

## Twitter Thread by Roshan Rao



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**The 3–3–1–3 formation: Its audacity and its frailty <https://t.co/LbmAs2g1Cr>**

**Is it worth the hype? What are the mechanics in attack and defence? Role of the wingbacks in this system with references from #LEESOU #Bielsa #EPL**

**Here's my honest take:**

The choice of a system with Bielsa depends firstly on the number in the first line of pressure from the opposition. The 3-3-1-3 is suited against opponents that press with 2 at the top to gain numerical superiority over the first line of press

As the play moves outwards from deep, the opposition finds it easy to apply high pressure forcing the play wide since there are no options back into the middle. The CM in front of the defence is often either tightly marked or is in a position of heavy inferiority.

Progression to the construction phase is initiated by wingbacks. The space lies in the inside channel (half space) to attack. Overloading the half space helps gain superiority in the middle. The opposing wingback helps create a 2v1 on the opposite side forcing the defence back

Superiority can also be created by one of the forwards dropping, the winger replacing the space left behind in the centre, and the wingback overlapping with a 3rd-man or 4th-man run. The play needs to be quick and direct or risks a 4v4 on the counter!

Defensively, in Bielsa's man-to-man system, one of the CBs needs to step out of the defensive line to press a free player in the middle. Timing is key as, for the CB to take this call, the wingbacks need to take cover and not be in transition back themselves.

This system concentrates play into wide and deep positions, but from there the progression is direct, usually with long balls and switch of sides. Leeds tend to average a lower percentage of possession in the 3-3-1-3 than in their regular 4-1-4-1

The absence of a DM like Phillips is palpable as the play rarely progresses through the centre because the CM gets outnumbered. The half spaces are sparsely occupied and there is lesser control over the centre which explains the lesser

possession percentage

"The difference between the two teams wasn't as big as the scoreline," commented Bielsa after the #LEESOU

His previous two encounters using the 3-3-1-3 this season against Burnley and Sheffield United ended 1-0 and 0-1 respectively

It's a high risk high reward system that makes the game exciting to watch. Also a preferred FM formation for many. But is it stable over the course of a gruelling season? Can it be practically periodized for a league like the #EPL?

Let me know your thoughts. RTs appreciated!