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Comparison of Attacking Strategies Through Set-Pieces Between Johor Darul Ta'zim and Urawa Red Diamonds in The AFC Champions League 2022

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I. INTRODUCTION

Set pieces have become an important part of modern football because they provide teams with structured opportunities to create scoring chances from planned situations. In elite competitions, matches are often decided by small margins, and set pieces such as corner kicks, free kicks, and throw-ins can influence the result [1]. Among these situations, corner kicks are especially important because they allow teams to deliver the ball directly into dangerous areas near the goal, increasing the chance of shots, rebounds, and defensive errors [2]. Although open-play goals remain important, set-pieces continue to play a major role in goal scoring and match outcomes at the highest level [3]. However, much of the existing research has focused on European football, while tactical patterns and set-piece effectiveness in elite Asian competitions remain less explored [4]. Therefore, this study aimed to compare the attacking strategies and effectiveness of set-pieces between Johor Darul Ta'zim (JDT) and Urawa Red Diamonds (URD), with a focus on how both teams used these situations to create goal-scoring opportunities.

II. METHODS

Comparative quantitative design was used in this study through systematic notational analysis. A total of 13 official matches from the 2022 AFC Champions League were analysed. This included six matches involving Johor Darul Ta'zim (JDT), six matches involving Urawa Red Diamonds (URD), and one head-to-head match between both teams. All set-piece situations were identified and coded according to set-piece type and selected performance indicators. These indicators included attacking outcomes such as shots on target, shots off target, and other set-piece results. Descriptive statistics were used to summarise the frequency and distribution of set-piece outcomes. Inferential analysis was then conducted using the chi-square test of independence in Jamovi software to determine whether there were significant differences in set-piece outcomes between JDT and URD.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 presents the distribution of set-piece shot outcomes between Johor Darul Ta'zim (19 shots) and Urawa Red Diamonds (27 shots). Both teams showed similar set-piece patterns, with only minor differences in the frequency of shots on target and shots off target.

TABLE I
CONTINGENCY TABLE OF SET-PIECE SHOOTING OUTCOMES

		Shot On Target	Shot Off Target	Total
JDT	Observed	9	10	19
	Expected	9.09	9.91	19.0
	% within row	47.4%	52.6%	100.0%
URD	Observed	13	14	27
	Expected	12.91	14.09	27.0
	% within row	48.1%	51.9%	100.0%
Total	Observed	22	24	46
	Expected	22	24	46
	% within row	47.8%	52.2%	100.0%

TABLE II
CONTINGENCY CHI SQUARE TEST OF INDEPENDENCE

	Value	df	p
χ^2	0.00272	1	0.958
Likelihood ratio	0.00272	1	0.958
N	46		

As shown in Table 2, Chi-square analysis showed no significant association between team shooting and set-piece results ($\chi^2 = 0.0027$, $p > 0.05$), indicating that the observed frequency difference was minimal. As shown in Table 2, the chi-square analysis showed no significant association between team and set piece shooting outcome ($\chi^2 = 0.0027$, $p > 0.05$), indicating that the observed frequency difference was minimal.

TABLE III
EFFECT SIZE (PHI AND CRAMER'S V)

Cramer's V values	0.00769
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The findings showed no significant relationship between team identity and set-piece effectiveness. The almost identical distribution of outcomes between JDT and URD suggests that both teams produced similar levels of attacking success from set-piece situations. This result indicates that set-piece effectiveness was not strongly influenced by whether the set-piece was performed by JDT or URD. This interpretation is further supported by the very low phi and Cramer's V values of 0.00769, indicating a negligible effect size. Although both teams may differ in playing philosophy, squad profile, and tactical style, the statistical result suggests that team identity alone did not explain the success or failure of set-piece outcomes. From a tactical perspective, this finding suggests that set-piece success at the elite Asian level depends more on execution quality than on team identity. Set pieces require accurate delivery, well-timed attacking movement, effective blocking or screening, strong aerial ability, and quick reactions to second balls. Previous research on elite football also shows that successful attacking outcomes are influenced by technical, tactical, and spatial factors rather than a single factor such as team identity [2].

This work highlights the importance of how attacking situations are created and finished within specific pitch areas. The present findings also align with research on corner-kick performance indicators in elite football. Fernández-Hermógenes et al. [3] analysed elite corner kicks and defined successful corners as those ending in a shot. Their study emphasised situational and behavioural factors, such as delivery type, attacking organisation, and player movement, as key elements linked to successful corner-kick outcomes. This supports the idea that the quality of set-piece organisation and execution matters more than the team taking the set-piece. The similarity between JDT and URD may also reflect the high tactical standard of the AFC Champions League. At this level, teams are generally well prepared defensively. Defenders are organised, marking systems are structured, and goalkeepers are trained to manage crosses and aerial threats. As a result, set-piece situations often become highly contested moments. Even when a team wins a corner or free kick, the chance of producing a shot on target depends on small details such as delivery accuracy, timing of the run, attacking positioning, and the ability to win the first or second contact. Therefore, the insignificant chi-square result should not be interpreted as evidence that set pieces are unimportant. Instead, it suggests that both teams showed comparable effectiveness in these situations. Set-pieces remain tactically important because they

provide structured opportunities to create shots, especially in matches where open-play chances are limited. The main issue is not whether JDT or URD used set-pieces, but how well each team executed the tactical plan during those moments.

Overall, this study suggests that set-piece effectiveness in elite Asian football should be examined through more detailed performance indicators. Future analyses should include delivery zone, delivery type, number of attackers in the penalty area, defensive marking system, first contact outcome, second-ball recovery, and final shot quality. These indicators would provide a clearer explanation of why some set-pieces lead to meaningful attacking opportunities while others fail to threaten the opponent's goal. This study concluded that there was no significant difference in set-piece effectiveness between Johor Darul Ta'zim and Urawa Red Diamonds in the 2022 AFC Champions League. Both teams showed similar tactical efficiency in creating goal-scoring opportunities through set-pieces. These findings contribute to performance analysis in Asian football by highlighting the need to examine execution quality and detailed tactical indicators rather than team identity alone.

Overall, this study suggests that set-piece effectiveness in elite Asian football should be examined through more detailed performance indicators. Future analysis should include delivery zone, type of delivery, number of attackers in the penalty area, defensive marking system, first contact outcome, second-ball recovery, and final shot quality. These indicators would provide a clearer explanation of why some set-pieces lead to meaningful attacking opportunities while others fail to threaten the opponent's goal.

IV. CONCLUSIONS

This study concluded that there was no significant difference in set-piece effectiveness between Johor Darul Ta'zim and Urawa Red Diamonds in the 2022 AFC Champions League. Both teams showed similar tactical efficiency in creating goal-scoring opportunities through set pieces. This finding makes a meaningful contribution to the performance of Asian football

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