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## EXTENDED ABSTRACT

# Comparison in Attacking & Defending Patterns Between Spain & England Football Teams in Euro 2024

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## I. Introduction

Football is a popular sport that brings people together through skill, passion, and strategy. With millions of fans and players around the world, it helps create connections across countries [1]. Football matches possess many of the characteristics of complex sociotechnical systems, multiple interacting human and non-human components operating within a dynamic and constantly changing match environment [2]. A direct style of play focuses on fast counterattacks, while possession-based football emphasizes careful and planned moves [3].

This research analyzes Spain and England's attacking and defending patterns during UEFA Euro 2024. By using fresh, tournament-specific data, the study addresses gaps in national team analysis and provides a comprehensive view of performance [4]. While most prior studies isolate either attack or defense, this work integrates both to better understand tactical approaches across 11 matches, including each team's full campaign and the final.

## II. Methods

Teams were selected based on the final Euro 2024 ranking table from the official UEFA website. Spain and England were selected as they are the champions and runners-up of the tournament. Attacking & defending statistics, such as attacks, goals scored, and tackles, were downloaded from the official UEFA website [11]. Match data from UEFA Euro 2024 websites were used to compare Spain and England across 13 indicators: attacks, total attempts, attempts on target, attempts off target, goals scored, goals inside area, goals outside area, tackles, tackles won, tackles lost, clearance attempted, clearance completed, and balls recovered.

The data are extracted and structured into datasets using Microsoft Excel. Using Jamovi, a quantitative analysis was conducted to assess attacking and defending differences across 11 matches. The quantitative approach guarantees that all the data will be measurable and objective, enabling systematic comparisons of the two teams [5]. Comparative analysis was conducted to identify differences in attacking and defending patterns between Spain and England, using independent samples t-tests.

## III. Results and Discussion

### *A. Attacking Patterns*

Spain recorded more attacks per match ($58.71 \pm 24.14$) than England ($49.14 \pm 15.88$), although the difference was not statistically significant ($p = 0.398$). Spain also registered more total attempts ($17.57 \pm 9.40$) than England ($10.71 \pm 3.50$), with no statistically significant difference ($p = 0.095$), indicating greater attacking activity. For attempts on target, Spain had more accurate shots per match ($6.00 \pm 3.65$) than England ($3.14 \pm 0.69$), with no statistically significant difference, $p$-value of 0.065, though Spain's accuracy varied more across matches. Similarly, Spain recorded more off-target attempts ($7.00 \pm 3.74$) than England ($3.43 \pm 2.30$), with a $p$-value of 0.052, suggesting higher shot frequency but also more missed opportunities. Spain scored more goals per match ($2.14 \pm 1.07$) than England ($1.14 \pm 0.69$), with a $p$-value of 0.060. For goals scored inside the area, Spain had a higher average ($1.86 \pm 1.35$) than England ($0.86 \pm 0.90$), though the difference was not statistically significant ($p = 0.128$). In goals scored from outside the area, Spain averaged more long-range goals ($3.00 \pm 7.51$) than England ($0.29 \pm 0.49$), with a $p$-value of 0.359

### *B. Defending Patterns*

England and Spain showed no significant differences across all defensive performance indicators. The average number of tackles was similar ($p = 0.919$), with England at $11.57 \pm 3.05$ and Spain at $11.43 \pm 1.99$. For tackles won, England had a slightly higher average ($5.43 \pm 2.64$) than Spain ($4.57 \pm 2.88$), but the difference was not significant ($p = 0.572$). In tackles lost, Spain recorded a higher average ($9.43 \pm 5.62$) than England ($6.14 \pm 1.57$), yet the difference remained statistically non-significant ($p = 0.162$). Spain attempted more clearances ($16.43 \pm 10.41$) than England ($13.86 \pm 8.86$), with no significant difference ($p = 0.628$). Similarly, Spain completed more clearances ($16.00 \pm 13.80$) than England ($10.14 \pm 6.12$), but the difference was not statistically significant ($p = 0.325$). For balls recovered, Spain averaged more ($41.43 \pm 12.31$) than England ($36.00 \pm 7.81$), though this difference was also not significant ($p = 0.344$).

### *C. Overall Performance*

Although Spain led in most statistical indicators, both teams reached the final. Spain's stronger attacking and

recovery stats suggest superior tactical balance. Key performances in critical matches likely contributed to tournament advancement. The integrated view of attacking and defending highlights Spain's more cohesive style, while England leaned more on defensive pressure [6].

### *D. Figure and Table*

TABLE I
GROUP DESCRIPTIVE COMPARISON IN ATTACKING BETWEEN ENGLAND & SPAIN

| Indicators | England (Mean ± SD) | Spain (Mean ± SD) | Statistics (t) | Effect Size | p-value |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Attacks | 49.14 ± 15.88 | 58.71 ± 24.14 | -0.877 | -0.468 | 0.398 |
| Total Attempts | 10.71 ± 3.50 | 17.57 ± 9.40 | -1.80 | -0.967 | 0.095 |
| Attempts on Target | 3.14 ± 0.69 | 6.00 ± 3.65 | -2.03 | -1.087 | 0.065 |
| Attempts off Target | 3.43 ± 2.30 | 7.00 ± 3.74 | -2.152 | -1.150 | 0.052 |
| Goals Scored | 1.14 ± 0.69 | 2.14 ± 1.07 | -2.079 | -1111 | 0.060 |
| Goals Inside Area | 0.86 ± 0.90 | 1.86 ± 1.35 | -1.635 | -0.873 | 0.128 |
| Goals Outside Area | 0.29 ± 0.49 | 3.00 ± 7.51 | -0.955 | -0.510 | 0.359 |

TABLE II
GROUP DESCRIPTIVE COMPARISON IN DEFENDING BETWEEN ENGLAND & SPAIN

| Indicators | England (Mean ± SD) | Spain (Mean ± SD) | Statistics (t) | Effect Size | p-value |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Tackles | 11.57 ± 3.05 | 11.43 ± 1.994 | 0.104 | 0.555 | 0.919 |
| Tackles Won | 5.43 ± 2.64 | 4.57 ± 2.88 | 0.581 | 0.310 | 0.572 |
| Tackles Lost | 6.14 ± 1.57 | 9.43 ± 5.62 | -1.489 | -0.795 | 0.162 |
| Clearance Attempted | 13.86 ± 8.86 | 16.43 ± 10.41 | -0.498 | -0.266 | 0.628 |
| Clearance Completed | 10.14 ± 6.12 | 16.00 ± 13.80 | -1.027 | -0.548 | 0.325 |
| Balls Recovered | 36.00 ± 7.81 | 41.43 ± 12.31 | -0.985 | -0.526 | 0.344 |

## IV. CONCLUSIONS

This study shows that Spain, the UEFA Euro 2024 champions, outperformed runners-up England in both attacking and defensive indicators. Spain recorded more goal attempts, higher shooting efficiency, and greater goal conversion. Defensively, they recovered more balls and completed more clearances, reflecting stronger tactical discipline. While both teams reached the final, Spain's statistical superiority underscores their control and consistency. These results highlight the importance of evaluating both attacking and defending patterns when analyzing elite team performance. Such an integrated approach offers valuable insights for coaches, analysts, and scholars studying high-level international football competitions [7].

Future studies should contextually analyze match performance by accounting for variables such as match phase, score status, and opponent strength to better reflect tactical adaptability [8]. Additionally, incorporating spatiotemporal data like player positioning and movement can provide deeper insights into structural organization and on-field decision-making [9]. It is also recommended to explore tactical transitions such as pressing intensity and counterattacks, which often determine success in high-stakes matches [10].

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