like scenarios.
 - This is the "robotic" part of football.
 - Type of situation: "Well-ordered"
- 10-20% of actions do NOT follow this model
 - Type of situation: "Complex"
 - Grey areas
 - External factors
 - What is our strategy in the particular game?
 - Require improvisation
- **Temor Escénico:** Fear of failure
 - High pressure → increase in anxiety → changes in attention → performance decrement
 - Two solutions:
 - Train under pressure and recreate the experiences of the game
 - Quiet-Eye Training: Break the action script down into procedures, key checkpoints, or cues for the player in hopes that he will consciously learn these things and become unconsciously competent, free of emotional influence when performing in a game.

Worldwide principles of the game (listed in hierarchy like order—if you can achieve one, move on to the other in hopes that it helps you achieve the higher principle):

1. Penetration
2. Dispersal (width and depth)
3. Movement
4. Support
5. Improvisation

Bielsa's principles (p. 35)

1. Create an effective AAA
2. Use one of the following structures to help you achieve an effective AAA:
 - a. Spread opponent horizontally so that you can play through
 - b. Spread the opponent out vertically
 - c. Draw the opposition into straight lines, either vertically or horizontally, facing one direction
3. Switch the point of attack to create/find an AAA
4. Retain the ball and play your way, looking to see if any/each pass offers the opportunity for principles 1-3

Final objectives of the game (attack / defense)

1. Score goals / prevent goals
 2. Assist goals / prevent the assisting of goals
 3. Assist an assist / prevent the assist of an assist
 4. Achieve the principles of the game / prevent the opposition from achieving the (their?) principles of the game
- Note: Knowing the opposition's principles will help you defend them well.
 - Question: Should you disguise/hide your principles from the opposition?
 - Quote I don't understand (p. 35): Instead of having a back-up plan, "the solution is to improve and deepen the resolution we have."

Part 5: Advanced Area Actions in Further Detail

- The purpose of all AAA: To create clear cut goal scoring opportunities
- 80-92% of all goals are scored from within the 18-yd box "castle" (p. 36)
 - How can we get in this area?

Three key situations from which we may be able to enter the "castle":

1. With the ball in front of the opposition CBS
2. With the ball in front of the opposition FBs
 - a. Look to pull a defender out of position
 - b. Stat: The moment that we increase the distance between two defenders, we increase our chances of scoring a goal.
 - c. Cue to penetrate: As soon as one defender steps and either cover is not applied, or the other defenders forget to step in unison to pull other attackers offside
3. With the ball behind the opposition FBs
 - a. Look to see who you pull out—CB, CM?
 - b. Is there a free man left unmarked?
 - c. Is there an evenly numbered match-up with qualitative superiority (for example, 2v2 in the box with attackers who are better in the air)?

- **Mixed Position:** A player who receives the ball in between opposition lines at an angle. Receiving at an angle increases a player's opportunity to turn and increase the quality of his next action by 2.1 meters.
- **Kill Zone:** The space behind the opposition's back line
- **Torture Zone:** The space between the opposition's midfield and defensive lines
- **Hostages:** All passes that take place in the torture zone
- **Scoring system for AAA:**
 - 5 points: goal
 - 3 points: assisting a goal, taking a shot
 - 1 point: all hostages

Chapter 6: Pre-Advanced Area Actions

- Goal: Create AAAs
- **Section 1: Spreading the opposition out horizontally**
 - Principle of the diamond: Create diamonds and you will always find ways to break through (p.48)
 - Problem: The opposition are compact horizontally.
 - Solution: Spread them out laterally and penetrate.
 - First line pass to open up third or second line pass
 - When a team is compact and disciplined in a low block, try creating an overload in one flank and a 1v1 with qualitative superiority in the other flank and switch the play as much as possible, which increases the number of times their unit has to shift laterally, the distance their unit must cover when shifting, and therefore, the likelihood that penetration will become more possible and successful.
 - (3) strategic options:
 - Overload and isolate with the idea of switching to the isolated 1v1 with qualitative superiority or 2v1 on the opposite side.
 - Overload and isolate with the intent of forcing the opposition to cover more ground horizontally and penetrate through the middle.
 - Purposely play into an underload and pull the opposition out of position by getting them to act on their pressing triggers.
- **Section 2: Spreading the opposition out vertically**
- Problem: The opposition's defensive and midfield lines are vertically compact. Solution: Spread them out vertically.
- Ways of breaking a vertical lot compact team:
 - First line and backwards passes to draw them out of position
 - Driving with the ball to attract an opponent and create space for a teammate
 - La Pausa
 - Play over the top behind the opposition's defensive line if they are too high
 - Dribbling past a player
 - Position your forwards high and wide in order to push back the opposition's defensive line and create space in front of them.

- Rotations and movement
- Provoking the opponent by intentionally presenting them with one of their pressing triggers (for example, a false touch).
- A way of pulling the forward line apart from its midfield line: Play with fullbacks deep in the half spaces and use them to build plays.
- Question: What to do if the opposition defensive and midfield lines are vertically compact?
 - The book says Pep created inverted fullbacks playing in midfield to attract opposition Center midfielders and help his team break the midfield line
 - Why is the graphic on p. 67 different from the W shape in Eric's field?
 -

Pressing triggers:

1. The attacking team are not yet organized
 - a. Counterpressing
 - b. 5.5 second rule
 - i. First press must happen within 2.3 seconds
 - ii. Second press within 5.5
2. The conditions for control are not yet present
 - a. Team Defending curriculum
 - b. individual pressing cues that happen throughout the game
 - c. See p. 63 for a list of 12 cues
3. Set pressing traps
 - a. We should add more of these to the curriculum!
4. Pressure in relation to risk
 - a. Situations in which a high press does not bring about high risk.
 - b. Pressing in the corners of the opposition's half?

Note: Defend the space in between two players and allow a pass to be played so that pressing cues (mistakes) are more likely to happen!

Note: Watch Bayern Munich games 2014-2016 to see how the fullbacks transitioned back and forth in and outdoor central areas

- Section 3:
- Problem: The opposition have good layers in midfield (pressure, cover, balance).
Solution: Either a) remove the layers and pull them into straight lines, or b) Find pockets of space where the opposition are flat in a specific direction.

Section 3: Removing layers in the opposition's defense, or provoking them into positions where they are flat

Ways you can draw the defender who is adding layers to his team's defense out of position:

1. Pass into teammate near the defender to draw him in, straight back or set pass, play through to third man in the vacated space
2. Give and go around the defender
3. Off-ball movements
4. Draw defender into a vertical line with another teammate either by positioning yourself as a potential receiver behind the defender and move left or right, or by dribbling to draw him before passing away.

Platforms: Places where you dictate possession from

- Low platform: Around your own 18
- Medium: Halfway line
- High: In response to when the opponent falls into a low block around their 18
- AKA “launch pads”

Chapter 7: Changing Angles of Attack

The horizontal lines of play:

1. GK line
2. Deepest line (CBs)
3. In front of the opposition midfield (#6)
4. Opposition midfield line (halfway line)
5. Behind the opposition midfield line
6. In front of the opposition defensive line
7. Opposition defensive line

John Cartwright’s (4) play-round levels (horizontal lines that mark areas where you can move the ball horizontally on the field)

- Deepest: Around your own 18, likely a switch involving the GK
- Back: A switch using your own defensive players
- Mid: Horizontal circulation around the opposition half
- Forward: Circulation around the opposition 18

15-yard rule: The ball needs to move at least 15 yards in order to “change the picture” and present new opportunities for the attacking team.

Switch and slice: When the player receiving a 15-yard horizontal pass to switch the play plays a one-touch pass to break a line of and split the opposition into a teammate.

Interesting though: Yes, we teach plays to switch the play in order to discover a new situation, but are we teaching them to run away from pressure and forgetting to teach them to practice pre-AAA structures?

Chapter 8: Retain and play your way out

1v1 scenarios:

1. Defender in front
2. Defender behind (75%)
3. Defender to the side
4. Defender approaching from a recovery angle
5. No defender (due to movement)
6. Aerial scenarios of the above

Two-phase model of development (Pepijn Lijnders)

- Phase One: Develop the all-around individual attacking technique
 - Controlling body and ball
 - Learning to protect ball and get free with it
 - Learning to outplay opponents and drive into space/holes
 - Learning to find the goal by heading, shooting, volleying
 - Initiatives / AAAs / Excellence between the lines
- Phase two: Concentrate in game development
 - More and better ball possession
 - Creating more chances
 - Score more goals
- Finally, three types of expression that form layers to each aspect listed above in phase two:
 - Individual expression
 - Cooperative expression
 - Collective expression

Principles of play: p. 85

Chapter 9: Communication

- FON + C
 - Before receiving the ball...
 - Look forward
 - Look opposite
 - Look near to evaluate the scenarios
 - Communicate what we see to the player on the ball
- Analyzing the game in the game:
 - Rate the three areas on the field: Center and two wide areas. Which are the best to attack?
 - Are we getting enough players forward in these areas?
 - Make sure players are in positions to recover quickly upon losing the ball.
- Communication (tactics on a football field) can be theorized and split into different areas of work:
 - Verbal communication

- Non-verbal communication
- The environment
- Player identification and self-awareness of the individual
- Team identification and self-awareness of the team

Chapter 10: Languages of the game

1. Up-back-through
 2. Out-in-our
 3. Overload-isolate
 4. Weakside fullback
- I don't understand...
 - The weak side fullback
 - Why these are called "languages"

Chapter 11: Rotations

1. CM drops in between CBs
 2. CM drops into a lateral position alongside the CB
 - Strong side
 - Maybe you want your #6 in the half-space
 - Send your outside back high and the winger drops inside
 - For a #6 who is good in tighter areas
 - Weak side
 - If you want to get your #6 space to receive and drive forwards
 - The two CBs may consider passing back and forth a few times to draw the opposition block over to the strong side. Then, a quick switch back to the weak side #6 will potentially find him in space in front of him, as long as the weak side winger has fixed his man high and wide, to exploit.
 3. Between two or more CMs
 - Over and under:
 - The deepest CM moves away from the ball towards one half space and allows another CM to drop in and receive in the opposite half space.
 - Purpose: Free up congested space in platform areas (players receiving the ball facing forward looking to play into an advanced area)
 - Under and Over:
 - A higher CM drops in towards the ball and opens up a space for the ball possessor to play into one of the higher CMs.
 - Purpose: Free up congested space ahead of the ball
 - Question: What if the defenders don't move with you?
 4. Four players (two wingers and two attacking CM's) position themselves high to "fix" the back four and the striker can drop in between the defensive and midfield lines to receive.
- Why Rotate?

- a. To find players who can play forward into advanced areas and/or penetrate.
 - b. To move the opposition and open up space through which we can play directly into advanced areas.
 - c. To create a free man beyond the opposition midfield in an advanced area.
- To facilitate successful rotations, remember what Tom told me at Cedar Point:
 - Give players individual objectives
 - Have them meet and talk and figure out how they can support and help each other achieve their objectives.

Chapter 13: Bielsa's 1-4-2-3-1

- **Balance and rotations of the three midfielders:** Two and one of these players will generally be on opposite sides of the other team's midfield line depending on the phase of the game. The two on the same side should occupy lanes 1-3 and 3-5 respectively, never being in lane 3 together. The one by himself should occupy lanes 2-4 (a more central role).
- When building out with the 6 and 8 both in front of the opposition's midfield line, they are supposed to cover lots of ground horizontally. The ball-Side CM can shift all the way into the wing while the FB goes high. It reminds me of like having two "stoppers."
- When the CB has the ball in one of the half-spaces...
 - The weak-side midfielder should generally drop in to the opposite half space.
 - The strong-side CM and FB should be "opposite." One dropping to receive the ball, and the other higher up for a split pass.

Chapter 14: Bielsa's 1-3-3-1-3

- Lateral Volante: A wingback who will move inside for at least one of the phases of the game
- Enganche: The number 10

Chapter 15: Adaptation: 1-3-4-2-1 or 1-3-5-2

- Create a 4v3 in center mid
 - Two CDMs and two CAMs
 - In a 4-3-3, you can have another enter this space...
 - Winger drop in (and outside back go high and wide)
 - Inverted fullback go up and in (and winger provide width), etc.
- The languages of the game are great ways to teach players to work in "four's"
 - Out-in-out
 - Up-back-through
 - These combos could teach them the importance of maintaining distance, width, etc. and realizing that they might get the third or fourth pass.