

INTERNATIONAL GRADUATE COLLOQUIUM

i-SPEAK **2026**

**SPORTS AND PHYSICAL EXERCISE
ASSEMBLY OF KNOWLEDGE SHARING**

SERIES 1. 2026

COLLOQUIUM PROCEEDINGS

EXTENDED ABSTRACT



Malaysia, 10 February 2026



eISBN 978-629-7989-01-3



Comparison of Attacking and Defending Styles Between Top Three and Bottom Three Teams in The UEFA Champions League 2023/24

Muhammad Adam Aqasha Osmi Junaidi¹, Muhamad Noor Mohamed¹, Mohd Aizzat Adnan¹, & Muhamad Safiq Bin Saiful Annur^{1*}

¹Faculty of Sports Science and Recreation, Universiti Teknologi MARA Negeri Sembilan, Seremban Campus, Malaysia

*Corresponding author: msafiq@uitm.edu.my

Keywords: Match Analysis, Performance Indicators, Attacking Style, Defending Style, UEFA Champions League

I. INTRODUCTION

Performance analysis plays an important role in understanding how teams achieve success in elite football competitions [1]. Modern match analysis allows coaches and researchers to objectively evaluate team performance using performance indicators such as possession, passes, goals, attempts on target, tackles, blocks, and clearances [2][3]. In high-level tournaments such as the UEFA Champions League (UCL), small differences in attacking and defending styles may influence match outcomes [4]. However, limited research has directly compared the attacking and defending performance indicators of top-performing and bottom-performing teams within the same competition season. Therefore, this study aimed to compare the attacking and defending styles of the top three and bottom three teams in the UEFA Champions League season using selected performance indicators.

II. METHODS

This study employed a quantitative notational analysis design. Match performance data were collected from selected UEFA Champions League 2023/24 matches involving the top three and bottom three teams. The data source was considered reliable based on previous studies [3][4]. Three matches were analysed for each team. Performance indicators included possession, passes, goals, attempts on target, ball recoveries, tackles, blocks, and clearances. The data were processed and analysed using Jamovi statistical software. Descriptive statistics were used to summarise team performance, while independent samples t-tests were conducted to compare differences between top-performing and bottom-performing teams.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of the current study are presented in Table 1. The top three teams demonstrated higher mean values for possession and passes compared with the bottom three teams, reflecting greater control of match play [4][5]. The top teams also recorded higher attacking output in terms of goals and attempts on target [6]. In contrast, the bottom

three teams showed higher values in selected defensive indicators such as blocks and clearances, suggesting that they spent more time defending under pressure [5]. Statistical analysis revealed significant differences in possession, passes, and blocks between the two groups, while other indicators showed no significant differences. These findings suggest that successful teams tend to dominate ball possession and build-up play, whereas lower-performing teams rely more on reactive defensive actions [6]. The results provide practical insights for coaches and analysts in understanding tactical differences between higher- and lower-performing teams in elite football.

TABLE I
COMPARISON OF SELECTED PERFORMANCE INDICATORS
BETWEEN THE TOP THREE AND BOTTOM THREE TEAMS IN UEFA
CHAMPIONS LEAGUE 2023/24

Indicator	Top 3 Teams (Mean ± SD)	Bottom 3 Teams (Mean ± SD)	p-value
Possession (%)	50.44 ± 7.04	41.44 ± 8.26	0.024*
Passes completed	460.11 ± 108.04	316.33 ± 92.32	0.008*
Goals	2.11 ± 1.17	1.11 ± 1.27	0.101
Attempts	5.33 ± 2.18	3.56 ± 2.51	0.128
Ball recoveries	36.00 ± 7.78	38.44 ± 8.4	0.531
Tackles	17.00 ± 2.18	14.22 ± 4.02	0.087
Blocks	2.89 ± 1.17	5.67 ± 3.67	0.046*
Clearances	12.22 ± 4.66	16.33 ± 8.09	0.205

IV. CONCLUSION

This study highlights clear differences in selected attacking and defending performance indicators between top-performing and bottom-performing teams in the UEFA Champions League 2023/24 season. The findings emphasise the importance of possession-based play and structured attacking build-up for team success, while lower-performing teams tend to exhibit higher defensive workloads.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The author expresses sincere appreciation to the supervisor for continuous guidance, constructive feedback, and critical insights throughout the planning, execution, and completion of this research. The supervisor's academic support and high standards strengthened the quality and direction of this study. Gratitude is also extended to friends and colleagues who assisted during data collection, data management, and manuscript preparation. Their cooperation, encouragement, and willingness to share ideas played an important role in completing this extended abstract.

REFERENCES

- [1] Sarmiento, H., Manuel Clemente, F., Araújo, D., Davids, K., McRobert, A., & Figueiredo, A. (2018). What performance analysts need to know about research trends in association football (2012–2016): A systematic review. *Sports Medicine*, 48(4), 799–836. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40279-017-0836-6>
- [2] Hughes, M., & Bartlett, R. (2002). The use of performance indicators in performance analysis. *Journal of Sports Sciences*, 20(10), 739–754. <https://doi.org/10.1080/026404102320675602>
- [3] Liu, H., Hopkins, W., Gómez, A. M., & Molinuevo, S. J. (2013). Inter-operator reliability of live football match statistics from OPTA Sportsdata. *International Journal of Performance Analysis in Sport*, 13(3), 803–821. <https://doi.org/10.1080/24748668.2013.11868690>
- [4] Lago-Peñas, C., Lago-Ballesteros, J., Dellal, A., & Gómez, M. (2010). Game-Related Statistics that Discriminated Winning, Drawing and Losing Teams from the Spanish Soccer League. *Journal of sports science & medicine*, 9(2), 288–293.
- [5] Castellano, J., Casamichana, D., & Lago, C. (2012). The use of match statistics that discriminate between successful and unsuccessful soccer teams. *Journal of Human Kinetics*, 31, 139–147. <https://doi.org/10.2478/v10078-012-0015-7>
- [6] Liu, H., Gómez, M. A., Lago-Peñas, C., & Sampaio, J. (2015). Match statistics related to winning in the group stage of 2014 Brazil FIFA World Cup. *Journal of Sports Sciences*, 33(12), 1205–1213. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02640414.2015.1022578>