# Scout Report - Denis Dervishi

Importance of recoveries for Liverpool

Liverpool under Klopp is a team characterized by the constant and intense high press often called 'gegenpress'. In the season 2017/2018 this style can be seen in the numbers. They measured 2295 recoveries over the season (60 recoveries per game on average), which puts them second in the league just behind Manchester City who won the league. Additionally, their recoveries are on average second furthest up the pitch again just behind Manchester City. This style leads to more turnovers and therefore more scoring opportunities as seen with Manchester City's success. While Manchester City uses these recoveries to regain control of the ball quickly and start up the build-up play of long possession chains, Liverpool wants to use their fast attacking transition in the recovery to catch their opposing team off guard and threaten the goal quickly. Focusing on these recoveries a metric was built to calculate the danger of a recovery and analyze which players perform the best at it.

Recovery Threat Model Results

In the graph below best players in the Premier League 2017/2018 season are shown according to two different metrics. The first metric measures players that started the most recoveries that ended up in a shot per 90 minutes, and the second metric measures players that started the most recoveries that ended up in a goal per 90 minutes. Only players who played in at least 10 matches this season are considered to remove players who do not have a continuous presence in their respective teams. However, both metrics try to capture the threat of a recovery and which players excel at it. Liverpool players are shown with red dots.

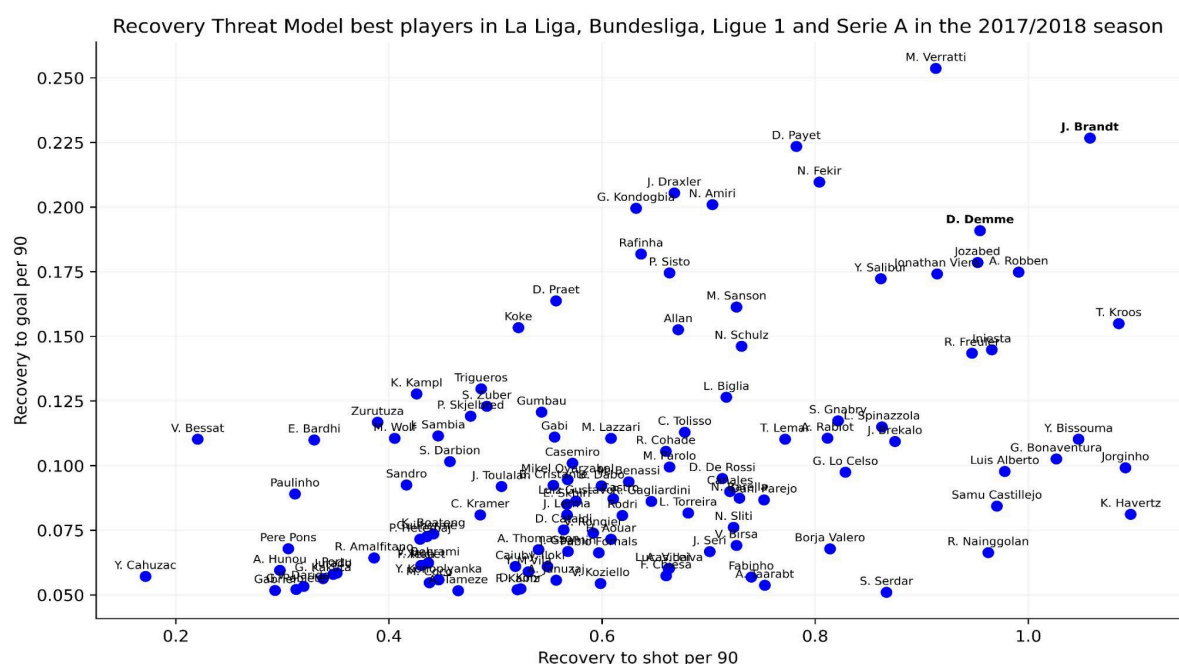Recovery Threat Model best players in Premier League 2017/2018 season
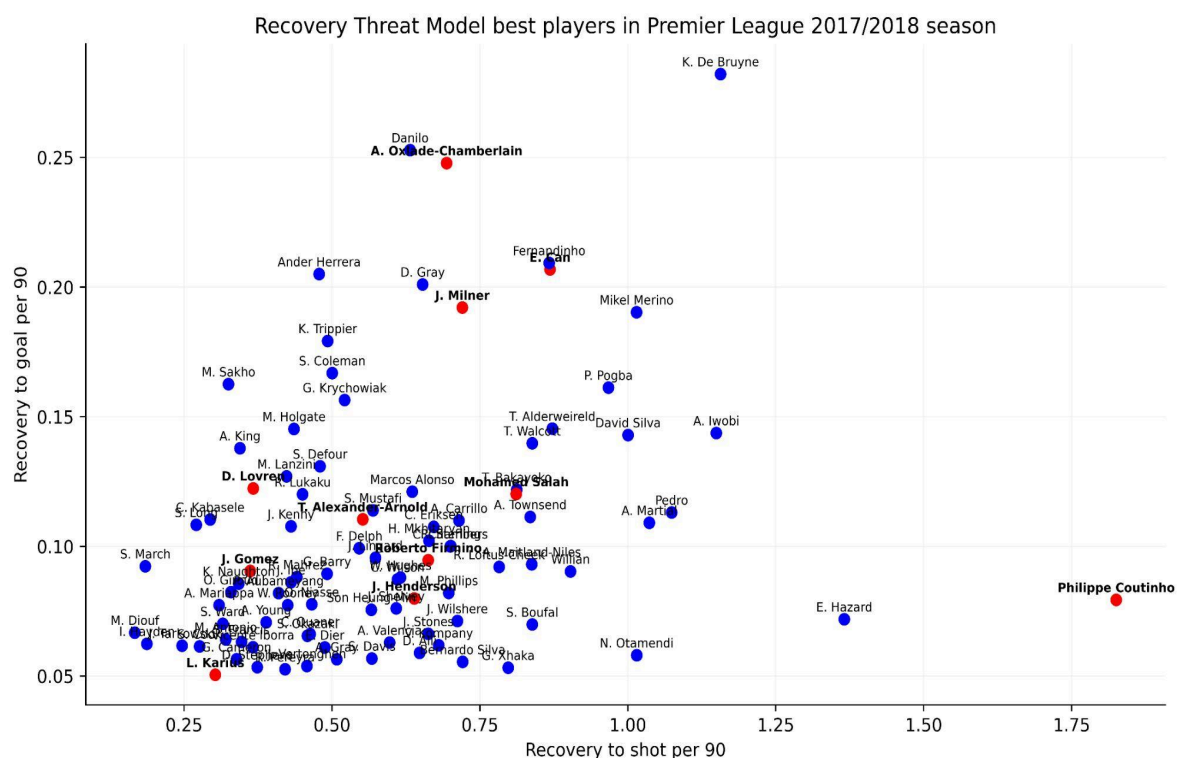
As expected Liverpool and Manchester City players dominate this metric. Philippe Coutinho is the best player in the league according to recoveries that resulted in a shot with on average 1.83 shots from Coutinho's recoveries per 90 minutes. On the other metric Liverpool players have 3 spots in the top 10 showing once again how recoveries are important to the core of Liverpool's game. The new signing Oxlade-Chamberlain is third in the league, Emre Can is fifth and James Milner is eighth in regards to making recoveries that resulted in a goal per 90 minutes. Emre Can specifically made on average 0.21 recoveries per game that resulted in a goal (e.g. every 5 games or so one of Emre Can's recoveries ended in a goal).

This is also where the problem arises of maintaining that level of recoveries and the threat that they impose on the opposition. Two of the players before mentioned left the club in 2018. Coutinho left that winter transfer window on a record-breaking fee of 105 million pounds to Barcelona. Moreover, Emre Can left on a free transfer to Juventus following the end of the season. These two players performed superbly in these two metrics so they should be replaced suitably if Liverpool wants to continue having success from their "gegenpress" tactical setup.

Replacements and the group scout decision

To find suitable midfield replacements the recovery to shot model and recovery to goal model were calculated in the other 4 leagues (Bundesliga, Serie A, La Liga and Ligue 1) to scout out potential targets. In the graph below results are shown this time only isolating midfield players who performed the best in the metric and played at least 15 games in the top 5 leagues without the Premier League. The threshold for minutes played was increased to also consider that the switch to the Premier League is difficult for certain players who cannot handle the dynamic of play. Therefore, we have only included those players whose fitness level indicates that they are accustomed to playing regularly. For the upcoming summer window 2018 it is important to strengthen the midfield after losing Emre Can and Philippe Coutinho.

Recovery Threat Model best players in La Liga, Bundesliga, Ligue 1 and Serie A in the 2017/2018 season

My recommendations to reinforce the midfield are two midfielders from the Bundesliga. The first one is Julian Brandt, a 22-year-old attacking midfielder from Bayer 04 Leverkusen. The only player appearing in the top 10 for both metrics and definitely a promising young talent. The second target that I would like to highlight is Diego Demme. A 26-year-old defensive midfielder for RB Leipzig. While he is not in the top 10 he is in the top 20 for both metrics and certainly a more affordable and more defensive option.

As a team of Liverpool scouts, we created various models to analyze different aspects of football. We needed to unify our findings to make collective recommendations for potential signings. To do this, we examined our models to identify exceptional players who consistently ranked highly across all of them. That was not the easiest task since we had various models that suited different profiles of players. Nevertheless, we managed to isolate two potential targets who performed well in our models. The first target is Geoffrey Kondogbia, a 25-year-old defensive midfielder currently on loan at Valencia. His physical presence and impressive performance in our numerous models make him a good fit in Liverpool's midfield. He is affordable with his estimated market value set at 25 million euros. Our second target is Kurt Zouma, a 23-year-old defender playing for Chelsea. His experience in the Premier League, an imposing stature, and solid performance in the models prove he could be a reliable backup to Liverpool's already great center-back options. His market value could reach 20 million euros which is not a lot considering his growth potential. We consider that these two players could improve Liverpool's performance in the following 2018/2019 season.