

Identifying and assessing team-level strategies

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Goal of analysis

How do teams attack?

- How much do they vary their approach?
- Which players are important?

What are a team's vulnerabilities in defence?

- How can a team exploit these?
- Where are the weak or strong links?

How effective are different approaches?

- Is balance important?

How do approaches or vulnerabilities change over time?



Data inputs & method

Utilise 'chains of possession'

Possessions ending with shot only

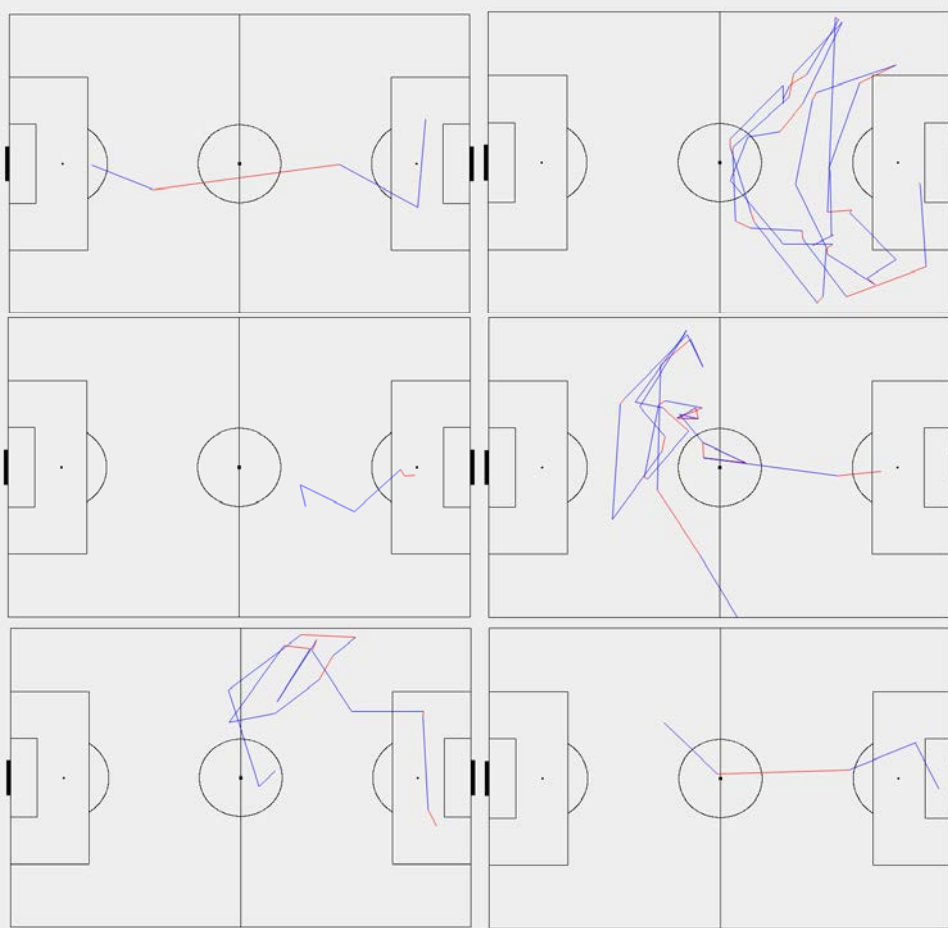
~19,000 from EPL 12/13-16/17

~44% of all shots

Exclude penalties, set-pieces,
rebounds & 'snap' shots

Calculate path and speed of each
possession chain

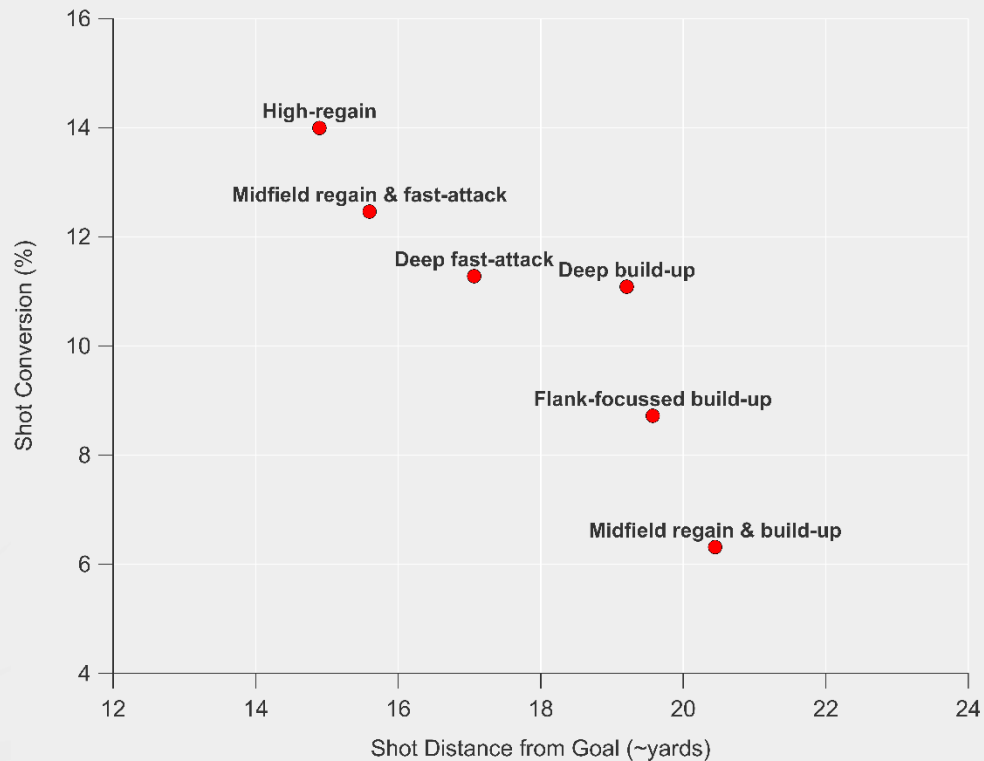
Fed through k-means clustering to
find similar possession chains



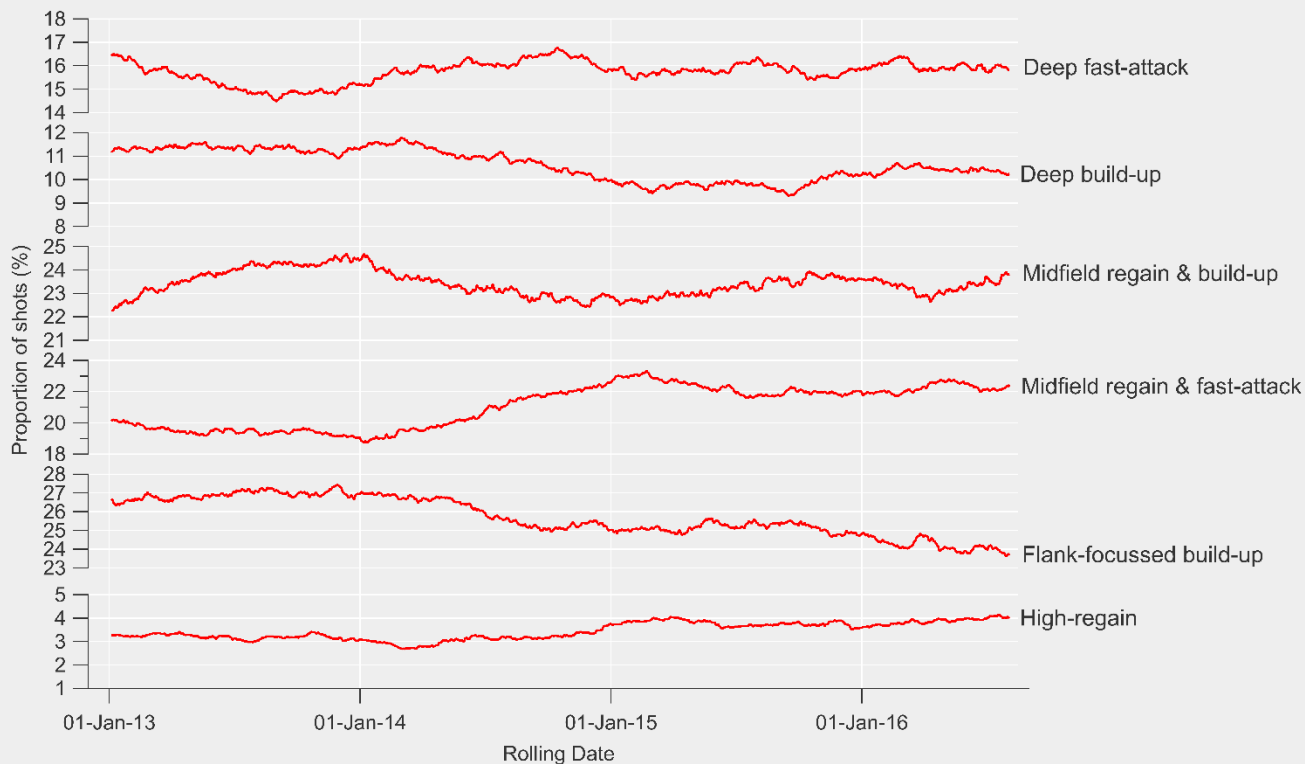
Cluster Summary: 13 identified, grouped into 6 profiles

Profile	Characteristics	Notable teams
Deep fast-attack	Low number of passes, direct, fast-paced	Chelsea, Liverpool
Deep build-up	Higher number of passes, slower-paced	Liverpool (BR), Southampton
Midfield regain & build-up	High passing, slow-paced	Sunderland, Crystal Palace
Midfield regain & fast-attack	Direct & central passing, fast-paced	Leicester City, Southampton
Flank-focussed build-up	Average-pace, crossing	QPR, Stoke
High-regain	Central & direct passing focus	Leicester, Watford

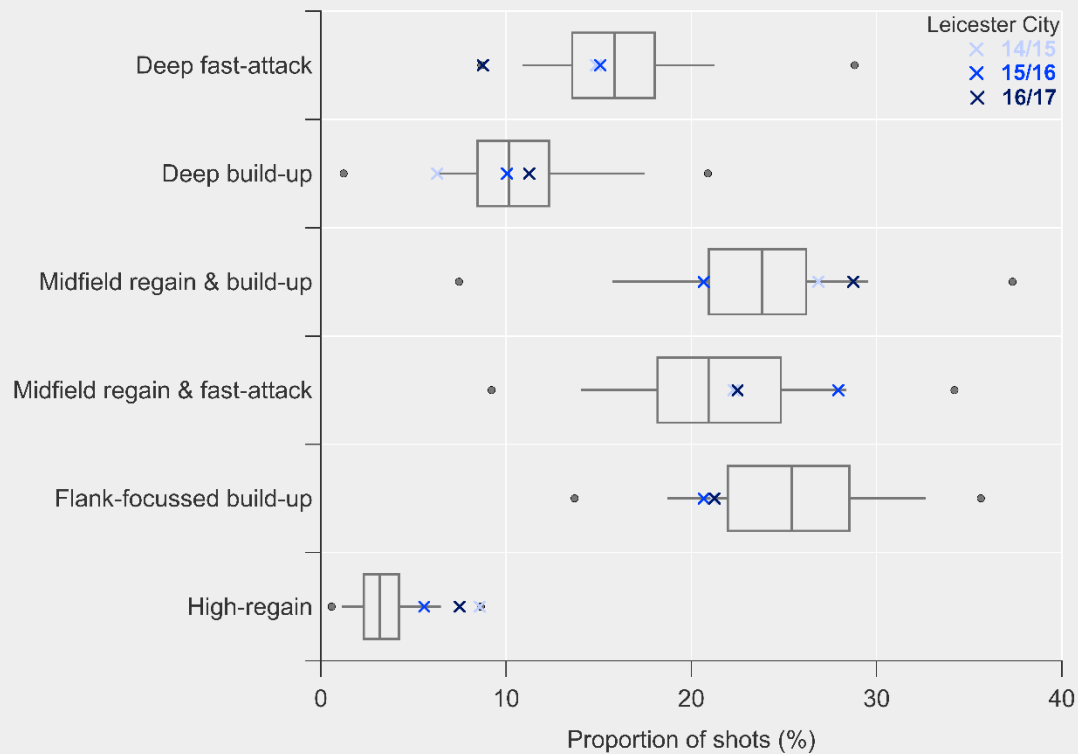
Cluster Efficiency & Frequency



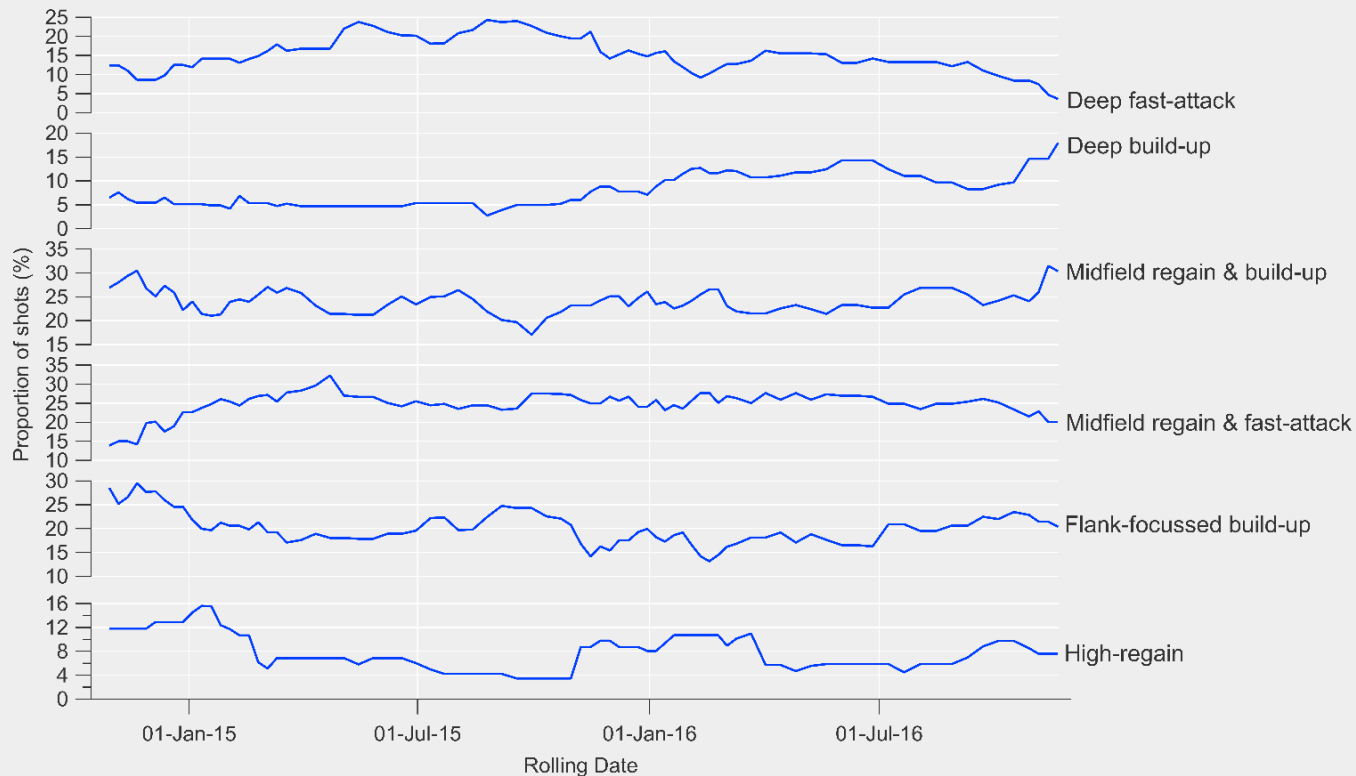
English Premier League 12/13 to 16/17



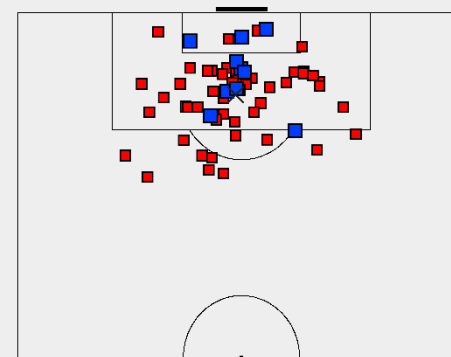
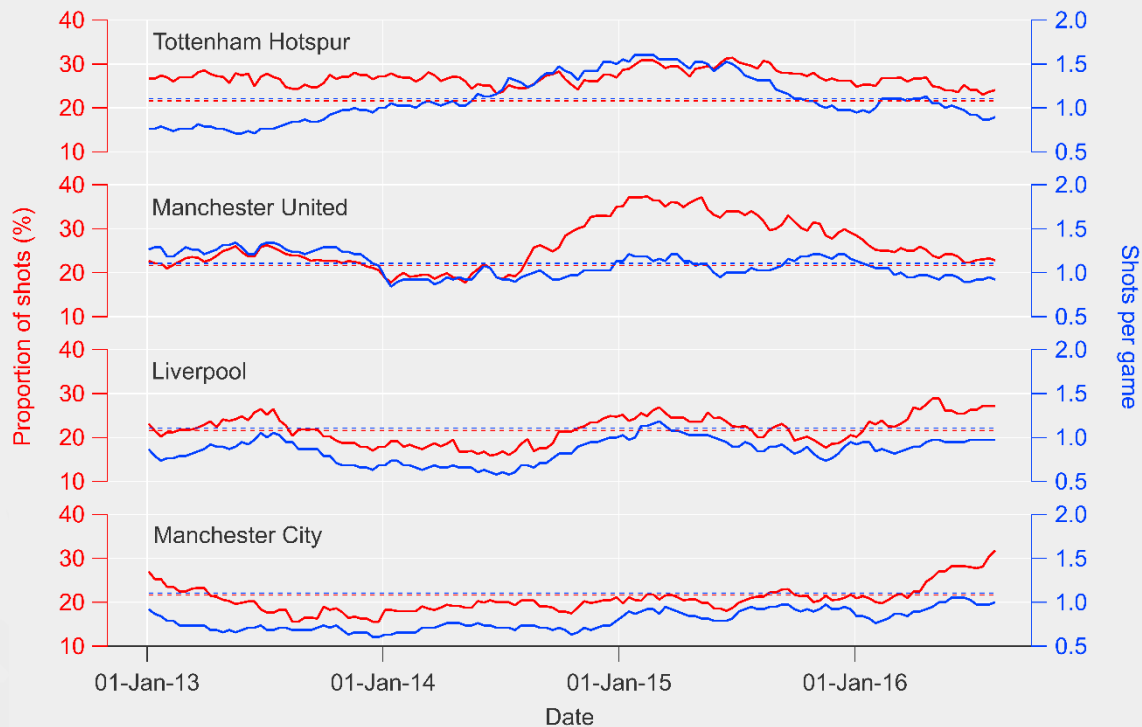
Team Shot Profiles: Leicester City



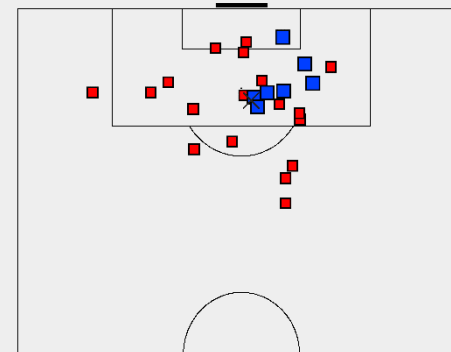
Team Shot Profiles: Leicester City



Defence Case Study: Midfield regain & fast-attack



Tottenham Hotspur 14/15
Goals: 10 | Shots: 59
Conversion: 16.9% | Shot Distance: 13.8 yards



Manchester City 16/17
Goals: 7 | Shots: 25
Conversion: 28.0% | Shot Distance: 15.4 yards

Players

Profile	Notable players
Deep fast-attack	Alexis Sánchez, Mesut Özil, Phillippe Coutinho
Deep build-up	Rodgers-era Liverpool players
Midfield regain & build-up	Yaya Touré, Samir Nasri, David Silva
Midfield regain & fast-attack	Alexis Sánchez, Eden Hazard, Dusan Tadic
Flank-focussed build-up	Mousa Dembélé, Aleksandar Kolorov
High-regain	Alexis Sánchez, Aaron Ramsey, Kevin De Bruyne

Most evenly distributed player profile: 12/13 edition of Steven Gerrard...

Future research & questions

Is football a game of scissors, paper, stone?

How important is a 'balanced' attacking or defensive profile?

How adaptable are players when moving across different profiles?

Expand beyond shots & identify important defensive players?

How does style differ across different leagues?

Thank you for listening

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