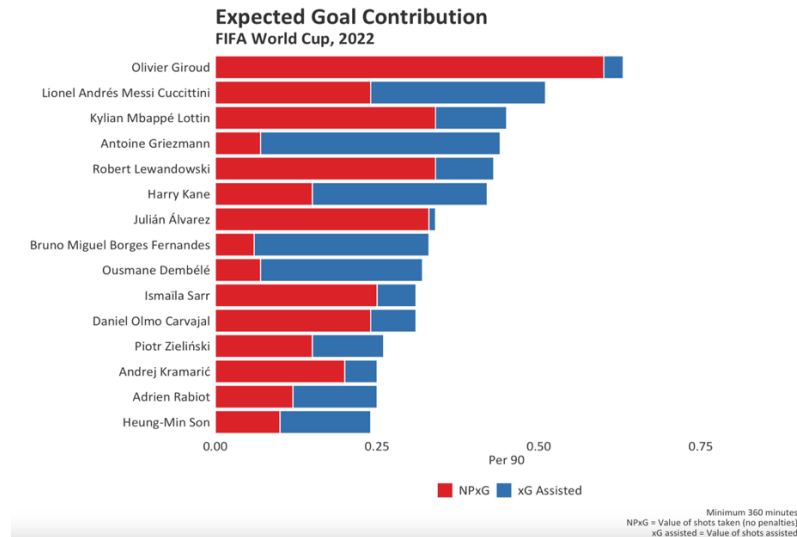# Insights of the Beautiful Game
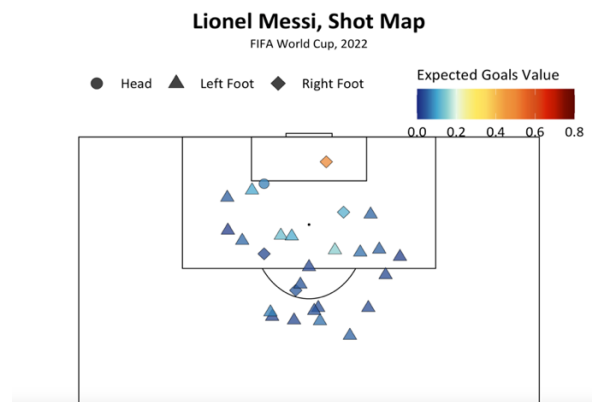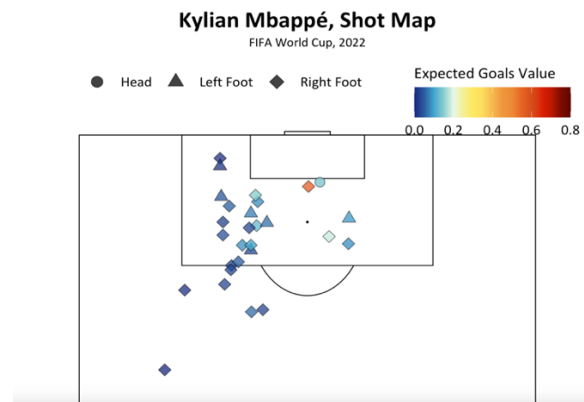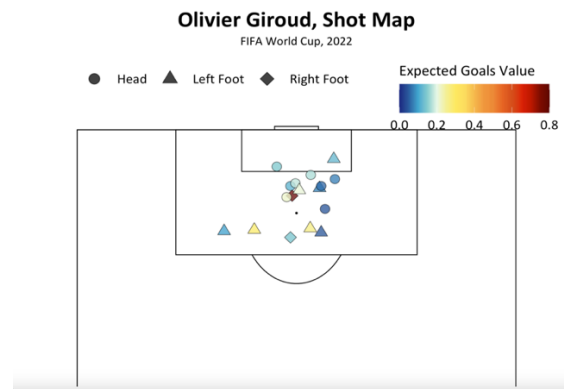
Who were the most dangerous players of the 2022 FIFA World Cup?

Expected Goal Contribution
FIFA World Cup, 2022

Minimum 360 minutes
NPxG = Value of shots taken (no penalties)
xG assisted = Value of shots assisted

ANALYSIS:

If one were to answer the question above without the chart below it, their answer would most definitely not include Giroud. He had nearly double the NPxG per 90 than those behind him. It is interesting to see that Mbappé did not lead France in either NPxG nor xG assisted per 90, as he was without a doubt their so called "ace." Griezmann and Giroud led both France and the tournament in these two categories. In fact, 5 of the 15 players above are French. Clearly, Mbappé had a lot of support. Messi, the "ace" of the other finalists Argentina, benefitted greatly from the emergence of Álvarez. Of course, the chart above does not depict the level of execution with these shots, but it does give insight to who found themselves in and created the best quality chances. These results might not be very meaningful, given that the World Cup provides a very small sample size, but chars like the one above might be more useful for assessing players' danger level over a longer period.

Shot Maps

Olivier Giroud, Shot Map
FIFA World Cup, 2022

Kylian Mbappé, Shot Map
FIFA World Cup, 2022
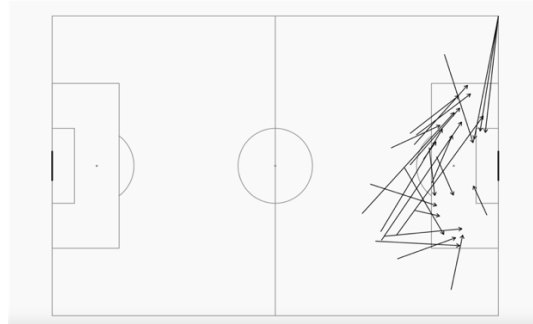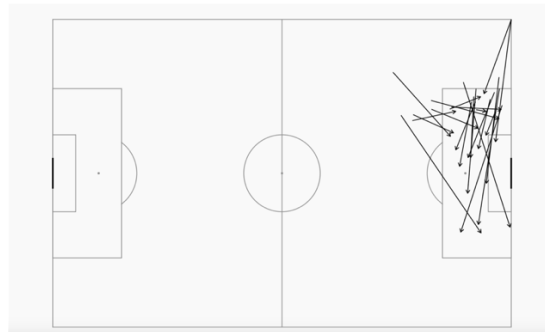

Lionel Messi, Shot Map
FIFA World Cup, 2022

ANALYSIS:

Above are three shot maps for the three players on the expected goal contribution chart. We can learn a lot about an attacker from these. It is evident that Mbappé likes to cut in on his right foot. Both Messi and Mbappé tend to shot from distance, something only players of their quality have the license to do on a consistent basis. Giroud is clearly a center forward who lives in the box in anticipation of good service.
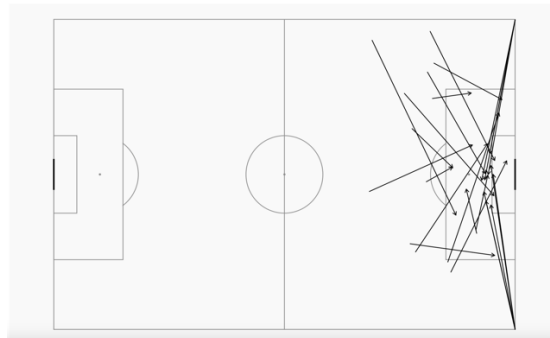
Passes into the Box

Lionel Messi, Completed Passes to the Box
FIFA World Cup,
2022

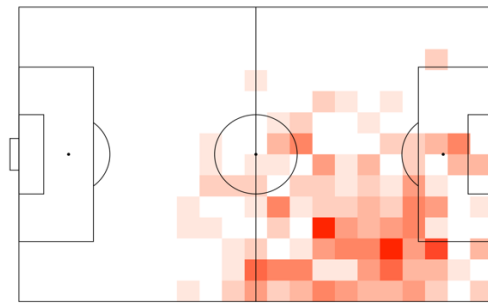Kylian Mbappé, Completed Passes to the Box
FIFA World Cup,
2022

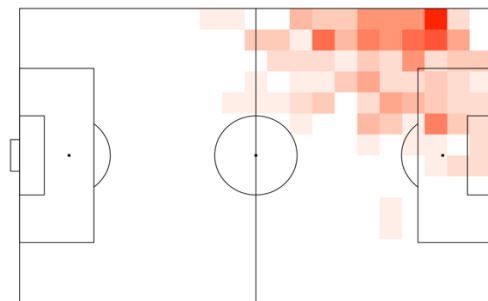Antoine Griezmann, Completed Passes to the Box
FIFA World Cup,
2022

ANALYSIS:

The visualizations above depict completed passes into the box. I replaced Giroud for Griezmann due to Giroud's lack of xG assisted, to make for better analysis. There are clear patterns for Messi and Mbappé. Messi clearly plays many balls into the box from the half space just outside the box, likely to the opposite side winger or outside back. Almost all of Mbappe's passes into the box were shorter passes and crosses to the middle of the box. Griezmann's passes are much more scattered throughout final third. He also had a high quantity of corners, which is probably a factor in why he led in xG assisted.
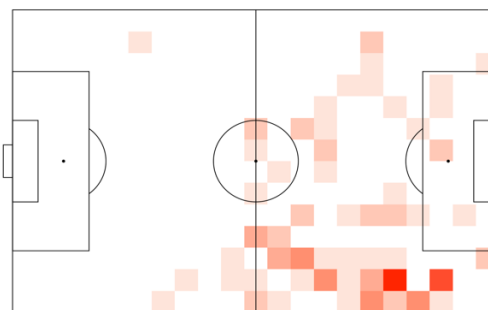
Ball Receptions Heatmaps

FIFA World Cup, 2022
Lionel Messi Pass Receptions Heatmap

FIFA World Cup, 2022
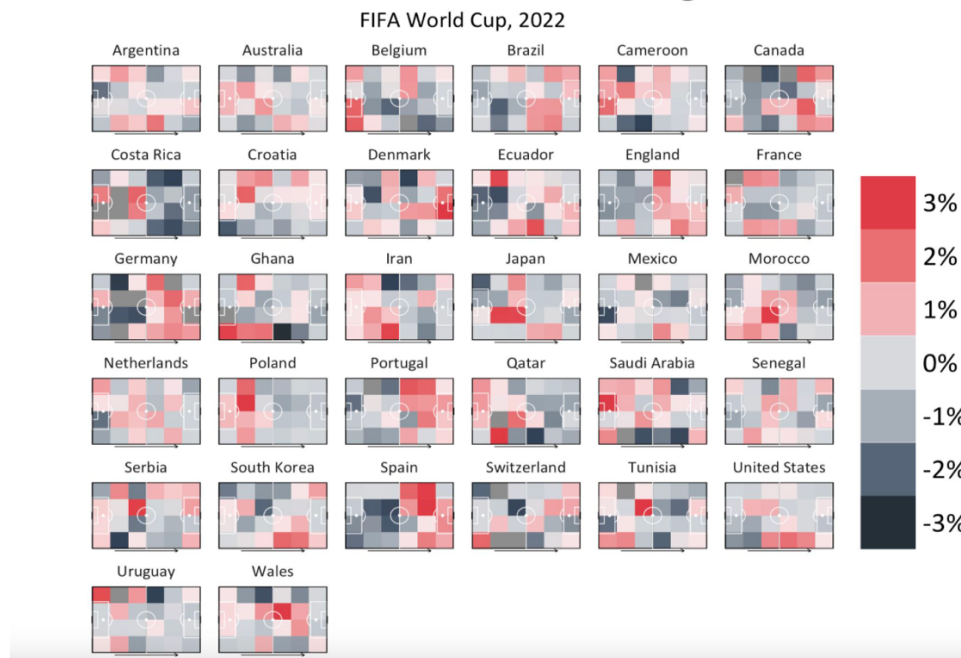**Kylian Mbappé Pass Receptions Heatmap**

FIFA World Cup, 2022
Antoine Griezmann Pass Receptions Heatmap

ANALYSIS:

These heatmaps certainly help explain the pass maps prior to them. We can see that a majority of Mess's receptions come in that area in the half space just at the beginning and edge of the final third. This is something opposition defenses should prioritize in defending Argentina. On the other hand, Mbappé is a winger who received the ball closer to the touchline more so. This suits his game as it gives him more space to utilize his speed and run at defenders in 1v1 situations. It is also interesting to point out that Griezmann received the ball a lot more on the right flank, since he was playing in a central attacking midfield role. This is a concept known as the false 10, in which the attacking mid helps create numerical advantages to progress down flanks.
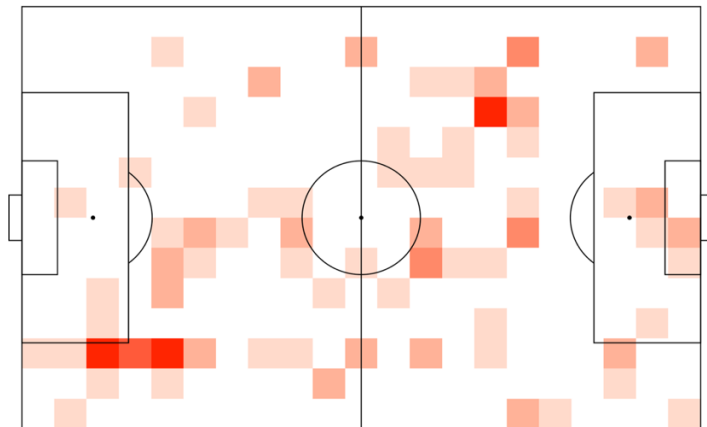
Defensive Intensity by Country

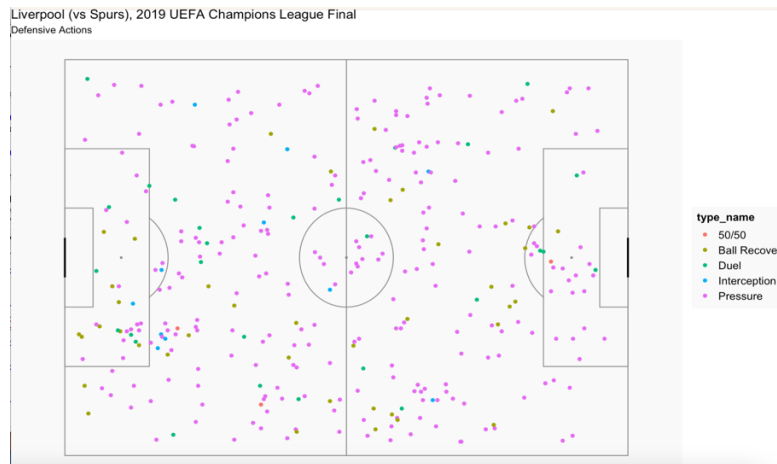**Defensive Actions vs Average**
FIFA World Cup, 2022

ANALYSIS:

Above is a heatmap of every team's defensive actions against the tournament average. This has nothing to do with the analysis above on dangerous attackers of the World Cup, but I show it because it is one of my favorite types of heatmap. These are very powerful, as each image tells a large part of how a team defends. You can be sure Germany will press you in your own half, and you can be sure Costa Rica won't. It could be key to note that both Argentina and France defended with a consistent intensity across the pitch, but began to apply more pressure as their oppositions progressed through the flanks. It is likely that wide players were told to apply pressure while central players were told to prioritize cutting off passing lanes.

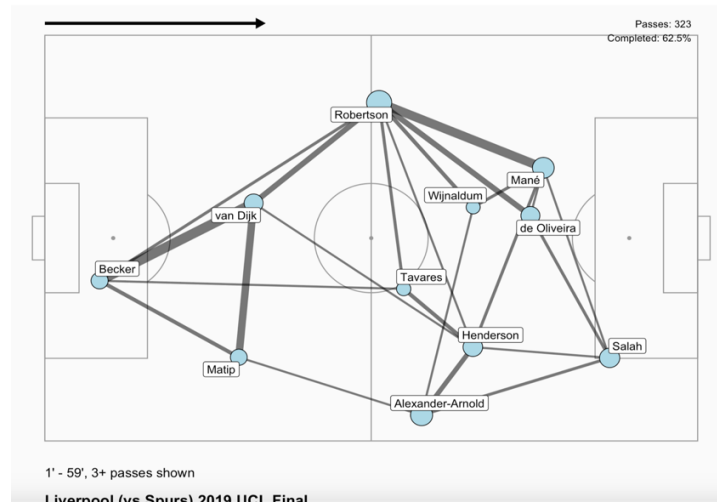**Liverpool vs Tottenham 2019 UEFA Champions League Final Brief Match Analysis**

Defensive Actions Heatmap
Liverpool (vs Spurs) 2019 UCL Final

Liverpool (vs Spurs), 2019 UEFA Champions League Final
Defensive Actions

type_name
• 50/50
• Ball Recovery
• Duel
• Interception
• Pressure

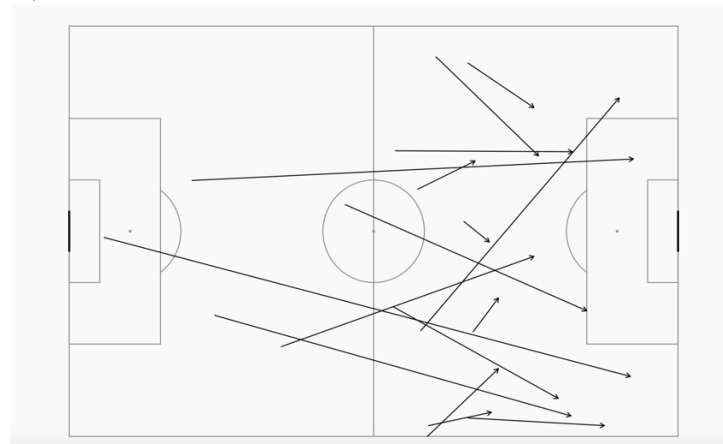ANALYSIS:

The graphics above provide insight to how Liverpool defended during the 2019 UEFA Champions League Final vs Tottenham. The first graphic, or the heatmap, shows the extent to which Liverpool press high up their field, something they are known for. The second graphic reinforces this idea. It is truly astonishing to see all the pressures in the opposition half, even in their attacking box.

Passes: 323
Completed: 62.5%

1' - 59', 3+ passes shown
Liverpool (vs Spurs) 2019 UCL Final

Liverpool (vs Spurs), 2019 UEFA Champions Leagye Final
Completed Passes to the Final Third

ANALYSIS:

        Now these two graphics above provide insight into how Liverpool attacked. The first graphic, or passing network, shows the nature of Liverpool in possession. The size of each player bubble depicts the number of passes received, with the position of the bubble referring to the average position of their pass receptions. Lastly, the lines between players depict the number of passes between players. Too much attention is put into formations in soccer. Two teams playing the 4-3-3 can be playing completely different styles of the game. Here we can see that both outside backs push high up the field, likely in behind the space left behind the wingers. This is allowed by the positioning of the center forward, who in this case is Roberto Firmino (de Oliveira), a player known to be an exemplary false 9, or a center forward who drops deep to pick up possession of the ball leaving space in behind for runs from wide areas and the midfield. These two graphics in unison tell a story as well. It is clear from the passing network that Liverpool was more active down the left side in their build up. It is clear from the second graphic that many of Liverpool's passes to the final third were diagonal passes aimed closer to the right flank. In combining these we see that Liverpool was essentially building up through the left side of the field to then switch it to the right side, who presumably should have more space to

attack. This is a common phenomenon, where teams try to build through one side to then release the other. This idea is also reinforced by the slight shift of the formation. Notice the higher and wider positioning of the right sided winger and outside back compared to the left.