

Module 3. Offensive SPs Analysis



After reviewing the analysis process of defensive set pieces (SPs), introducing a proposal of variables, and exemplifying it through the actions of corner kicks and indirect free kicks, we proceed to analyse the **offensive aspect of the SPs**. The process will follow a structure similar to the previous module and will have the aim of providing effective resources for the analysis of these actions, all through a practical proposal of analysis variables. In this way, reports of corner kicks, direct and indirect free kicks and penalty kicks will be exemplified and the possibilities offered by the analysis of actions, such as the kick-off and the throw-in, will be deepened.

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Unit 3.1 Introduction to offensive SPs

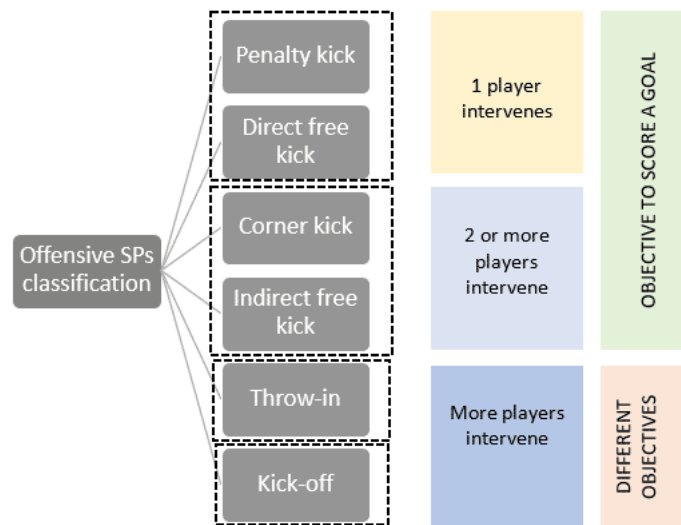
As in defensive SPs, it will be key to dissect each action in the SPs analysis. In other words, the variables that we use for the analysis of a team's offensive throw-ins will have nothing to do with those that we determine for the analysis of an indirect free kick. Although this may seem obvious, we must bear it in mind since the very nature of each SP—which may have totally different objectives or success indicators among them—will impose that we have to establish analysis variables for each one of them.

It is true that the analysis variables of two offensive SPs can be very similar, as could happen in the analysis of the corner kick and the indirect free kick. But, even so, depending on the SPs whose analysis is required, we must determine a series of variables that allow us to identify the performance of this action, always in agreement with its nature and its objective.

The SP itself will be the one that will define our execution possibilities. When we are faced with a penalty kick, we understand that it is a much more closed situation, where normally the intervention falls on only two players. On the other hand, in a corner kick or in a throw-in, the player who executes will have a wider range of possibilities available to make a decision.

It is for this reason that a possible criterion when establishing the general demands for analysis—and, therefore, deciding the priority that each SP will have by classifying the different actions—may be the direct participation of the players. In this case, we would differentiate penalty kicks and direct free kicks from the rest of the SPs, due to their lower degree of uncertainty, analysing, a priori, only the shooter's execution. In addition, we would group two actions that aim to score a goal by connecting at least two players. In this way, corner kicks and indirect free kicks (crossed or short plays) are different from throw-ins and kick-offs. Although it is true that in kick-offs and throw-ins the interaction of two players can lead to scoring a goal, it is not usual nor is it usually the immediate objective of the executing team in this type of actions.

Figure 1: Offensive SPs categorisation



Source: own elaboration.

In this case, a classification of the offensive SPs has been exposed (Figure 1) based on criteria such as the possible level of intervention of the players and the objective of said action. We must be clear that the chosen criteria categorise offensive SPs in a general way and, hence, may have certain exceptions.

For example, we know that the regulations do not oblige the shooter of a penalty to have to do it directly, but it is allowed to contact a player, as Johan Cruyff did on his day. On the other hand, it can also happen that the player shooting the corner kick scores a goal without any teammate contacting the ball. In turn, and as a last example, we understand that the primary objective of a kick-off or throw-in is not to score a goal—or at least it is not immediately—even so, in some cases we can observe it, especially in throw-ins close to the rival box.

It should be noted that we will mainly focus on exposing the offensive SPs analysis process through corner kicks. We understand, in this way, that many of the variables that will be exposed will coincide with the other SP, in which at least two players intervene and also has the immediate objective of scoring a goal, that is, indirect free kicks. That is why, with reference to these actions and unlike the previous module, only an analysis exemplification will be performed. In addition, we will enter into commenting on the remaining SPs through a proposal of analysis variables and a practical example of a report of said actions.

[CONTINUE](#)

Unit 3.2 The offensive SPs analysis process through corner kicks

As we commented in the previous module, corner kicks are the most studied SP by the specialised literature. In fact, this theory is on the rise, if we focus on the offensive part of said action. Due to the importance, it has in the game, this is why it will serve as a unifying thread and exemplifier of the offensive SPs analysis process.

Having commented the main results of the contrasted studies regarding performance in corner kicks in module 2 (referring to percentages of attempts and goals), we believe that, from now on, when it comes to offensive analysis, it is interesting to investigate those most studied variables at the offensive level in the corner kick and observe how these are related to success in said SP.

Among the most studied key aspects, we can find the way of shooting, the trajectory of the ball and the number of finishers.

Key variables for the analysis of the corner kick

Way of shooting

Depending on the intention and the type of contact of the player who shoots, we will differentiate those **direct corner kicks** (crossed in an aerial way to the box) from those played **with a short ball** (looking for a teammate to receive a low pass).

Along these lines, we find that nine out of ten corner kicks are executed directly through an aerial trajectory. Indirect corner kicks have a higher frequency of attempts, but a lower percentage of attempts on goal or goals due to its difficulty and the zone in which this attempt is performed (Silva, 2011; Maneiro et al., 2017; Sánchez Flores and García Manso, 2012). This difference between direct or indirect kicks (with a short ball) was not so noticeable in a study conducted by the FC Barcelona Analysis Department (2019) where, after analysing three hundred and seventy-eight corner kicks of eighteen games of four teams from the Spanish first division, it was concluded that up to 27% of the corner kicks were kicked short and indirectly. Even so, it should be noted that these data cannot be taken as an absolute reference since one of the four teams analysed was FC Barcelona itself, which in those games reached up to 44% kicks with a short ball.

In any case, it is clear that the use of direct kicks predominates, to the detriment of short kicks, and, as the bibliography can demonstrate, the greater efficiency of direct kick (attempt on goal and goal), despite the fact that the frequency of attempt can be higher in indirect or short kicks.

The trajectory of the ball

Although it is true that several studies classify the trajectory of the ball as aerial or low, we understand that this distinction must be related to the way of shooting, due to the similarity of the information provided by both variables. Therefore, when we begin to assess the trajectories of the ball, we will distinguish between four types of trajectories.

Two of them have a close relationship with the shooter's laterality, that is to say, it is an **outswinging** aerial ball trajectory when it is a natural leg kick (a left-footed player kicks the corner kick from the left), and it is an **inswinging** aerial ball trajectory when the kick is made with a changed leg (a left-footed player kicks the corner kick from the right). On the other hand, we distinguish the flat ball and the low or pass ball trajectory, which can be used regardless of the shooter's laterality.

Several authors agree that there are higher percentages of use of the kick with a changed leg, but greater effectiveness, that is, a greater probability of attempting and scoring in natural-leg kicks (Olsen and Larsen, 1997; Raya and Márquez, 1998; Borrás and Sainz de Baranda, 2005; Sainz de Baranda, López-Riquelme and Ortega, 2011; Arda et al., 2014).

These conclusions are in accordance with the study conducted by the FC Barcelona Analysis Department (2019) where the four teams analysed presented a higher probability of attempt through inswinging trajectories compared to outswinging ones. It should be noted that the flat trajectory was not categorised in this study, while the low trajectory (pass) was the least used by far (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Results regarding the trajectory of the ball and its relationship with the attempt

		All	FCB	SFC	RVCF	SDH
All of the corner kicks	Inswinging aerial ball	167 (44.2%)	25 (25.3%)	51 (55.4%)	53 (53.5%)	38 (43.2%)
	Outswinging aerial ball	175 (46.3%)	50 (50.5%)	36 (39.1%)	40 (40.4%)	49 (55.7%)
	Pass	36 (9.5%)	24 (24.2%)	5 (5.5%)	6 (6.1%)	1 (1.1%)
Frequency per game	Inswinging aerial ball	2.3	1.3	2.8	2.9	2.1
	Outswinging aerial ball	2.4	2.7	2	2.2	2.7
	Pass	0.5	1.3	0.2	0.3	0.01
Total attempts	Inswinging aerial ball	42	5	11	13	13
	Outswinging aerial ball	25	4	6	5	10
	Pass	15	8	3	3	1
Attempt probability	Inswinging aerial ball	25.1%	20%	21.5%	24.5%	34.2%
	Outswinging aerial ball	14.2%	8%	16.6%	12.5%	20.4%
	Pass	41.6%	33.3%	60%	50%	100%

Source: own elaboration based on the FC Barcelona Analysis Department, 2019.

It is important to note that, in this study, all corner kicks with a low trajectory (pass) belong to the short way of shooting, but that does not mean that all corner kicks are short balls or indirect since we consider that a corner kick can be executed short and, later, a cross can be produced that may have an inswinging, outswinging or flat trajectory.

Going one step further and focusing on what the use of one trajectory or another implies, we take as a reference another study by the FC Barcelona Analysis Department (2019) where the performance of the inswinging trajectory and the outswinging trajectory in corner kicks is compared.

OUTSWINGING AERIAL BALL TRAJECTORY	INSWINGING TRAJECTORY
<p>The main conclusions of the study confirm that a shot with an outswinging aerial ball trajectory benefits the attackers due to the fact that the shot itself will coincide with the finisher's sprint at many points of contact and this will make it easier for them to choose the ideal moment to attack the ball and contact it frontally. Besides, the outswinging aerial ball trajectories facilitate the attempt itself since they are shots that, by their nature, move away from the zone players (usually the ones that clear the most balls), make it difficult for the goalkeeper to intervene and get closer to the finishers. The negative side is that, when attempting from more distant positions, players make shots that require greater technical difficulty.</p>	

OUTSWINGING AERIAL BALL TRAJECTORY

INSWINGING TRAJECTORY

By analysing the shot with an **inswinging trajectory**, we know that the movement itself can already go in the direction of the goal and can benefit finishers, so that the attempt will only need a minimal contact. Occasionally, even danger can be created without any offensive player contacting the ball. Moreover, the shots that occur with inswinging trajectories are more likely to be in zones very close to the goal. Even so, this trajectory favours the performance of defenders, especially defenders of the zone, simply because the ball is heading towards them (they will have more points of contact than the finishers), away from the finishers. Likewise, since these are inswinging shots, it is clear that, depending on the power, height and precision of the shot, the intervention of the goalkeeper may be benefited.

Reflecting on the conclusions of the study, we believe that it may be interesting to adapt the players' sprints to the possible points of contact that each trajectory offers us (Figure 3). It is clear that not all finishers have to make the same sprint or the same detachment, but it may be interesting that, in outswinging kicks, players start the sprint from a more backward position, that is, they enter running and take advantage of the outswinging curve of the trajectory itself to be able to attack the ball frontally.

On the other hand, we consider that it could favour the performance of inswinging kicks that one or two finishers start from the player's position in the zone and their movement is in the direction of the corner; thus, they coincide in more contact points of the shot and favour their intervention by means of a pass to a teammate or an attempt on goal.

Figure 3: Adaptation of the finishers' sprints according to the trajectory



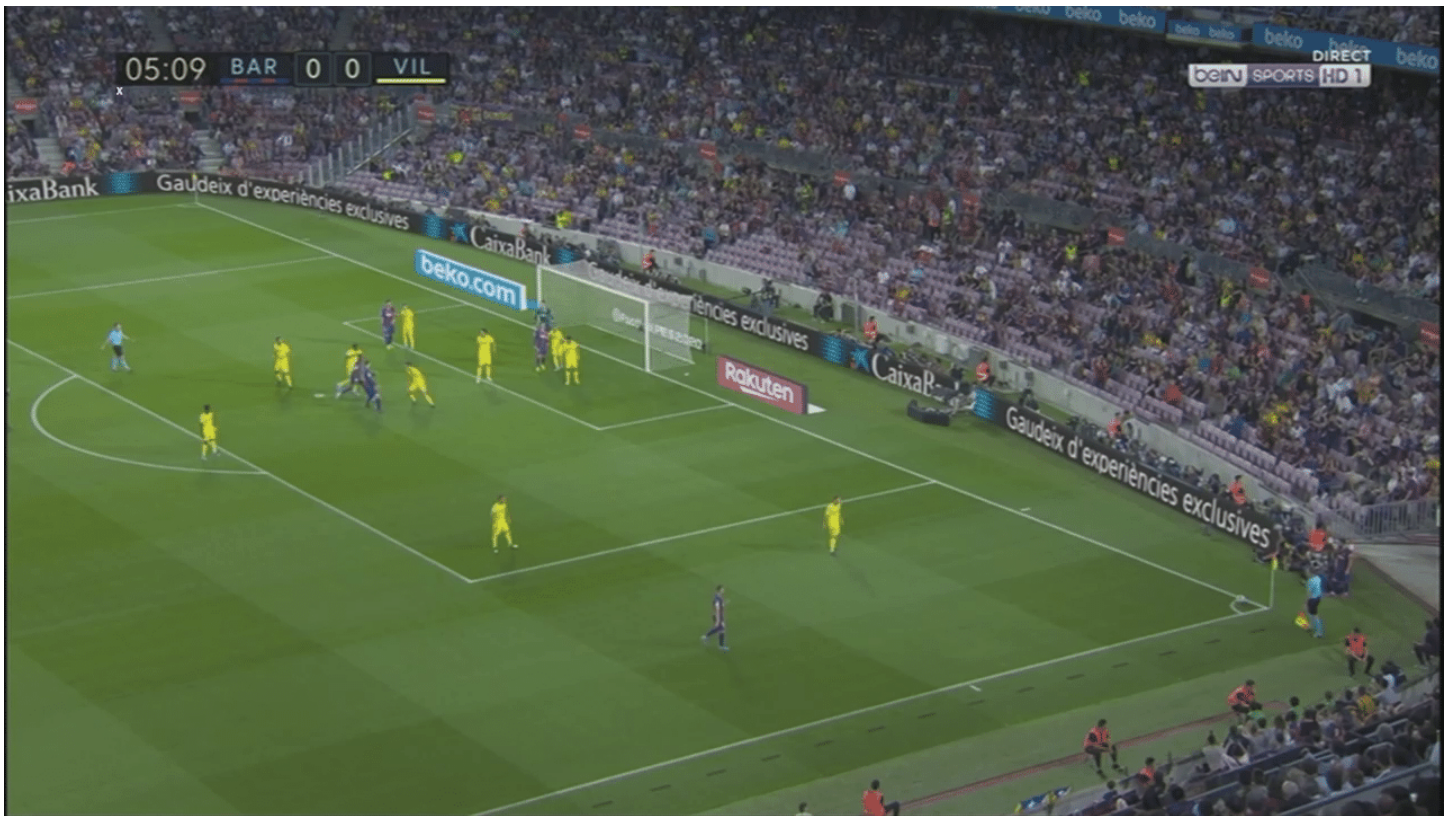
To make this idea more visible, the following videos are attached showing corner kicks where the finisher adapts their sprint to the trajectory of the ball.

Video 1. Adaptation of sprints to outswinging trajectories



Source: FC Barcelona Analysis Department (n.d.).

Video 2. Adaptation of sprints to inswinging trajectories



Source: FC Barcelona Analysis Department (n.d).

The number of finishers

In the vast majority of corner kicks, the finishers are in numerical inferiority to the defenders. More specifically, Maneiro (2014) states that the number of attackers, understood as finishers, is usually four or five. We have seen how this trend has been increasing and, currently, most teams choose to enter to finish with five players or even six.

This variable, although a priori it may seem simple, will be key to our SPs analysis of the rival team. Knowing the tendency of said team to enter with four, five or six players gives us very valuable information to intervene in it. In fact, as we already know, to determine this trend or regularity, it will be key to observe the team in different contexts in order to understand how certain factors affect the number of finishers proposed. Will the same number of finishers enter when the opponent leaves a player in offensive position? In final minutes and with a favourable or unfavourable score, do they keep the same number, or do they modify it? Will the number of finishers vary depending on the profile of the players on the pitch?

At the end of the day, it is essential to determine an estimate of the number of finishers in order to intervene and offer resources so that the team adapts its defensive structure to that specific situation. For example, in the case of a team that usually enters with five players—but with adverse results—it can do so with six. One of our clearance

players must be aware of this possible situation to modify their role and become a man-to-man marker. In addition, the player in an offensive position, also attentive to this stimulus, will delay their position by approaching to the clearance zone and, in this way, the team will complete its self-adaptation to that particular situation.

Organisation possibilities in offensive corners. Static and dynamic structure

In the case of offensive corners, determining the initial organisation of the finishers is not as relevant as in defensive corner kicks. This is because, when defending a corner kick, the organisation is usually static and, consequently, it will be key to identify the way in which the players of that team will position themselves to defend the action. On the other hand, when we talk about offensive corners, although it is true that the team is part of an organisation that we will call a static structure, it can usually evolve into its dynamic aspect, where all the movements that occur during the attempt to finish the corner kick will be considered. Thus, on many occasions, it will be the dynamic structure that emerges or is established that will really give us information about the main regularities that a team follows in an attacking corner.

Various authors consider that team performing a corner kick increases its chances of success when it establishes a dynamic organisation (Pérez and Vicente, 1996; Herráez 2003; Arda et al., 2014). That is to say, the players leave their initial position—static structure—to carry out a certain function in the corner kick, through certain movements such as drag moves, crosses, and blockings, with the aim of attaining collective success.

Even so, we should not ignore the static structure established by a team since, depending on some situations, it can be decisive and totally conditioning of the dynamic structure. Some of the common static structures that we can distinguish today are those listed below.

Formation 1-4.

Figure 4: Formation 1-4



Source: own elaboration based on the FC Barcelona Analysis Department, n.d.

Formation 2-3

Figure 5: Formation 2-3



Source: own elaboration based on the FC Barcelona Analysis Department, n.d.

Formation of accumulation in the small area.

Figure 6: Formation of accumulation in the small area



Source: own elaboration based on the FC Barcelona Analysis Department, n.d.

Formation of accumulation in a line ("conga line")

Figure 7: Formation of accumulation in a line ("conga line")



Source: own elaboration based on the FC Barcelona Analysis Department, n.d.

Below, we highlight some of the possible moves to benefit the finisher or, ultimately, the possibilities of dynamic structure (Spielverlagerung.de, 2019, t.ly/HUNw).

Blocking

Movement in which a player obstructs the sprint and, therefore, the tracking of their mark, with the aim of benefiting the teammate's race (space-time), thus increasing their chances of success in the theoretical attempt. They are easily recognisable; it is common to see the blocker facing the player they are going to block. It is important not to give signals to the rival and to try to hide the block. It is advisable to isolate these situations, looking for 2v2. Contrary to what one might think, we believe that blocking the zone player can be very beneficial since, generally, they are the player who perform the most clearances.

Crossings

When the finishers finish their own sprints, they raise doubts in the opponent and if this crossing is performed in a synchronised way, the attackers should not slow down their sprint. Instead, surely, their markers will have to do it and they will already be at a disadvantage.

Creation of space through dragging

Movement or set of movements performed by the finishers in order to free a certain zone. Generally, it is used to isolate the reference player in a 1x1 situation or after a blocking. It can also be done to free the clearance zone or the short kick.

Overloading a zone

All movements of the players will be concentrated in a certain zone, trying to take advantage of its weakness. This resource can be very useful against zone defences.

These are just a few examples of the wide range of action possibilities that emerge in the dynamic structure of the offensive corner kick. As we can see, the objective of these movements will always be that the finisher or finishers benefit from a gain in space-time and, thus, increase their chances of success when attempting.

It should be noted that they will not make any sense on their own so they must be in perfect tune (proper timing), both with the shooter and with the other finishers. Thus, a corner kick—in which a two-player drag move has been planned to free the penalty spot zone where the reference finisher will arrive after blocking at the far post to attempt an inswinging trajectory—will not be successful if, in principle, the events discussed do not occur with the appropriate chronology and timing.

Identification of functional roles in offensive corners

In the previous module, the concept of a functional role for defensive corners was introduced. Next, we determine the functional roles in an attacking corner.

Shooter

Player who will not only execute the shot, but also, depending on various factors, will have to make important decisions such as the area to kick and the way of shooting (short or direct); in many cases, it will be the person in charge of choosing and marking, by means of a verbal or visual signal, a certain play to be made.

Therefore, in addition to being a precise player with a good ball hit, it will be important that they have a correct reading of the situation, as well as a good decision-making based, among other things, on the instructions indicated about the rival defence and the different options worked on during training sessions.

Player at short distance

A player who will be normally located near the shooter in order to be an option in the short kick or to engage a rival player. Generally, depending on the decision of the shooter, they will have to modify their behaviour, preparing to receive the ball or adapting their position according to the shot and having options to pick up the clearance. Players who are at short distance must be skilled in the associative game and have that point of cleverness necessary to be an option in a hypothetical quick short kick.

Finisher

Finishers are those players positioned within the box just before the corner kick is shot. They are the ones that will define the initial organisation (static structure) depending on their position. Depending on whether or not there are planned or intuitive movements, the dynamic structure of the team will emerge in order to obtain an optimal finishing position.

Within the finishers, on occasions, a small division can be made **that distinguishes the reference finishers** from **the facilitators**. The former must be players with good aerial ability who dominate the timing of the attempt in a corner kick and, above all, with the ability to detach and anticipate their marking. Not all players with aerial ability are capable of attempting a corner kick, as examples of players with a high percentage of success in frontal aerial duels or in clearances located in the area come to mind, but with great difficulties in attacking the ball and attempting a corner kick.

Facilitators should behave like actors. The objective of their participation will be to gain space-time for the reference finisher, thus facilitating their intervention in the desired zone. There are many possibilities of intervention, depending on the situation, from a drag move to a blocking, a crossing, among others.

Clearing player

They have a functional role similar to that of the clearing player defending corner kick since they must hold a high level of attention to foresee where the cross clearance may fall. In addition, the clearing player will have the function of avoiding a rival counterattack; therefore, they must try to collect the clearance to continue playing and, in case the opponent picks it up, avoid being beaten. Surely, we are facing one of the most adaptive roles of the attacking corners. Thus, according to the needs they detect, they can have functions such as entering to attempt (surprise factor), compensating, and joining the players in defence and approaching to be a short kick option. Qualities such as ability to return to defensive shape, associative play, and a good long shot may be optimal for this functional role.

Player in defence

A player or players who, apart from being attentive to picking up a possible long clearance, should focus their attention on the player in the opponent's offensive position. To do this, it will be key to be close to them and prevent them from receiving the ball. They should be players with a high level of concentration, defensive intensity and, if possible, they should be fast in the sprint.

We already commented that, in the defensive facet of the corner kicks, the functional roles in no case would be closed behaviours; hence, analysing them in their offensive aspect increases their value even more. The very nature of living beings and football and the understanding of the players and the team as complex systems that are constantly interrelated and self-organising lead us to think that we cannot keep only the delimitation of the roles they will perform.

By analysing the offensive functional roles, we must understand that the interaction will be much greater than in the defensive ones and that, to a greater extent, we will observe changes in roles or behaviours depending on a certain stimulus. Putting this into practice, we can find a player who a priori is a finisher, but ends up coming to receive a short kick, either in a planned way and established by the coaching staff or by pure intuition. And vice versa, a player who initially seemed to be at short distance modifies their position and ends up entering to attempt.

There are many possibilities in the rotation of functional roles in the offensive phase and that is why, in the analysis of these actions, we must still focus more on the dynamic structure of the action.

From the analysis of defensive corner kicks, we must maintain and rather enhance our capacity to individualise the analysis. Thus, delving into the characteristics of the players who will perform each role will give us a much more detailed and precise view of their role.

Proposal of variables for the analysis of offensive corners

In addition to individualising our analysis, focusing even more in the offensive SPs analysis, we must conduct an exhaustive and wide visualisation of actions. Apart from visualising a large number of actions, we must focus on identifying certain contexts that may be interesting to us in order to observe how that team will adapt to certain stimuli. Ultimately, all this will be key—especially in rival reports—to determine regularities in terms of the rival team's performance in a given SP, in this case, in corner kicks.

After delving into the possibilities of offensive organisation and functional roles in attacking corners, we present a proposal of variables to consider for the analysis of these actions.

Static offensive organisation structure

- Who are the shooters? What is their dominant leg? Are there regularities in terms of shooters depending on which side the corner kick is?
- Are there any players who are at short distance? Where do they stand when they are not at short distance?
- Who are the finishers? How many are they? In which situations can they enter with more finishers?
- How many players do they usually leave in clearance?
- How many players do they leave in defence? In what situations can they modify it?

Dynamic offensive organisation structure

- **Identification of usual sprints.** Explanation of the important movements of habitual plays.
- **Blocking assessment.** Do they usually use it? Who are the players who usually block? Where is the player who benefits from the blocking?

Qualitative parameters

- **Overall performance assessment.** In which zones is danger most created? Which zones are the most popular? With which shot trajectory have they created the most danger?
- **Assessment of shooters.** Do they create more danger with a specific shooter? Is it a specialist? Is it a straight kick? Is it a lobbed kick?
- **Assessment of finishers.** Are they looking for a specific player? How do they usually win the position to their marker? Do they create more danger by attempting from a specific body shape or are they effective from both?
- **Assessment of the management of the short kick.** Do they try to surprise by kicking fast? Are they looking to establish superiorities or simply cross? Can the player at short distance make an individual move?

Quantitative parameters

- How many corner kicks do they manage to attempt? (Percentage).
- How many goals have they scored from a corner kick? Have they been direct or after a second ball?

Figure 8: Analysis variables in an offensive corner



Source: own elaboration based on the FC Barcelona Analysis Department. 2019.

The proposal of variables presented (Figure 8) allows us to limit the analysis process of an offensive corner. We can see how this proposal goes along the same lines and coincides in many aspects with the variables proposed for the analysis of the defensive corner in module 2. Thus, it also begins in the static structure and progresses towards the dynamic structure, involving at all times the functional roles and relating the qualitative perspective with the quantitative one.

As the main difference, we could highlight the weight or relevance of the static structure. If in the analysis of a defensive corner it gives us very relevant information about how the team defends, in the offensive facet, the pure position or previous position of the players gives us certain information, but, by itself, it will not be decisive to dissect team behaviour or determine corner kick performance.

In addition, in the rival offensive corner report, we consider that the proposed option (in this case, defensive option) should not be a constant in our analysis, but that, depending on the context or the situation that comes our way, we can introduce it by giving some nuance or idea—if we consider that it is convenient to propose changes in our defensive structure.

Exemplification of the analysis of an offensive corner

Next, with the aim of putting the exposed contents into practice, an example of an offensive corner analysis is presented for each type of report. We remember that we are considering the **SP pre-game report** and the **SP in-situ report** as rival team analysis. And, on the other hand, the **post-game report** and **cumulative report**, as a reference for the analysis of our own team.

- **SP pre-game report (attacking corner):** coinciding with the format of the defensive SPs analysis, in the pre-game report, we highlight those relevant aspects of the rival (in this case offensive) about the SP in question.

Figure 9: SP pre-game report (attacking corner)


Attacking corner

- Shooters** (priority order): PLAY8 (right-footed) and PLAY11 (left-footed). If they are not playing, PLAY7 (right-footed) would shoot
- 5 players to attempt:** PLAY4, PLAY5, PLAY6, PLAY9 and PLAY11. Generally, 2-3 or 1-4
- 1-2 players for clearing:** PLAY7
- They usually have **1 player at short** distance: PLAY10
- 2 players in defence (full backs): PLAY2 and PLAY3

They can enter with 6 (unfavourable scores) adding the clearing player (PLAY7) and the players from the back approaching the clearance, being even an option for the short kick.

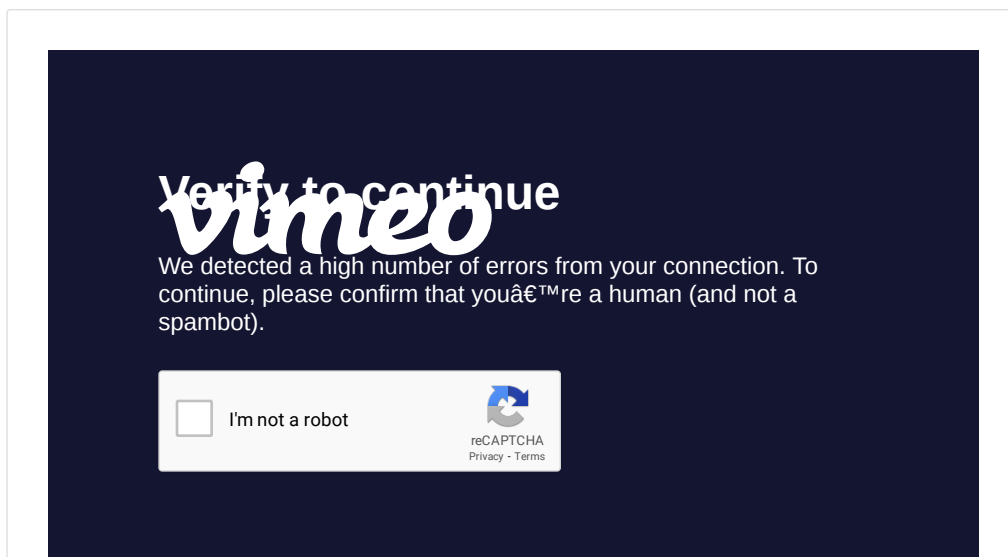
Habitual plays

- QUICK short** kick where they seek to play 2x1 with the player closing (PLAY1 or PLAY8) to end up crossing or playing with the clearing player to hit.
- Ball to near post for the anticipation of PLAY5** (usually OUTSWINGING). Kick to the **penalty spot** (usually INSWINGING) looking for PLAY4.
- Low ball between the penalty spot and clearance for hit** by PLAY9 (from our right) or PLAY11 (from our left) that come out of a blocking from the far post.
- They have not scored, but they have increased the percentage of corner kicks attempted since the first leg.



Source: FC Barcelona Analysis Department, n.d.

Video 3. Highlighted clips of attacking corner





Source: FC Barcelona Analysis Department (n.d.).

Figure 10: 2D rendering (pre-game) in attacking corner



Source: [Untitled image on 2D rendering (pre-game) in attacking corner], n.d., FC Barcelona Analysis Department.

It is the regularities that we find in the rival analysis of the attacking corner kick that will determine how we release the information. We can see that both in video 3 and in the 2D renderings (Figures 10, 11 and 12) it has been tried to define the performance of the rival team in said action through their main preferential behaviours or habitual plays.

Figure 11: 2D rendering (pre-game) in attacking corner (low pass)



Source: [Untitled image on 2D rendering (pre-game) in low attacking corner], n.d., FC Barcelona Analysis Department.

Figure 12: 2D rendering (pre-game) in attacking corner (6 players enter)



Source: [Untitled image on 2D rendering (pre-game) in attacking corner (6 players enter)], n.d., FC Barcelona Analysis Department.

- **In situ game report (attacking corner)**

As in the defensive corner in situ report, this time the individualisation will become even more relevant in the analysis process. In this case, apart from trying to define the offensive structure and, above all, the functional roles that the rival team will adopt, we present a proposal for markings (in accordance with the coaching staff) for the own team (Figure 13), based on the aerial capacity of rival finishers and in the characteristics of our players.

Figure 13: In situ SP game report (attacking corner)



Source: [Untitled image on in situ SP game report (attacking corner)], n.d., FC Barcelona Analysis Department.

- **SP post-game report (attacking corner)**

In the post-game report, we remember that we focus—from the perspective of our own team—on those positive and negative aspects of the team in terms of the attacking corner in the last game. In addition, it is important to include data regarding the frequency and efficacy of the SP.

Figure 14: Post-game report (attacking corner)

Attacking corner

5 attacking corners. 2 attempts (1 by PIQUÉ and 1 by SUÁREZ in the 2nd ball).

- We have presented **variability of zones** when kicking the corners. (Far post, inswinging trajectory to penalty spot and one kicked short).
- **PIQUÉ attempt to the post** after a good shot by ARTHUR from the right with an inswinging trajectory.
- **Good RAKITIC's blockings to facilitate PIQUÉ's sprints.**
- **The management of the 3x2 in the short kick can be improved.**

- **Cumulative SP report (attacking corner)**

As we have already mentioned in the previous module, in the cumulative report we will try to broaden the perspective of performance analysis, in this case, of the offensive corner kick, trying to highlight the main regularities of the team such as strengths and weaknesses in said action. All this in relation to the finishing of the action, that is, the attempts made, and goals scored.

Figure 15: Cumulative SP report (attacking corner)

Attacking corner

Positioning with 5 players to attempt. Usually, the 2-3 formation. Where 1 player anticipates the near post, another seeks the far post and the other 3 enter occupying the central corridors. 2-3 clearance (one near at short distance) and 1 player in defence.

Aspects to improve:

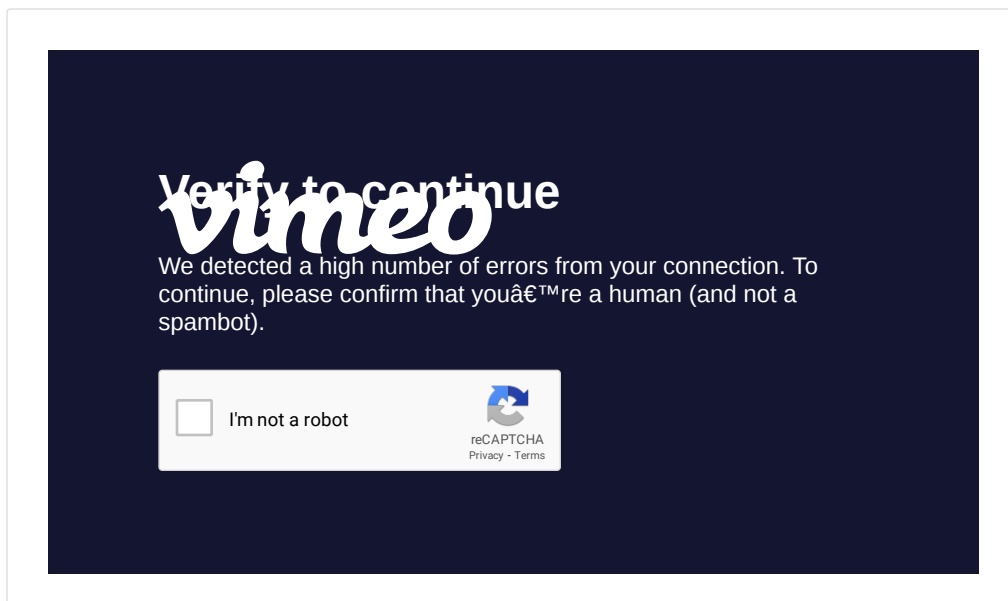
- **It is difficult for us to create danger with very outswinging kicks to the near post.** High density of rivals in that zone.
- **The short kick management can be improved.** Sometimes we play against rival equality, and we end up returning to our own field.
- Finishers' sprints on foreseeable occasions with **little intervention from facilitators;** blockings or drag moves usually do not appear to create spaces.

Positive aspects:

- **Anticipation** of a player, usually GRIEZMANN, to the 1st defender to pass or attempt. Good alternative in those very outswinging kicks.
- We have created a lot of **danger through PIQUÉ,** especially in zones of the box.
- **2 goals** scored.




Video 4. Highlighted clips of attacking corner (cumulative report)



Source: [Video file], n.d., FC Barcelona Analysis Department (WYSCOUT).

CONTINUE

Unit 3.3 Exemplification of one analysis of indirect offensive free kicks

For the analysis of indirect offensive free kicks, we can base ourselves, with small variations, on the proposed variables presented for the analysis of corner kicks. Variables such as the identification of the shooter and finisher, the prioritisation of a certain trajectory and the most popular zones will be very important for the SPs analysis.

As an example, and following the proposed reporting structure, below is attached an analysis of indirect offensive free kicks, specifically offensive lateral free kicks.

SP pre-game report (attacking lateral free kick)

Figure 16: SP pre-game report (attacking lateral free kick)

Attacking free kick

- **Shooters** (priority order): PLAY8 (right-footed) PLAY7 (right-footed) and PLAY11 (left-footed). They alternate trajectories, although, as usual, right-footed players shoot, **from the right inswinging and from the left outswinging**.
- **5 players to attempt:** PLAY4, PLAY5, PLAY6, PLAY9 and PLAY11
- **1-2 players for clearing:** PLAY7 or PLAY8.
- They usually have **1 player at short** distance or near the kick or open on the side: PLAY11. In case of not positioning at short distance, they position in clearance.
- **2 players in defence** (full backs): PLAY2 and PLAY5.

They have entered with 6 players to attempt, especially in near free kicks or with unfavourable scores (first leg).

Habitual plays

- They usually look for balls in the **central zones of the box** for the sprints of PLAY4, PLAY9 and PLAY5, the latter has attacked the far post zone a lot in recent games.
- Attention with the **blocks**, especially if PLAY14 plays, **for the centre back who performs enveloping movements** or for the clearing player who enters the sprint.




Source: [Untitled image on SP pre-game report (attacking lateral free kick)], n.d., FC Barcelona Analysis Department.

Video 5. Highlighted clips of attacking lateral free kick



Source: [Video file], n.d., FC Barcelona Analysis Department (WYSCOUT).

Figure 17: 2D rendering (pre-game) in attacking lateral free kick



Source: [Untitled image on 2D rendering (pre-game) in attacking lateral free kick], n.d., FC Barcelona Analysis Department.

Figure 18: 2D rendering (pre-game) in near attacking lateral free kick



Source: [Untitled image on 2D rendering (pre-game) in near attacking lateral free kick], n.d., FC Barcelona Analysis Department.

In this case, we ignore the SP *in-situ* report regarding lateral free kicks, as we would expose the offensive organisation already presented together with a man-to-man marking proposal identical to that of the rival offensive corner *in-situ* report.

SP post-game report (attacking lateral free kick)

Figure 18: SP post-game report (attacking lateral free kick)

Attacking free kick

3 indirect free kicks, 2 lateral free kicks and 1 lateral near free kick. **1 attempt** through lateral free kick.

- Little variability in terms of the zones sought. All balls were kicked **outswinging to the near post.**
- Very good **straight kicks, surpassing the 1st player** of the defensive line (**MESSI**).
- **LENGLET's** off-target attempt.

Source: [Untitled image on SP post-game report (attacking lateral free kick)], n.d., FC Barcelona Analysis Department.

Cumulative SP report (attacking lateral free kick)

Figure 19: Cumulative SP report (attacking lateral free kick)

Attacking free kick

Positioning with 5 players to attempt. 2-3 clearance (there may be one near at short distance) and 1 player in defence.

- **We have created more danger before high defensive lines** by taking advantage of the space we had at the back of the defensive line and kicking with an **inswinging trajectory, giving time to occupy spaces** by our finishers—this is how **we have scored 2 goals**.
- **In the near indirect free kicks (lower defences) it has been difficult for us to attempt and win duels.** They have cleared most of the balls crossed in the direction of the goal.
- Alternative: before low defensive lines, **take advantage of the spaces created in the clearance zones.**
- Alternative: enter with a 3-2 or 2-3 formation where **the first ones drag their line and create spaces for the ones that enter next.**



Source: [Untitled image on SP cumulative report (attacking lateral free kick)], n.d., FC Barcelona Analysis Department.

Video 6. Highlighted clips of attacking lateral kick (cumulative report)



Source: [Video file], n.d., FC Barcelona Analysis Department (WYSCOUT).

CONTINUE

Unit 3.4 Introduction to the remaining SPs

Next, we will delve into other less studied SPs, such as kick-offs and throw-ins. In addition, we will exemplify with a report on the analysis of direct free kicks and penalty kicks.

Kick-offs

Surely, we are facing the less studied action of resuming the game. In fact, it is quite usual to ignore said action when establishing the general demands for analysis with the coaching staff (general parameters of the SPs analysis).

Even so, we believe that it is necessary to know the possibilities that this SP offers us in order—if the situation requires it—to be able to base an analysis of the rival or own kick-off. For practical purposes, three great possibilities of action are proposed in the kick-off:

- Kick-off to have a **quick occasion**—either through direct play or through a combined attack, the objective is to get closer to the rival goal as soon as possible.

Video 7. Kick-off to have a quick occasion



Source: [Video file], n.d., FC Barcelona Analysis Department (WYSCOUT).

- Kick-off to **press**: although it is not very common, the team renounces the possession of the ball to establish themselves in the opposite field and put pressure on the team with the ball.

Video 8. Kick-off to press



Source: [Video file], n.d., FC Barcelona Analysis Department (WYSCOUT).

- Kick-off to **gain a possession**: the team simply starts the game in order to have the ball and make the play that, as in all actions in the game, will end up having the final intention of the goal.

Video 9. Kick-off to gain a possession



Source: [Video file], n.d., FC Barcelona Analysis Department (WYSCOUT).

Throw-ins

The set piece of the throw-in is different from all the others in that the player who resumes the game must do so through a throw-in with their hands. As the regulations stipulate, it must be a throw with both hands from behind and over the head from the place where the ball has left the pitch.

These actions imply some difficulty for the executing team, in fact, in many teams they imply a high number of ball losses per game. Although we cannot generalise the results of the study, García et al. (2019) affirms that the analysis of throw-ins in 2nd Division B group IV shows up to 64% loss of the ball after the throw-in.

The criteria defined to classify these actions will depend on the analyst and the coaching staff, even though a possible proposal would be to divide the throw-ins according to the zones of the pitch:

- Throw-in in **team's own half** and throw-in in **intermediate zones**: Although they totally depend on the collective intention of the team, the possible intentions can be basically two:

Continue in possession of the ball seeking a throw-in to the foot

In this case, different resources are used to facilitate the conditions in which the player receives the ball:

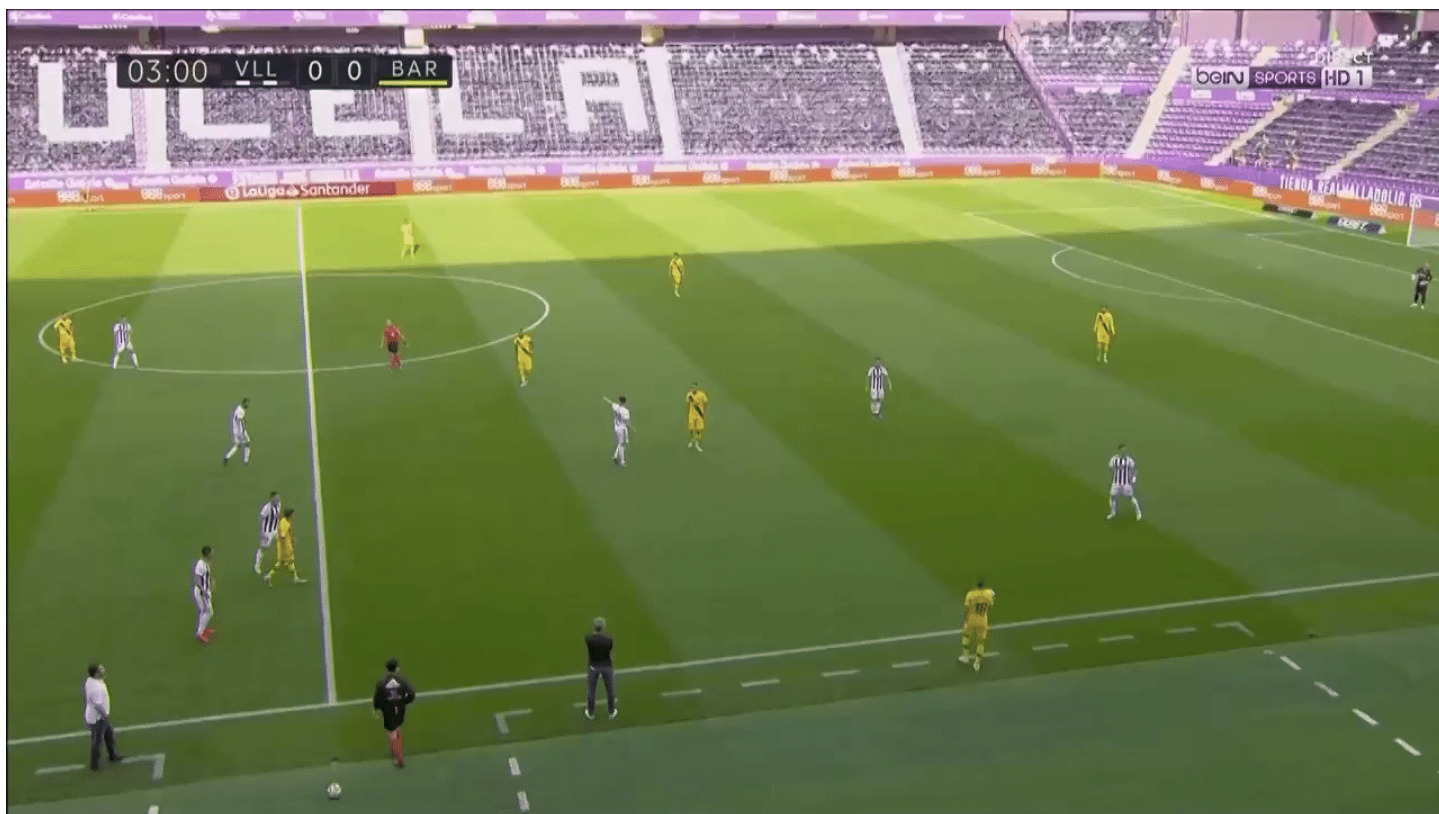
- To maintain width in the distances of possible receivers.
- To use previously trained drag moves.

Quickly connect (long) with offensive players

thus minimising the chances of a compromised loss. Possible resources to achieve it:

- To use the near player's drop kick to connect with advanced players.
- Search for the pass towards the advanced player.

Video 10. Throw-in to continue in possession of the ball in team's own half



Source: [Video file], n.d., FC Barcelona Analysis Department (WYSCOUT).

Video 11. Throw-in in the middle zone. Creation of spaces



Source: [Video file], n.d., FC Barcelona Analysis Department (WYSCOUT).

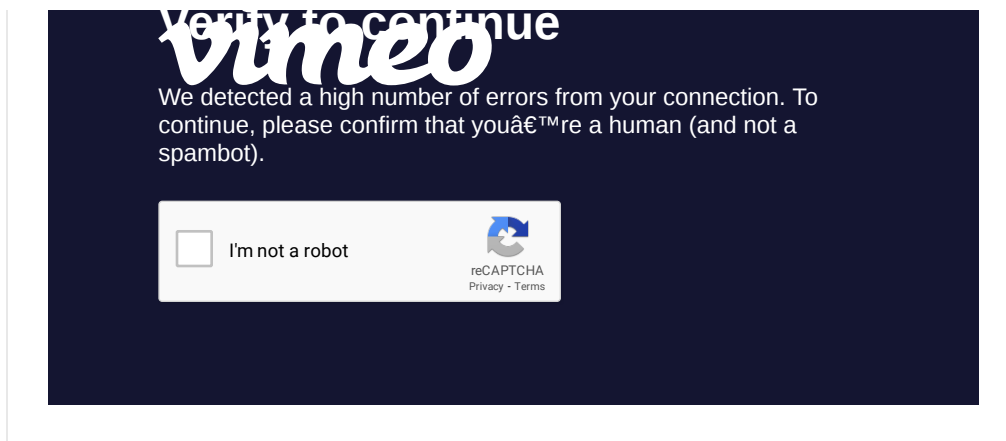
- **Throw-in in the finishing zone**

Besides continuing in possession of the ball (option to seek a quick backward kick), it will seek to generate an unbalancing action to enable a scoring chance. The possibilities that arise for this are many, such as:

- Use a drag move or simply a detach to facilitate the reception of a decisive player and establish a qualitative superiority.
- Look for the quick cross. Either directly through the receiver or by passing back to the shooter.
- Direct kick to the box looking for the attempt or the pass from a teammate.

Video 12. Throw-in in the finishing zone directly into the box. Example Sporting de Gijón





Source: Santy Hernández [Username] (12th January, 2015). Sporting de Gijón Strategy Throw-ins [YouTube Video]. Retrieved from: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aKF4a8f0Rw&ab_channel=SantyHernandez

Direct free kicks and penalty kicks

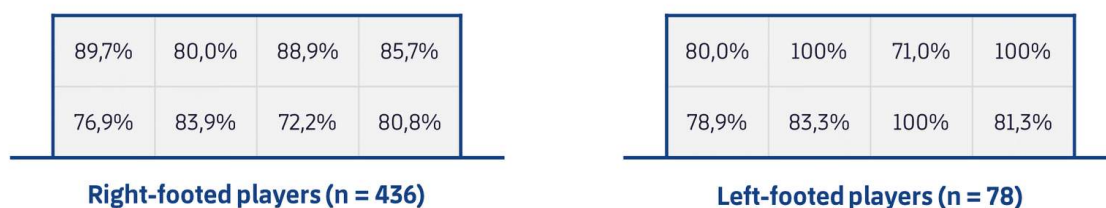
Throughout the course, the classification that we made when analysing free kicks has been nuanced, so—for practical purposes—we understand as direct free kicks those free kicks in which an attempt on goal is directly produced.

Although the attempt itself has been studied in great detail from a biomechanical perspective, we cannot determine reliable statistics about the effectiveness of these actions which will depend almost exclusively on the performance of two players—the shooter and the goalkeeper.

Regarding penalty kicks, which are statistically more studied, Palao et al. (2010) state (in their review of 642 penalty kicks from Spanish professional competitions) that 7 out of 10 penalty kicks end in a goal. In addition, they add that there is a tendency to cross kick since right-footed players tend to kick to the right of the goalkeeper, while left-footed players tend to kick to the left.

The same authors, three years earlier, reflected in this way the effectiveness of shooters according to their laterality:

Figure 21: Percentage of efficiency in relation to the shooting zone for right- and left-footed players



We could say that the direct free kick and the penalty kick are the most stable SPs (only surpassed by the penalty kick) that we can find within the interactive and dynamic context that is football.

In the proposal for the organisation of general demands for SPs analysis, presented in module 1, it was determined that the person in charge of the analysis—both for penalty kicks and direct free kicks—would be the goalkeeper coach. This is so because the performance that is analysed from said action will have a direct consequence with the performance of the goalkeeper and, therefore, the analysis itself will involve specific technical-tactical needs that will be more easily understood by a goalkeeper coach.

Still, as analysts, we can and should track the preferred behaviours of the top shooters of the team in question, depending on the context. Simply collecting the main actions of the shooter can help us to identify regularities in order to provide information to our goalkeeper about the type of attempt that they will execute in the free kick or penalty kick, thus improving our performance in said SP.

Below, as an example, is a report referring to direct free kicks and another referring to penalty kicks, highlighting those aspects that we consider key to the performance of the commented actions.

Figure 21: Direct free kick report



Video 13. Highlighted clips of the direct free kick report



Source: [Video file], n.d., FC Barcelona Analysis Department (WYSCOUT).

Figure 22: Penalty kick report

Penalty kick

Main shooter: **PLAY10** (right-footed)

8 penalty kicks made in the last 2 seasons (**6 goals**, 1 penalty on the post and another saved by the goalkeeper).

He does not look at the goalkeeper as he sprints towards the ball.

He alternates cross kicks (3) with kicks to his right.

Maximum effectiveness on cross kicks (to his left) alternating up and down.

More powerful kick than when he shoots to the other side.

He also alternates height in his kicks to his right.

Penalty kicks **missed: centre (medium height) and right (down)**.

Alternative shooter: **PLAY26** (left-footed).

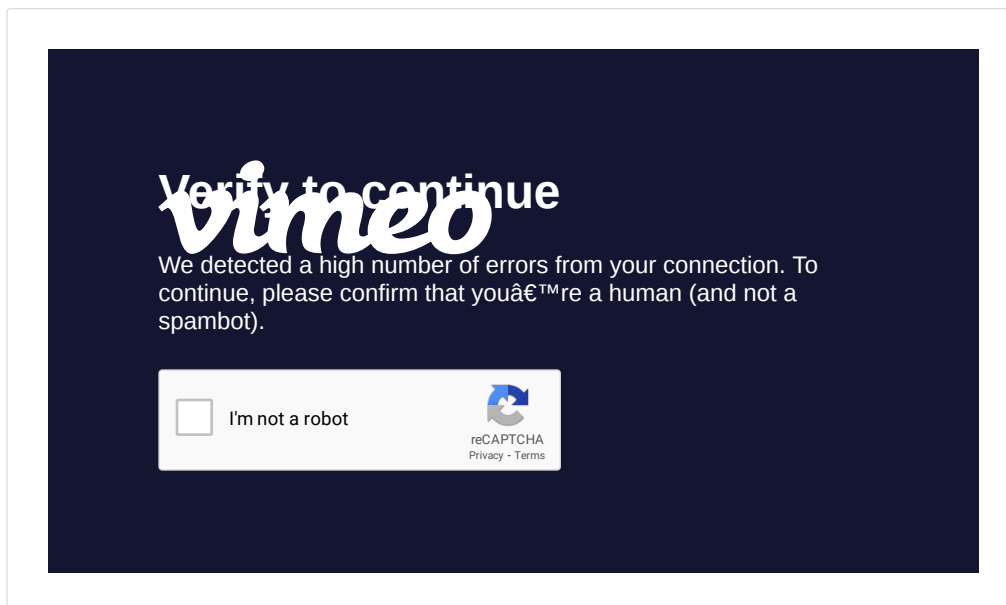
PLAY26 has kicked **3 penalty kicks (3 goals)**.

2 low balls to the left (body back) and 1 crossed to the right at medium height.



Source: [Untitled image on penalty kick report], n.d., FC Barcelona Analysis Department.

Video 14. Highlighted clips of the penalty kick report



Source: [Video file], n.d., FC Barcelona Analysis Department (WYSCOUT).

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