



TOTAL FOOTBALL ANALYSIS

#117 // JANUARY 2025 // 2025 BREAKTOUT XI

IT'S THAT TIME OF THE YEAR AGAIN WHEN WE AT TFA PRESENT YOU WITH THE MOST EXCITING PROSPECTS IN WORLD FOOTBALL THAT YOU MUST KEEP AN EYE OUT FOR. THIS YEAR WE PRESENT YOU THE **2025 BREAKTOUT XI**, WHICH INCLUDES TWO HEAD COACH REPORTS. AS A SPECIAL TREAT, WE INCLUDED AN **EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW WITH JOSÉ ALBERTO LÓPEZ** OF RACING SANTANDER. WE DIDN'T STOP THERE. ENJOY READING **EIGHT DATA-VIZZES**, HIGHLIGHTING THE PLAYERS WHO ALMOST MADE IT INTO OUR BREAKTOUT XI. LUCKILY FOR YOU, WE FOUND A SPOT ON OUR BENCH FOR THEM.



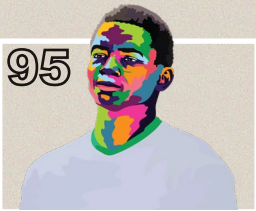
JOSÉ ALBERTO LÓPEZ
RACING SANTANDER



AMY MERRICKS
BIRMINGHAM CITY



EMANUEL EMEGHA
STRASBOURG



BAZOUMANA TOURE
HAMMARBY



ESTEVÃO WILLIAN
PALMEIRAS



ETHAN NWANERI
ARSENAL



LAURA HUGHES
MELBOURNE CITY



LENNON MILLER
MOTHERWELL



JOAQUIN SEYS
CLUB BRUGGE



TARAS MYKHAVKO
DYNAMO KYIV



PIETRO COMUZZO
FIORENTINA



CONOR BRADLEY
LIVERPOOL



JOHN PULSKAMP
SPORTING KANSAS CITY

CLICK TO NAVIGATE

It's that time of the year again when we at TFA present you with the most exciting prospects in world football that you must keep an eye out for.

This year we present you the 2025 Breakout XI, which includes two head coach reports. As a special treat, we included an exclusive interview with José Alberto López of Racing Santander.

We didn't stop there. Enjoy reading eight data-vizzes, highlighting the players who almost made it into our Breakout XI. Luckily for you, we found a spot on our bench for them.

DATA VIZZIES

26

KEVIN MIER
GOALKEEPER
CRUZ AZUL

35

JESSICA HUSBAND
RIGHT-BACK
HEARTS

52

DYLAN LEONARD
LEFT CENTRE-BACK
WESTERN UNITED

68

SVERRE NY PAN
CENTRAL MIDFIELD
ROSENBORG

76

CHRIS RIGG
CENTRAL MIDFIELD
SUNDERLAND

85

GABRIEL PEC
RIGHT-WING
LA GALAXY

93

OLAUG TVEDTEN
ATTACKING MIDFIELD
VÅLERENGA

109

CHIDO OBI MARTIN
CENTRE-FORWARD
MANCHESTER UNITED

JOSÉ ALBERTO LÓPEZ

JOSÉ ALBERTO LÓPEZ



MANAGER

RACING SANTANDER

EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW

ALEXIS GUANCHEZ // @ALEXISGCHZ

When discussing football in Spain, we might consider the positional play of Pep Guardiola or Luis Enrique.

Culturally and methodologically, Spain is a prominent positional country.

José Alberto López's Racing Santander are currently first in Spain's second tier — favourites for promotion.

Notwithstanding their impressive results, the most interesting detail about the team playing in El Sardinero is the philosophy they apply to their game model and tactics.

José Alberto López's Racing Santander are a relationist/functional squad without concepts like symmetries or amplitude.

Innovative, indeed, but this path into relationism has also been insanely organic and natural— as an independent discovery, like the rebirth of relationism amongst many positional teams in Spain.

In this exclusive interview and head coach analysis at Total Football Analysis, José Alberto reflects on his philosophy and methodology while explaining how his Racing Santander became a relationist team.

WHO IS JOSÉ ALBERTO LÓPEZ?

After a long career in Spanish football, José Alberto López is in everyone's mouth because of his work this year at Racing.

His first experience as a head coach in professional football was at Sporting Gijón (2018-2019).

He then worked for Mirandés (2020-2021) and Málaga (2021-2022) before arriving at El Sardinero in 2022.

Now at Racing Santander, José Alberto's assistant team is made up of Pablo Álvarez (assistant coach), Pedro Dorronsoro (goalkeepers's trainer), Enric Soriano (analyst), Albert Tataret, and Dani Salvador (physical trainers).

JOSÉ ALBERTO LÓPEZ'S RACING SANTANDER RELATIONISM DURING THE OFFENSIVE PHASE

In positional models, football is about space.

The pitch is made larger, and open space is exploited when the opposing team loses order.

When we sat down with José Alberto, even before entering into the relationism-positional play debate, he clearly explained the intentions of his game model.

"It is an entertaining model for the spectator.

We want to be brave both offensively and defensively.

During the offensive phase, we try to focus our game on the relations and interactions between our players — in fact, we are the team with the most short passes in the tournament.

All these positional play models that have become trends are very good, but they also tend to anchor the player to play from certain positions.

We try totally the opposite.

We bring our players closer together, acting as facilitators so that players' interactions are not perceived as isolated individual efforts but rather

as associations that multiply the options to score goals, progress, and create as many scoring opportunities as possible.

From that idea, we have been the team with the most xG generated.”

When in possession, Racing Santander’s players locate themselves as close as possible to exploit their relationships through short passes, quick off-the-ball movements, and individual quality.

The winger from the far side gets closer to the play, and one of the full-backs stays to do the rest defence in case of a turnover.

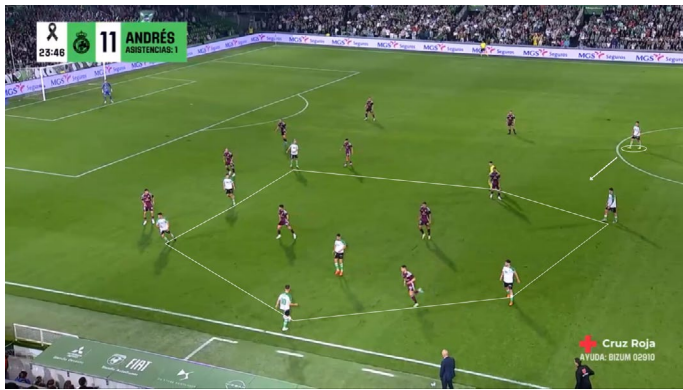


Figure 1 shows José Alberto López’s Racing Santander relationism during the offensive phase on the opposite half.

HOW DID RACING SANTANDER’S RELATIONISM START?

The most interesting detail about this team is how José Alberto López’s Racing Santander started playing like this.

The coach did not wake up one day and say, ‘I want to play like this’.

All of this, as occurred with the origins of relationism, started organically and naturally.

“We have created this naturally.

I have been here for more than two years.

We have been developing our style of play progressively with time.

Time has allowed us to generate those relations between players to exploit our best potential and count on the best individual skills of every player.

If our left-winger can find the centre-forward, the attacking midfielder, and the right-winger at the same time—which is difficult because if you play from the positions, it is hard to see both wingers finding themselves—they can associate and enhance their strengths thanks to the instructions that we have built.

We have finishers, passers, associative players, and more individualists.... Because of these capacities, we looked for a way to locate them.

All of this has led to our game.

Then, we heard that Fernando Diniz at Fluminense was a coach who strongly emphasised relationism, but I wasn’t familiar with the philosophy.

This appeared spontaneously.

People told us, ‘You play like this’, and they were right.

Then, we started investigating to study which ideas we could take from other teams that had already played similarly, but we did not know this style.”

RACING SANTANDER'S LADDERS AND CORTA-LUZ

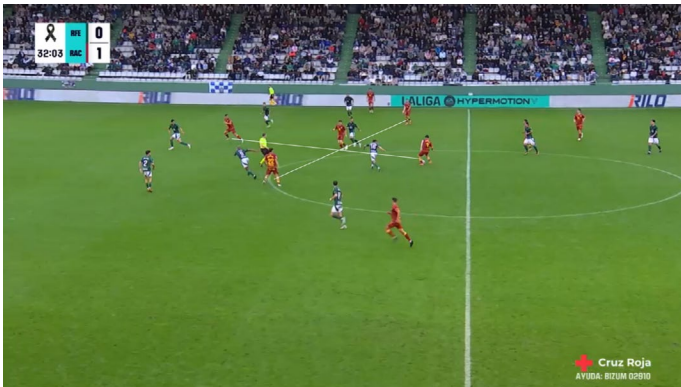


Figure 2 shows Karrikaburu's goal against Racing Ferrol by progressing with a ladder.

When a relationist team progresses, one of the most common patterns is the ladder.

As Figure 2 shows, Racing make two ladders with Íñigo Vicente as the axis.

Once this configuration happens, the tension of the first pass decides the tempo of the progress, sometimes causing a corta-luz—when a player lets the ball roll to the teammate forward and becomes an option in the next play.

Nevertheless, these types of automatisms are born in a natural way from the relationships of the players, and that is what happened here.

Insisting on the naturality of Racing Santander's development in possession, we asked José Alberto about how to train and become routine these patterns.

"Well... I did not even know before what was a ladder or a corta-luz.

We do not name those things.

In each phase of the game, we try to locate our players in the best possible way to progress, relate

and generate as many clear goal opportunities as possible.

In the build-up, we have automatisms; progressing through the middle, we have other automatisms, and beating a low block, we have other ones — I'm still learning."

RACING SANTANDER'S TIME SEQUENCE

A relationist model is usually considered a dominant style of play.

We can affirm that Racing Santander is a dominant team.

Although they play with short passes and combinations, they do not dominate with long possessions.

Curiously, José Alberto López's Racing Santander is the team with the fewest average time per offensive sequence.

Once they recover, they are aggressive and risky.

They do not want to maintain the ball, so we asked José Alberto about this.

"This has an explanation and you will understand easily.

In our style of play, short combinations are crucial, but the number of passes is not important to me.

If I ask my players to be different and they consistently attempt final passes, the likelihood of mistakes in those passes increases.

However, the outcome ultimately depends on the quality—and we have plenty of quality in the final third.

We accept that.

There is another metric—the majority of the goals are generated in possessions from four and eight passes; once we have made more than eight, the rivals are usually able to reorganise.

We want to attack fast.”

JOSÉ ALBERTO LÓPEZ’S RACING SANTANDER DURING THE DEFENSIVE PHASE

If we want to understand the why behind the rhythm of José Alberto López’s Racing Santander at the moment of attacking, we must deep-dive into the defensive phase.

As well as being the fastest team while attacking, they recover the ball faster than anyone—they are the team with the most counterpressing recoveries in the opposition’s half from LaLiga 2.

RACING SANTANDER’S HIGH REGAINS

RACING SANTANDER HIGH REGAINS

All games from Segunda División 2024/2025

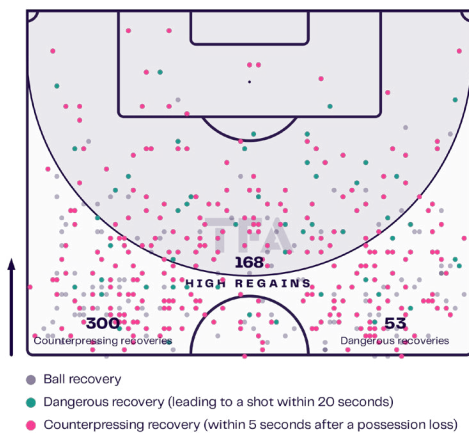


Figure 3 shows Racing Santander’s high regains map from LaLiga 2 2024/25.

“There is another interesting metric—we are the team with the highest percentage of play in the opposition’s half, not only attacking but also defending.

We want to play in the opposition’s half and to do this, we must spend some defensive phases there.”

In this phase, José Alberto’s Racing Santander not only make aggressive and risky jumps in a man-oriented press, well they also position the defensive line high—the highest in the tournament—to be always close to their marks and use the offside trap as a tool.

JOSÉ ALBERTO LÓPEZ RACING SANTANDER DEFENSIVE TERRITORY

RACING SANTANDER DEFENSIVE TERRITORY

All games from Segunda División 2024/2025

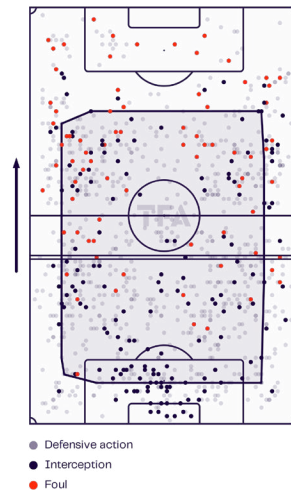


Figure 4 shows Racing Santander’s defensive territory map from LaLiga 2 2024/25

Why the high line and the offside trap? José Alberto explains.

“It’s about choosing how you want a team to attack you.

You can choose to let them attack you in a deep block, where you’ll mostly face box situations—defending crosses from wide areas, long-range shots, and dealing with second or third balls close to your goal.

Or you can choose to let them attack with fewer players involved.

THE CONVICTION

Also, playing with a very high defensive line means there's a lot of space behind your backline to recover, which buys you time.

So, many times, when we think defending with a high line is risky, it can actually be an advantage.

You have a lot of time to readjust."

The offside trap has become almost a trend, too.

Hansi Flick's Barcelona, for example, use it as a weapon to push themselves forward with the pressure.

They have good defenders in open-pitch actions and the work behind to perfect the height and synergy between the players to not break the line in specific sequences is heavy.

Something similar happens here.



Figure 5 shows Racing Santander's high defensive line against Burgos.

As Figure 5 shows, they tend to use the halfway line as the limit.

As we can see, both centre-backs are prepared to run back but are taking care of the coordination in the defensive line to avoid mismatches in crucial meters.

Specifically against Burgos, José Alberto deployed a braver defensive line, and his defenders were tested.

In possession, players from Spanish football are comfortable with positional models.

After losing the ball, many of them are used to running back to defend in mid/low-blocks.

So, maybe the most interesting collective detail in José Alberto López's Racing Santander is the conviction and the bravery to make all of this 'new' model real.

"[On the high defensive line] It's hard to convince the players to execute it.

There is a lot of training and video analysis work involved.

Not too long ago, we were winning 2-0 at home against Burgos, and three of the four defenders approached me and said, 'We're too exposed.'

We were not really that exposed; it's just that playing with so much space behind you is challenging.

You have to convince them through hard work, through images and videos, that they can recognise situations like a covered or uncovered ball, a ball in the central channel, or a ball out wide.

There are a lot of different circumstances.

The key is to get the players fully convinced and able to identify those situations as quickly as possible to respond accordingly.

All of this, of course, while taking full responsibility as the coach.

For example, we conceded a goal away from home against Racing Ferrol due to the risks we took with the high line.

It's the coach who has to assume responsibility for that—without blaming anyone.

The responsibility for playing with such an advanced line is mine, and the courage the players are showing in doing it deserves a lot of credit.

There is a lot of work behind it.

This is our style, our way of understanding the game, and it cannot change. “

POSITIONAL PLAY: THE DETERMINING FACTOR IN SPANISH FOOTBALL

Offensively, in addition to the video and training, a way to convince the players is to emphasise the weaknesses of positional playing models.

“I have spent many years in the Segunda División and know well what opponents propose in this league.

Positional play, especially defensively, causes many opposing players to be pinned by their positions.

So, if you attack down the left flank, for example, the left-back and left-winger remain pinned on the opposite side [something we can see perfectly in Figure 1].

When you move your team to attack on the other side, there are already two players who will not defend.

That is where we've started to analyse, build, and establish relationships that allow us to attack and enhance combinations.

I think this is a general trait of Spanish football—all teams work based on positional play.

The players' own positions determine and pin them down, and the same happens to us when we defend.

Because of these limitations within the positional play, you have to take risks and help the players see that it's possible to attack differently—not just attacking into open spaces where the circulation becomes wider and easier to defend.”

JOKIN EZKIETA OVERPERFORMANCE AND THE GK TRAINING

Another curious detail about the team is that goalkeeper Jokin Ezkieta has been overperforming this season, according to xG metrics.

The 28-year-old has prevented 7.83 goals at the moment of writing.

However, we must consider that objective variables calculate the expected goals in a shoot—location of the shot/assist, foot or head, assist type, etc.

José Alberto also told us why he does not consider this metric to be alarming.

Jokin Ezkieta Shots Faced By GK

JOKIN EZKIETA SHOTS FACED BY GK

All games from Segunda División 2024/2025

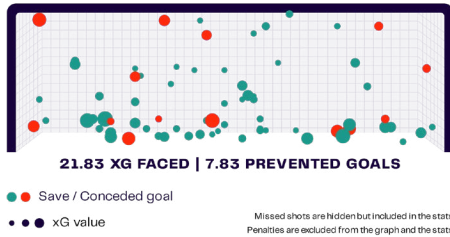


Figure 6 shows Jokin Ezkieta's shots faced by GK from LaLiga 2 2024/25.

"I'm not overly concerned.

It's about choosing how you want your opponents to finish their attacks.

We've chosen to let them finish in repetitive patterns, and our goalkeeper knows how we might concede goals.

Our goalkeeping coach prepares him specifically to try to prevent situations like 1v1s, shots from tight angles, and shots after low crosses are played to the near post in the space between the goalkeeper and the backline.

RACING SANTANDER'S SHOTS AGAINST

RACING SANTANDER SHOTS AGAINST

All games from Segunda División 2024/2025

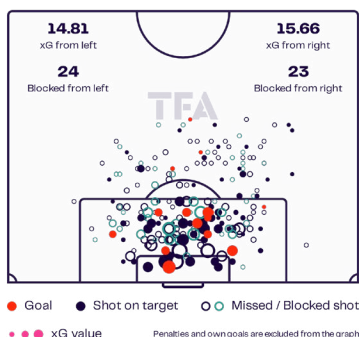


Figure 7 shows Racing Santander's shots against from LaLiga 2 2024/25.

Those types of actions can happen, and we work on them a lot.

By doing this, we accept that we will concede fewer goals than last season when we conceded far too many.

It was clear that we needed to change certain situations.

When deciding where to set your defensive line, understanding why you want to play that way is the most important thing.

Our defensive approach is proactive, defending forward so that when we recover the ball, we have enough players to find options quickly and transition effectively.

We've scored goals by recovering and playing.

After winning the ball back, finding an advanced teammate with the first touch is key.

When the opponent is spreading out and opening up, it often becomes much easier to score."

CONCLUSION

What is happening at El Sardinero is a historical anomaly.

Although the results in the last two months were not the best, Racing are still favourites to be promoted to LaLiga this year.

What is most important is how football reinvents itself in every part of the world.

Racing Santander keep developing a unique style of play in the strangest place to do it.

Regarding the promotion, we recently asked José if he would maintain a similar model at LaLiga, and his answer was blunt.

"100%, no doubts."

Fernando Diniz at Cruzeiro, Henrik Rydström at Malmö, and Lionel Scaloni at Argentina are, more or less, a few examples of current-big-scenario coaches employing relationism in their squads.

José Alberto is another one, and he has the chance to be promoted to the first level in the country with the most UEFA Coach Licenses in the world with a counter-cultural methodology.



AMY
MERRICKS

AMY MERRICKS



MANAGER

BIRMINGHAM CITY
WOMEN

JACK CHIPPENDALE // @JACKCHIPPY6

When Amy Merricks was appointed as the new Birmingham City Women's manager earlier this year, it seemed as though it was a match made in heaven.

Having developed under Hope Powell at Brighton, Merricks was identified as a young and progressive coach who could help Birmingham return to the Women's Super League.

Things appear to be coming to fruition for the Blues this season, as they currently sit atop the Women's Championship on the back of some offensive-minded and tactically expansive play.

She is undoubtedly paving the way for female coaches in the world of football.

Her relentless nature has allowed Birmingham to become an impressive women's football outfit again.

The following scout report and analysis will dive into some key features of Amy Merrick's managerial style, focusing on the impressive tactical tweaks that have allowed the Blues to consistently threaten their opposition.

We will also identify how their pressing structure has bolstered their presence in the final third but can also lead to some negative consequences at the wrong end of the pitch.

INITIAL BUILD-UP PHASE

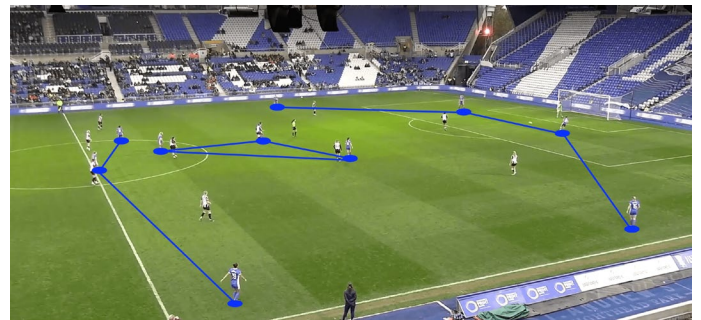
Throughout this season at Birmingham City Women, Merricks has encouraged a deep build-up phase centred around maintaining ball possession while remaining progressive and damaging to the opposition's defensive structure.

Birmingham have usually lined up in either the 4-2-3-1 or 4-1-4-1, meaning that Merrick's side will often interchange between a single or

double pivot as clear passing options for central progression.

However, the height of their full-backs and the confidence that the central defenders have when moving with the ball indicate that Birmingham have been much more effective when building up along the flanks.

The following image provides an informative snapshot of Merricks' usual in-possession structure as her side plays out from their box against Newcastle.



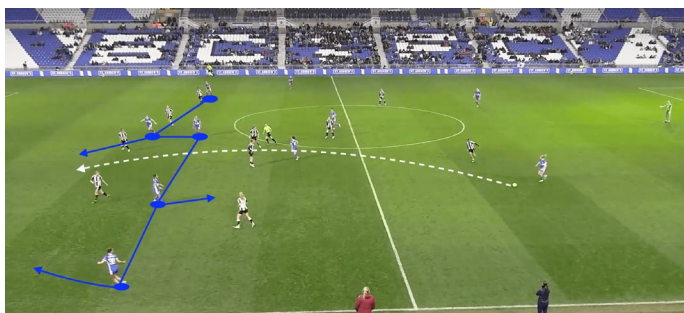
With Newcastle marking the Birmingham pivot man-to-man, Merricks' side can use the space in the channels to progress the ball quickly, thanks to the movement of their roaming playmaker and the right winger, who has adopted a more centralised position.

This was also an effective strategy against Bristol City, with one winger stretching the width of the defensive line whilst the other could move infield to play closer to Birmingham's other attacking outlets.



We also see how this strategy can be implemented to draw defensive attention away from the flanks.

Birmingham's left winger looks to attract the Newcastle right-back, while runners look to exploit the space left behind.



Birmingham is atop the Barclays Women's Championship, and they certainly possess the attacking confidence to commit players forward in a 2-3-5 shape.

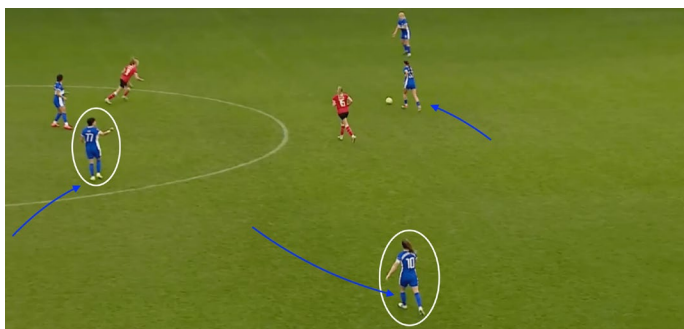
Their left-back is an integral part of their offensive shape.

While it would appear risky to commit so many bodies forward, Birmingham's excellent defensive record could be attributed to their midfield rotations and intelligence in picking up space in the middle to defensive thirds.

In their recent match against Charlton, Neve Herron's movement indicates that the central defender was attempting to launch a diagonal pass towards the right flank for Choe Yu-ri to meet in stride.

To plug this gap, which could have been exposed in transition, Christie Murray rotates into the left centre-back role, while Lee Geum-min drops in to support Cho Hyun in the double pivot.

This sufficiently bolsters Birmingham's 3-2 rest defence should Charlton regain possession high.



ATTACKING STYLE

After gaining initial insight into the Birmingham build-up play under Amy Merricks, it is easy to see why she places a huge responsibility on the split central defenders to progress the ball up the pitch.

The full-backs' remaining wide frees up the two central defenders to progress the ball through the channels.

They can link play by directly passing to the Birmingham striker's feet or even driving at speed through the half-space.

These attacking sequences are ultimately a result of Birmingham's impressive technical qualities, which span the entire squad.

These qualities allow them to move the ball quickly using overloads out wide and impressive combinations to confuse opposing defences.

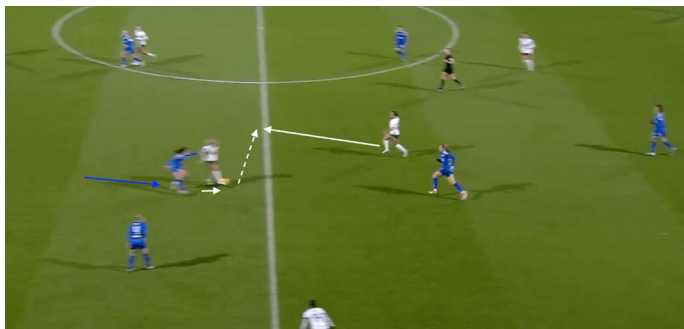
Under Merricks this season, Birmingham have maintained a league-leading 58.1% average ball possession whilst also ranking second in the Women's Championship for progressive passes per 90 (76.13).

One focal point of their attack is their leading striker, who they often use as a decoy to release others behind.

Simone Magill has featured heavily for Merricks this season, and against Leicester, we saw how the aforementioned passes through the channel could result in dangerous attacking opportunities for Birmingham.

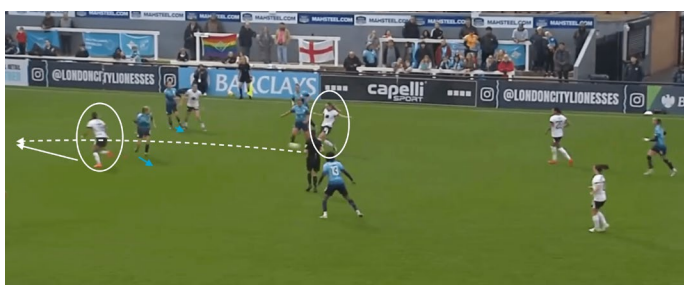
Having affected Leicester's defensive coordination by drawing in a tight marker, Magill can quickly release the ball into the path of advanced midfielder Cho So-hyun, eventually

threading the ball through for right winger Ava Baker to enter the penalty area.



Similar sequences were on display against the London City Lionesses, but this time, we saw Ivana Fuso becoming the beneficiary from that inverted winger position.

Importantly for Merricks, such movements create much more of a favourable attacking matchup for Birmingham, with the mobile and technical Fuso now able to threaten a displaced central defender with no defensive support in behind.



An integral element of these opportunities where the Birmingham wingers are isolated has been the ability for their full-backs to occupy space within the attacking third.

Although their indirect influence has been important for Birmingham's attacking success, their direct contributions can also be equally effective.

The first of which can be highlighted in Birmingham's visit to Southampton, where Tegan McGowan was able to release a through ball into the path of Rebecca McKenna after some impressive hold-up play through the centre.

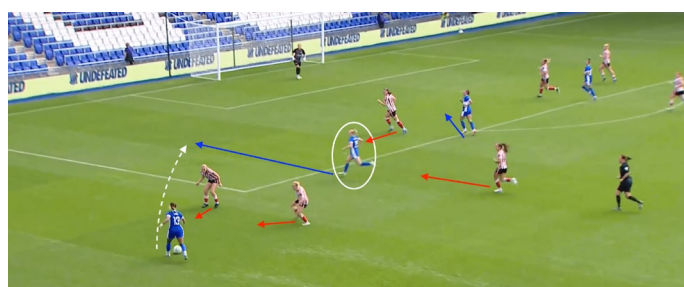


McKenna can stride into the final third unopposed before cutting back an excellent cross to damage Southampton between the lines.

This is perfect for Lily Agg, who can act as a roaming playmaker just behind the forward line.

On the opposite flank, we see how Rebecca Holloway's underlapping movement can devastate Sunderland's defensive structure.

Not only does her initial positioning through the half-space open up a direct passing lane to Ivana Fuso on the flank, but her eventual run into the final third forces the defensive line to shift aggressively across, leaving more space in the penalty area for potential cut-backs or direct passes to the striker.



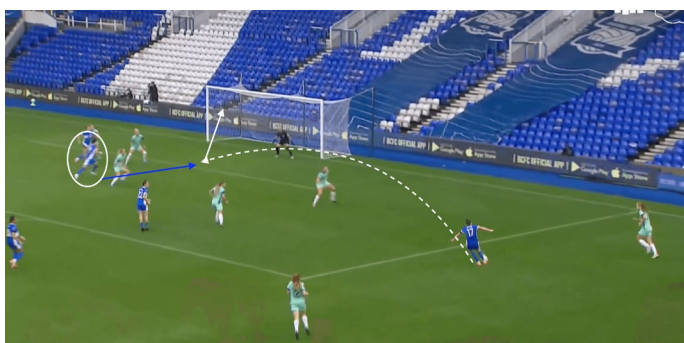
This only further emphasises Birmingham's impressive box presence this season, with Merricks' side recording 21.65 penalty area touches per 90.

Another interesting feature that has contributed to this is the movement of Birmingham's advanced central midfielders when operating in variations of 4-1-4-1 and 4-3-3.

The late runs into the box have allowed Birmingham to rack up an impressive eight headed goals so far this season, blowing the league average of 1.64 out of the water.

This is supported by their 27 headed shots, which are almost double the league average of 13.82.

The following example highlights the damaging run from Lee Geum-min, which caught the Portsmouth defence on their heels.



PRESSING EFFECTIVENESS

Another key element contributing to Birmingham's ball dominance is its ability to press the opposition and create high turnovers, which can be dangerous in transition against an unstructured defence.

When Merricks' side are out of possession, they currently rank as the lowest team in the Women's Championship for defensive duels per 90 (67.35), but the critical fact would have to be that they maintain a 69.5% success rate should they need to engage in one.

It is more important to highlight their pressing effectiveness, which is often understood using metrics such as challenge intensity and passes per defensive action (PPDA).

Birmingham currently boasts a challenge intensity of 6.9 and a PPDA score of 6.99, key factors of a successful high-pressing team that is proactive in its defensive actions.

This season, Birmingham have usually pressed in more of a 4-1-4-1 shape, with a lone striker aiming to apply pressure towards the two central defenders.



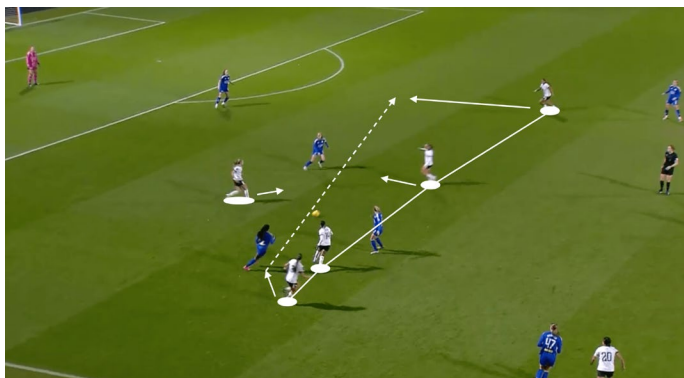
They can then apply man-to-man pressure on the opposing double-pivot with another holding midfielder deployed to either screen the defensive line or tightly mark an opposing advanced playmaker.

Whilst this would also allow the opposition to look to advance through the channels in a similar manner to Merricks' team, we see against Southampton how the mobility of the Birmingham midfield can help to intercept play and attack in transition.



Even when facing opposition from the WSL, Birmingham's press was engaged and persistent, resulting in a goal-ending turnover.

When facing Leicester, the commitment of Birmingham's midfielders to advance and close down space quickly saw an inaccurate pass land at the feet of Ava Baker, who made no mistake with her drilled strike from distance.



Despite conceding an overall expected goal against figure of 12.09 xGA this season, this has only amounted to the concession of 5 actual goals after ten matches.

Whilst this stands out as a significant overachievement when looking at the bigger picture, Birmingham have been comforted by the aforementioned pressing qualities and rest defence they have displayed to counteract their offensive nature.

Given this, one of the only fundamental weaknesses of Birmingham's game under Merricks is that the chances they concede are significant in nature and quality.

Birmingham currently ranks third in the Women's Championship for expected goal per shot against, with 0.146.

This indicates that the opposition usually has a greater chance of scoring whichever attacking opportunities they manage to create.

Having analysed the goals that Birmingham have conceded this season, their most evident defensive weakness revolves around a lack of support from the wide midfielders tracking back.

It allows opposing wingers to create advantageous 1v1 scenarios against the Birmingham full-backs, which we know can often be advanced and caught out of position in transition.

Without the Birmingham wide players tracking back to support defensively, we see how easily the Birmingham defenders can be displaced to allow passes to be cut across the face of the penalty area.

This was evident against Leicester when Birmingham's defensive line was severely stretched and could not stop the overwhelming double-up that the hosts had on the right flank.

Another thing that makes Birmingham a top side under Amy Merricks would be their ability to recognise when they negatively impact opposition build-up and how they can amplify this with a tweak to their initial press.

In their match against Bristol City, Birmingham consistently forced their opposition into wayward passes, stifling their ability to progress up the pitch.

This facilitated a switch to a two-headed pressing effort from the front line.



Birmingham could allow one of their wingers to move inside from the left flank after assessing the long passing ability of the Bristol City goalkeeper, creating an opportunity for the whole team to advance slightly and adopt a higher point of initial press.

DEFENSIVE CAPABILITIES

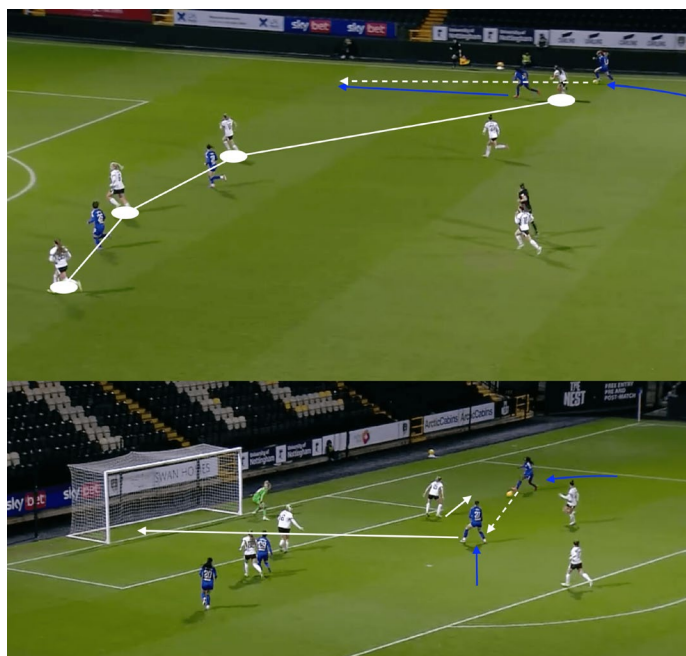
Even though Birmingham's attacking efforts have been an impressive feature of their game, Amy Merricks is quietly guiding the Blues to an excellent defensive record in the Women's Championship.

CONCLUSION

Even though things may not be perfect for Birmingham and Amy Merricks, they are developing a serious charge to the title.

Having maintained an impressive record during their league matches, their cup encounters have also highlighted how they might fare against stronger opposition upon a potential return to the WSL.

Despite premature talk of promotion, Amy Merricks has asserted herself as a really intriguing up-and-coming manager, with the tactical nous to unlock the best out of her Birmingham City side.



It was also noted how a desire to play short possession-based football could backfire when ideas around build-up play were misaligned.

In their match against Sheffield United, one of the central defenders dropped off the defensive line to offer a short passing outlet to the goalkeeper.

Instead, the keeper opted to go long into a zone where the Birmingham midfield was unstructured.

The sequence allowed Sheffield United to easily cut out the long pass and quickly play the ball into the feet of the unmarked forward, rapidly creating a 4v3 attacking scenario that allowed them to score.



JOHN PULSKAMP

JOHN PULSKAMP



GOALKEEPER

SPORTING KANSAS CITY

In this magazine edition, we are delving into a special report on John Pulskamp — an emerging talent currently playing as goalkeeper for Sporting Kansas City in Major League Soccer.

Throughout the 2024 season in senior club competitions, he played 930 minutes in 10 games, conceding 19 goals and keeping one clean sheet.

Though the stats aren't outstanding, our scout report will go into detail on why Pulskamp is viewed as a rising talent in US soccer.

His market value is currently estimated to be at €400k, and his contract with Sporting Kansas City is due to expire on December 31, 2025.

In this scout report, we will examine his effectiveness on the ball, helping the club with build-up play and distribution, and other factors in his game, such as his sweeper-keeper abilities and reading of the game.

WHAT MAKES A GOALKEEPER GREAT?

What makes a goalkeeper great in modern football is being comfortable with the ball at their feet.

There has been an overemphasis in today's game on keepers moving a few yards up and playing as centre-backs during the build-up.

This creates an 11v10 scenario on the pitch as the keeper takes on that role and absorbs the pressure from a striker.

From the 2010s until now, there has been a rising need for keepers to act as sweepers, making clearances and racing to the ball for tackles.

Manuel Neuer has significantly influenced this trend.

Think of '50s-'60s black and white cinema with wide-angle lenses and grains scattered across the TV.

Over the decades, there has been a progression.

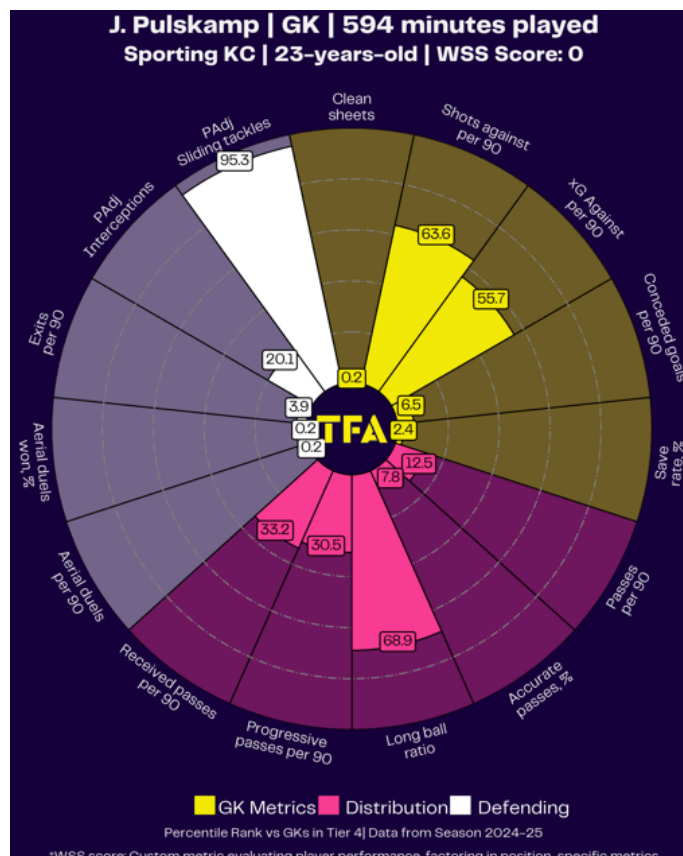
First came the introduction of colour in TV and movies, which is the equivalent of keepers coming out of the box more often than sweepers.

In the 2010s and 2020s, we have IMAX quality and audio, corresponding to keepers having technical ability on the same level as centre-backs.

The demand for goalkeeper's skills has been increasing.

Of course, keepers should make saves and be quick on their feet along their line, but now the tide has changed.

PLAYER RADAR CHART



John Pulskamp's radar chart highlights areas where he excels, reflecting his evolving skill set in modern football.

Below are two important aspects we want to touch on.

Notably, his rating for "Sliding Tackles" is exceptional, scoring in the 95.3rd percentile among goalkeepers.

This indicates his proficiency in aggressive defensive manoeuvres, which are crucial in one-on-one situations.

His ranking in the "Long Ball Ratio" at the 68.9th percentile showcases his ability to progress the ball forward with the ball at his feet.

Keepers typically do not have a high long ball ratio since it is essentially a gamble when playing long, and as the saying goes, "the house wins."

This means the odds of your long ball being successful and accurate from such a distance aren't going to be completed the majority of the time typically, but being roughly in the 69th percentile is a great start.

BUILD-UP PLAY



Pulskamp plays a pivotal role in his club's tactics, often opting to go long instead of playing to the centre-backs, but his build-up work could be improved.

What separates the best keepers from the average keeper is the split second before releasing the ball, the one final look up to decide whether to follow through with the pass.

In the image above, he's looking to play out the back to his wing-back, but if he had looked up for just a second before releasing the ball, he would see the opponent running towards that wing-back who ends up intercepting the ball.

This moment of awareness can dramatically influence the outcome.

It's crucial for a goalkeeper who is heavily involved in team distribution and tactics.



This example above illustrates a similar scenario, opting for a long, one-time pass.

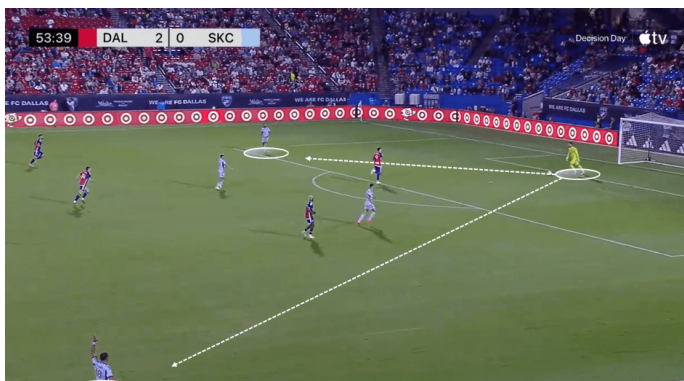
If Pulskamp kept his head up, he would see that there was no immediate pressure and could take a touch.

Even if he decides to go long still, that extra touch and look up changes everything.

There might be a better opportunity to go wide with the full-back than going long, or maybe long is the right choice.

However, taking another touch could set up his pass better, allowing for a more calculated pass.

This kind of awareness and decision-making can elevate a goalkeeper's game, making them crucial in shaping the team's attack from the back.



This image represents what should happen consistently.

Elite 'keepers don't need to look at the floor to know where the ball is.

They envision and calculate the pass as soon as it leaves their teammate's foot and starts rolling towards them.

With their heads up, they can make smarter decisions.

Their ability to assess the field allows them to choose the best passing options, whether to retain possession or launch a long ball.



What really makes something stand out during a match is a player with confidence.

Once again, keeping that head up is key, but in this scenario, these are the moments you show how good you are on the ball.

You don't have to boot it out of play when a striker runs at you.

Instead, you can roll it behind your legs to the other side and throw the striker off.

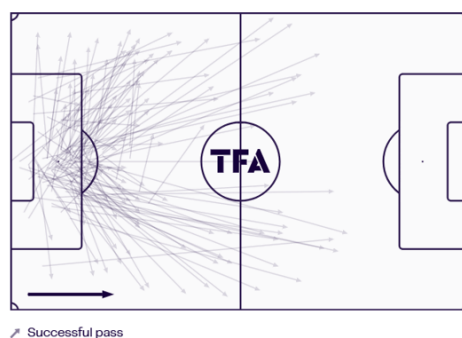
These are the moments where players increase their exposure, showboat and increase their market value.

It's evident that he is great on the ball and extremely accurate in his passes, but keeping the head up here is crucial.

This not only helps in maintaining possession under pressure but also showcases the keeper's calmness and confidence.

J. PULSKAMP PASS MAP

All games from Leagues Cup 2024, US Open Cup 2024, MLS Next Pro 2024, MLS 2024



His pass map for the 2024 season shows how often he likes to go long.

We can see just how far his passes are taking his team.

They are almost into a zone of the pitch that's easy to transition into the final third, and his passes play a crucial role in their attack from the keeper's spot.

SWEEPER KEEPER

Pulskamp is generally fast and agile when coming out of his box.

In set-piece play, excluding corners, he is confident in his ability to leave his line and will challenge the opponent for the ball.

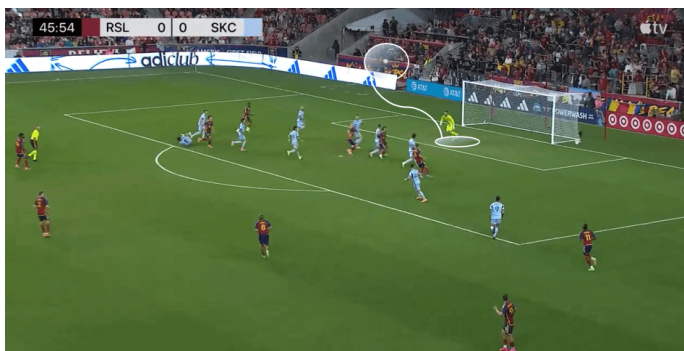
There is more hesitation during corners, which is normal given the difficulty caused by the many surrounding players.



The first image above is a perfect example of reading the play, coming out to collect the cross, and showing your dominance in the box.

This action shows the goalkeeper's ability to anticipate incoming balls and assert control in dangerous areas.

But there is a slight hesitation on coming out for these crosses in his game, which could lead to costly errors; either you fully commit or you don't; there's no such thing as a half commitment.



One critical aspect of his game that I want to point out is how he comes out to collect crosses with the mindset of "let the ball come to me," waiting for the ball to inch closer to his position rather than actively moving towards it.

Everyone has seen keepers coming out to collect crosses but waiting for the ball to come to them, and somehow, the opponent gets their head on the ball before it reaches the keeper into an empty net.

If Pulskamp can adopt the mindset of going towards the ball rather than expecting it to come to him, he will be more confident in aerial duels and significantly improve his sweeper-keeper game.



His heat map shows some intensity just outside the box, where he sometimes comes out to receive the ball when the team is looking to reset the play.

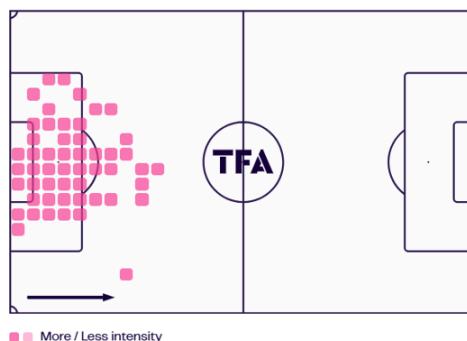
It would be great if there were growing signs of faded tiles showing more light intensity on the edges, but his ability to come off his line with speed is certainly there.

It's just about getting rid of that slight hesitation.

Overcoming this hesitation will enable him to be more decisive in controlling the space around his goal.

J. PULSKAMP HEATMAP

All games from Leagues Cup 2024, US Open Cup 2024, MLS Next Pro 2024, MLS 2024



With limited game time, it's difficult to fully assess some statistics, such as the heat and touch maps, but we can examine the foundation.

The touch map shows some touches outside the 18-yard box, which is great.

Hopefully, with more minutes, we can see him venture out of the box or towards the edge of the box more often, working on his sweeper-keeper skills.

SHOT STOPPING CAPABILITIES

Kansas City finished 13th out of 14 teams in the Western Conference of the MLS, making it one of the weakest teams in the league.

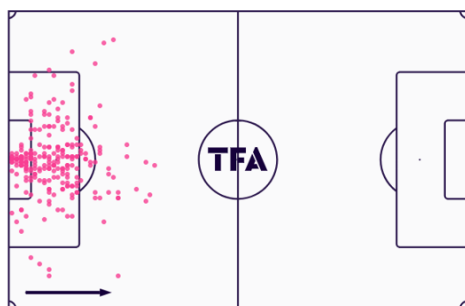
Therefore, it's hard to judge a goalkeeper based on goals conceded when playing for a club that is allowing more shots than normal.

For example, the expected goals (xG) Pulskamp faced in his limited minutes can be attributed to the club's defensive weaknesses rather than his abilities.

This context is crucial when evaluating his performances in shot-stopping.

J. PULSKAMP TOUCH MAP

All games from Leagues Cup 2024, US Open Cup 2024, MLS Next Pro 2024, MLS 2024



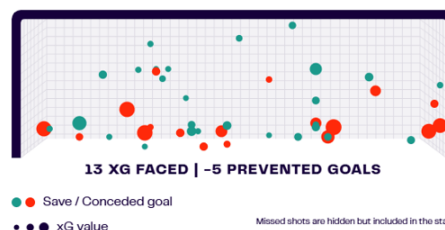
Pulskamp is a great shot-stopper and has rapid reflexes.

When coming out of his box in scenarios like these, he does a great job of making himself look big and covering as much of the net as possible.

His ability to enlarge his presence is crucial in reducing the angles for attackers, which he is great at doing at a young age and early in his career.

J. PULSKAMP SHOTS FACED BY GK

All games from Leagues Cup 2024, US Open Cup 2024, MLS Next Pro 2024, MLS 2024



His save map above provides more context for his 2024 season, showing he faced 13 expected goals (xG) and prevented -5 goals.

It's important to keep in mind that his limited minutes should be considered when evaluating these statistics.

This suggests that while he's faced a significant number of shots, the negative goal-prevention metric could reflect the team's overall defensive challenges.

CONCLUSION

John Pulskamp is a keeper to watch. The young talent still has many years to improve his game and has shown some promising signs in his current team with a foundation to build off.

He's got very fast reflexes, can make himself big to be a great shot-stopper, comes out to collect crosses, and is very accurate in his long passes.

If he can fix some of the slight hesitation in stepping off his line, keep his head up when passing in the build-up, and stay calm, he can definitely rise through the ranks of world football in terms of a keeper. With limited minutes in the MLS, it may be more beneficial if he seeks a move abroad to Europe.

Leagues like the Belgian, Dutch, and Portuguese leagues, where many scouts take talent from, or even the second division of the top-five leagues, could be ideal to keep building on his foundation, get more minutes, and improve his game.

DATA VIZ

KEVIN MIER

CRUZ AZUL GOALKEEPER

VENKATANARAYANAN VENKATESAN // @VENKYREDDEVIL

Total Football Analysis' Breakout XI for 2025 includes eight 'alternates'/'bench players' who almost made the cut for a full scouting report in the magazine.

Those players will still be covered with a mini data analysis.

The first is Kevin Mier, who plays as a goalkeeper for Cruz Azul in Liga MX. Kevin Mier has been one of the best goalkeepers, if not the best goalkeeper, in the Liga MX in 2024.

The 24-year-old, who has represented Colombia at different age groups but has yet to make his senior debut, leads the charts for several goalkeeping metrics after completing the first half of the 2024/25 season.

The below visualisation shows the shots Mier has faced over the last year since signing for Cruz Azul in January 2024. Mier has the highest number of clean sheets this season (nine), conceding only 12 goals so far.

The keeper, who has played the second-most minutes of any goalkeeper in the last calendar year, has underperformed in his shot-stopping and should have prevented more goals.

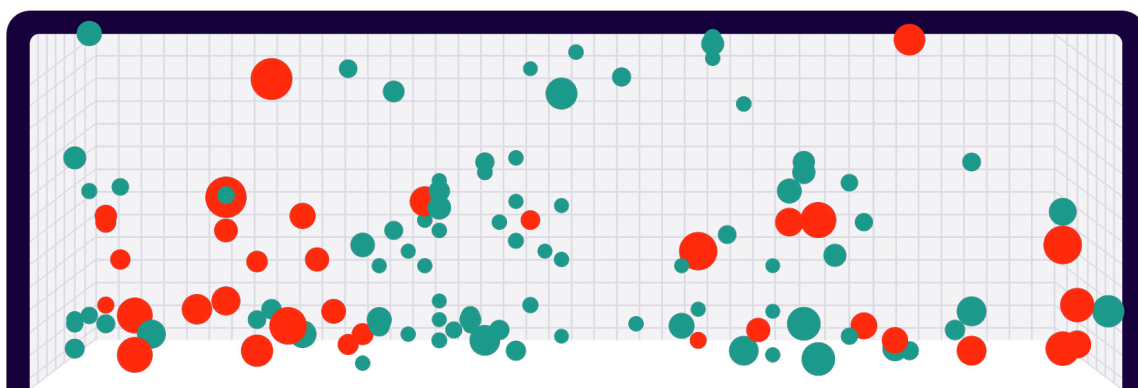
Still, his current form still makes him one of the best keepers in the league. With a save rate of 67.24%, Mier ranks third for that metric but has faced the fewest shots per 90 minutes in the league (2.44).

His 0.55 exits per 90 minutes this season are among the fewest in the league for a goalkeeper, and he should focus more on this aspect of his game as he seeks to progress his career. Mier's Average pass length of 25.18m and Average Long Pass Length of 48.14m are among the shortest in the league.

This is an indication of how comfortable he is for a possession-based style. For someone of Kevin Mier's age, now might be the right time to switch to Europe and flourish. With his curve only moving upwards now, Mier is definitely a player to watch out for in 2025.

K. MIER SHOTS FACED BY GK

All games from Liga MX 2024/2025, Liga MX 2023/2024



34.34 XG FACED | 0.34 PREVENTED GOALS

● ● Save / Conceded goal

● ● ● xG value

Missed shots are hidden but included in the stats
Penalties are excluded from the graph and the stats

CONOR BRADLEY

CONOR BRADLEY



RIGHT-BACK

LIVERPOOL

MORITZ H. // @MH_SV5

At 21, Conor Bradley is one of Liverpool's younger defenders, with the majority of his career still ahead of him.

His development in the club's youth academy has instilled several characteristic tactical elements of Liverpool's playing philosophy in his game, which we will examine in greater detail throughout this article.

Bradley took his first steps in professional football with Bolton Wanderers in League One before returning to Liverpool for the 2023/24 season.

He immediately made appearances in several league matches, even starting in some.

This season, Bradley had the opportunity to start for Liverpool in the Champions League against Real Madrid.

However, he currently remains a rotational option, primarily due to the exceptionally strong competition in Liverpool's backline.

The undisputed starter, Trent Alexander-Arnold, typically occupies the right-back position.

Last season, Bradley was frequently given the opportunity to start matches, earning a total of 10 appearances in the starting lineup in the Premier League alone.

This season, however, Bradley has predominantly been used as a substitute and has only been included in the starting XI once in the Premier League.

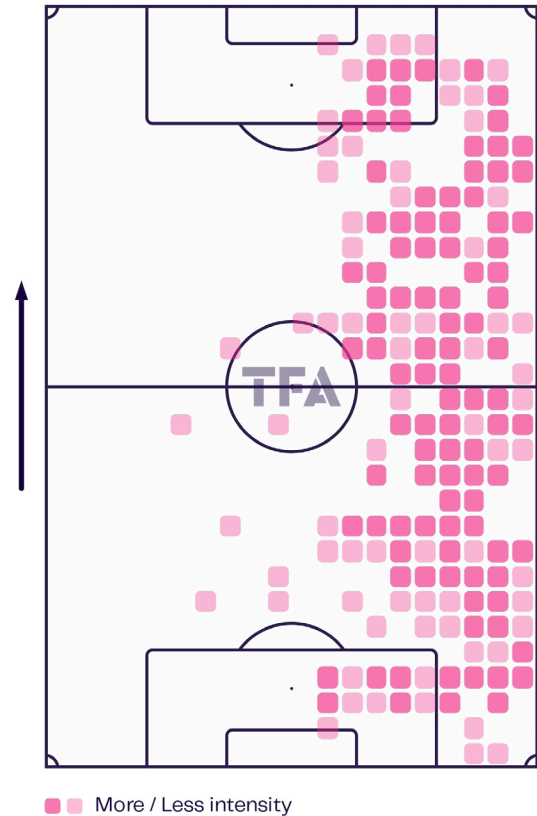
This shift might be attributed to the arrival of the new manager and a slightly adjusted tactical philosophy at Liverpool.

This aspect will be explored in more detail at the end of the article.

STATISTICAL OVERVIEW

C. BRADLEY HEATMAP

All games from Premier League 2024/2025



As the accompanying heatmap shows, Bradley is also highly active offensively down the right flank.

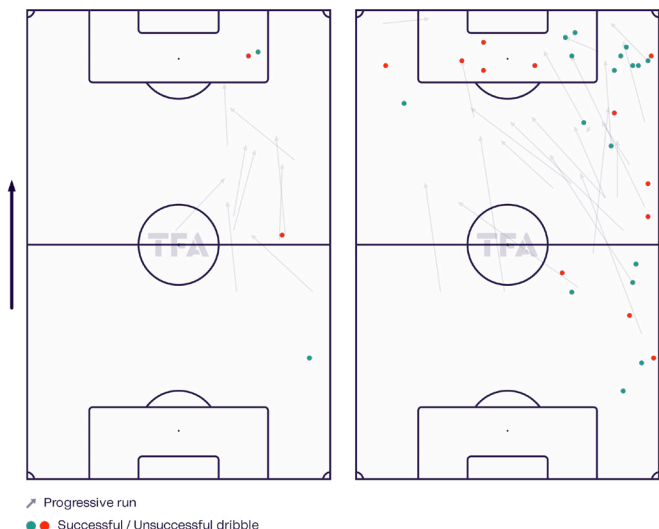
As a right-footed player, Bradley operates on the right side, where his far-side foot makes it more challenging for opponents to press effectively.

The heatmap clearly illustrates that Bradley predominantly operates from the half-space rather than the wide channel, even in attacking scenarios.

Later in the article, it will be explained in greater detail why Bradley does not play along the touchline.

C. BRADLEY BALL PROGRESSION

PREMIER LEAGUE 2024/2025 UEFA NATIONS LEAGUE - LEAGUE C 2024/2025



One of Bradley's standout qualities, highlighted later in the article, is his ability to make progressive and supporting runs into deeper areas of the pitch.

What's particularly intriguing is the contrast in the zones where Bradley primarily operates for the national team compared to his role in league matches for Liverpool.

As shown on the map, Bradley is generally less active in the final third for Liverpool and rarely ventures into wide areas.

In contrast, his positioning for the national team differs significantly.

The reasons behind these contrasting patterns of play will also be analysed in greater detail as the article progresses.

CONOR BRADLEY IN BUILD-UP PLAY

In build-up play, Bradley typically operates in a deeper position, just in front of the opponent's pressing line, rather than pushing high up the pitch.

This is partly due to Liverpool's setup on the flank.

Mohamed Salah benefits greatly from starting in a wider position before cutting inside, which is why Bradley, as a full-back, refrains from advancing high during the build-up phase.



Conor Bradley operates against Real Madrid just in front of the first pressing line within a three-man build-up.

Additionally, this positioning plays to Bradley's personal strengths.

His high dynamism consistently manages to break through opposing lines.

His ability to assert himself stems from his impressive top speed and effective use of his body.

Bradley rarely engages in tight one-on-one duels in offensive areas, as he often struggles with the quick changes of direction required in such situations.

Instead, he thrives on building up momentum and using his pace to almost overpower his opponents.

As a result, a position just in front of the opponent's pressing line suits him far better.

Statistically, this strength is reflected in his so-called "progressive runs."

These are runs in which a player carries the ball forward and gains significant ground for the team.

This season, Bradley averages 2.62 progressive runs per game, more than double the number recorded by Trent Alexander-Arnold, who plays the same position.

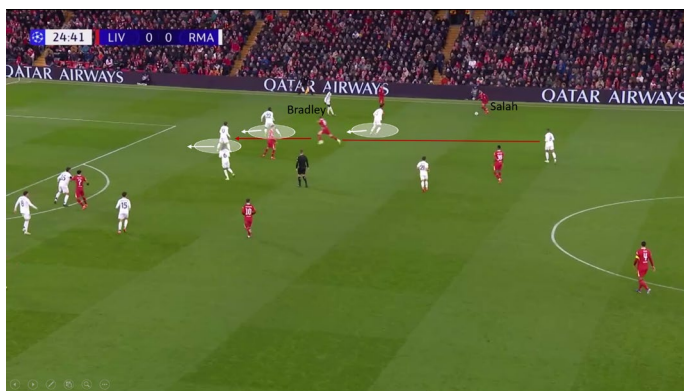
This is also a significant improvement over his performance last season.

These attributes combine excellently with Salah's playing style.

Salah, whose primary aim is often to dribble into central areas from the wing, is frequently double-marked by opponents due to his strength in one-on-one situations.

Liverpool often takes advantage of this by having the full-back or holding midfielder make overlapping runs to create space for Salah in the centre and pull defenders out of position.

Bradley's frequent involvement in such runs allows him to draw attention and contribute effectively to this tactical approach.



Bradley's deep run pulls several Madrid players with him, creating more space for Salah.

CONOR BRADLEY STRENGTH IN DUELS

Bradley also excels in defensive duels, particularly because of his intelligent use of his body and excellent timing.

Although he stands at 1.81m, he is not the tallest, but he consistently outpaces his opponents and gains positional advantage.

Bradley tends to act less aggressively and more patiently in open one-on-one situations, focusing on positioning his body between the ball and the opponent.

Unlike players such as Upamecano or Lucas Hernandez, who often take a more proactive approach in duels, Bradley rarely assumes the "active" role.

Instead, he waits for his opponent to make the first move before reacting.



In defensive one-on-one situations, Bradley positions himself against his opponent and slows down the pace without engaging aggressively.

Statistically, Bradley boasts an impressive success rate of 64% in duels, a strong figure for a player in his position.

Bradley's approach to one-on-one duels, which relies heavily on positional discipline, can be interpreted as both a strength and a potential weakness, depending on the situation.

On the one hand, Bradley demonstrates an impressive ability to neutralise even the best and fastest players by disrupting their momentum and dynamic play.

A notable example occurred during Liverpool's Champions League match against Real Madrid when he repeatedly slowed down attacking moves involving the lightning-quick Mbappé.

On the other hand, Bradley often adopts a somewhat passive approach in isolated situations along the touchline when defending against his direct opponents.

In these scenarios, a more aggressive defensive style would occasionally be more effective.

By applying greater pressure on his opponent, Bradley could limit the time and space available for decision-making, forcing quicker and potentially less accurate actions from his adversaries.

CONOR BRADLEY COUNTERPRESSING

Bradley's exceptional focus on counterpressing situations is one of his most striking features.

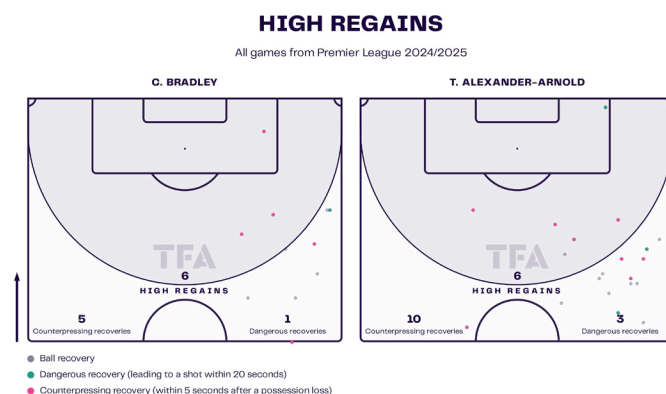
This makes him a perfect fit for Liverpool's playing style, which is still heavily oriented toward counterpressing.

Bradley consistently works against the ball immediately after losing possession, striving to regain it as quickly as possible.

This is particularly common for full-backs, who are often the first line of defense behind the wide players who are more prone to losing possession.

With 9.6 ball recoveries per game last season, 2.62 of which occurred in the opponent's half, Bradley's defensive contribution—especially in

counterpressing situations—proves statistically successful.



The graphic illustrating high ball recoveries further reinforces this impression.

Bradley frequently succeeds in regaining possession in advanced areas, often as a result of counterpressing situations.

Although his absolute number of high recoveries falls significantly behind Trent Alexander-Arnold's, this can be attributed to the difference in total minutes played between the two players.

When the ratio of minutes played to balls recovered is examined, the comparison becomes quite impressive and reflects very positively on Bradley.

It's worth noting that Trent is an undisputed starter for Liverpool, making Bradley's numbers even more commendable in context.

Bradley's ability to seek out these counterpressing moments is largely linked to his football intelligence.

He frequently anticipates ball losses in advance and positions himself well to recover possession.

It's likely that his development at Liverpool played a key role in this aspect of his game.

The playing philosophies of both the senior and youth teams are often aligned, making it

logical that Bradley gained valuable experience in dealing with these situations during his youth development at the club.

LEADERSHIP QUALITIES

Bradley impresses not only with his technical and footballing abilities but also with his outstanding leadership qualities.

At just 21 years of age, he was named captain of the Northern Ireland national team, a testament to his natural leadership and maturity both on and off the pitch.

On the field, Bradley is highly communicative.

He consistently engages with his teammates in a positive and supportive manner.

He frequently demonstrates an ability to uplift those around him, contributing to a cohesive team dynamic.

His playing style further reinforces these leadership attributes, exemplifying composure, reliability, and a commitment to collective success.

Bradley's exceptional dynamism and strength in duels can inspire his teammates during critical moments of a match.

This influence is particularly evident in tightly contested games, where Bradley's presence and commanding demeanour can make a decisive impact.

Another noteworthy aspect of his game is his ability to retain possession, as his low rate of turnovers aligns perfectly with the qualities expected of an ideal captain's playing style.

Furthermore, a key trait of any leader on the pitch is a certain level of game intelligence—the

ability to recognise pivotal phases of a match and adapt one's approach accordingly.

Bradley's impressive anticipation in counterpressing situations exemplifies tactical acumen.

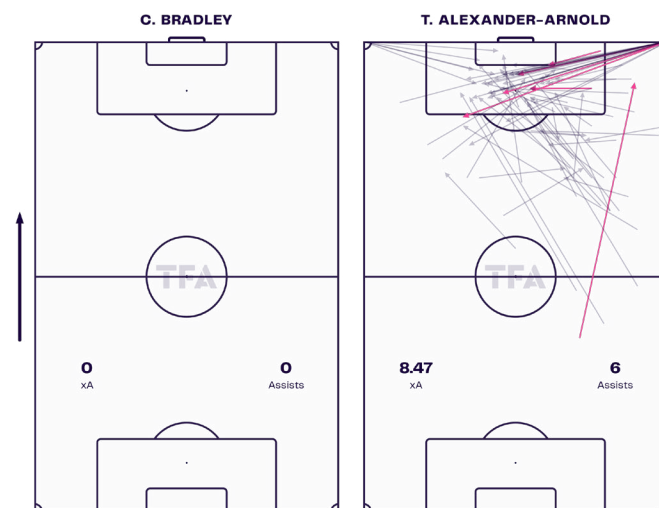
This skill has been highlighted previously and further underscores his value as a player and a leader.

CONOR BRADLEY POTENTIAL

Although Bradley consistently relieves Salah through his progressive runs, he still too rarely poses a direct threat on goal in terms of shots or assists.

He needs to work on his decision-making in situations closer to the goal.

SHOT ASSISTS



This is clearly reflected in the overview provided here.

While Trent Alexander-Arnold has consistently managed to create offensively dangerous chances within Liverpool's system, Bradley has yet to register a single assist or goal-scoring opportunity in either of the two Premier League seasons he has played.

However, it's important to acknowledge that Alexander-Arnold has played significantly more matches than Bradley, which naturally results in him having a considerable advantage in the total number of chances created.

This discrepancy in match appearances is a key factor when comparing their contributions in this specific area.

Furthermore, Bradley could look to engage in more direct one-on-one duels in offensive situations.

As a full-back, it's crucial to be able to occupy your opponent and create numerical superiority by winning one-on-one battles.

Dribbling in these situations is less risky for full-backs, as they typically occur near the touchline. Moreover, these dribbles help improve pressing resistance against high opposition pressure.

Bradley's acceleration and agility difficulties disadvantage him in such situations.

However, his high football intelligence could help him read his opponent better, reducing his reliance on his own pace in these duels.

For example, he could skillfully compensate for this weakness using his first touch.

CONCLUSION

Connor Bradley is still a very young full-back who has already gained experience at the highest level.

His strength in counterpressing and numerous dynamic runs in behind make him an excellent full-back in Liverpool's system.

With these attributes, he fits perfectly into Liverpool's playing style.

Additionally, his strong leadership qualities work in his favour.

These qualities are already highly developed for his young age.

Therefore, his appointment as the Northern Ireland national team captain is entirely justified.

It will be interesting to see whether Bradley can continue to play as prominent a role under Slot as he did under Klopp.

After all, Liverpool's style under Klopp was even more focused on verticality and counterpressing moments, which suited a player like Bradley very well.

His development over the next year and in the coming years will undoubtedly be fascinating to follow.

DATA VIZ

JESSICA HUSBAND

HEARTS RIGHT-BACK

VENKATANARAYANAN VENKATESAN // @VENKYREDDEVIL

Our sub right-back is Jessica Husband of Hearts Women. The 16-year-old Hearts defender is an exciting, emerging talent that is catching the eye of many.

Husband can play on either side of the defence but has mostly played as a right wing-back thus far.

The below visualisation shows her primary crossing zones and where those crosses have landed.

Jessica has three goals to her name to go with five assists as well this term, showing her attacking capabilities.

From the visual above, a good number of Jessica's crosses have landed in dangerous areas.

She is closer to the byline when crossing from the right side than the left, seeing almost equal success from each wing.

With 3.28 touches in the box per 90 minutes, Jessica ranks in the top 10 for that metric.

She is also mostly engaging in the mid-to-final third, and many of her defensive actions have come in the wide mid-to-final third, showcasing her intense ball-recovering ability.

With 2.97 Progressive runs per 90 minutes, Husband is decent at ball-carrying, too.

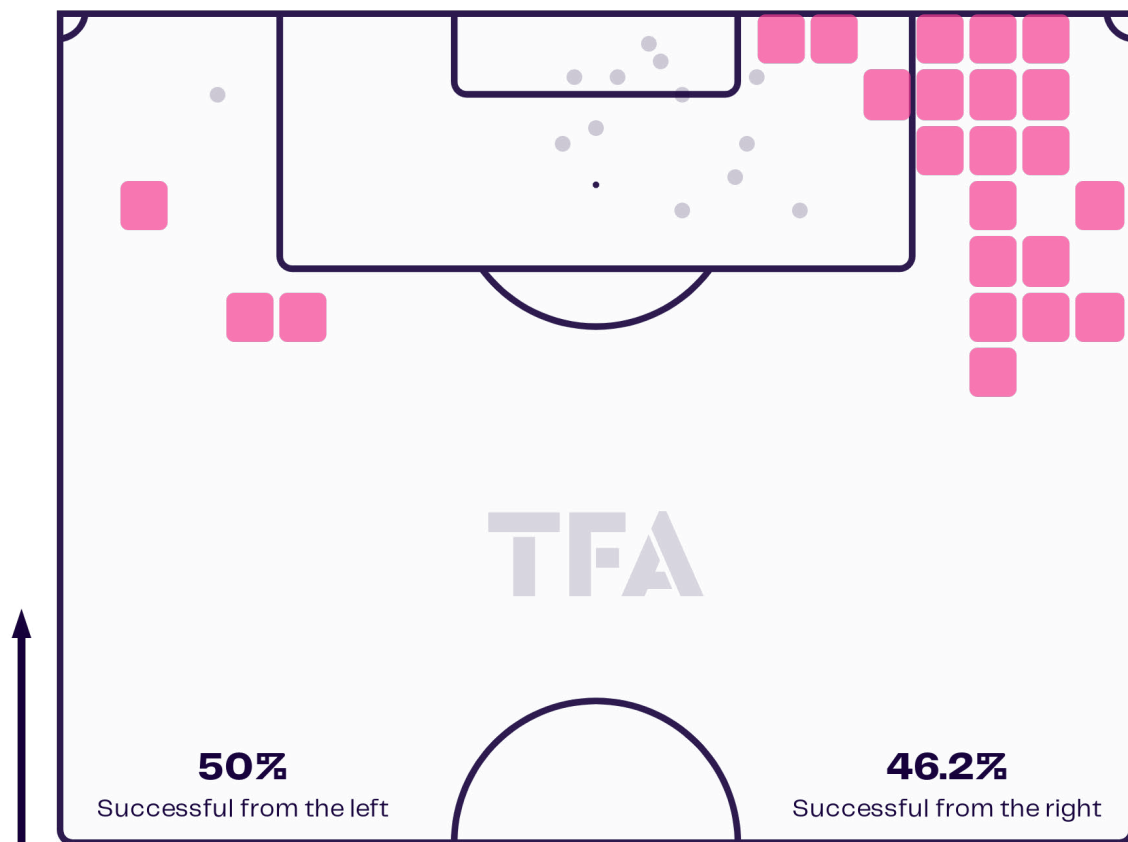
Defensively, she wins a high volume of duels—in fact, she wins 70% of her duels—which shows her ability in 1v1 defending.

Jessica Husband is among the youngest and brightest talents to come out of the Scottish League.

For a number of reasons, including some listed above, she is undoubtedly a player to watch out for in 2025; where she will be by the end of the year will be an interesting watch.

J. HUSBAND CROSSING ZONES

All games from SWPL 1 2024/2025



- Frequent dispatching zones
- Successful crosses destinations

PIETRO COMUZZO

PIETRO COMUZZO



RIGHT CENTRE-BACK

FIorentina

One of the best up-and-coming defenders in Serie A is Fiorentina's Pietro Comuzzo.

At the start of last season, the 19-year-old centre-back was a virtual unknown in Italy, where he was still playing at the U18/U19 level.

Still, he made a promising impression in his six first-team appearances in various competitions.

The impression must have been a lasting one, too, as he has emerged as a regular starter for Fiorentina this season, already making 15 appearances in all competitions.

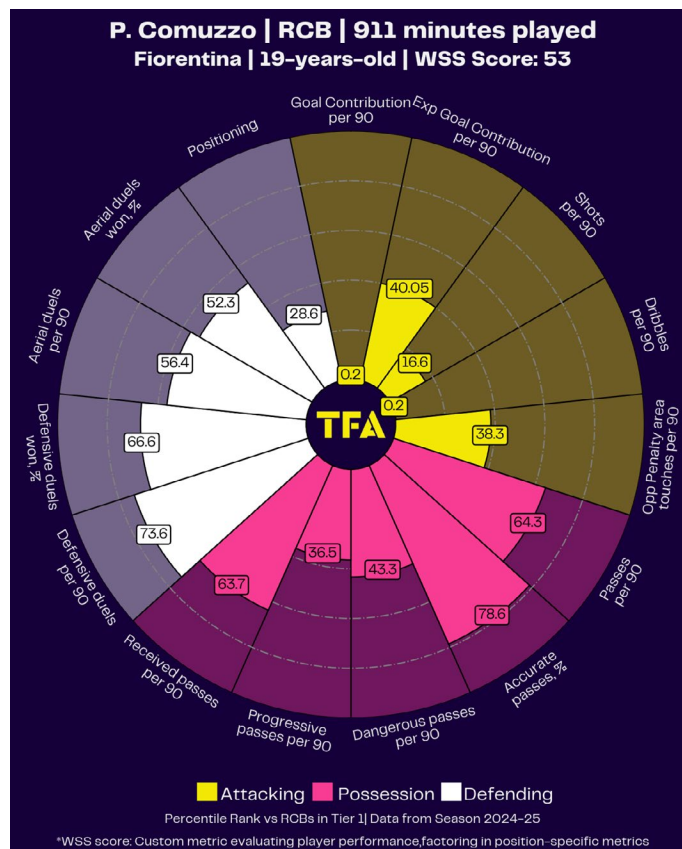
His form this season has not gone unnoticed, with Italy manager Luciano Spalletti calling Comuzzo up to the Italy senior squad recently – while he did not feature, the call-up itself is a mark of his ability.

Furthermore, his emergence this season has caught the eye of several clubs, including Serie A giants Inter and Premier League side Everton.

This scout report will provide an analysis of Comuzzo's impact at Fiorentina so far in the 2024/25 campaign, looking at his role in Fiorentina's tactics as well as a series of data analysis segments.

PIETRO COMUZZO PLAYER OVERVIEW

PIETRO COMUZZO PLAYER RADAR MAP



What you may notice from his radar map in Figure 1 is that nothing really jumps off the page – no real standout qualities that are apparent in the measurable metrics above.

As we examine this scout report, it becomes increasingly apparent that Comuzzo isn't a flashy central defender.

He's not likely to carry the ball out of defence and step into midfield or execute regular progressive passes, for example.

However, he has given Fiorentina at the back so far this season an element of stability, reliability, and consistency on the ball when it comes to doing the simple yet necessary things.

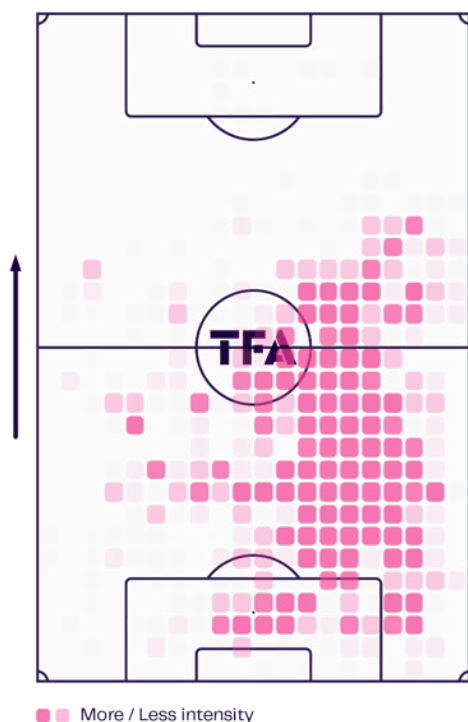
His defensive stats rank him fairly well, considering his lack of first-team experience.

Let's not forget that Comuzzo is part of the Fiorentina defensive unit, which currently boasts the joint-best defensive record in Serie A.

PIETRO COMUZZO HEATMAP

P. COMUZZO HEATMAP

All games from Serie A 2024/2025



Comuzzo's role as the right centre-back in a back four is to provide security in and out of possession, as well as being a short passing option for various other positions such as the goalkeeper, left centre-back, right-back, and a range of midfielders.

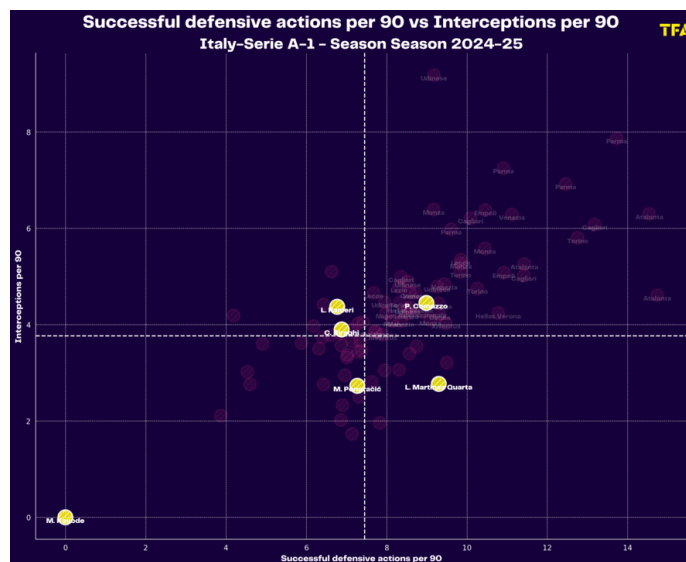
If you look at the above heatmap without knowing who it belongs to, you would likely guess a right-sided centre-back.

Comuzzo's positional presence is that of a traditional right centre-back; it is rare for him to operate in wide areas or drift to the left side of the pitch.

PIETRO COMUZZO DEFENSIVE QUALITIES

Comuzzo's ability to seamlessly transition at an elite level has been impressive.

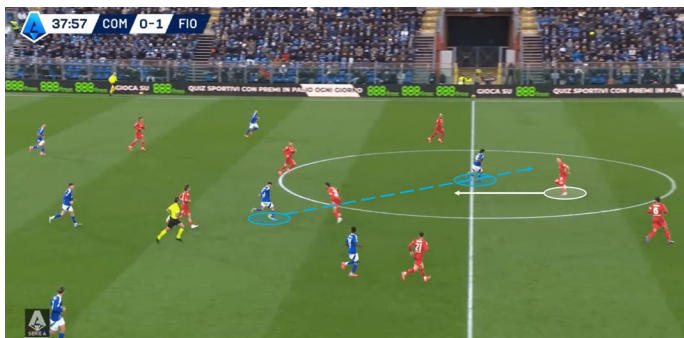
His defensive dominance is a key skill in his arsenal, which is part of the reason for the aforementioned transfer rumours.



This scout report repeatedly emphasises Comuzzo's above-average defensive metrics ranking compared to other Serie A centre-backs.

The graph above shows us that the young defender is more likely to make an interception than any other Fiorentina centre-back, which tells you something about his ability to read situations.

Figure 3 also tells us that Comuzzo is consistent when it comes to defensive action – making more successful defensive actions per 90 than many Serie A centre-backs.

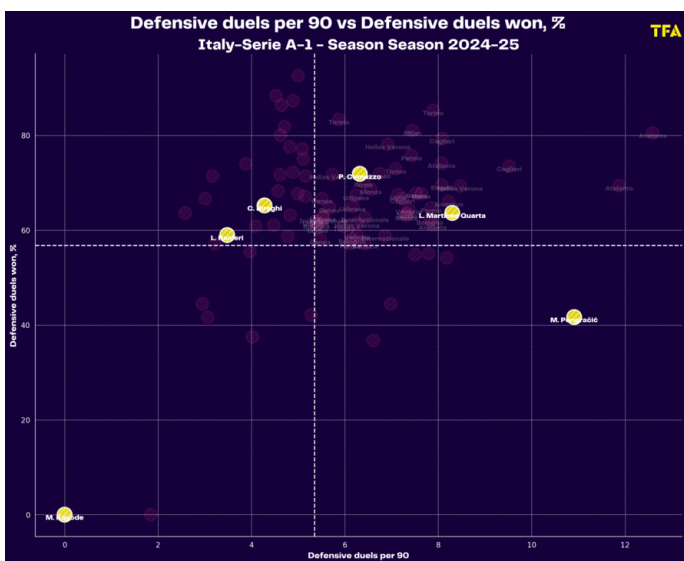


The data doesn't lie – Comuzzo's ability to intercept is a real asset.

Figure 4 demonstrates those qualities as Comuzzo shows some quick thinking to intercept a potentially dangerous through pass from the Como player.

Initially, the Como attacker making the run beyond Comuzzo peels away from the Fiorentina defender, meaning that if Comuzzo had shuffled across to try and mark the runner, the passer would've had the chance to play a splitting pass between the two Fiorentina defenders into the path of the Como runner.

Comuzzo was aware of this danger and knew the pass was coming, so instead opted to hang back a second before stepping into the passing line to intercept the through pass successfully – fantastic anticipation and reaction.



Thus far in Serie A this season, Comuzzo has been more effective than any of his Fiorentina teammates at centre-back when it comes to

defensive duels – the third-highest engagement rate combined with the highest success rate tells us that he is consistently able to do the dirty work off the ball and protect his goal effectively.

His numbers in both engagement and success are also comfortably above the league average for central defenders – yet more promising news for the young defender.

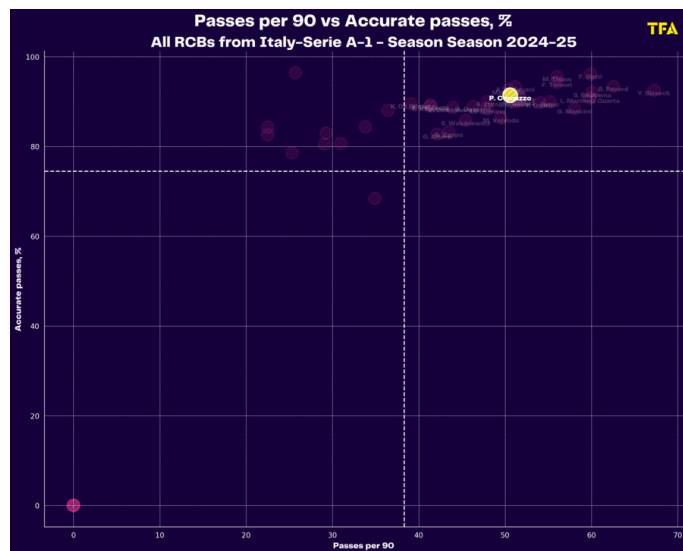
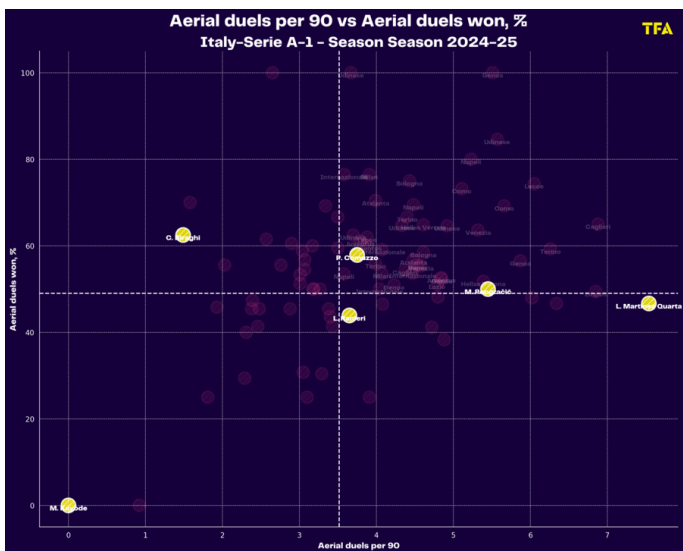


While Comuzzo doesn't venture too far forward when Fiorentina have possession, the young centre-back can sometimes be seen rushing into midfield areas to apply pressure and often engage in a defensive duel in midfield areas.

This action usually occurs when the opposition bypasses the initial Fiorentina press.

At this point, Comuzzo is deployed as he comes in with an element of surprise to disturb the opposition player on the ball.

His strength and technical execution in these duels make him very effective, which is likely why he has been instructed to undertake this defensive role in particular.



Standing around the 6’-6’1” mark, Pietro Comuzzo is not exceptionally tall for a centre-back, but his good positioning and timing allow him to be effective in aerial duels.

As you can see, his engagement is just above the league average.

At the same time, his success rate is comfortably above the league average and the second-highest among Fiorentina centre-backs.

PIETRO COMUZZO CONTRIBUTING TO POSSESSION

As we touched on, Comuzzo is what we’d label a ‘ball-playing centre-half’, but he plays an important and somewhat underrated role on the ball in how he does the simple things in the early stages of possession – he can also be effective at finding the first pass into midfield that allows Fiorentina to beat the initial press.

As we can see from the data above, Comuzzo is highly active on the ball (compared to Serie A centre-backs) and boasts an impressive accuracy rate—of his 46.73 passes per 90, 90.4% are accurate, suggesting excellent reliability in possession.

Fiorentina has averaged 52.7% possession so far this season.

In several games, they have dominated larger portions of the ball, so shifting the ball forward or into more useful areas is an integral part of Comuzzo’s game.



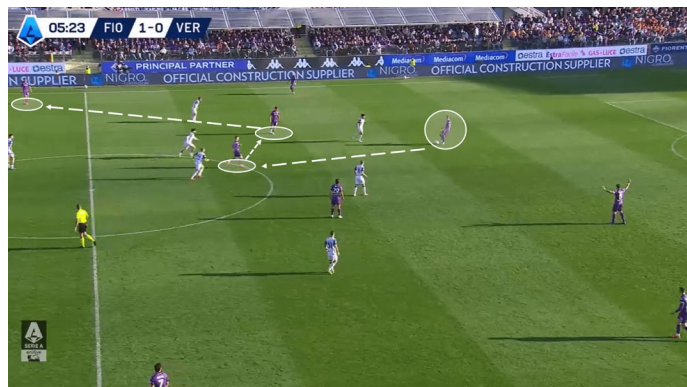
It is not uncommon in modern football that we see the centre-backs split and push into wider positions when their team has the ball – this isn’t something we’ve seen too much from Fiorentina this season, and it does suit Comuzzo’s attributes.

Being close to his centre-back partner allows them to move the ball on quickly to each other when needed; if the team aims to shift possession

from one flank to another, this kind of positioning can be effective.

It must be noted that Fiorentina's centre-back partnership does not usually sit as deep in possession as they do in the image above.

If La Viola have possession with the opposition penned in, expect to see them around the halfway line, with a distance similar to the one in the example above.



We mentioned earlier that Comuzzo could find that first pass, allowing Fiorentina to beat the initial opposition press.

Figure 10 shows an instance of Fiorentina looking to play through the Verona press, which has a high central midfield presence.

While it may have been possible to attempt a lofted ball to an open teammate in the flanks, those passes do come with their own various risks, and Fiorentina are clearly equipped to play through a press.

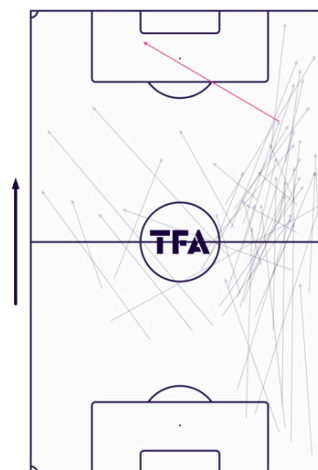
Comuzzo is able to play quickly on minimal touches when necessary.

Still, in situations like the one in Figure 10, he knows that patience and timing are vital – he was aware that shifting the ball to the left centre-back or right-back would only invite the opposition to increase their press in a more isolated area, so he looked an alternative option.

Comuzzo awaited the arrival of midfield support and played a short pass into the highlighted player – and what happened next suggests that this whole sequence of play is part of Fiorentina's tactics, as La Viola were able to play a series of passes that effectively eliminated the Verona midfield, completely bypassing the press and giving them the chance to launch a dangerous attack.

P. COMUZZO PROGRESSIVE PASSES

All games from Serie A 2024/2025



➤ Progressive pass
➤ Progressive pass into the penalty area

When discussing his radar map early in this scout report, we explained that Comuzzo doesn't regularly execute progressive passes.

However, they are still a part of his game, even though it is a small part, averaging 5.7 progressive passes per 90.

While many of his progressive passes take shape down that right flank, as you'd expect, interestingly, several progressive passes are going from right to left – a trait that can be effective in transitions, as explained later in Figure 13.



Many of the progressive passes Comuzzo makes are simple in appearance but important in possession progression.

The one above ticks that box – it doesn't require a great deal of vision to spot the pass out to the right flank, but it serves a vital role in getting Fiorentina into the final third.

There is also something to be said for decision-making here – Comuzzo could've easily played a short pass to one of the nearby teammates you see in Figure 12 but saw more value in the progressive pass to the wide area.



There are times when Comuzzo does demonstrate his passing vision, and as we touched on earlier, this trait, combined with progressive passing, can be very effective in attacking transitions.

Figure 13 shows us a moment in Fiorentina's game against Como where neither team were able to settle the ball down, with the ball going to and fro the two teams.

The ball then fell to Comuzzo, who showed good awareness and the ability to adjust his body position and shape, putting himself in good stead to hook a lofted ball into the left flank for his teammate to run onto.

Some may consider this pass a fluke, but Comuzzo showed several technical, tactical, and psychological traits in turning a moment of chaos into a well-executed pass to a teammate in dangerous attacking space—the pass was executed with his weaker left foot, too!

CONCLUSION

Pietro Comuzzo's meteoric rise into Fiorentina's first team, and as a regular starter too, is a credit to his ability.

When fans hear about an up-and-coming centre-back these days, they often expect a player with ridiculous passing range or the dribbling ability of a midfielder.

Comuzzo doesn't currently possess those traits, but that doesn't mean he lacks the qualities of a top-level defender.

At just 19, he has quickly asserted himself as an essential member of Fiorentina's lineup, playing an important role in their defensive and in-possession tactics.

Although his technical makeup in possession may appear limited, his composure and reliability on the ball allow him to execute simple yet necessary actions consistently.

Expect to see Comuzzo continue to contribute to Fiorentina's push for a place in European football next season, and speaking of next season, there's every chance a bigger club swoops in for him.

TARAS MYKHAVKO

TARAS MYKHAVKO



LEFT CENTRE-BACK

DYNAMO KYIV

In Total Football Analysis' 2025 Breakout XI, the left centre-back is 19-year-old Taras Mykhavko, who plays for Dynamo Kyiv.

At the time of writing, Dynamo Kyiv is the best defensive side in the Ukrainian Premier League, conceding 11 goals.

The young defender, who stands at 185cm / 6'1" and weighs 69kg / 152lbs, has joined the first team from the beginning of 2024, coming from the U19 team he joined from PFC Lviv.

The 19-year-old has played in 15 of the league's 17 matches this season, missing two due to injury.

In these 15 matches, he received no yellow cards, indicating that he can get the ball back without tough fouls.

This tactical analysis and player-focused scout report aims to explain why we've selected Taras Mykhavko for this team.

Our player analysis will use data and video analysis to explain why this left-footed centre-back is a rising talent to watch closely as 2025 approaches.

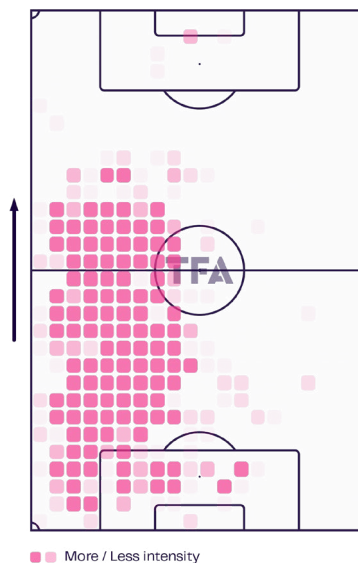
TARAS MYKHAVKO GENERAL PROFILE

As shown in the heat map below, we are talking about a diversely skilled defender who can play as a left centre-back in a four-defender backline or a three-defender backline.

This player has more ability to push forward while the ball is in his side.

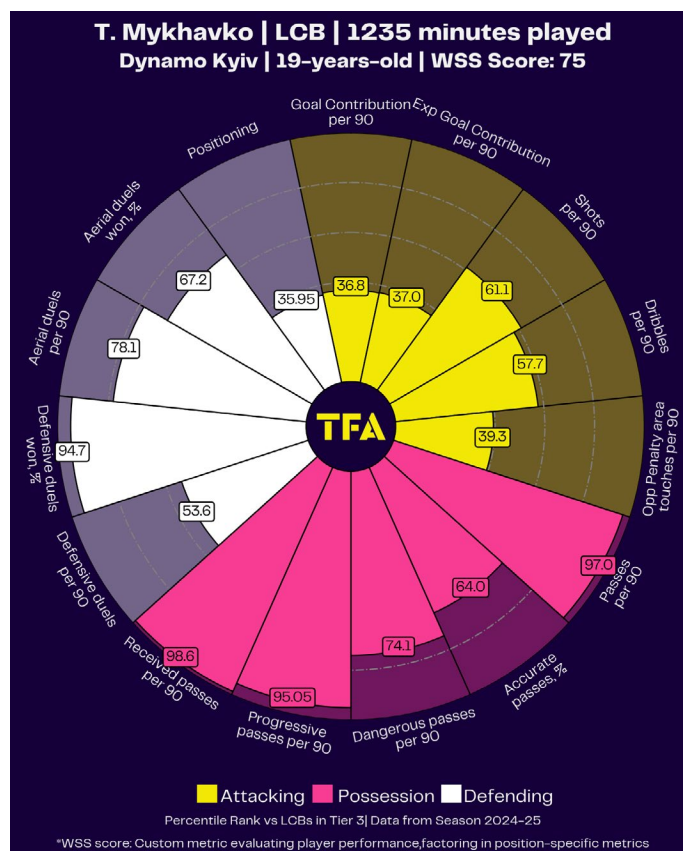
T. MYKHAVKO HEATMAP

All games from VBET League 2024/2025



The photo below features a pizza chart featuring some significant metrics related to Taras Mykhavko's all-around game, divided into three unique categories: attacking, possession, and defending metrics.

The numbers on the pizza chart represent Taras' performance in these criteria when compared with other left centre-backs playing in the leagues at the same tier in 2024/25.



He stands out in the possession section in the photo above, especially in progressive passes per 90.

As we will clarify in the video analysis, this is a small indicator that he fits in elite attacking teams.

It's also clear that he is good at the defensive duels won percentage (94.7), but not a beast in the aerial duels one percentage (67.2).

SKILLS WITH THE BALL

Starting with his attacking skills, we will discuss his ability to be effective in the possession phase when the team has the ball.

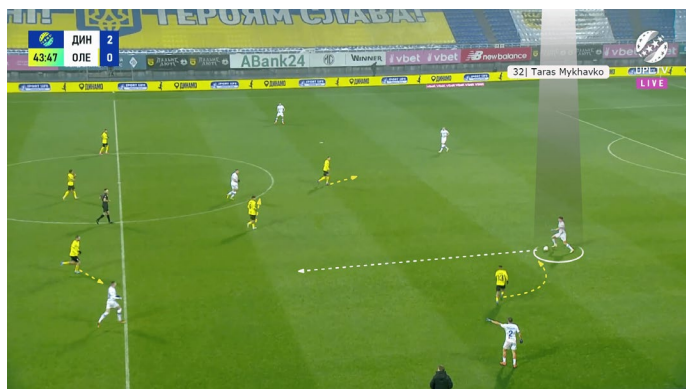
DRIBBLING

His clearest skill is his ability to dribble with the ball to benefit the team.

In the case below, we prove that dribbling is not just running with the ball without a desire; it also allows the player to open many spaces, failing the opponent's pressing scheme.

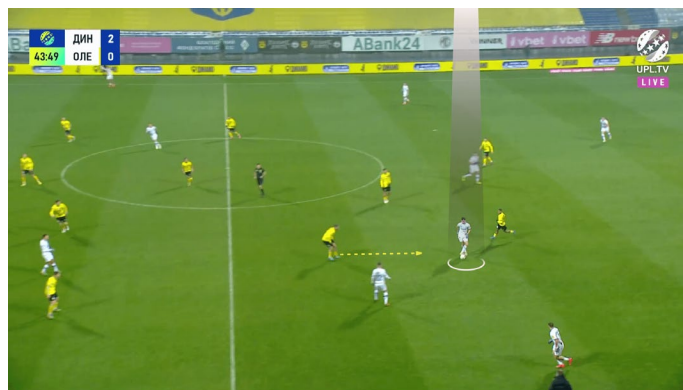
As shown below, he has the ball but mostly has no free choice to pass.

At the same time, an opponent presses him in a curved run to cover the shadow of the full-back while pressing him, so he decides to dribble forward with the ball.



As shown below, he makes it difficult for an opponent to press him or stay with the midfielder.

The midfielder decides to press him, so he easily passes the ball to his mate, who becomes free. He also has an option now to pass to the full-back.



In the case below, he does the same thing against AS Roma in the UEFA Europa League, clearly showing the importance of this action.

He has the ball while the striker is still too far away from pressing, so he asks the opponent the same question, not just standing on the ball and closing the passing option, as many defenders do.



He continues dribbling, so a midfielder is asked to go to press him.



This player initially leaves the space where he stands, which Taras Mykhavko exploits by sending a pass behind him into the empty space.

CAN SEE PASSES

His second important skill is his ability to see the best and cleverest passing options to create space.

Many players just run with the ball toward their teammates, closing the passing options and narrowing their space.

In the case below, he discovered a space for his teammate, who didn't realise the good space he stood in and could exploit.

In the photo below, he has the ball while the six in his team is asking him to pass to the other centre-back, not realising the area he has or maybe because of the striker who cuts the passing lane to him.



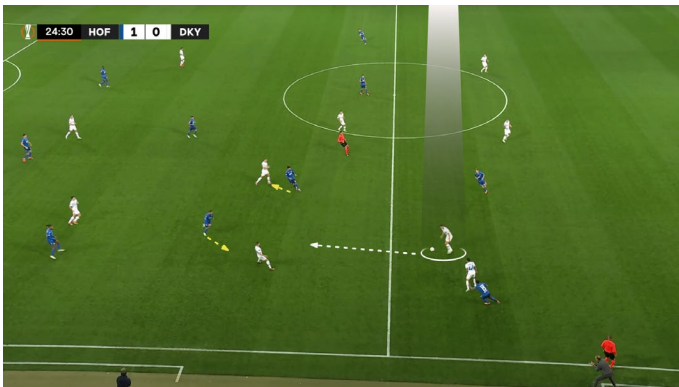
The 19-year-old defender dribbles a bit toward the other centre-back, making the striker shift slightly toward him.

This opens the passing lane for the six, who can now receive and turn to exploit this area.



As in the case below, he can dribble straight and feint with the ball to find the right passing option.

He gets the ball back to his team and dribbles with the ball as usual, reaching the opponent's midfield.



In the photo below, he fakes that he will pass and then dribbles inside, passing the ball to his teammate on the right, who has the option to pass to the area behind the midfield, as in the two following photos.



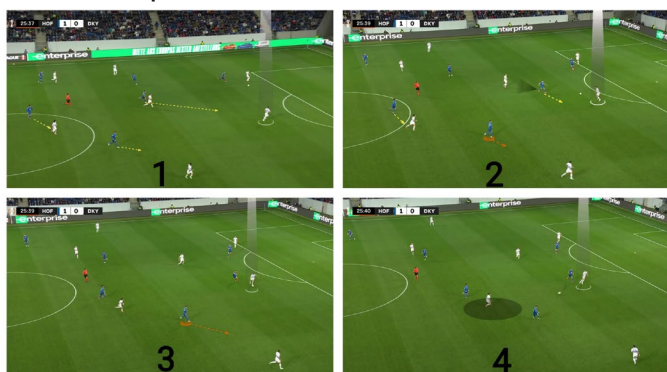
COMPOSURE ON THE BALL

He can't implement these skills without the third important one: being composed on the ball without any rush, waiting for the best solution to keep possession with his team, not just clearing the ball.

In the first photo below, the other centre-back passes the ball to him horizontally, which triggers the opponent to press him while pressing the near-passing options (yellow arrows).

It is apparent in the second photo that he is pressed and can't even find the six because the pressing player covers the shadow of him, but his neck is always high, so he can always behave.

He lets the ball come over him to make the orange defender think that he will pass to the left full-back and then passes the ball into the space into the middle at the right moment, which can be called a disguised pass, as shown in the third and fourth photos.



Sometimes, defenders just need to compose and pause the game until the appropriate passing moment when the passing lane is open.

It is evident in the photo that he is in a difficult situation pressed by an attacker who curves his run, which makes it risky to pass to the left, so he receives the ball calmly without fear, raising his neck trying to find a passing lane to the right full-back by just small touches to open the passing lane waiting for the appropriate time.



The plan works, as shown in the photo below.



OFF-THE-BALL SKILLS

Now, the time has come to discuss his defending skills.

We will start with a crucial factor for many teams in modern football: defending on the front foot.

FRONT-FOOT DEFENDING

front-foot defending means that the defender should always stand at an appropriate and moderate distance between him and the defender to be able to intercept the pass played to the attacker before him or at least prevent him from turning around, depending on the situation.

He shouldn't be so close not to have a through pass played at his back and shouldn't be so far not to give the attacker the time to turn and face the defence.

Hence, applying the proper front-foot defending is difficult.

He stands at a good distance from the opponent with good anticipation, which makes him expect these passes (green arrows), so he starts to be a bit closer.



This simple action prevents the attacker from turning and creating danger.



The scene also ends perfectly by returning the ball to his team, not just preventing the attacker from turning.

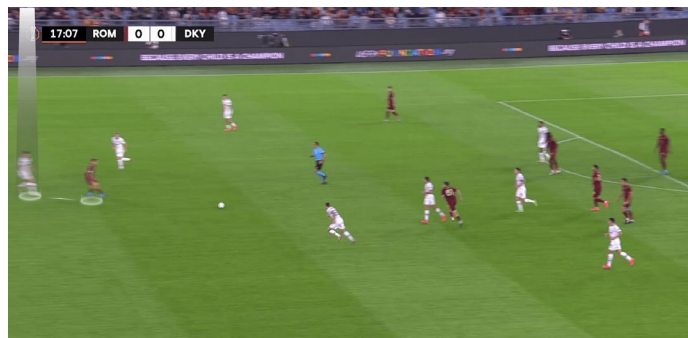


He implements the same strategy even if he is in a higher position on the pitch.

He is not afraid to push high, which is an important skill, especially at such a young age.

In the photo below, he pushes up with the attacker in the transition phase to prevent the counterattack from the beginning.

He keeps the same appropriate distance to prevent the attacker from turning and is ready to fall back if he suddenly turns to receive a through ball behind him.



He commits a foul because of a small push but still kills the counterattack and prevents the attacker from turning.



Here, we should mention a potential weakness which he can improve, especially since he is still a youngster.

This weakness appears when he hesitates to go forward to defend on the front foot because it makes him neither stay in position nor prevent the opponent from turning.

Let's see an example.

In the first photo below, the two green passes are easily expected.

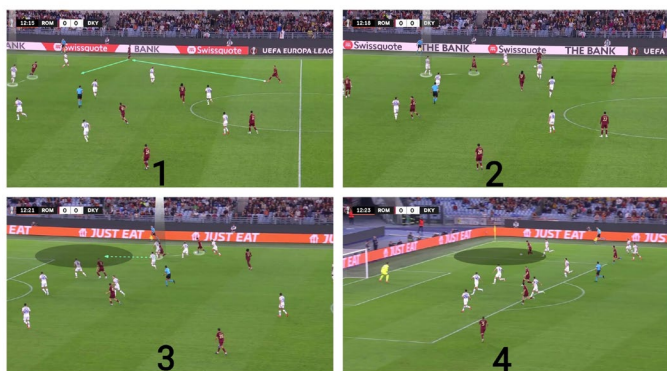
He starts at a good, moderate distance from Rome's inside attacker (inside winger), who he is responsible for as the left centre-back in a back-three line.

Once the ball reaches Rome's wingback, the opponent rushes toward the fullback to receive the pass.

Then, he hesitates to push up with him all that distance, which makes the distance longer.

This Rome player receives the ball and turns easily, then sends a through ball behind Taras Mykhavko to the running wing-back again, leading to a dangerous situation.

Front-foot defending can't be implemented reasonably because Taras Mykhavko, in this case, neither stands to cover his area nor prevents the opponent from turning.



HEADING

As we have illustrated with data analysis, he may need some improvement in his heading skills.

He is not bad, but he just needs some adjustments and instructions regarding the timing, decision and trying to keep the ball with his team after the heading.

The first part means that it's crucial to choose the timing and decide whether the situation needs him to go to win the header in the full-back zone or not, depending on the measurement of the risk and the long ball.

The second part means that he sometimes prioritises just clearing the ball away, especially near his box.

Still, elite defenders also try to find a heading passing option to keep possession in case the situation helps.

Let's see an example, knowing he is still young and can improve in these small aspects.

In the photo below, Taras Mykhavko decides to chase this aerial conflict near the left full-back.

This is good and usually happens in many teams, but you should be sure when you do that because you will leave a huge space behind you if you fail.

It is supposed to be teamwork, not a single one, with the rest of the defensive line standing narrowly and covering you.



In the photo below, Taras Mykhavko leaves his space and fails to measure this aerial situation properly, leaving a dangerous area behind him that the ball can reach.

This has already happened.

We repeat that he can be better in this aspect with more experience.



CONCLUSION

In this analysis, we have illustrated Taras Mykhavko's various skills, showing his ability to be effective offensively and defensively, especially at such a young age.

We have also shown how he can improve on some points.

This scout report dissects his dribbling skills, ability to see passes, composure on the ball, and front-foot defending while showing how he needs to improve his tackling and heading.



DATA VIZ

DYLAN LEONARD

WESTERN UNITED LEFT CENTRE-BACK

VENKATANARAYANAN VENKATESAN // @VENKYREDDEVIL

Our sub left centre-back is Dylan Leonard of Western United. One of the brightest young defenders playing in the A-League is Western United's 17-year-old centre-back, Dylan Leonard.

Leonard is a right-footed left centre-back and the youngest Western United squad player. The below visualisation highlights where Leonard ranks for some key metrics when compared with the other left-sided centre-backs who play in the A-League and other similar leagues.

Leonard's biggest strength is his ability on the ball. He is very composed and not hesitant to take risks in possession for someone his age. He is very comfortable receiving and progressing, ranking in the 66th percentile for Progressive passes per 90.

Leonard also covers a lot of space, and his defensive actions are almost spread across the entire left side.

He is suited to play in a high line because of his pace and 1v1 defending, as well as his aggressive and proactive nature in tackling.

He lacks the aerial prowess that is often a desirable strength in a centre-back, but he makes up for it with his other attributes.

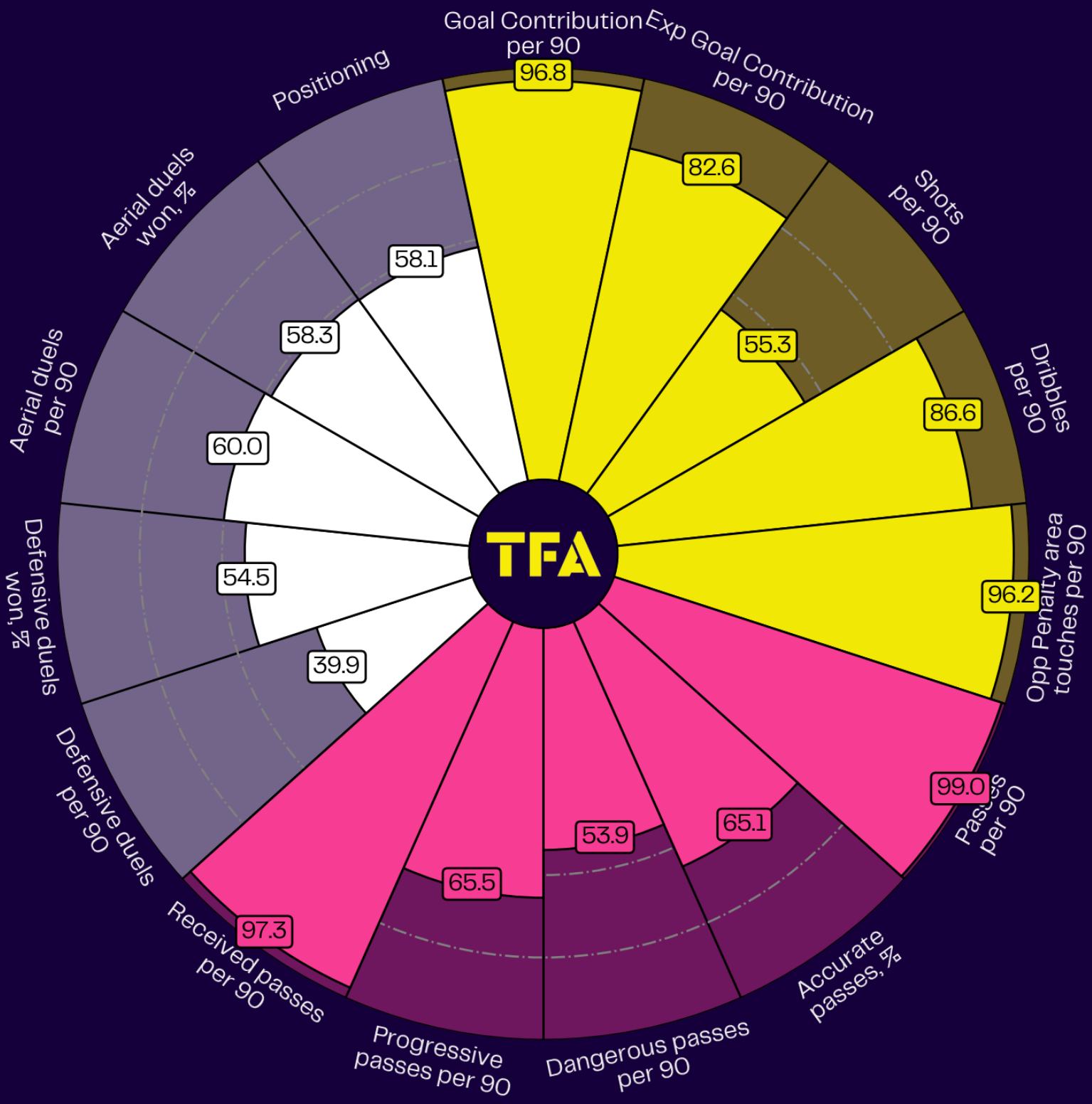
Dylan Leonard is still only 17 years old and has caught the attention of a number of scouts already. Leonard has been reliable for his club so far.

He hopes to be a regular starter this season and will make the best of his opportunities to see where that takes him in 2025.

Leonard has almost all the qualities expected of a modern-day centre-back and is surely one of the defenders to watch out for in 2025.

D. Leonard | LCB | 491 minutes played

Western United | 17-years-old | WSS Score: 68



■ Attacking
 ■ Possession
 ■ Defending

Percentile Rank vs LCBs in Tier 6 | Data from Season 2024-25

*WSS score: Custom metric evaluating player performance, factoring in position-specific metrics

JOAQUIN SEYS

JOAQUIN SEYS



LEFT-BACK

CLUB BRUGGE

EDIN HALILOVIĆ // @EDHALILOVIC96

Joaquin Seys is at left-back in Total Football Analysis' 2025 Breakout XI.

It's been quite the year for Seys, who has gone from playing in Club Brugge's reserve team, Club NXT in the second tier, to becoming a nailed-on starter for the senior squad in a matter of months.

What catches the eye about him is his conversion to right-back since joining Nicky Hayden's team in the summer, having never played the position before at Club NXT and indeed performing as well as he has since switching flanks.

He also earned a call-up from Domenico Tedesco for the Belgian senior national team for November's UEFA Nations League games.

However, he couldn't participate after picking up an injury shortly after the announcement.

And to put the cherry on top of the cake, he recently won the Dominique D'Onofrio Prize, awarded to the best debutant of the year in the Belgian Pro League, which made him only the second Club Brugge player to win the award after Charles De Ketelaere.

Quite an impressive progression in a short space of time for a player who had never represented his country beyond the U19s at national level, and the way things are going, there's a lot more in store for Seys in 2025 and beyond.

We may be cheating a bit by including him as a left-back, given that he's been a mainstay on the opposite side of his club in recent months.

But given that he's still naturally a left-footed left-back and that he is one of the fastest-rising young players in Europe in either position, we believe his place in our team is more than justified.

This scout report and player analysis will examine Seys' progression this season, his strengths and

areas for improvement, and what makes him one to watch in 2025.

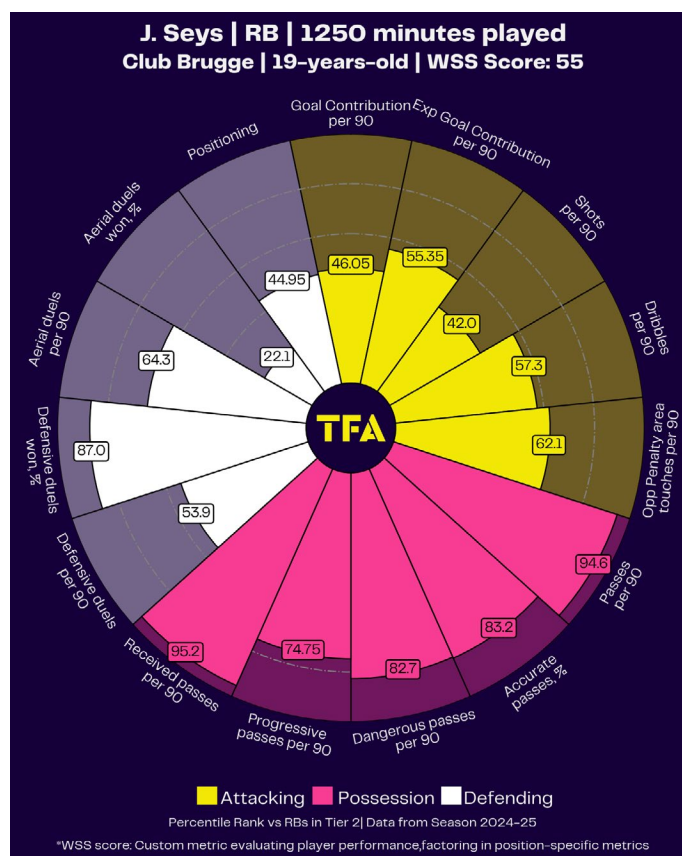
PLAYER PROFILE

Joaquin Seys is a 19-year-old full-back who has played for Club Brugge since he joined them from Oostende in 2012 when he was seven.

He's also amassed twelve caps for Belgium's youth national teams at U18 and U19 levels before his maiden senior call-up in November 2024.

At 1.78m (5'10') and 64 kg (141 lbs), Seys has all the essential ingredients of a modern full-back: quick, athletic, technically solid, and contributive both on and off the ball for his team, covering a lot of ground each game up and down the flank.

JOAQUIN SEYS 2024/25 RADAR MAP



As shown in the radar map above, his 2024/25 season data clearly stand out.

His strong performance in possession ranks him in the 82nd percentile or higher in nearly every metric.

Another essential aspect to highlight above is his impressive win rate in defensive duels.

He ranks in the 87th percentile, which means he is in the top 13% in that area.

This demonstrates his qualities on the defensive side of his game.

While his aerial duels and positioning could use work, his attacking metrics are well-balanced.

Nothing really stands out; his numbers are about average for his position.

Overall, there are no glaring weaknesses going off his radar map, which makes him a well-rounded full-back and is a big reason why he's gained the trust for a starting role in one of Belgium's biggest clubs early in his career.

Let's examine some areas of his game that stand out and could use some work as he enters the New Year.

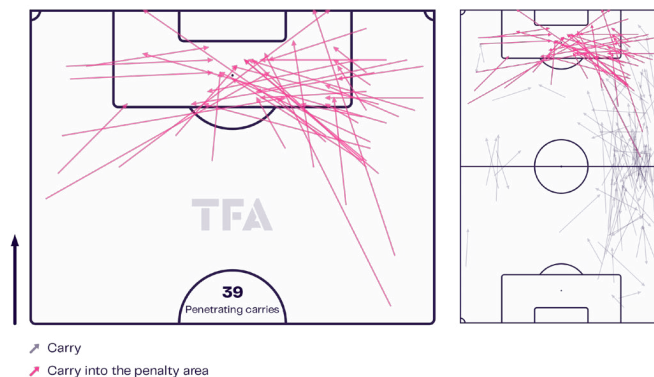
STRENGTHS

One reason for Seys' rapid progression this year is his confidence and belief in himself, which he expresses on the field through his ball-carrying abilities.

JOAQUIN SEYS 2024/25 PENETRATING CARRIES MAP

J. SEYS PENETRATING CARRIES

All games from Pro League 2024/2025



With 39 penetrating carries — displaying his runs across the pitch and into the opposition penalty area with the ball — Seys is a natural with the ball at his feet and is proactive when it comes to progressing the play from deep.

His willingness and courage to move forward make him an essential tool for Club Brugge's transitional attacks from wide areas.

His ball retention skills are excellent, and he rarely panics, even under pressure.



Here's an example of his ball-carrying abilities and confidence from the game against Mechelen.

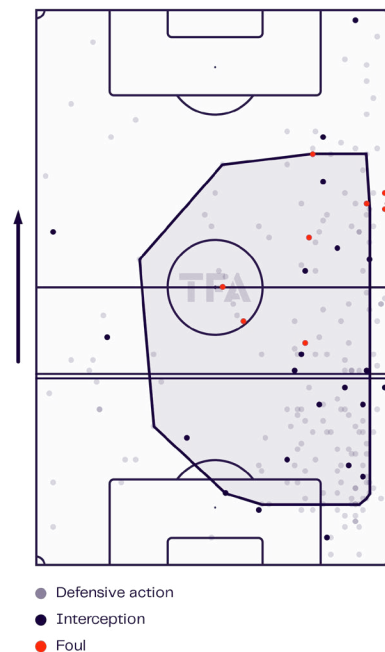
Seys is in a deeper position to support his centrebacks during the build-up phase.

As he receives the pass, a Mechelen player comes over to make it difficult for him to decide when the ball arrives at his feet.

JOAQUIN SEYS 2024/25 DEFENSIVE TERRITORY MAP

J. SEYS DEFENSIVE TERRITORY

All games from Pro League 2024/2025



Another strength of his is the aggression which he plays with when it comes to defending and pressing off the ball.

As his defensive territory map above shows, Seys is quite active when defending, taking actions and intercepting all across the right flank and half-space.

This comes from his instincts to push up and be the aggressor when he needs to be or senses the opportunity.

One such example came early in the home game against Gent, which we'll see below.



Seys cleverly uses the weight of the pass to guide it in the opposite direction of the run from the player who was attempting to press him.

This allows him to run with the ball into an empty space in front of him and progress the play further upfield.



Due to Mechelen's poor pressing structure, Seys could run some 50-60 yards upfield close to their penalty area after beating the first line of their press.

The important thing here is to highlight his tendencies to carry the ball forward and make good decisions even under pressure.

This example displays some of his games with the ball at his feet.

Here, we can see Gent looking to build their attack from the back through their left-hand side and Seys pushing up as the near-side full-back away from the rest of the defensive line.

Before the pass is even played, Seys is already moving towards the player, ready to receive and turn towards the attacking half with the ball.

As Seys has already figured out early in the game, the Gent player in question is predominantly left-footed.

Allowing him time and space to receive the ball and turn towards him could spell danger for him and his side defensively.

So, instead of waiting for the inevitable to happen, he decides to press early, before the ball is played.



As a result, he can come across to intercept the pass in time and regain possession for his team in the attacking half.

This highlights his intelligent decision-making, timing, and aggression when pressing higher up the field, which have been valuable assets for Club Brugge throughout the season.

AREAS OF IMPROVEMENT

While Seys doesn't have any glaring weaknesses, as we've covered in this analysis, he will have to improve on some aspects of his game.

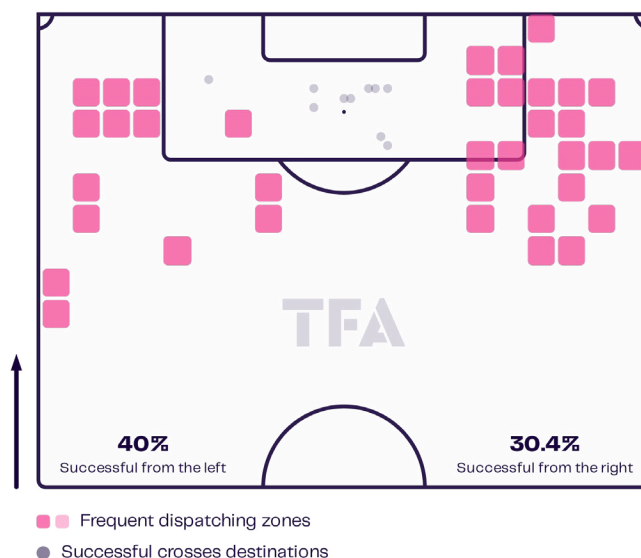
One is partially due to his conversion to right-back as a left-footed player.

His left foot makes it more awkward and unnatural for him to go down the byline and cross into the box like most right-footed right-backs would.

JOAQUIN SEYS 2024/25 CROSSING ZONES MAP

J. SEYS CROSSING ZONES

All games from Pro League 2024/2025



As we can gather from his crossing zones map above from this season, with just a 30% success rate from the right-hand side, it's obvious that he will need to work on this if he continues playing right-back in the long term.

Only his managers will know whether that's the plan.

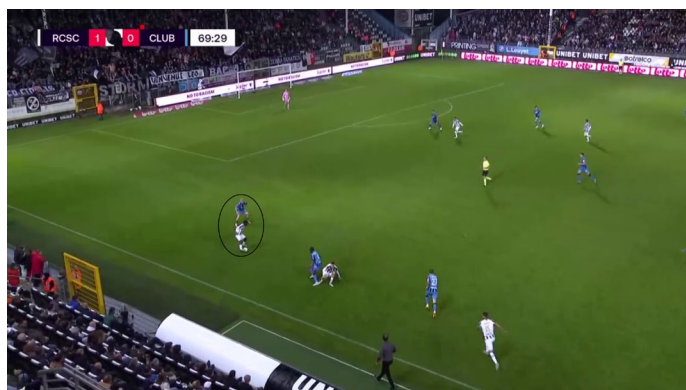
Still, to become a proper two-sided full-back, he will have to invent ways to improve his final third performance, especially in situations where it's natural to cross on his right.

One way he can achieve separation from his marker in tighter spaces is to use his dribbling ability, but in general, he may have to keep improving his weak foot to produce more qualitative deliveries into the penalty area.

Another area that will need some work is his defending, specifically his aerial duels and defensive positioning.

We already noted a deficiency in both when looking at his radar map earlier and the lower percentile ranks in those metrics.

Let's take one of the situations in which he could work on his defensive positioning.



We've already mentioned how he likes to press higher up the field, which can create spaces behind him if he fails to intercept the ball.

In this example, we'll instead examine a situation in which he defends from a deeper position in a 1v1 match against an opposing winger.

Above, we can see the Charleroi left winger receiving the ball with his back facing Seys.

Although Seys could try to get tighter and nick the ball here, he opts to stay static.



While that mistake allowed the winger to turn towards goal, we'll highlight here what Seys does when that happens, which signals a flaw in his defensive game.

The arrows in the image above indicate two things: the black arrow indicates where Seys should try to take the winger, and the red arrow indicates where the winger wants to go, given that he's on his preferred side.

Seys instead leaves the room open for the winger to run outside of him, forcing him to defend on his weaker side.



Instead, he ends up getting beat in the final ten yards as he tries to get tighter, and the Charleroi winger gets the chance to pull the ball back across the six-yard box for a goalscoring chance, which in the end wasn't converted.

This example highlights the discomfort Seys has when defending against left-footed wingers who like to go on the outside, meaning he has to defend on his weaker foot.

Just as it's awkward for players playing on the opposite side of their preferred foot to cross the ball into the box, the same applies to players when defending on the flanks against tricky wingers.

In this situation, Seys could have done more to show the winger inside but instead gambled on himself to win a 1v1 duel on the outside and didn't manage to do so here.

Again, it showcases his confidence in his abilities, but from a defensive standpoint, it's not something he can rely on every single time.

If he stays at right-back long term, he will have to learn how to manipulate these situations better.

CONCLUSION

Joaquin Seys has made a remarkable progression in under half a year, becoming a regular fixture in Club Brugge's starting eleven after playing for their reserves just last season.

His efforts didn't stop there. He was crowned the best young player in the league for 2024 and earned himself a call to the Belgian national side before even playing for the U21s.

All of this has him earmarked as one young talent to watch in 2025, and that's why he's in Total Football Analysis' Breakout XI.

It will be interesting to follow the trajectory of his development over the next 12 months, with senior national team caps likely to come given Belgium's relatively doable FIFA World Cup qualifying group and with crunch UEFA Champions League fixtures against Juventus and Manchester City for his club who are vying for a knockout berth.

Seys will be looking to impress on these occasions, and if he does so, a transfer out of Belgium to one of the elite leagues in 2025 may be on the horizon.



LENNON MILLER

LENNON MILLER



RIGHT CENTRAL MIDFIELD

MOTHERWELL

Scotland may have a generational talent in their ranks.

Lennon Miller, 18, has caught the eye of the footballing world for his mature performances.

These have made him one of Scotland's most exciting young players and one of Europe's most promising talents.

Scottish football has received bad publicity recently, with its top clubs failing to give talented youngsters the minutes they require in their first team to establish themselves as top-level professionals.

Much of this criticism is harsh as the competitive nature of the Scottish top flight means that it's difficult to give young players the time to develop when every game matters.

Yet Motherwell knew they had a talent ready to make the leap that very few have or are making in Scottish football.

Six days after turning 16, Lennon Miller became Motherwell's youngest player in 2022.

Having attended Well's academy since the age of eight, this was a special moment for the North Lanarkshire club.

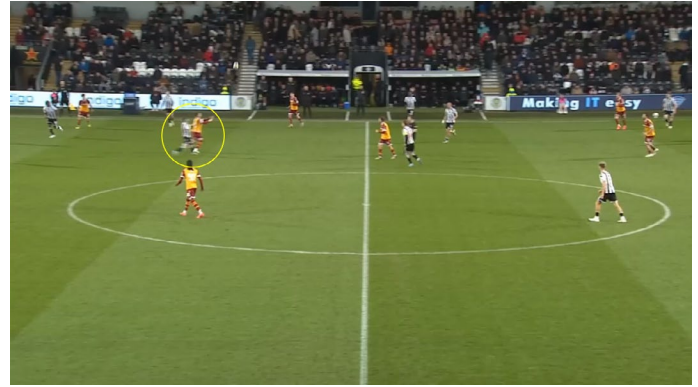
The midfielder has established himself as a key component of The Steelemen and is now being watched by some of the biggest clubs in Britain.

So what makes him special?

PHYSICAL

Lennon Miller stands around 5'10". He is not the tallest player, but the young Scot's size rarely hinders him.

Miller has a decent aerial duels win percentage of 40.3%.



In this situation, a long ball is played towards Miller.

He's able to outjump his opponent and make clean contact with the ball, heading it away from danger.

Miller's physical strength has also matched the required standards.

Scotland has long been known for its rough nature, which means that players must be adequately physically developed before they can be trusted.

Miller shows no signs of weakness and is more than willing to compete for the ball against experienced pros.



Here, we see Miller going into a 50/50 challenge that many young players would be afraid to face.

Miller goes full throttle into the challenge and cleanly wins the ball from his opponent.

Another physical quality that Miller possesses is incredible stamina.

Miller has started every league game for Motherwell this season and has played 99% of his side's league minutes, showing his ability to be relied upon even in the dying moments of a match.

POSITION

Miller is a manager's dream. Despite his age, Miller has shown incredible versatility.

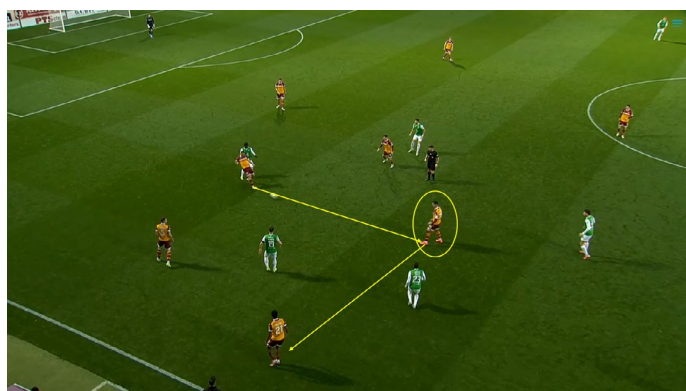
Miller can be used as a number 6, number 8 and a number 10 and has qualities that suit each position.

One of the major reasons for Miller's capabilities to play anywhere in the midfield is his elite awareness.

Miller is constantly scanning.

He will always look to assess what areas he can take up.

Then, once he's picked up a pocket of space he'll scan to decide what options are available to him or what defenders will press him if he receives the ball.



We see a perfect example of Miller's awareness in this situation.

He has dropped into a gap that allows him to receive the ball.

Before doing so, he scans and is aware that he has an opponent who could press him.

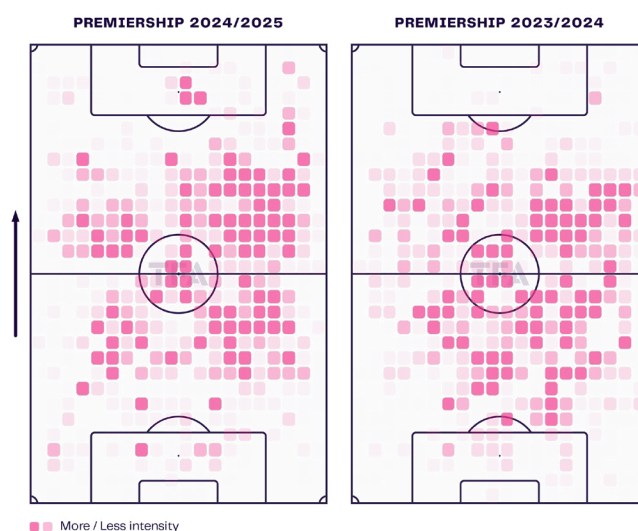
As the ball travels towards him, he knows his next move.

Despite being pressed, he quickly flicks the ball neatly around the corner first-time.

Even in his short career, Miller's positioning has evolved.

He has been tasked with contributing more to his side in the attacking third.

L. MILLER HEATMAP



When comparing his heatmaps over the past two seasons, you can see a slight increase in the number of actions he's completing in higher positions.

In his nine appearances starting as an attacking midfielder, he has five goal contributions to his name.

ATTACKING

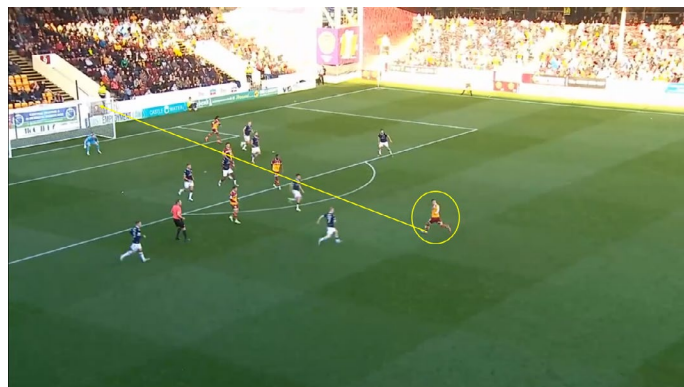
As highlighted, Miller has become far more of a threat over the past season, playing in more advanced positions.

This has led to his grabbing his first Scottish Premiership.



Here, Miller makes his way into the crowded box, and as the ball ricochets to the Scotland under 21 international, he fires the ball into the bottom corner.

However, most of Miller's shots come from outside the area.



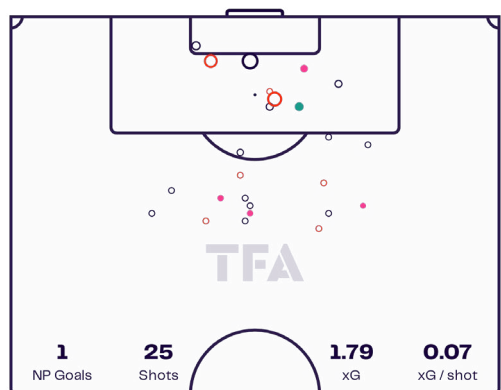
In this situation, Miller has a shot from distance.

The shot tested the goalkeeper and forced him to make a save.

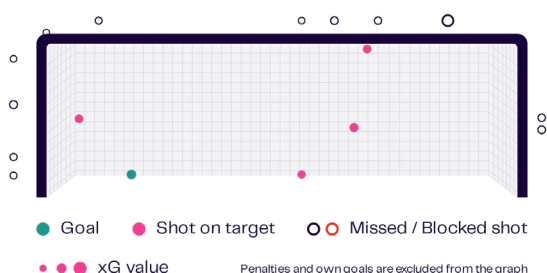
However, Miller will need to get into the penalty area more often if he wants to score more goals.

L. MILLER SHOTS

All games from Premiership 2024/2025



1/1 PENALTIES SCORED

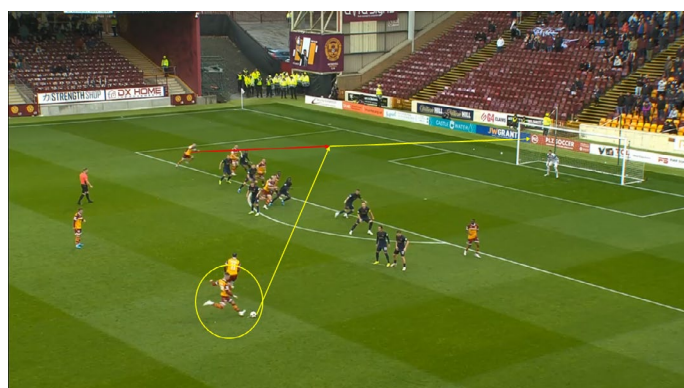


When you look at Miller's shot map this season, you see that he's taken a large number of shots from positions where he's unlikely to score, leading to a remarkably low xG per shot figure of 0.07.

Although he does not regularly appear on the scoresheet, he still contributes through his ability to create.

So far this season, Miller has five assists to his name.

These assists have come from free kicks, demonstrating his quality from set-pieces.



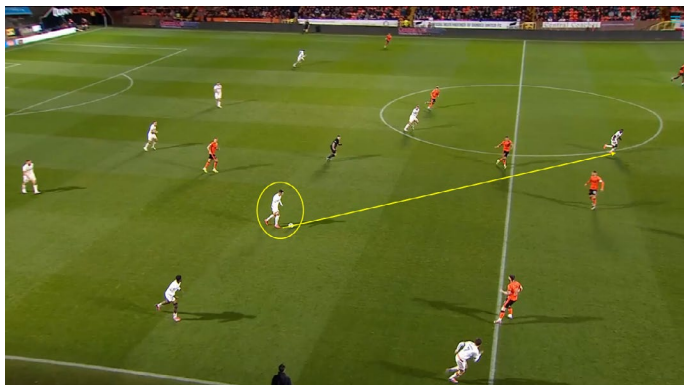
Here, Miller delivers a dangerous cross from a deep free-kick into the penalty area.

He puts an enormous amount of whip on the ball, aiming it towards the back post, where an unmarked teammate heads it home.

Yet Miller's ability to create can't be purely limited to his set-pieces.

Miller wants to create and looks to play forward whenever possible.

Over a third of all his passes are forward, demonstrating his willingness to progress play.



In this example, Miller has just intercepted a pass and raises his head to see his options.

When one of his forwards becomes available, he plays an excellent line-breaking pass that finds his teammate's feet.

Miller can play progressive passes from deep and find teammates through intricate passes higher up the pitch.



In this situation, Miller receives the ball at the edge of the box.

He then returns it to the player he received it from with perfect weight and timing, executing a perfect 1-2 that gets Motherwell into the opponent's area.

Miller's passing quality can be seen statistically.

He averages a remarkable 2 key passes per 90.

He also has impressive rates of 7.08 and 2.93 for passes into the final third and penalty area per 90, respectively.

DEFENDING

Miller's ability to create and play forward is utilised across the three roles he fulfils in Motherwell's midfield.

However, his ability to defend has also been a real asset to the Well, who have emerged victorious in midfield battles this season.

Like all great defensive-minded midfielders, Miller has a fantastic ability to make interceptions.

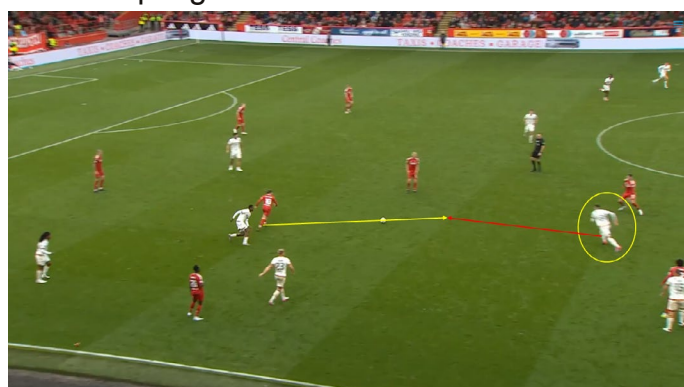
He averages 4.5 interceptions per 90.



Here, we see Miller stepping in to make an excellent interception that prevents the opposition from progressing play.

This highlights Miller's ability to read the game.

Although his intelligence is a significant factor in his defensive duties, his athleticism and competitiveness also contribute to his success in intercepting.

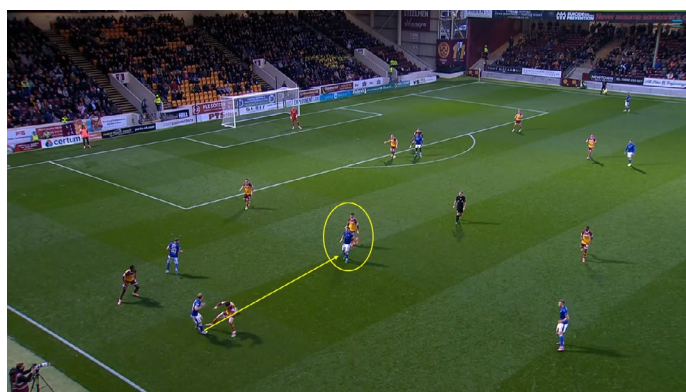


In this situation, an opposition player fails to play a pass at the appropriate pace.

While his opponent is caught flat-footed, Miller steps quickly before his direct opponent to win the ball.

Miller possesses the ability to win his defensive duels, which is an unbelievable asset.

He has won an outstanding 69.5% of his defensive duels.



Here, Miller sticks tightly to the opposition's number 10.

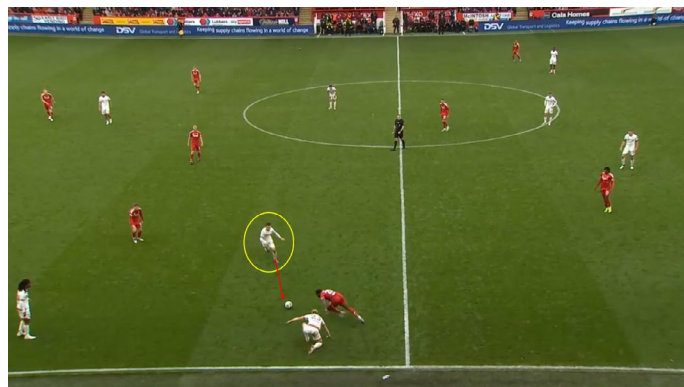
As the ball is played into the feet of the attacking midfielder, Miller remains close and prevents his opponent from turning before eventually winning the ball.

Miller isn't responsible for sitting deep and waiting for the opposition to attack before he engages defensively; he can press intensely when required.

The number of high regains Miller has made this season proves his worth to teams that may want to press more aggressively than Motherwell has this season.

He's made an incredible 43 counterpressing recoveries.

This number of counterpressing recoveries shows Lennon's excellent reaction during the defensive transition.

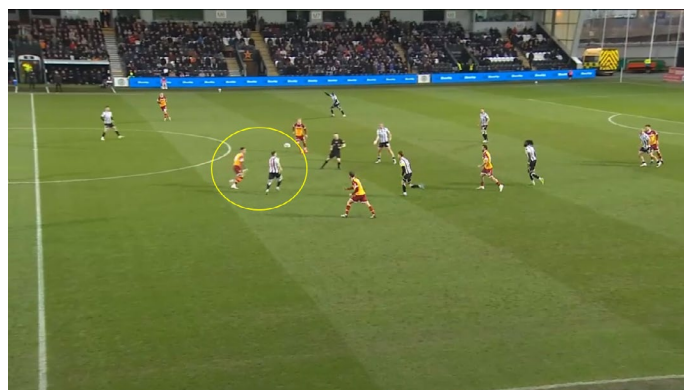


In this situation, Miller sees his teammate lose out in a duel.

He quickly reacts and presses his opponent to win the ball back.

Part of Miller's success when winning the ball high up the pitch defensive is his ability to win second balls.

This is another feature of his play that shows his excellent reaction skills.



This example demonstrates Miller's capacity to win second balls perfectly.

Here, after the opposition have made first contact with a long ball, Miller pounces on the opponent who the ball is heading towards.

He quickly muscles him off the ball, allowing him to secure possession.

PSYCHOLOGICAL

Many factors suggest Miller is far more mature than his fellow professionals, who are similarly aged to the Wishaw-born player.

He shows an immense level of composure on the ball and never seems to panic when being pressed.

Stuart Kettlewell, his manager, has also shown tremendous faith in the number of responsibilities he has assigned to his young starlet.

He's been given important tasks such as taking many of his side's free-kicks and corners.

The duties of penalties have also been passed over Miller in recent times.

The most remarkable is that Miller has captained the side on multiple occasions.

The absence of captain Paul McGinn and vice-captain Stephen O'Donnell has provided Miller with an opportunity he probably wouldn't have expected so early on in his career.

Amazingly, Miller's first appearance as Captain came last season as a 17-year-old.

Only a player with immense maturity could lead a side of senior professionals at such a young age.

Miller keeps taking responsibility after responsibility and shows no sign of a decrease in performance.

He thrives under the added pressure, proving he truly is the real deal.

CONCLUSION

Through this scout report, we have identified many characteristics that have earned Lennon Miller the much-deserved attention he has received.

He's developed athletically, allowing him to compete in the physical Scottish game.

He can play and thrive in a variety of positions.

In possession, he has room to grow in the number of goals he contributes to but has, without question, proven his worth in terms of creating.

Miller also proves his defensive qualities through his ability to win his duels and make critical interceptions.

It's also clear that he has immense maturity, most notably in captaining his club side.

I predict Miller will make his next move to either a mid-table Premier League club, a top-half Serie A club or one of the Old-firm.

Miller already looks like one of the best players in the Scottish Premiership, so I believe he will be keen to test himself in another league.

He will want to continue having consistent playing time, which has been so vital to his development.

In the long term, I believe Miller could play for one of Europe's top clubs, competing at the top of Elite football.

DATA VIZ

SVERRE NYPAN

ROSENBERG CENTRE-MIDFIELD

VENKATANARAYANAN VENKATESAN // @VENKYREDDEVIL

Next up on our bench is left central midfielder Sverre Nypan of Rosenborg. There has been no shortage of talent coming out of Norway in recent years.

After Martin Ødegaard, Erling Haaland, and Alexander Sørloth have all become regulars for their respective clubs in the big five leagues, the country is seeing more and more talent emerge and catch the eye of those at the highest level.

One talent to watch closely in 2025 is Sverre Nypan, who currently plays for Rosenborg. Nypan finished the season with the most goal contributions (14) for the Eliteserien side. The visualisation below highlights Nypan's ranking for some key metrics compared with the other left-sided central midfielders in the Eliteserien and similar leagues.

After making his senior debut for Rosenborg as a 15-year-old, Nypan's rise over the last couple of seasons has been impressive. In 2024, Nypan started 25 games, making 28 appearances in total in the league.

Sverre Nypan bears a resemblance to Ødegaard in his style of play. A technically gifted player, Nypan excels in being a press-resistant midfielder and is extremely good as a ball carrier — it's no wonder he ranks in the top 5% for dribbles per 90.

In fact, Nypan ranks in the top 15% for a number of attacking metrics, including shots per 90 minutes, going on to show he is a high-volume shooter.

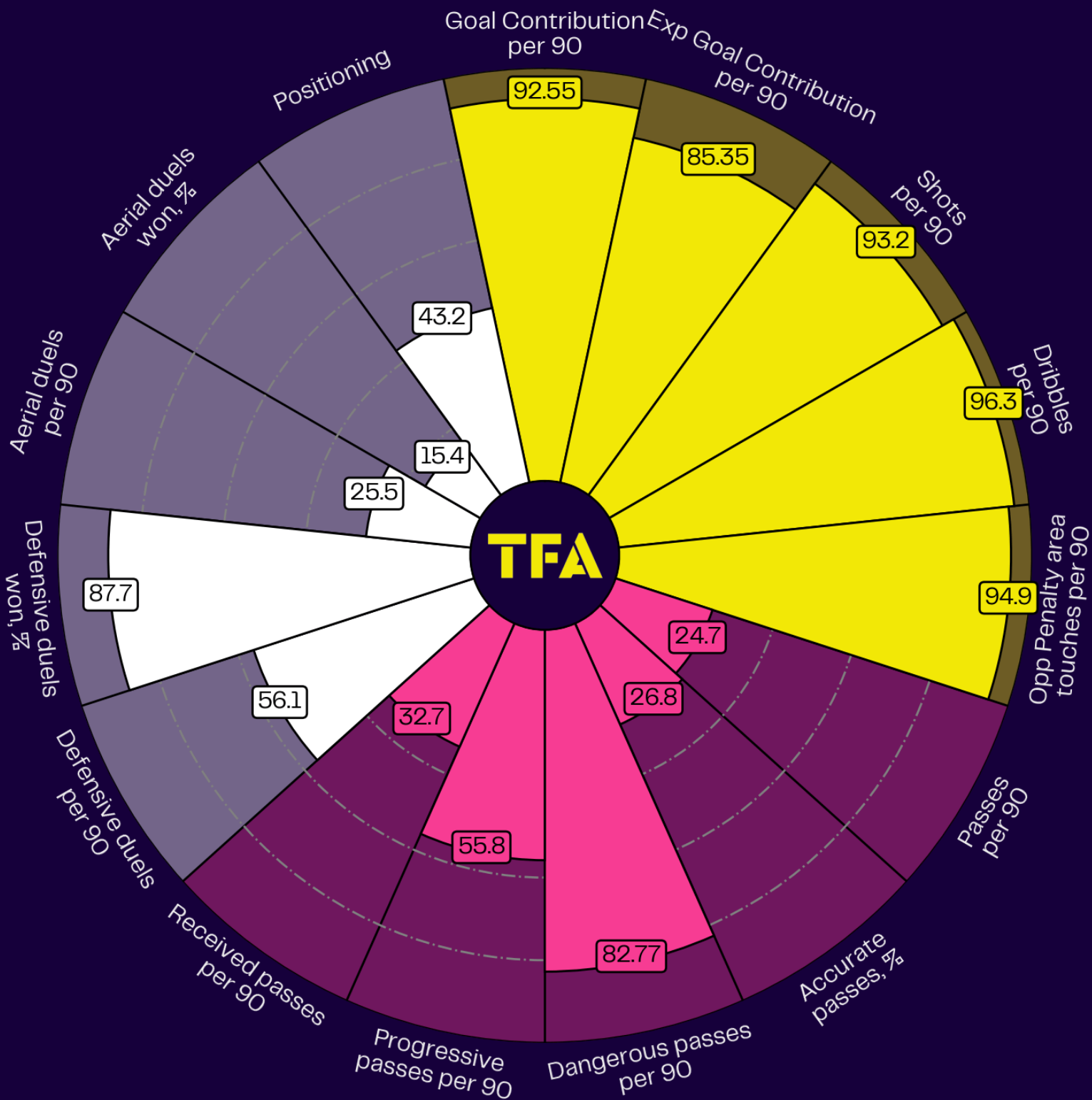
Very intelligent and sharp in possession, Nypan is very good at passing between the lines, creating dangerous chances out of nowhere. A big part of his involvement is in the left-sided channels.

His decision-making regarding when to shoot and when not to shoot has to improve.

Overall, Nypan is an exciting young talent that a lot of European clubs have an eye on. It will be interesting to watch if he is still with Rosenborg this time next year.

S. Nypan | LCM | 2283 minutes played

Rosenborg | 17-years-old | WSS Score: 47



■ Attacking
 ■ Possession
 ■ Defending

Percentile Rank vs LCMs in Tier 4 | Data from Season 2024-25

*WSS score: Custom metric evaluating player performance, factoring in position-specific metrics

LAURA HUGHES

LAURA HUGHES



LEFT CENTRAL MIDFIELD

MELBOURNE CITY

SELIM BEN HMIDA // @MRZIGUEN

With her first-ever call-up to the Australian women's national team occurring following the injury of Chloe Logarzo, Laura Hughes has finally earned the opportunity to represent her national team.

She also got picked for our Team of 2025, as we believe that Hughes will make her breakthrough in the coming period and shine further as a midfielder.

Knowing that she has the ability to perform excellently, whether with Melbourne City or another team, Hughes is also expected to move to a "bigger" club soon to gain more experience and challenge the best players in the world.

Hughes is a 23-year-old international Australian midfielder who has been putting on convincing performances lately and who is destined to become a top player in the years to come as she has all the abilities needed to succeed as a midfielder and perform at the highest level, especially if she gets the chance to join a team that helps her further in her development process.

Hughes started her footballing career in 2016 at Canberra United, where she stayed until 2023 and learned a lot at the Australian club, knowing that she also had a brief experience in Iceland with Próttur in 2020 before returning to the A-League with Canberra United.

In 2023, Hughes joined Melbourne City and started impressing a lot of followers of the game thanks to her simple yet charismatic and efficient style of play, significantly impacting Melbourne City's midfield and overall tactics.

She is a player who can be useful in defence and attack, as she has the ability to help in both phases with excellent defensive traits and reliable playmaking talent that allows her to dictate the game for her team and be central in starting most of their attacks.

In addition, Hughes is also a player who usually finishes actions with accuracy and can become an even more dangerous finisher, whether shooting from distance, coming from behind to collect second balls or finishing with headers.

In this tactical analysis and scout report on the Australian international, we will explore her main traits and abilities regarding playmaking, goalscoring and defending.

Moreover, the analysis will focus on Hughes' possible positions and the roles that she can execute on the pitch.

It will rely on data, statistics, and footage to be as objective as possible.

HUGHES' POSITIONS & ROLES

Hughes is a midfielder who can occupy various midfield roles, whether as a '6', '8', or a '10' since she has the needed traits for the three positions.

In other words, Hughes has the vision, the passing intelligence and the versatility needed to give her best, whether by playing in front of the defensive line or by playing behind the strikers.

Additionally, she has been accustomed to resisting opponents' high pressing, providing passes under pressure while protecting the ball and knowing how to escape from the disturbance of her direct markers.

Therefore, playing defensive midfielder in front of the defensive line might be her most suitable position for now, given that she is experienced in dealing with all the situations this position requires.

Nevertheless, as a non-aggressive and very defensive player, getting her out of her comfort

zone and playing her up front behind the strikers is beneficial, especially if the team has a reliable replacement for the defensive midfielder.

Playing as an advanced playmaker would suit Hughes well in the coming period.

It would expose her playmaking and key passing abilities more consistently and allow her to aim at shooting more regularly.

Hughes is useful in any midfield role, with an average passing accuracy of 83.5%.

However, it will be very important for her to work on improving her shooting accuracy and shooting on target rates since that would make the difference for her as it would be the “deciding point” for head coaches to know whether it would be worth it to opt for her as an attacking midfielder or as a defensive one.

That being said, Hughes has been winning 61% defensive duels and 40.9% aerial ones.

She’s proven on numerous occasions that she could cover well and be useful in the defensive phase, which confirmed her as a central midfielder with mixed (attacking and defensive) roles.

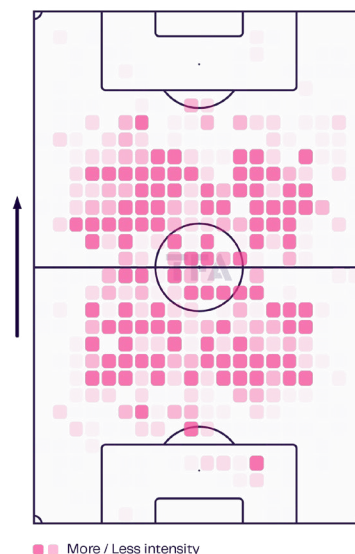
In the following heatmap, we can clearly see Hughes’ movements on the pitch as she retreats frequently to help in the build-up phase and use short passes and sometimes long ones when needed to serve her attacking teammates.

Moreover, she positions herself inside the opponent’s first third most of the time, and that’s exactly where she can be very dangerous with key passes towards the box or the wings.

LAURA HUGHES’ HEATMAP

L. HUGHES HEATMAP

All games from A-League Women 2024/2025, A-League Women 2023/2024



With more movement towards the box, however, Hughes can become a much more dangerous player as she would be able to be at the receiving end of crosses and use her finishing abilities in favour of her team.

HUGHES’S FINISHING ABILITIES

With 0.93 shots attempted per game and an average of 0.07 goals scored, Hughes still has a lot to prove regarding goalscoring and quality finishing.

At the same time, applying the instructions and not advancing a lot when playing as a defensive midfielder makes it difficult for her to showcase her goalscoring skills and be clinical when the team attacks.

Nevertheless, Hughes scores beautiful goals whenever she gets the possibility to advance towards or near the box, especially when playing as a central midfielder in a midfielder duo, which makes her find more freedom upfront while relying on her midfield teammate to cover if needed.

When she plays as a defensive midfielder in a 4-1-4-1 formation, it is complicated for her to advance recurrently and contribute significantly with shooting and goalscoring as she needs to always be in front of the defensive line.

The following goal action highlights her ability to come from the back to be at the receiving end of crosses and finish using her left foot in an action that shows her ability to deal well with complicated attacking situations and finish accurately and without hesitation despite the goalkeeper's disturbance.

Being able to surprise her direct marker and take advantage of her while the ball was about to be crossed before anticipating the goalkeeper's reaction showcasing Hughes' studied attacking movements and her awareness of how she needs to act to exploit the opportunity she put herself in.

This intelligent attacking positioning without the ball can make Hughes a clinical midfielder finisher if she keeps working on this aspect, especially if her current and upcoming head coaches work with her to develop it further and use it during games in Frank Lampard's style.

HUGHES' ATTACKING MOVEMENTS

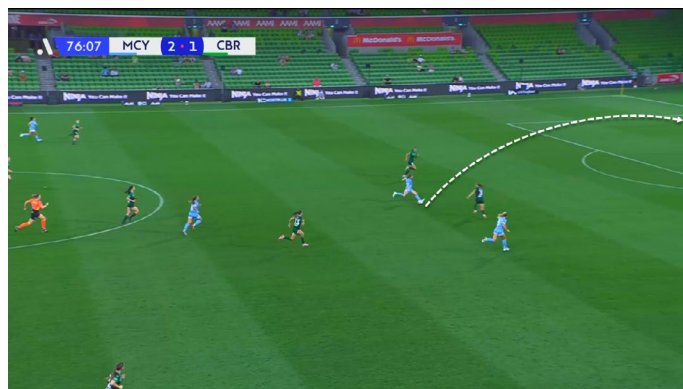


In addition to her excellent attacking positioning, Hughes can advance and apply high pressing whenever needed.

She often predicts when opponents make wrong passes and intercepts them.

Furthermore, she was capable of converting one of her key interceptions into goals, too, thanks to her outstanding reaction to the fact that the opposing goalkeeper was outside of her goal.

Hughes saw the goalkeeper out of her goal and immediately attempted a beautiful lobbed shot that went right inside the net before the goalkeeper could get to it, which highlights Hughes' goalscoring potential once again and shows that she can score some even more beautiful and crucial goals if she gets the chance to play inside the final third more often.



Hughes' goal against Canberra United

In addition to these abilities, Hughes proved on numerous occasions that she can deal well with situations requiring the use of her left foot, whether for passing or for finishing.

This makes her increasingly deserving of a more attacking position, further showcasing her attacking talent.

The following goal highlights Hughes' shooting ability, using her left foot to finish the action with a powerful shot towards the top corner despite being disturbed from behind.



Hughes' goal using her left foot

PLAYMAKING AND PASSING

When it comes to passing, Hughes can be considered among the best in the A-League.

She often looks for more vertical passes and has remarkable rates of passes towards the final third and the box.

With a 75.5% success rate regarding her passes to the final third and 45.5% concerning passes towards the penalty box, we can confirm the fact that Hughes can be very dangerous when attempting passes towards these key areas, especially when she opts for through passes between the lines.

Hughes provides five passes to the final third and 1.34 to the box on average, with a high success rate that makes it useful to intensify Hughes' passing attempts in the future.

Moreover, she is capable of creating dangerous situations by herself on some occasions.

She is always attentive to her opponents' mistakes and does not hesitate to press high and intercept their passes to launch counter-attacking situations.

The following action shows Hughes' key interception following a slow pass from the opponent.

She quickly moved to the right to create space for her teammate and then provided a perfect assist with a no-look pass.

HUGHES' INTERCEPTION & ASSIST



Hughes also showed numerous times that she is the type of midfielder who does not mind being surrounded by opponents and usually finds a way to provide an accurate pass despite being marked.

This makes her even more valuable as a midfielder, but it requires a lot more work to consistently use this talent to create space for her teammates and make more dangerous passes per game.

The example below showcases her ability to provide key passes despite being in a tight space between plenty of Melbourne Victory.

She created a golden opportunity for her teammate, who was left alone inside the box.

Using the left foot when attempting such a complicated pass further confirms the ease with which she deals with the ball, whether regarding passing or shooting, making things easier and more confusing for the opponents, especially defenders and goalkeepers.



Hughes' left foot passing

Conclusion

Laura Hughes is a midfielder with plenty of talents, as she is a player who can cope with the different phases of the game and adapt her abilities depending on the situation and the position she occupies.

This means that Hughes can be very good at passing and also be crucial in terms of interceptions in the defensive phase.

Finding the most suitable position for her in the long term will allow her to develop even more as a midfielder.

She has the potential to become a very dangerous attacking midfielder while still performing her defensive duties when needed.

Moving to a “bigger” club in a more difficult league would surely make Hughes a more clinical and sought-after player.

She has what it takes to shine on the international scene in the coming years.



DATA VIZ

CHRIS RIGG

SUNDERLAND CENTRE-MIDFIELD

VENKATANARAYANAN VENKATESAN // @VENKYREDDEVIL

Next up is sub-centre-mid Chris Rigg. Not just in the Championship but across the EFL, Sunderland's Chris Rigg has been one of the players to watch out for this season so far. Sunderland's form has taken a slight downturn at the time of writing; they are currently fourth, but Chris Rigg is presently one of the best players in the Championship.

He might be the most exciting talent from England's second tier to watch out for in 2025. The visualisation below shows where Rigg ranks for some key metrics compared with the other attacking midfielders in the Championship and similar leagues.

Only two players aged 20 or under have played more minutes than Chris Rigg in the EFL Championship this season. Rigg also has the joint-second-most goals (three) among players in that age category.

Having played most of his minutes as an attacking midfielder, Rigg positions himself in the right channel for ball progression.

He also brings in a lot of energy and is a good counterpresser in the opponent's half.

Rigg's ball control is one of his biggest strengths, and the midfielder can quite easily receive and turn when pressed. He is an all-action midfielder who covers the entire pitch during some games, which certifies his excellent work rate.

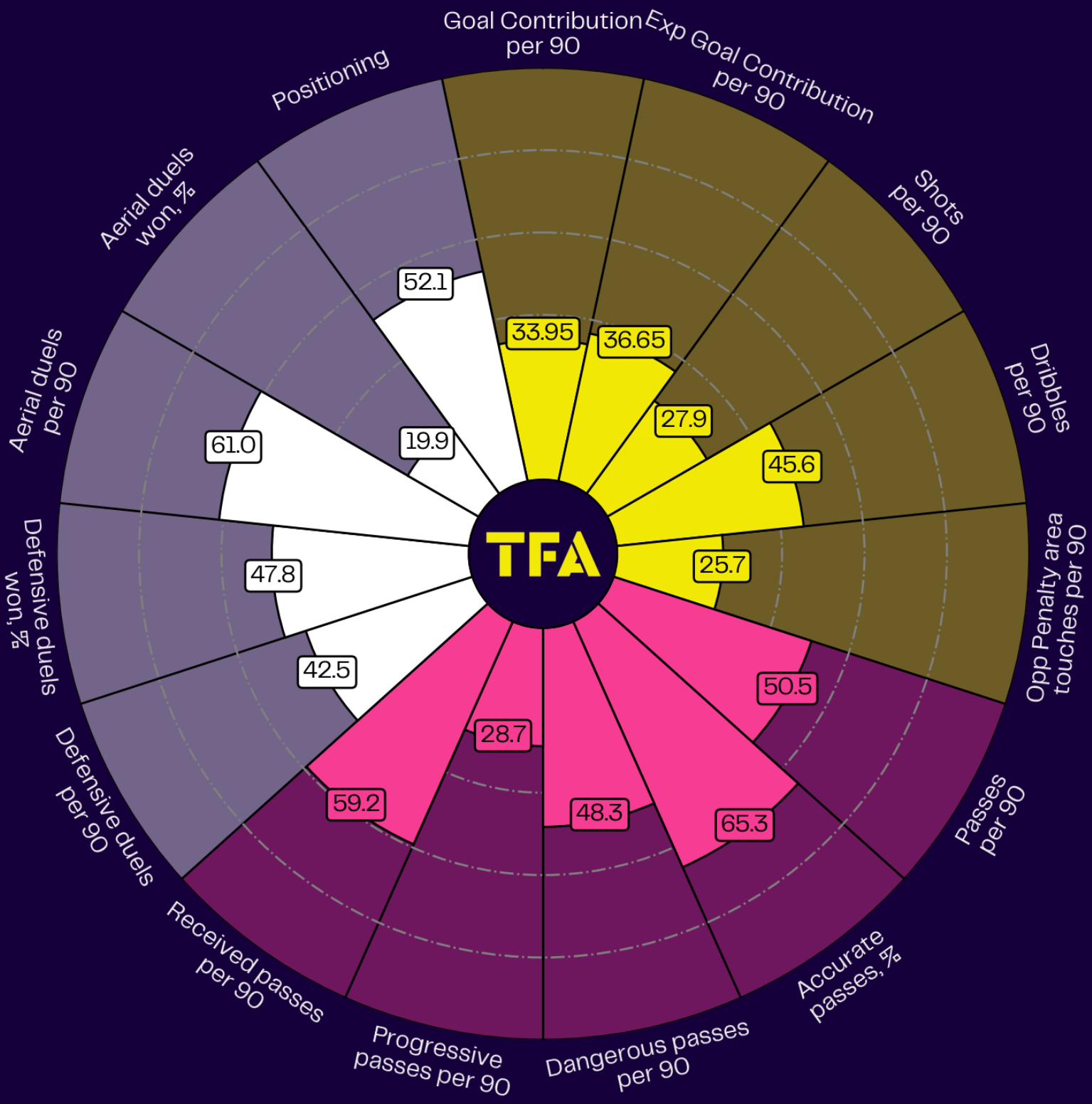
Although his involvement inside the box can sometimes be questioned, he makes up for it by playing a key role outside and driving attacks.

Rigg might not currently rank above average for some key metrics, as seen in the visual above, but he has proven to be a consistent performer, and there is evidence that his game is on the rise.

In his second season with the Sunderland first-team, Rigg has established himself as one of the key players in his club's lineup. If he continues to rise above expectations, a move to the Premier League during the summer would not be a surprise.

C. Rigg | AMF | 1154 minutes played

Sunderland | 17-years-old | WSS Score: 41



■ Attacking
 ■ Possession
 ■ Defending

Percentile Rank vs AMFs in Tier 2 | Data from Season 2024-25

*WSS score: Custom metric evaluating player performance, factoring in position-specific metrics

ESTEVÃO WILLIAN

ESTEVÃO WILLIAN



RIGHT-WING

PALMEIRAS

Estêvão Willian Almeida de Oliveira Gonçalves is one of Brazil's most promising young talents.

Born on 24 April 2007 in Franca, he's already turning heads as an attacking midfielder and winger.

Currently with Palmeiras' youth team, Estêvão represents the perfect example of a Brazilian attacking talent: creative, unpredictable, and a blast to watch.

This scout report examines his style of play, tactical role, and areas for improvement, showing why he's considered the future of Brazilian football.

PLAYER PROFILE

Estêvão is 176 cm tall and usually plays as an attacking midfielder, winger, or second striker.

Although he's only 17, he's already a mature player with a keen understanding of how to influence games.

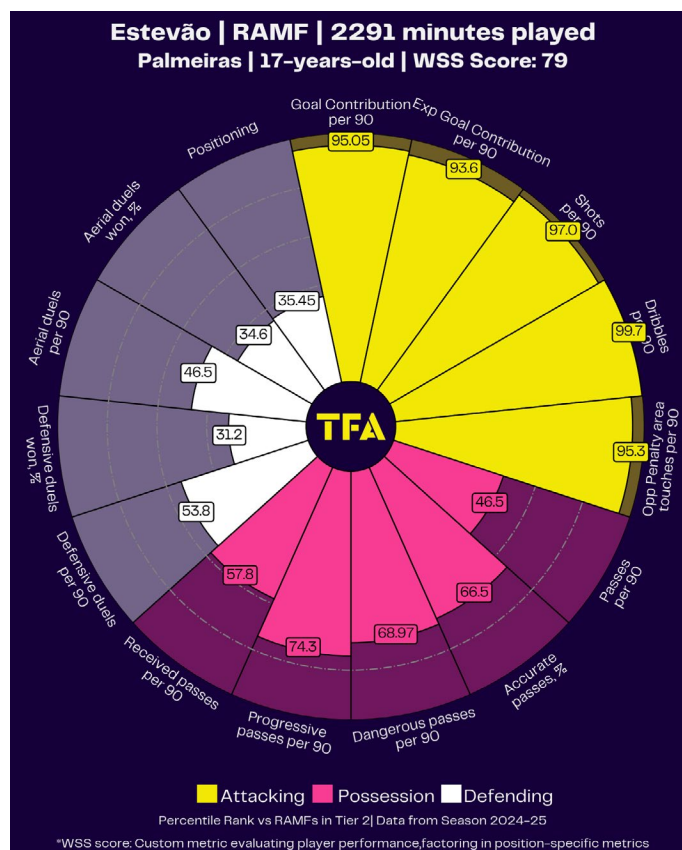
The left-footed teenager — known for his creativity, dribbling and vision — has the technical skills, agility, and low centre of gravity to make him a nightmare for defenders 1v1.

While the winger's still working on his defensive game, his attacking skills make him a real standout and potential game-changer for club and country.

Estêvão Willian's rise through the Brazilian football ranks has been nothing short of sensational, earning him comparisons to legends like Neymar.

At only 17, Estêvão's already showing more maturity and skill than most of his peers.

After starting out in the Cruzeiro youth ranks, he had a breakthrough after moving to Palmeiras, where he has shown a unique mix of technical skill, footballing intelligence and creativity.



His Palmeiras performances prompted Chelsea to snap him up for €34m last summer.

However, due to FIFA rules, Estêvão will not be able to join the London club until the summer of 2025, when he turns 18.

In the meantime, he's still honing his skills in Brazil, where he's already smashed records and won numerous awards that show off his talent.

Estêvão's performances have totally wowed Palmeiras.

His ability to influence games through goals, assists, and decisive plays has made him a rare talent, recently breaking Neymar's record for the most combined goals and assists by a 17-year-old in the Brazilian league, cementing his place in history as a generational talent.

Neymar himself has been impressed, congratulating Estêvão on his achievements, and that says a lot about the young prodigy's potential.

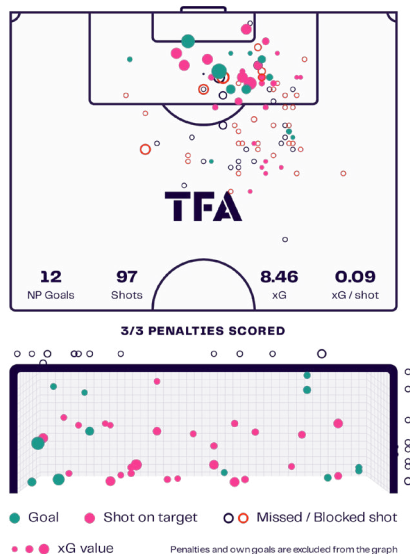
Estêvão has been called up to the Brazilian senior squad, where he made a big impact on his debut against Ecuador.

He doesn't stick to one position, either — he plays a free-attacking role, spotting weaknesses in the other team's defence and exploiting them.

Estêvão's ability to combine with teammates in tight spaces makes him a natural fit in systems that focus on keeping the ball.

ESTEVÃO SHOTS

All games from Serie A 2024, Copa do Brasil 2024, Copa Libertadores 2024



PLAYER ROLE

When it comes to tactics, Estêvão is like a free-roaming playmaker but on the attack.

His role involves getting involved in possession a lot, particularly in the half-spaces, where he can link up the midfield and the attack.

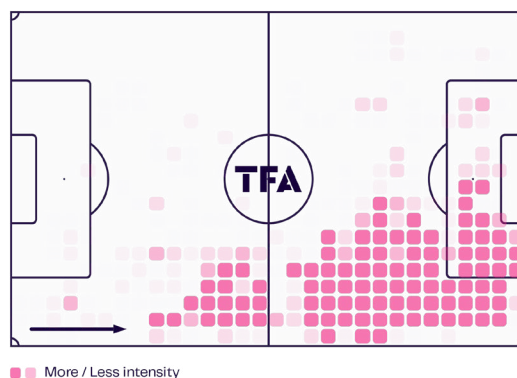
This means he can influence the game from the centre and the wings, making him a great asset to coaches.

He can drift between lines and find those pockets of space so he can create and score.

Estêvão is able to get past defenders 1v1 with his stop-motion dribbling and body feints, which often leave opponents off balance.

ESTEVÃO HEATMAP

All games from Serie A 2024, Copa do Brasil 2024, Copa Libertadores 2024



Chelsea's acquisition of the young Brazilian reflects their long-term vision and investment in young talent.

The club has no plans to loan him out after he arrives.

Instead, the plan is to integrate him directly into the first team, which shows their confidence that he can adapt to the demands of European football.

The decision to keep him at Stamford Bridge shows just how much faith Chelsea's coaching staff have in his talent and versatility.

While Chelsea have a lot of high-quality attacking options, Estêvão has a unique profile that sets him apart.

His technical mastery, low centre of gravity and vision make him the perfect candidate for the "No. 10" role.

His agent, Andre Cury, says Chelsea see him as a central attacking midfielder — a position in which he can showcase his creativity and flair.

Chelsea's play suits his skill set, allowing him to dictate play, create chances, and exploit gaps in the opposition's defence with his dynamic movement.

Even though Chelsea have faith in him, it won't be easy for him to fit in with the star-studded team.

The attacking midfield and wide forward positions are among the most competitive at the club.

Players like João Félix and Palmer are creative, while Mudryk and Madueke are fast and can dribble.

To earn a regular spot, Estêvão will need to quickly adjust to the intensity and physicality of the Premier League.

Chelsea's decision to focus on his development as a "No. 10" might be the key to success.

Playing in the middle would mean less direct competition with the wingers and would allow Estêvão to showcase his vision and playmaking skills.

Moreover, the tactical flexibility he's shown at Palmeiras — able to drift wide, operate in the half-spaces, and occasionally play as a second striker — means he could provide solutions across multiple attacking roles.

ROLE IN BUILD-UP PLAY

Estêvão's a smart player, always finding space and creating passing options.

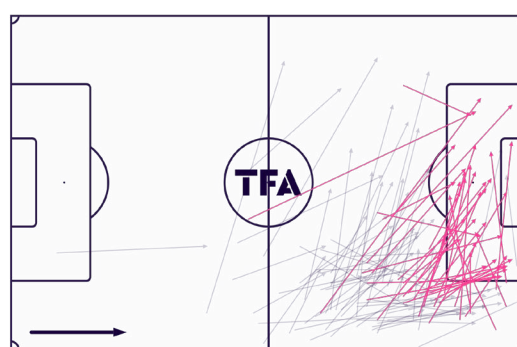
He's great at dropping deep to collect the ball, using his first touch and ball control to avoid pressure.

His left foot lets him play incisive passes, break lines and set up advanced attacking moves.

He has a great eye for where the play is going and is really calm on the ball, which helps him dictate the pace of the game, especially when he's in the half-spaces.

ESTEVAO PROGRESSIVE PASSES

All games from Serie A 2024, Copa do Brasil 2024, Copa Libertadores 2024



In deeper roles, Estêvão often acts as a transition link between defence and attack, facilitating quick one-twos and providing a reliable outlet for teammates under pressure.

He's an absolute whiz at outwitting the opposition's defenders with his subtle moves, especially when they're playing a high press.

Even when the opposition tries to shut him down, he still remains a key player in the build-up.

Estêvão's link-up play is excellent.

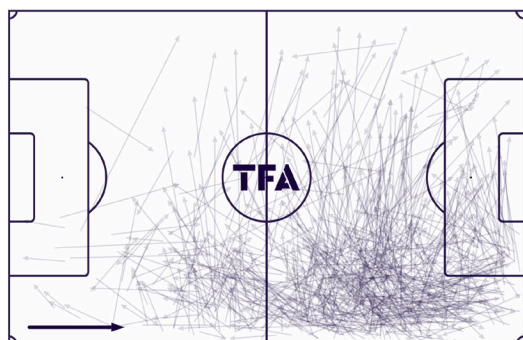
He loves making quick one-twos with his teammates and does it with real flair.

The creator also has a good understanding of where to be on the pitch.

He uses his ability to link up with his teammates to good effect and positions himself between defenders and the ball to receive it.

ESTÊVÃO PASS MAP

All games from Serie A 2024, Copa do Brasil 2024, Copa Libertadores 2024



The 17-year-old is great at getting the ball to the other team's back line, either through through-balls or switching up the play, and he's really good at taking on the full-back to attack.

He's pretty smart about when to release the ball after receiving wide or advancing via a dribble, although his passing range isn't particularly impressive.

Estêvão usually goes for easy and secure passes, preferring short passes to mid or long-range ones.

ROLE IN THE FINAL THIRD

Estêvão is a real game-changer in the attacking third. He's super dynamic, and you can never predict what he'll do.

His dribbling ability, which involves quick direction changes and some really intricate footwork, lets him take on multiple defenders.

He's a total pro at creating separation from his markers, often using stop-motion dribbling to unbalance opponents before bursting into dangerous areas.

He has real confidence about him, and he's always trying those audacious solo runs and skill moves, which is impressive for a guy his age.

As a scorer, Estêvão can score spectacular goals from distance, thanks to his powerful and precise left foot.

His technique is impressive, with an ability to hit the ball with great power and accuracy, whether in open play or set pieces.

He's also a great scorer and a top creator with his incisive passes and crosses into the box.

The youngster gets a lot of space and timing right, and he can draw defenders out of position to create opportunities for his teammates.

Estêvão's not afraid to shoot, and he's got a good technique for it.

Chelsea also have a good set-piece taker coming in Estêvão.

He's a pro at taking penalties and free-kicks, no matter how far away the goal is.

The Palmeiras man has a great mix of strength and precision when he's on the ball.

It feels like he's always aiming for the perfect-placed shot, and when he gets it right, it's spectacular.

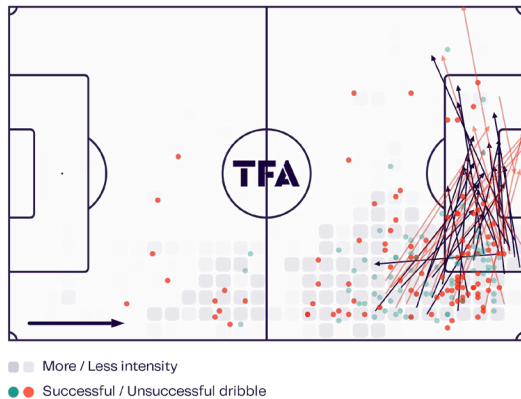
He's got a real knack for working his body balance, which lets him create separation and evade pressure in all sorts of situations.

He's a strong dribbler, and he beats his markers well.

The way he uses his shoulder drops and carries the ball often makes his direct opponent lunge for possession.

ESTEVÃO WINGER ACTIONS

All games from Serie A 2024, Copa do Brasil 2024, Copa Libertadores 2024



The Brazilian teenager's acceleration and ability to change his body orientation, coupled with the drop of his shoulder, enable him to evade any opposition, making him quite capable of working past his direct opponent.

He's undoubtedly an exciting player, and his future looks bright.

ROLE IN DEFENDING

Because of this, it's sometimes easy to forget that he's still a player at an early stage of development.

The 17-year-old is really coming into his own, but he hasn't played that much for the first team at a high level yet.

One thing that's clear is that he needs to work on his physical development if he wants to compete at the highest level for a Premier League club.

At 17, some of this will come naturally.

However, he'll still need to do specific training to understand what his body can and can't handle at this stage of his career.

And on the pitch, he's got to work on his defensive skills and aerial ability.

Estevão is already showing a big willingness to close down opponents and help in the defensive phase.

The improvement here is more about picking the right duels and working on the timing of tackles and jumps to compete for the ball.

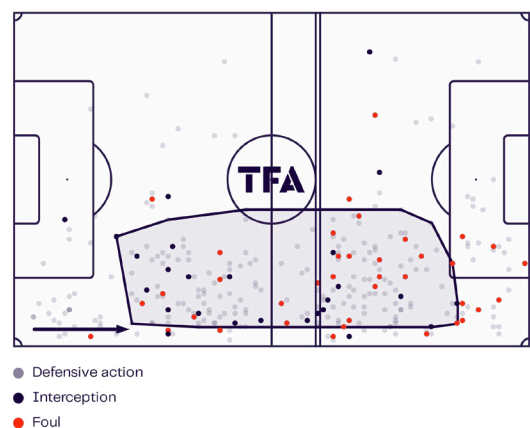
When it comes to defending, Estevão still has some work to do.

He's smart enough to read the game and intercept passes, but his physical limitations and lack of defensive efficiency sometimes leave him exposed in high-intensity matches.

He's inconsistent when it comes to pressing, often not aggressive or tenacious enough to disrupt the opposition's build-ups effectively.

ESTEVÃO DEFENSIVE TERRITORY

All games from Serie A 2024, Copa do Brasil 2024, Copa Libertadores 2024



The good news is that this player is pretty switched on about tactics and keen to get back and help out, so he'll get there.

Coaches should make sure he knows where to be on the pitch and work on his defensive skills to get the most out of him.

Given his age, there's plenty of room for improvement in this area.

CONCLUSION

Estêvão Willian's move to Chelsea is not just the next step in his career – it's the gateway to global recognition.

His journey so far has been a testament to his immense talent and resilience.

It has been marked by record-breaking performances and his adoration of Brazilian football.

Chelsea's faith in his ability to transition seamlessly into European football is a testament to their belief in his status as a future superstar.

The Premier League is tough, and it's not easy to succeed here, but Estêvão's got what it takes.

With the right management, the support of his teammates, and his own indomitable spirit, Estêvão Willian could very well become the cornerstone of Chelsea's attacking play for years to come, fulfilling his dream of becoming the best player in the world.



GABRIEL PEC

LA GALAXY RIGHT-WING

VENKATANARAYANAN VENKATESAN // @VENKYREDDEVIL

Our backup right-winger is Gabriel Pec of LA Galaxy. The 23-year-old LA Galaxy winger was one of the best attackers from the 2024 season.

The Brazilian finished the season with 28 goal contributions in the MLS, ranking in the top 10 for that metric.

Gabriel also finished with more assists than the one and only Lionel Messi.

So, apart from his goal contributions, what's been most impressive about Gabriel Pec's season and what can be expected out of him in 2025?

The visualisation below highlights Gabriel Pec's percentile ranks compared with those of other players in similar positions in the MLS and leagues that are mostly on par with the MLS.

As visible in the radar above, Gabriel Pec ranks in the top 10% for a number of key attacking and creation metrics.

Pec is most dangerous with the ball at his feet. He is an impressive ball carrier with the required pace and dribbling skills to keep the opponents guessing about his next move.

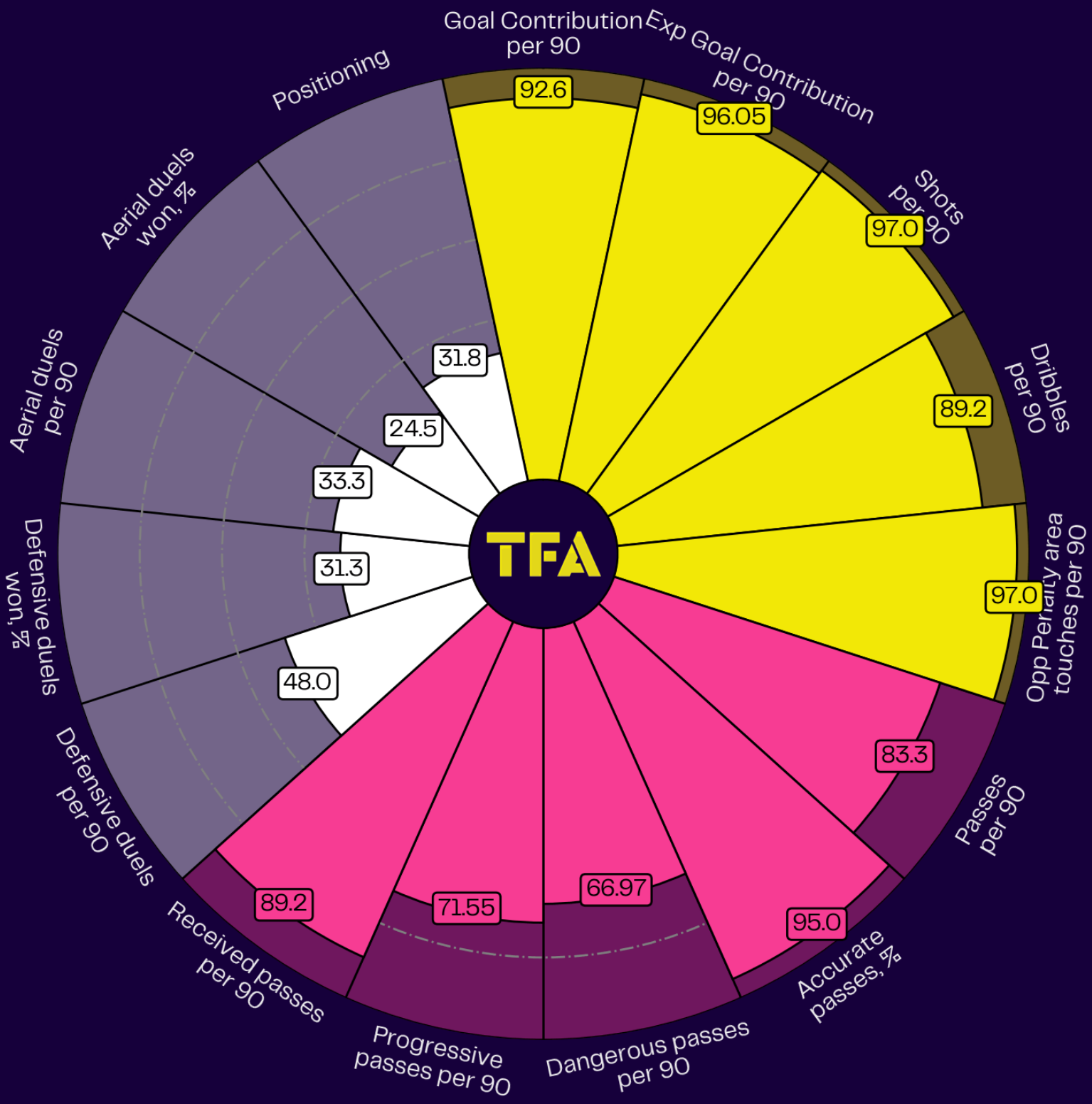
A player who likes to hug the touchline, Gabriel Pec has 2.09 deep completions per 90, showing quite often he attempts to pass the ball to the danger zone inside the box.

Pec is an excellent chance creator, an average dribbler, and has impressive finishing ability. The playmaker's defensive work rate has to improve, though. Gabriel Pec keeps the viewers on the edge whenever he has the ball and has, so far, lived up to every bit of hype.

His game has improved so much since his move to the MLS, and he has continued to rise above expectations, making him a player to watch out for in 2025.

Gabriel Pec | RAMF | 3220 minutes played

Los Angeles Galaxy | 23-years-old | WSS Score: 78



■ Attacking
 ■ Possession
 ■ Defending

Percentile Rank vs RAMFs in Tier 3,4,5 | Data from Season 2024-25

*WSS score: Custom metric evaluating player performance, factoring in position-specific metrics

ETHAN NWANERI

ETHAN NWANERI



ATTACKING MIDFIELD

ARSENAL

LORIHANNA BALABANOVA // @LORIHANNASH

The Hale End has produced a fair few exciting talents over the past few years.

Some have already made their way to the Premier League, while others are just starting to prove they deserve a place in the top tier.

The most prominent example of Arsenal's successful work at academy level is Bukayo Saka.

The 23-year-old has earned the praise of many by demonstrating maturity, consistency, intelligence and versatility at club and international levels.

There are a few other youngsters following in his steps.

Mikel Arteta has proven his continuous support to the academy players by allowing them to gain first-team experience.

Now, it's time for Ethan Nwaneri.

The 17-year-old attacking midfielder has already played 15 games for the Gunners this season, scoring four times despite having limited minutes.

He has taken every opportunity given by the manager and has shown his ability to adapt, as well as his attacking flair, on a few occasions.

The youngster has mainly played as a right central midfielder and right winger, and many have questioned whether he can find a place in the starting XI.

It is too early to draw conclusions, but in our scout report, we use tactical analysis to examine Nwaneri's style of play.

We explain how he can be used to his potential and where he fits in Arsenal's tactics.

VERSATILITY & INTELLIGENT MOVEMENT

Although Nwaneri's playing time has been limited, he's excelled in some areas and shown potential for development.

His most suitable playing position has yet to be determined, although some details clearly indicate where he feels most comfortable.

The player's versatility makes him suitable for multiple team setups.

He can play in different positions, including midfield and attack, as long as his role involves creating goalscoring opportunities.

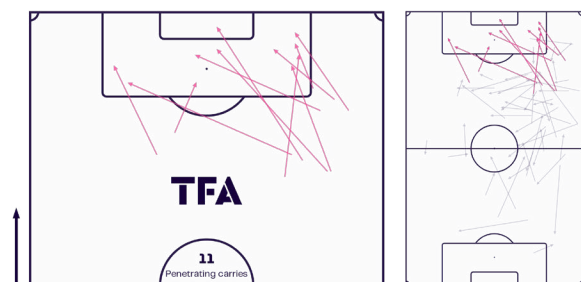
He can set his teammates up in key positions, but his best attribute is his ability to find pockets and exploit spaces, which makes him a direct threat to the goal.

He would operate on the right in a right central midfield position or as a right winger.

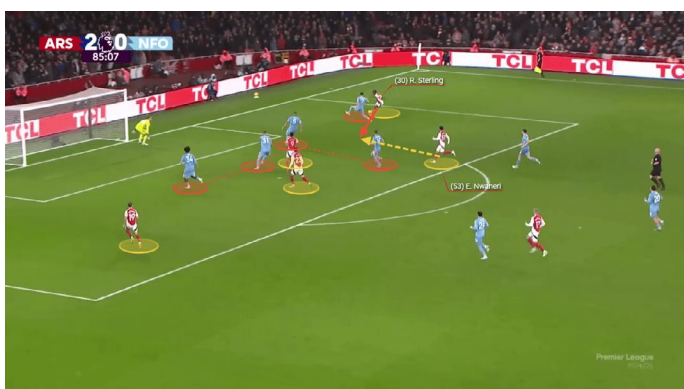
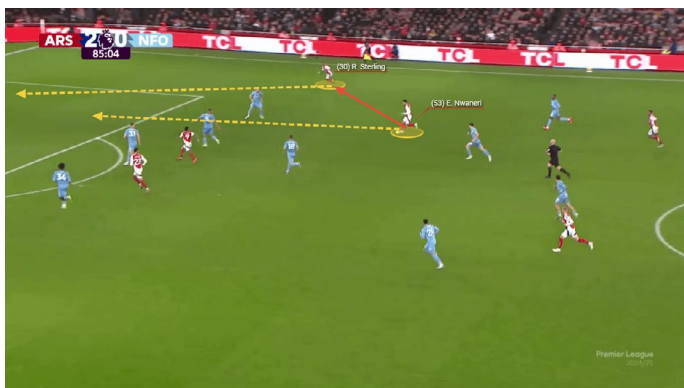
Either way, Nwaneri would focus on exploiting the half-spaces and creating attacking opportunities from these areas.

E. NWANERI PENETRATING CARRIES

All games from Premier League 2024/2025, Carabao Cup 2024/2025, UEFA Champions League 2024/2025



As illustrated by his penetrating carries map, he constantly aims to deliver the ball to the half-spaces, where he would either shoot or try to set his teammates up.



The above goalscoring situation from the game against Nottingham Forest demonstrates his vision and agility.

He spread out to Raheem Sterling on the flank so he could move to the box.

However, he initially acted as though he would not be involved in finishing the attack, which left the defenders covering the other three Arsenal players in the box.

He then relied on his agility and sped up to receive Sterling's cross and eventually score.

His tactical intelligence makes him valuable in the final third.

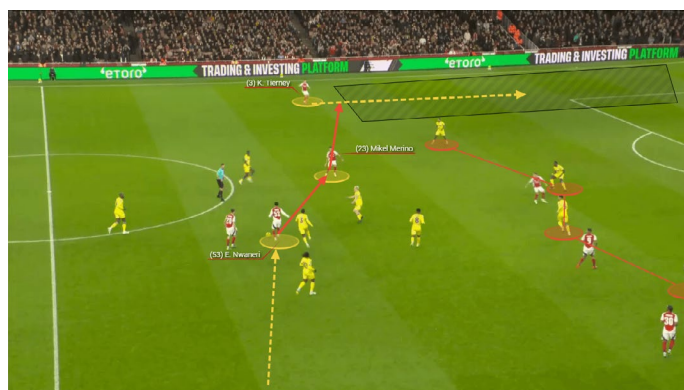
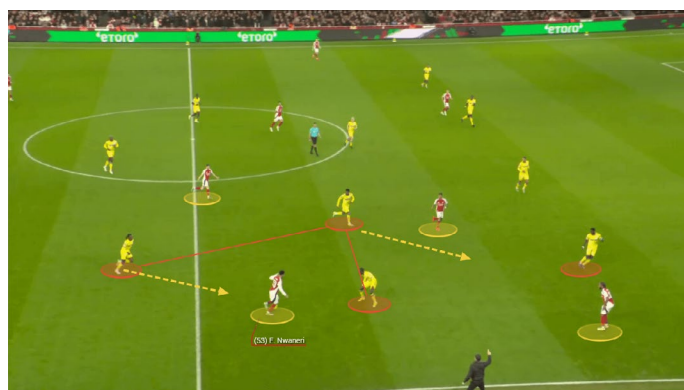
He can identify free space and expose the opposition through his movement and technical abilities.

But even more beneficial is that he can create spaces by cutting inside or switching play.

This underlines his passing abilities and his constant aim to progress the ball.

The next images show his ability to identify underloaded areas which can be used to expose the opposition.

Nwaneri figured out that switching plays and exploiting the free space on the left would be more beneficial so the team could dismiss the defensive line.

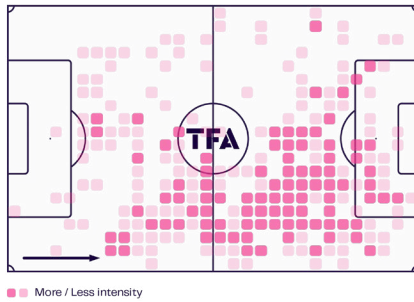


As illustrated by his heatmap, he usually occupied the half-spaces despite the formation but didn't hesitate to deliver the ball both centrally and out wide.

The youngster would also drop back into the team's own half to support ball retention and progression.

E. NWANERI HEATMAP

All games from Premier League 2024/2025, Carabao Cup 2024/2025, UEFA Champions League 2024/2025



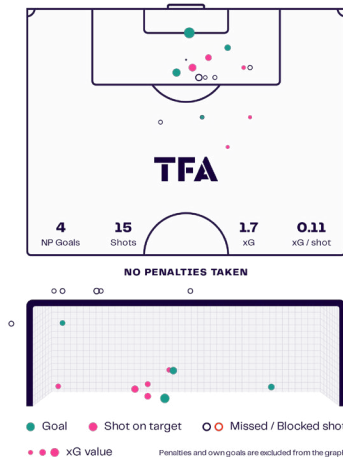
ATTACKING INFLUENCE

Nwaneri's positional sense often finds him in key areas where he can catch the defenders off-guard, while his attacking flair allows him to transform such chances into goalscoring opportunities.

Part of the reason is that he would shoot both from a close distance and outside the box without hesitation.

E. NWANERI SHOTS

All games from Premier League 2024/2025, Carabao Cup 2024/2025, UEFA Champions League 2024/2025



As his shooting map shows, the youngster occupies quality positions which can increase the team's efficiency in front of the goal.

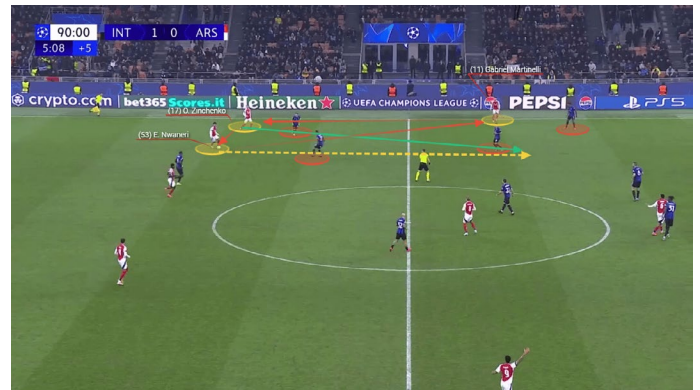
He can sneak into the box and shoot from difficult angles, which makes it difficult for defences to counteract.

When he cannot find a pocket or a teammate to pass to, he relies on his ball control to retain possession and move out of the overloaded zone.

That's a quality that can only develop with the change and improvement in his physicality.

His determination to deliver the ball to the final third helps him partner better with his teammates and promotes smoother build-up play.

While he still lacks the experience and the habit of performing with such intensity, the 17-year-old still manages to move past the opposing lines through combinations of passes with his teammates.



In this situation against Inter, Nwaneri created a passing net with Oleksandr Zinchenko and Gabriel Martinelli to bypass the press and advance the ball.

His movement off the ball also promotes link-up play and helps move the ball forward.

His link-up-play abilities can develop in the future if he is played alongside, not as a replacement, for the Gunners' skipper, Martin Ødegaard.

With his ability to drag players out of position and release pressure, they could be a good pair to set each other up in and around the box.

His impact on the wing shouldn't be underestimated as well.

His composure allows him to hold on to the ball and dribble past opponents successfully.

That's why he can be beneficial on the flank, too.

His willingness to move into tight spaces can give Arsenal additional depth, especially if paired with Saka.

The youngster has now played for the Londoners in all competitions (Premier League, Champions League, and EFL Cup), scoring four goals in 15 games.

However, it is difficult for him to achieve consistency, as he has played 350 minutes in total.

Despite not settling in completely, his 3.06 shots on average per game give the team a needed edge, especially considering their struggles to find a goalscorer.

CURRENT OPPORTUNITIES

Nwaneri will be challenged to find his place in the team, considering Arsenal's current starting XI.

He needs to gain experience and show his flexibility, which will only happen by playing in different set-ups and being tested by replacing key figures in the team.

The manager has already tested his adaptivity by starting him in Ødegaard's position.

While their vision is similar, Nwaneri has yet to replicate the captain's creativity and explosiveness around the box.

He needs to take the initiative and demonstrate his creative passing even more to replace Ødegaard properly and impress Arteta.

He can slowly be integrated into the starting XI, first by partnering with Ødegaard and providing additional attacking depth.

Then, he can eventually prove himself as the future replacement of the skipper.

Depending on his development, the 17-year-old's role could also transform into one with more central influence.

He could be tested as Kai Havertz's replacement.

His ball retention skills, positional sense, and ability to disrupt defences can help him fit into even more goal-oriented positions.

While their key qualities differ, the comparisons with Saka cannot be avoided.

Due to his left-footedness and tendency to cut inside, the inverted winger role could also be suitable for Nwaneri.

It would be challenging for the 17-year-old to match Saka's ability to take on defenders and hold on to the ball.

But he can fit the role thanks to his dribbling and passing range.

His passing accuracy (94.2% per 90) can help retain balls in the final third, increasing the team's attacking options.

However, Nwaneri's crossing abilities are far less developed, which might affect the efficiency in front of the goal.

FUTURE DEVELOPMENT: DEFENSIVE CONTRIBUTION & PHYSICALITY

While Nwaneri shows defensive commitment, he is yet to achieve consistency in his performance out of possession.

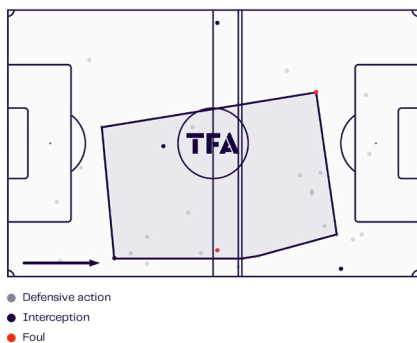
The lack of experience makes it difficult for him to anticipate potential threats and act upon blocking them.

Even when his defensive positioning was successful, he lacked the physicality to win his duels and block dangerous attacks.

The 17-year-old does try to initiate ball recovery in the opposition half through pressing, although he is more often caught off-guard and forced to do quick transitions back.

E. NWANERI DEFENSIVE TERRITORY

All games from Premier League 2024/2025, Carabao Cup 2024/2025, UEFA Champions League 2024/2025



As his defensive territory map shows, his defensive coverage is limited, considering he often plays in a wide role.

He needs to improve in covering the flank and tracking down players tightly.

Most importantly, he needs to increase the frequency of his defensive actions as he still hesitates to dive into challenges.

He has the tactical intelligence to identify such situations; however, his lack of experience affects his timing.

CONCLUSION

Our analysis shows that Ethan Nwaneri is a few steps away from earning his starting spot for Arsenal.

Mikel Arteta will undoubtedly give him more playing time if he can step up in challenging situations.

The youngster has a natural attacking flair that, if developed, can become crucial to the team's attacking ventures.

DATA VIZ

OLAUG TVEDTEN

VÅLERENGA ATTACKING MIDFIELD

VENKATANARAYANAN VENKATESAN // @VENKYREDDEVIL

Our attacking midfielder on the bench is Vålerenga Fotball Damer's Olaug Tvedten. The versatile 24-year-old Vålerenga midfielder continues to show a lot of promise.

Tvedten was the most essential player in Vålerenga's league success of 2024. The midfielder can play in different positions but has played most of her minutes as a left-sided wide attacker or winger.

Tvedten finished top of the charts for goal contributions for the second season running, with 13 goals and nine assists.

The below visualisation shows Tvedten's progressive pass map from the 2024 campaign. With 9.49 Progressive passes per 90 minutes, if you take players who played 1500 minutes, No one has ranks above Tvedten for that metric.

This goes on to show her impressive ability to drive attacks and create chances for her teammates.

Constantly making herself available to receive a pass, most of Vålerenga's attacks go through Tvedten.

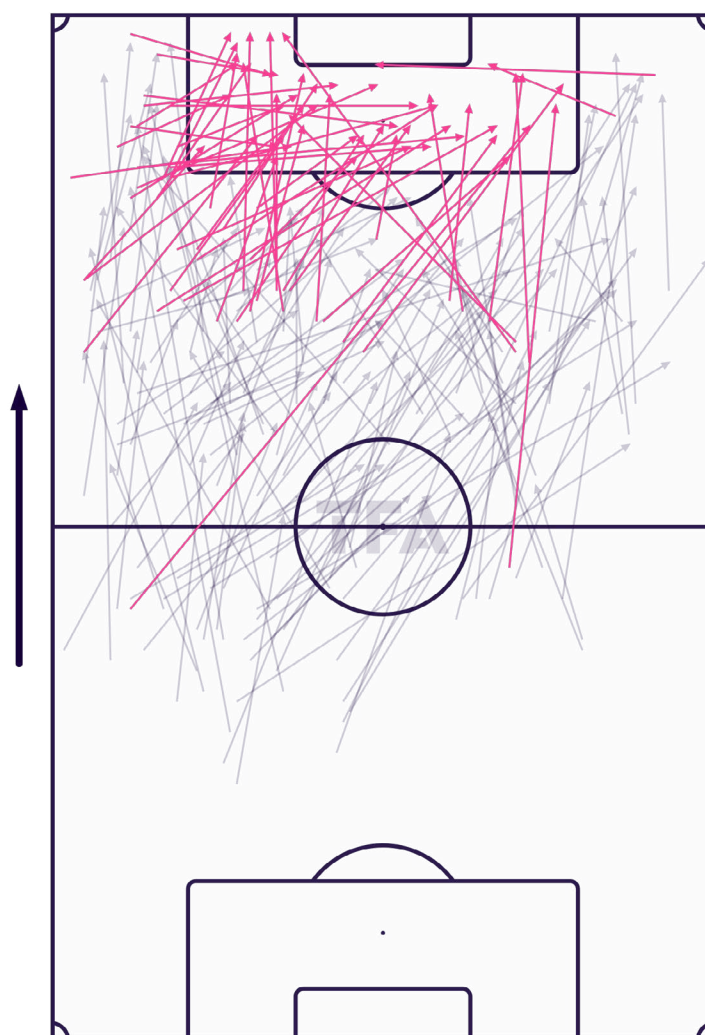
The majority of her passes also seem to be closer to the box, making it easy for her teammates to be positioned well enough to finish chances.

Tvedten has 13 goals from an xG of 8.03—a big overperformance, showcasing her excellent finishing ability. Tvedten wins 68% of her defensive duels. She is very intense in her pressing and recovers the ball quickly when she loses it.

Olaug Tvedten is aware on the pitch and is always very proactive in attack. She has more responsibilities on the pitch now and has constantly risen above expectations.

O. TVEDTEN PROGRESSIVE PASSES

All games from Toppserien 2024



↗ Progressive pass

↗ Progressive pass into the penalty area

BAZOU MANA TOURE

BAZOU MANA TOURE



LEFT-WING

HAMMARBY

Bazoumana Touré is slowly but surely taking the Allsvenskan league by storm.

The young Hammarby IF winger is rising through the ranks with his electric performances.

He has already attracted the attention of European giants like Bayern Munich, Tottenham Hotspur, and Manchester United.

This Côte d'Ivoire youngster is brimming with potential, versatility, and a curious combination of pure physicality and super athleticism, all while being a key part of his team's tactics.

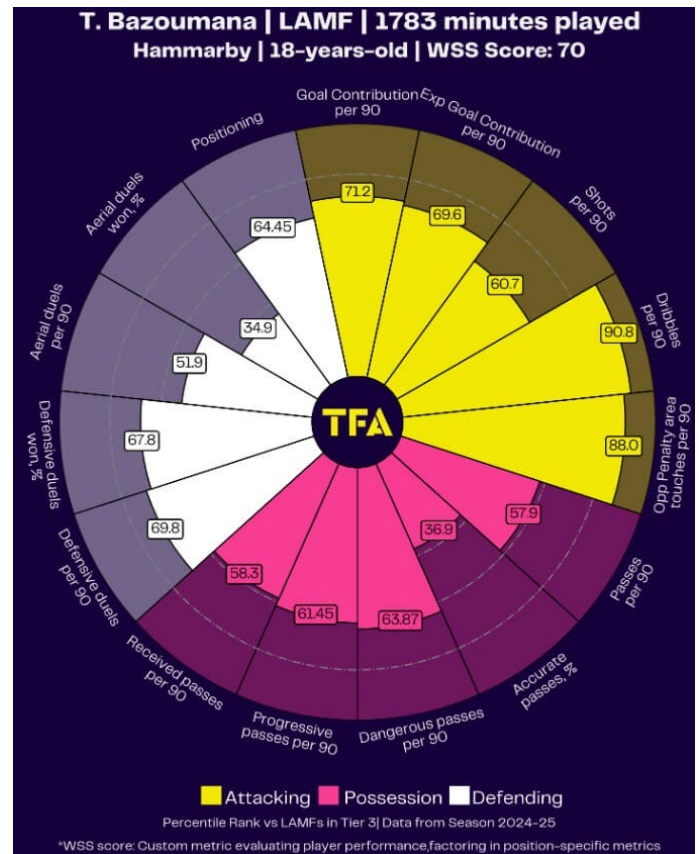
In our tactical analysis, we will provide Bazoumana Touré's full scout report, highlighting his strengths and weaknesses and explaining why he's a player you should follow in 2025.

PLAYER PROFILE ANALYSIS

Bazoumana Touré is an 18-year-old winger currently playing for Hammarby IF, where he arrived for a €443k fee from Mimosas in Côte d'Ivoire.

Standing at 175cm (5'9") and weighing 68kg (149 lbs), the young forward is still in development but can already manipulate his frame well, especially in offensive actions on the pitch.

Looking at our data analysis, we can see the main attributes of his player profile.



Bazoumana Touré Player Profile Allsvenskan 2024

His attacking figures are impressive but not as surprising, considering he's slowly become key to Hammarby's offensive tactics.

The 18-year-old is a dribbling machine, slotting in the top 10% for volume dribbles and in the top 12% for touches in the opposition's penalty area.

The statistics also confirm he shoots more than the average player in his position in the Swedish top tier and is well above average, good enough for the top ~30%, in goal contributions and expected goal contributions per 90 minutes.

Quite clearly, we are dealing with a highly efficient attacking tool.

In possession, he can be used both as a progressive option and a creative passer, although he prefers to carry the ball rather than deploy a high volume of incisive balls.

Still, he is fairly involved in Hammarby's overall tactics, assisting the build-up in several ways, albeit sometimes with minimal but still impactful contributions.

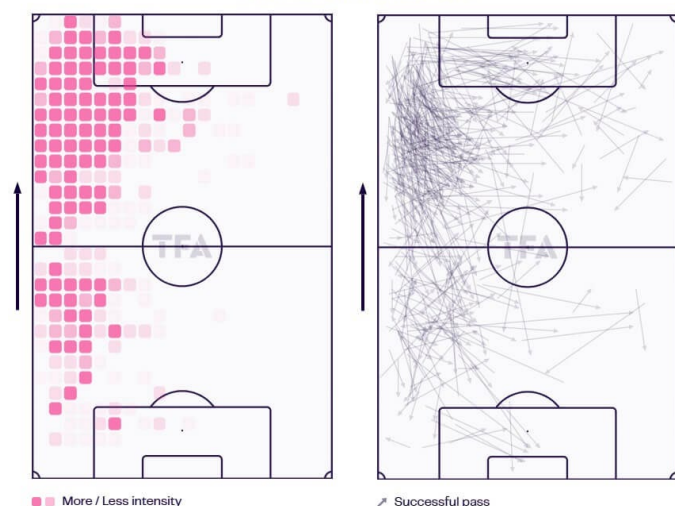
Defensively, he's a hard worker and an effective pressing and counter-pressing tool.

He uses his athletic base to assist his coach's off-the-ball tactics.

However, primarily, when describing his player profile, we can still talk about a same-side wide creator and outlet but one that is effective when hugging the touchline and making the pitch big and wide.

T. BAZOUMANA HEAT & PASS MAP

All games from Allsvenskan 2024



Bazoumana Touré Heat & Pass Map Allsvenskan 2024

Looking at his heatmap, we can see that he tends to stay wide and receive the ball while hugging the touchline.

Hammarby's tactics involve isolating Touré in those areas.

They aim to make the pitch big and let the young winger dart into open space, preferably in a 1v1 duel against a defender.

We can also see that he largely receives the ball in advanced areas.

Of course, he can and does drop deeper to assist the build-up, as alluded to earlier in the scout report, but he does so sporadically and sometimes only for a simple layoff or to create an additional passing channel for the deeper-positioned players.

Most passes he deploys in those deep areas are shorter and either aimed horizontally or backwards, as he creates a one-two sequence, a bounce pass or simply recycles possession if there are no good progression paths to take.

In the following section of our tactical analysis, we'll closely examine his first-phase involvement.

BUILD-UP PHASE TACTICAL ANALYSIS

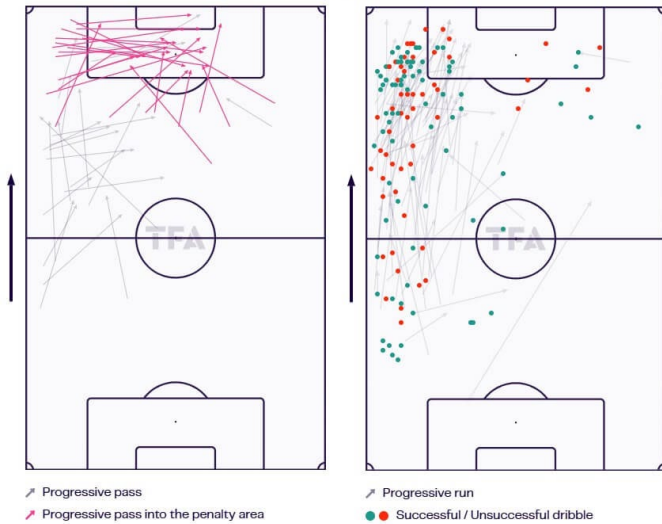
When it comes to pure numbers, Touré will not top the charts in progression or recycling the volume of passes.

However, that doesn't mean he's still not an effective tool in the first phase of Hammarby's attacking tactics.

The following visual shows us the 18-year-old's progression through passing (left) and carrying (right).

T. BAZOUMANA BALL PROGRESSION

All games from Allsvenskan 2024



Bazoumana Touré Ball Progression Allsvenskan 2024

Quite clearly, the young forward prefers progression.

His progressive passing is decent, especially higher up the pitch, but his main tool is running with the ball at his feet for longer distances.

This, of course, is helped once again by sheer athleticism and power.

Touré runs in big strides and can create quick separations from his marker in the opening several yards.

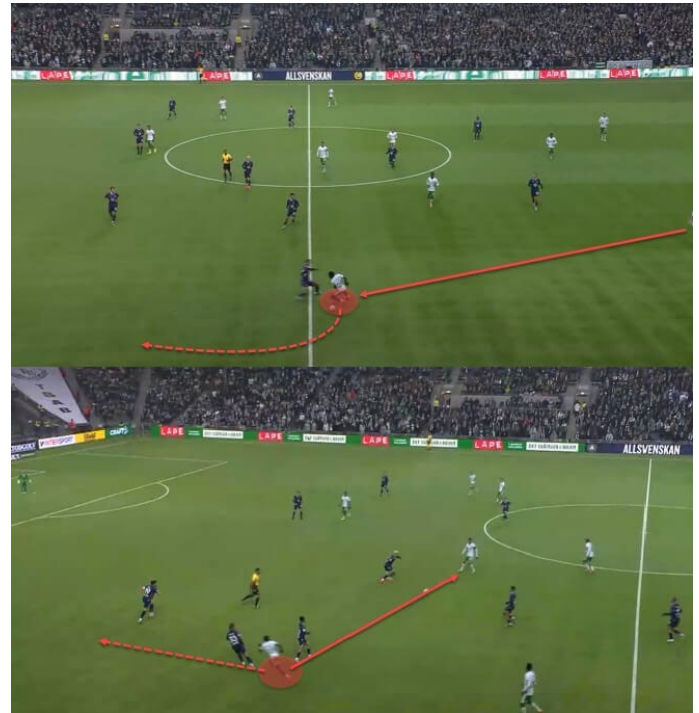
He prefers the direct offensive route when in possession of the ball.

He does this with a controlled step count, alternating between shorter and longer strides to move as cleanly and as efficiently as possible while being far more unpredictable and more difficult to mark.

Naturally, this is also an effective offensive tool, as we'll see later in this scout report.

Still, in the build-up, it's primarily used to push the opposition lines back and enter the second

phase of the attack around the middle third or just at the entrance of the final third of the pitch.



In this example, we can see Touré receiving the ball from the backline while he's dropped into a position around the halfway of the pitch.

As soon as he receives the ball, however, his first instinct is to immediately turn the marker who's been following him and advance forward.

Once he's successfully progressed the play to the entrance to the final third, he combines with a nearby teammate, setting up the rest of Hammaryb's attack.

It is very important to note Touré's involvement in the build-up.

He is primarily a ball carrier, so he instinctively tries to hold onto the ball or run with it for an extended period before transferring it to the next player.

We can see such a sequence in the following example.



At the beginning of our scout report, the data suggested he's a prolific dribbler who gets many touches inside the opposition's penalty area and is heavily involved in Hammarby's goal contributions.

That's his attacking repertoire in a nutshell.

This time, however, we see him drop all the way back into his team's half of the pitch, where he receives the ball from a teammate.

Again, even before attempting to combine with someone else, he seizes up his opponent, looking for a way to run past them rather than distribute the ball further.

Using his signature turn, he manages to shake off the marker and then attempts an incisive forward pass towards an advancing teammate.

Unfortunately, the pass still gets cut off, but Hammarby retain the ball in the end.

While ultimately unsuccessful, this sequence shows Touré's thinking process when he is involved in the first phase of the attack.

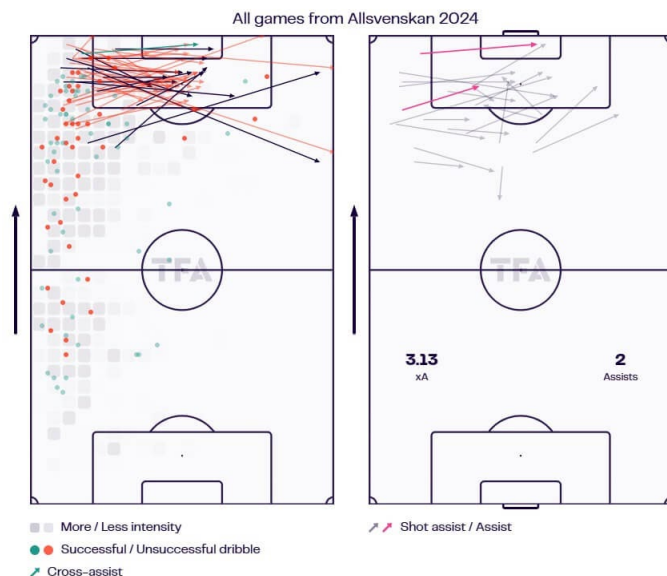
He was a carrier first and a passer second, which has its pros and cons.

Still, his running power and even his passing or crossing repertoires are best positioned much higher up the pitch, where the most fun aspects of his player profile become evident.

FINAL THIRD TACTICAL ANALYSIS

As useful as Touré can be in deeper areas when Hammarby don't have an easy way out, his kit fully shines in the final third.

T. BAZOUMANA WINGER ACTIONS



Bazoumana Touré Winger Actions Allsvenskan 2024

Looking at his winger actions across the whole of Allsvenskan's 2024 season, we can see the volume, intensity in certain areas, and distribution in the final third, especially just outside the box.

This visual also confirms what we discussed in the analysis of the build-up phase, as we can see Touré's dribbles and carries from the deep areas.

Naturally, being a volume dribbler comes with risk.

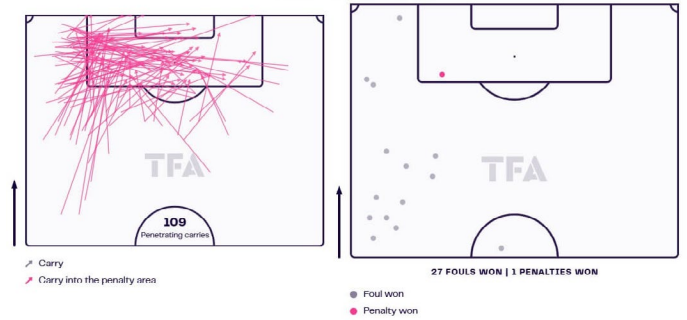
Still, with 6.81 dribbles per 90 minutes and a success rate of 60%, the young winger's dribbling is a reliable offensive tool.

So what's the secret?



T. BAZOUMANA PENETRATING CARRIES & FOULS SUFFERED

All games from Allsvenskan 2024



Bazoumana Touré Penetrative Carries & Fouls Suffered Allsvenskan 2024

Unsurprisingly, this means his penetrative carries into the box are a weapon of mass destruction, often forcing the opposition to foul him as their only way of stopping his advancement.

Once he gets the open space to attack his marker 1v1, it's often too late and the visual here tells us how often he attacks the danger area from there.

Generally, he can be used as a touchline winger who acts as an outlet, but seeing how he accelerates from a standstill, teams who prefer a ball-to-foot winger would also find great use in his profile.

However, being a left-footer who plays on the left does send him wide more often, and his heatmap indicates he doesn't invert as often, meaning defenders could theoretically read his actions more easily.

One of the positives of being a strong-side winger, though, is the quickness of cross-release.



The most interesting aspects of his dribbling techniques are his frame manipulation and his ability to execute actions well, even when moving at high speeds.

In the latest image, you can see how Touré shifts his body instantaneously, using a single feint to dismark himself and create a separation in the next couple of steps.

This often either wrong-foots his markers or simply sends them the opposite way, as they can't change directions as quickly as he does.

But the fascinating thing is that Touré has this low centre of gravity and runs like a gazelle, taking big strides in open spaces, too.

In other words, he has the agility of a small space manipulator with the engine of a large-distance runner.

Touré often shuffles his feet quickly before creating that one or two-step separation and then immediately releases the cross into the box.

His variety is impressive, too.

He can send low and driven passes, lofted passes into the back post, long switches, or passes into the six-yard box.

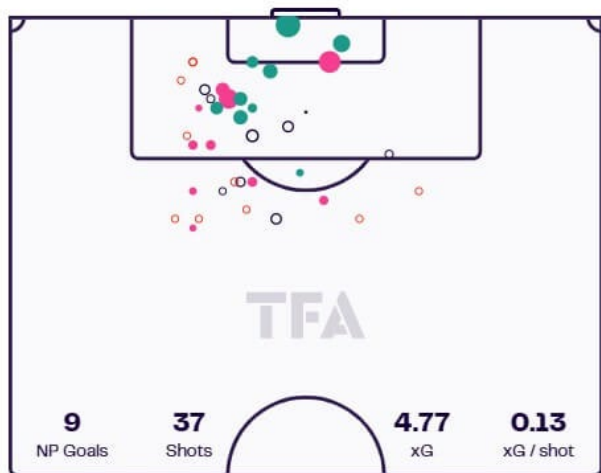
The pure execution of his final product, however, still needs work.

While 25.6% crossing accuracy is not necessarily the end of the world, the best crossers in Allsvenskan average around the 49% mark.

Finally, his shooting analysis.

T. BAZOUMANA SHOTS

All games from Allsvenskan 2024



NO PENALTIES TAKEN



Bazoumana Touré Shots Allsvenskan 2024

With nine goals across 1783 minutes in the 2024 Allsvenskan season, Touré is a significant contributor to Hammarby's attacking tactics.

Looking at his shot map, though, we see that he massively overperformed when his expected goals (4.77) are compared to the actual ones (nine).

The locations, too, are far more left-sided, as is to be expected from a winger crashing the box from the left flank, but most of the finishes seem to target the near-side post as well.

This is a general tendency but also a result of him attacking the back post once the opposite flank cross is deployed.

However, creating separations, using clean ball-striking, and having a good sense of positioning are all attributes of a player who can become a far more consistent and versatile goal-scorer in the future.

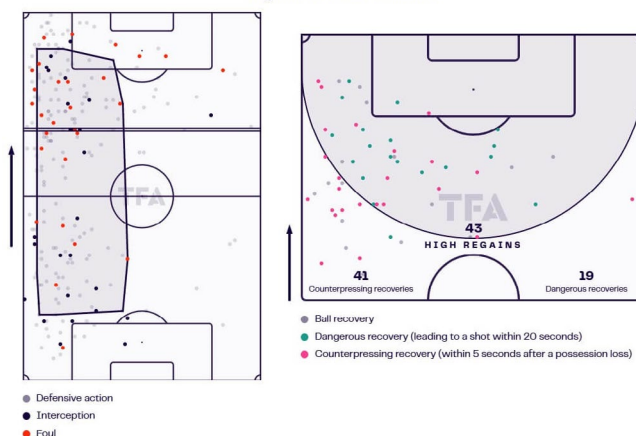
DEFENDING TACTICAL ANALYSIS

The final part of our scout report will focus on Touré's defensive profile.

Let's start with just his general defensive territory and actions.

T. BAZOUMANA DEFENCE

All games from Allsvenskan 2024



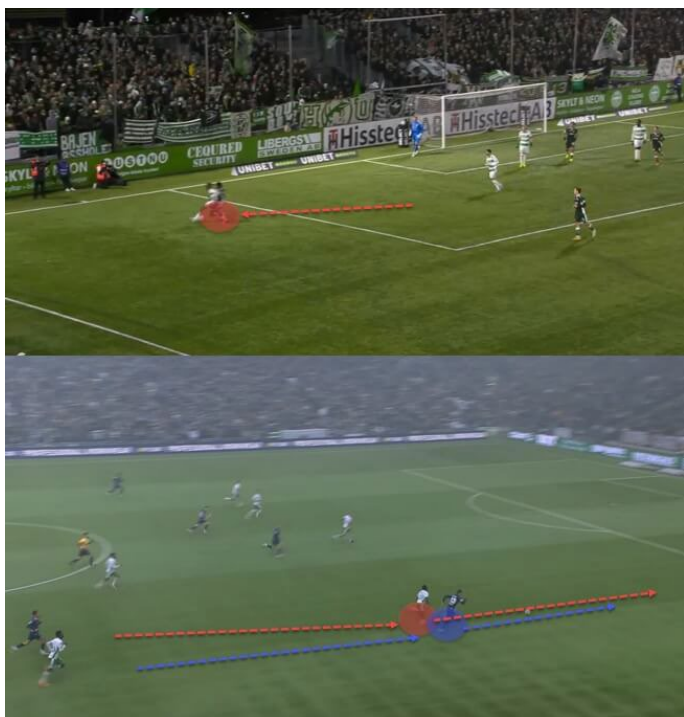
Bazoumana Touré Defensive Territory & High Regains

As expected, his zones are primarily confined to the left flank, but the activity on both extremes of the pitch is quite interesting.

Touré is a counter-pressing tool, as evidenced by the visual on the right in the latest image, but is also a player who's comfortable dropping deeper to defend with the rest of his team.

However, it's actually the middle third where there's an intriguing lack of activity.

Still, being an outlet but also a pressure valve from the deep, it makes sense that he is active both high and deep in Hammarby's defensive tactics; high when used as an outlet and a counter-pressing tool and deep when used as a quick progression tool once possession has been regained or a tracking-back runner.



His athleticism and hard-working nature are great components for Hammarby's defensive tactics.

CONCLUSION

Touré is a young but fascinating prospect who could see a move to a bigger league as soon as the winter transfer window.

A host of elite teams are already watching closely and taking notes of his development.

Of course, playing in Allsvenskan and being only 18 years old means he still has a long way to go to reach the very top, but the foundation and potential are certainly there.

2025 might just be his year.

EMANUEL EMEGHA

EMANUEL EMEGHA



CENTRE-FORWARD

STRASBOURG

At centre-forward in Total Football Analysis' 2025 Breakout XI is 21-year-old Emanuel Emegha, who plays up front for RC Strasbourg, the youngest team in Ligue 1.

The striker, who stands at 195cm / 6'5" and weighs 83kg / 182lbs, has been a consistent attacking threat since moving to the Alsace club from Austrian side SK Sturm Graz about 18 months ago.

Emegha scored eight goals and made two assists for Strasbourg in 28 Ligue 1 appearances last season before going on to add a further three goals and one assist this term at the time of writing.

The young forward has gone from strength to strength thus far in his career.

He first really began making noise at SK Sturm Graz, where he scored nine league goals and provided three league assists in 2022/23.

That campaign remains the most prolific of Emegha's career, but he managed to put up very similar numbers in a stronger league, the French top flight, last season, with just one more game played but about 500 minutes more pitch time.

The Strasbourg man has remained a significant threat to other Ligue 1 forwards this term, especially considering his young age and low level of experience at the highest level.

This helps him stand out among other young talents in the game today.

This tactical analysis and player-focused scout report aims to explain why we selected Emegha for this team.

Our player analysis, using data and video analysis, will explain why this youngster is a rising talent to watch closely as we enter 2025.

EMANUEL EMEGHA DATA ANALYSIS

First, let's look at the data that illuminates some of the key aspects of the Netherlands U21 international's game.

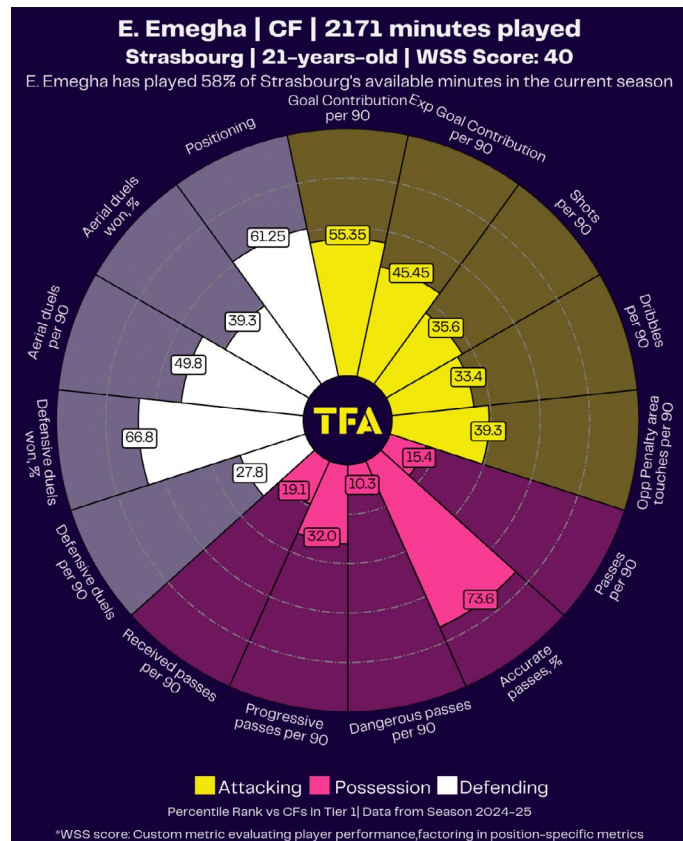


Figure 1 shows a pizza chart featuring some significant metrics related to Emegha's all-around game, divided into three unique categories: attacking, possession, and defending metrics.

The numbers on the pizza chart represent Emegha's performance in these criteria when compared with other centre-forwards from Europe's top-five leagues in 2024/25.

Looking at the viz, it's evident that Emegha performs quite well overall in defensive phases, with good standing in defensive duels won % and defensive positioning (a metric which combines tackles and interceptions).

The 195cm striker is perhaps surprisingly engaging in a slightly lower than average amount of aerial duels per 90, winning an even lower

proportion in relation to other centre-forwards in Europe's most prestigious leagues this term.

Offensively, Emegha performs best in goal contributions per 90 in the selected criteria.

At the same time, while his pass accuracy is the standout metric in the possession section, he is generally not extremely involved in possession phases.

EMANUEL EMEGHA'S HOLD-UP PLAY

Our next section of analysis focuses on the Dutch forward's hold-up play and the way in which he links up with his teammates in possession.

EMANUEL EMEGHA 2024/25 & 2023/25 HEAT MAP

E. EMEGHA HEATMAP

All games from Ligue 1 2024/2025, Coupe de France 2023/2024, Ligue 1 2023/2024

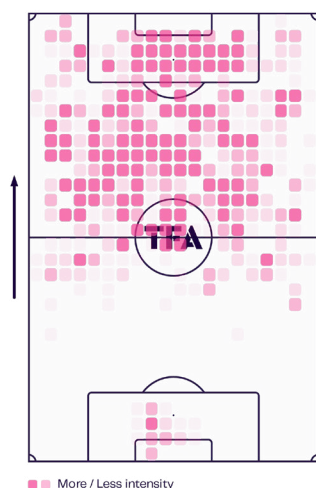


Figure 2 displays Emegha's heatmap for the 2024/25 campaign.

Again, the 21-year-old isn't heavily involved in his team's possession.

When he does link up with teammates, his involvement is relatively varied in terms of location.

He will sometimes drop off centrally, while other times, he'll drop into the half-spaces to receive passes.

Of course, he also has a heavy amount of involvement in the middle of the box, where his goalscoring abilities come to the forefront.

Most of the time, despite his imposing size, Emegha is capable of producing a gentle first touch when receiving the ball to feet after dropping off from the forward line.

From there, he'll typically attempt to lay the ball off into his teammates' path to continue the team's progress towards goal.

With that said, Emegha could work on having greater consistency in his first touch and link-up play.

The forward still misplaces too many of his first-time passes and loses control of the ball with a heavy first touch too often to really be considered reliable in this area.

So, his first touch and first-time passing under pressure are neither major strengths nor major weaknesses in his game.

Emegha will generally move quite well off the ball into inviting positions to give his teammates a decent passing option.

The 21-year-old has some room to develop his body further.

By strategically adding more muscle to his frame, Emegha could enhance his usefulness for the team when receiving with his back to goal and closely marked by an opponent.

In spite of his imposing stature, he's currently a bit vulnerable to aggressive but legal physical defending.

Emegha could improve his physique and become more comfortable receiving while stationary with a defender on his back.

He currently relies on his size and strength to retain possession, but he often tries to move around and receive in space, away from defenders.

The con with his current style of play in this regard is that at 195cm, he can receive while off balance right now, which can result in a loss of possession in less-than-ideal areas.

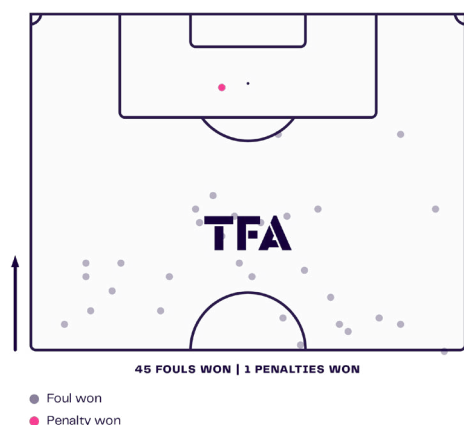
Still, the Strasbourg man must be cautious not to sacrifice too much of his mobility or versatility, which are strengths in his game right now.

Emegha can become a more complete forward with more physical development, but this must be done carefully, giving the 21-year-old time to get comfortable with the change.

EMANUEL EMEGHA 2024/25 & 2023/24 FOULS SUFFERED MAP

E. EMEGHA FOULS SUFFERED

All games from Ligue 1 2024/2025, Ligue 1 2023/2024, Coupe de France 2023/2024



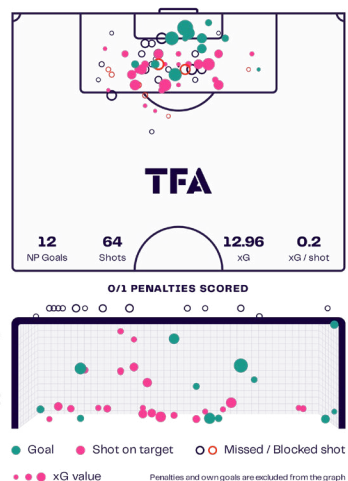
Emegha is capable of drawing fouls from the opponent when he drops off to receive from deeper teammates in the progression phase, a trait that his team can use strategically—see his fouls suffered map from the last season and a half with Le Racing above.

EMANUEL EMEGHA GOALSCORING

This scout report's third and final section focuses on Emanuel Emegha's goalscoring abilities.

E. EMEGHA SHOTS

All games from Ligue 1 2024/2025, Ligue 1 2023/2024, Coupe de France 2023/2024



Emegha primarily stands out as one to watch thanks to his goalscoring abilities; see the Strasbourg man's shot map from his time at Stade de la Meinau above.

The Dutchman is currently performing roughly on par with his expected goal (xG) numbers for the Alsace club.

He has scored a total of 12 non-penalty goals from 64 shots and 12.96 xG.

Emegha, a product of Sparta Rotterdam's youth academy, has averaged 0.2 xG per shot for his entire Strasbourg career—a highly impressive level.

Those numbers are actually even better for the 2024/25 season in isolation, with Emegha averaging 0.25 xG per shot this term.

The Dutch youth international's shots are generally localised around the penalty spot—exactly where you'd want to see him taking the majority of his shots from.

He takes on very few goalscoring chances from outside the penalty area; just six of the 64 shots visualised above originated outside the box.

Seven of the 12 goals featured on this shot map came from shots located either inside or just on the edge of the six-yard box, further highlighting this attacker's impressive ability to avail of chances from high-percentage locations.



Why does Emegha get so many chances from highly desirable locations?

One key reason for this is the player's off-the-ball movement inside the box.

We can see one passage of play in which Emegha's off-the-ball movement helped him get an inviting goalscoring opportunity from close range above.

Firstly, we see Strasbourg approaching the danger zone from the left wing, with Emegha circled just inside the penalty box.

At this point, Emegha is positioned just in front of the opposition's left centre-back—his marker—which is not the optimal position.

Emegha's location here allows the opponent, Aïssa Mandi, to keep both the forward and the ball carrier out on the wing within his line of sight, giving the Lille centre-back fairly good control of the situation despite the opposition's close proximity to the goal and the 195cm striker bearing down on the target.

Wise to this, Emegha completely changes the dynamic of this attack and makes it much more dangerous with his next move.

Though relatively subtle unless you're looking for it, Emegha's movement from in front of Mandi to the defender's back is critical to the creation of this goalscoring chance.

As soon as the 21-year-old positions himself on the centre-back's blind side, this attack's level of threat undergoes a notable rise.

As we see in the bottom-left image of figure 5, Mandi struggles once Emegha is attacking his blind side, with the defender trying to quickly move his head back and forth to watch both the ball carrier and the attacker.

Lille's left-back, Gabriel Gudmundsson, comes more central to try and assist Mandi in covering Emegha, but his marking job is not sufficient enough to prevent Emegha from escaping into space on the edge of the six-yard box and meeting the winger's perfectly placed and well-timed cross.

The aerial threat directs the ball goalward with his head, getting his name on the scoresheet.

Figure 5 shows this kind of intelligent movement, which is a key reason why Emegha is such a goal threat.

The 21-year-old knows where to place himself to be most difficult to control and most inviting for the playmakers on his side.

His ability to put himself in quality positions, like the one we see here, combined with Emegha's teammates' familiarity with his movement, has made him a major goal threat for this young Ligue 1 side.

In addition to this movement, Emegha is good at performing little last-minute bursts away from defenders and into space in dangerous positions, even when crowded with bodies.

This makes him an inviting passing option close to goal and gives him room to actually get a shot off.

Not just a threat from crosses or cutbacks, Emegha can time runs in behind against a high line quite well.

Although his pace is not rapid by any means, the 21-year-old's ability to time his runs for the playmakers and his long legs, which allow him to cover a lot of ground quite fast, make him a decent threat from those types of attacks as well.

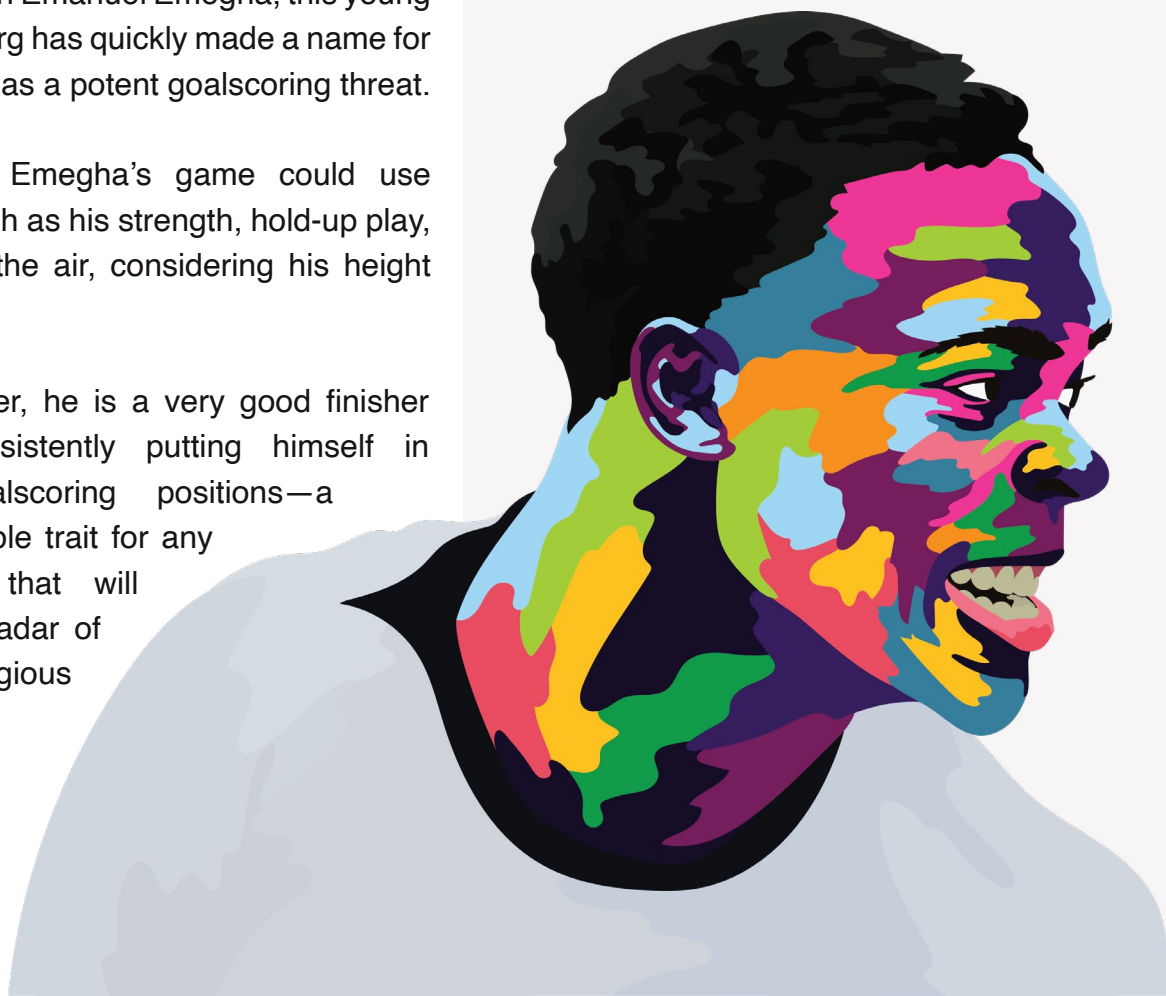
However, he's probably at his best when receiving inside the box, as seen in Figure 5.

CONCLUSION

To conclude this tactical analysis piece and scout report on Emanuel Emegha, this young talent at Strasbourg has quickly made a name for himself in France as a potent goalscoring threat.

Some areas of Emegha's game could use improvement, such as his strength, hold-up play, and reliability in the air, considering his height advantage.

Currently, however, he is a very good finisher capable of consistently putting himself in high-quality goalscoring positions—a massively desirable trait for any young forward that will put him on the radar of even more prestigious clubs.



DATA VIZ

CHIDO OBI MARTIN

MANCHESTER UNITED CENTRE-FORWARD

VENKATANARAYANAN VENKATESAN // @VENKYREDDEVIL

Last up on our bench is centre-forward Chido Obi-Martin of Manchester United. One Manchester United signing this season who did not miss the hype train was Chido Obi-Martin, who joined the club's youth side from Arsenal U18s.

Obi-Martin is already up and running for his new team, with the 17-year-old forward scoring a hat-trick in his debut against Forest U18s. Having recently broken the record for the most goals at U18 level, Obi-Martin is lethal in front of the net.

The visualisation below shows the forward's shot map from the current and last seasons. An instinctive goal-scorer, Obi-Martin's profile shows he is extremely good inside the box and seems to target every area around the goalkeeper, not just one.

Obi-Martin uses his physicality to impose himself on the opponent but is also very athletic for someone with his physicality.

His biggest strength is his ability to take a shot from really tight spaces. Overperforming his xG by a small margin, Obi-Martin is clinical and one of the best finishers in his age group.

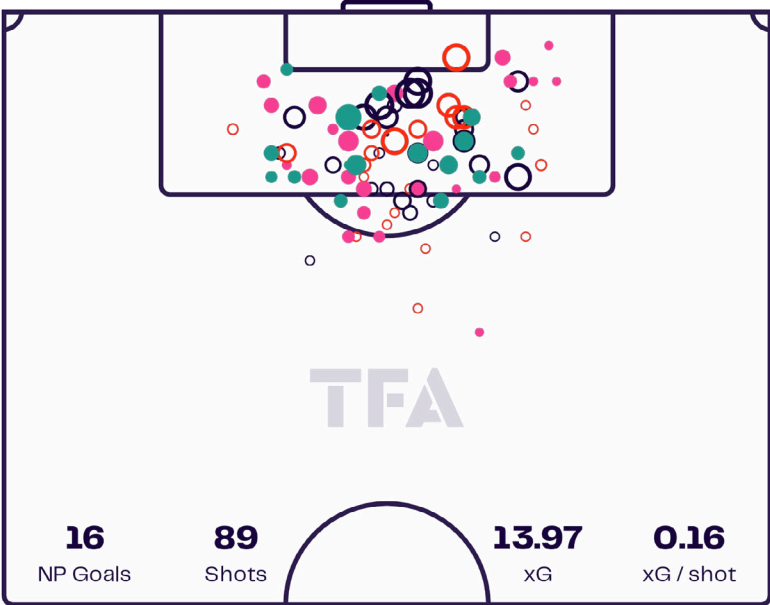
Other strengths of Chido Obi-Martin's game include his excellent ability to play with his back to the goal and link-up play with his teammates.

The 17-year-old has shown excellent promise so far, which has earned him a move to a club historically known to create a clear pathway for academy talent.

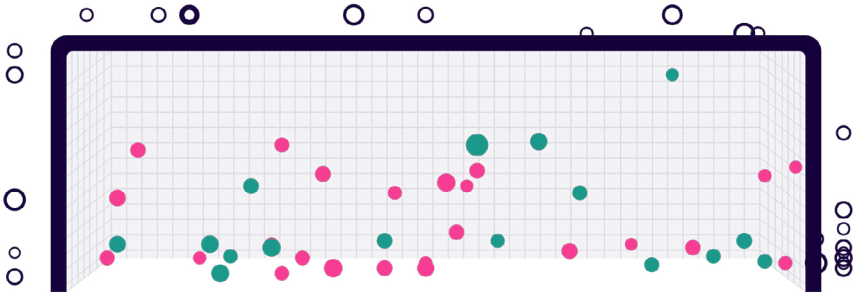
Now, it's time for Obi-Martin to step up and show why he is ready for a first-team opportunity in the near future.

C. OBI SHOTS

All games from U18 Premier League 2024/2025, U18 Premier League 2023/2024



6/6 PENALTIES SCORED



- Goal
 - Shot on target
 - Missed / Blocked shot
 - xG value
- Penalties and own goals are excluded from the graph

ANALYSTS

ALEXIS GUANCHEZ // @ALEXISGCHZ
DOMAGOJ KOSTANJŠAK // @DKOSTANJSAK
EDIN HALILOVIĆ // @EDHALILOVIC96
FINTAN O'REILLY // @FINTANFOOTBALL
JACK CHIPPENDALE // @JACKCHIPPY6
JACK MANSHIP // @JMANSHIP19
KARIM EL-SHESHEINY // @ELSHESHEINY
KUROSH MOGHTADER // @MEDIANOWATCHER
LORIHANNA BALABANOVA // @LORIHANNASH
LUIS KIRCHER // @LUISKIRCHER
MORITZ H. // @MH_SV5
SAM HUTCHINSON // @SAM51867823
SELIM BEN HMIDA // @MRZIGUEN

CONTRIBUTORS

DATA VIZZES

VENKATANARAYANAN VENKATESAN // @VENKYREDDEVIL

RAJ MAHAL
OWNER // @THEOTHERRAJ

FINTAN O'REILLY
LEAD EDITOR // @FINTANFOOTBALL

JAMIE BRACKPOOL
ART & MAGAZINE DESIGN // @JAMIEBRACKPOOL



24/7

**MATCH ANALYSIS
TRAINING ANALYSIS
DATA ANALYSIS
SCOUT REPORTS
TACTICAL THEORY
VIDEO ANALYSIS**



TWITTER
@TOTALANALYSIS

FACEBOOK
TOTAL FOOTBALL ANALYSIS MAGAZINE

INSTAGRAM
@TOTALFOOTBALLANALYSIS

YOUTUBE
@TOTALFOOTBALLANALYSIS

TOTAL FOOTBALL ANALYSIS