

Player Analysis - Alexis Mac Allister - World Cup 2022

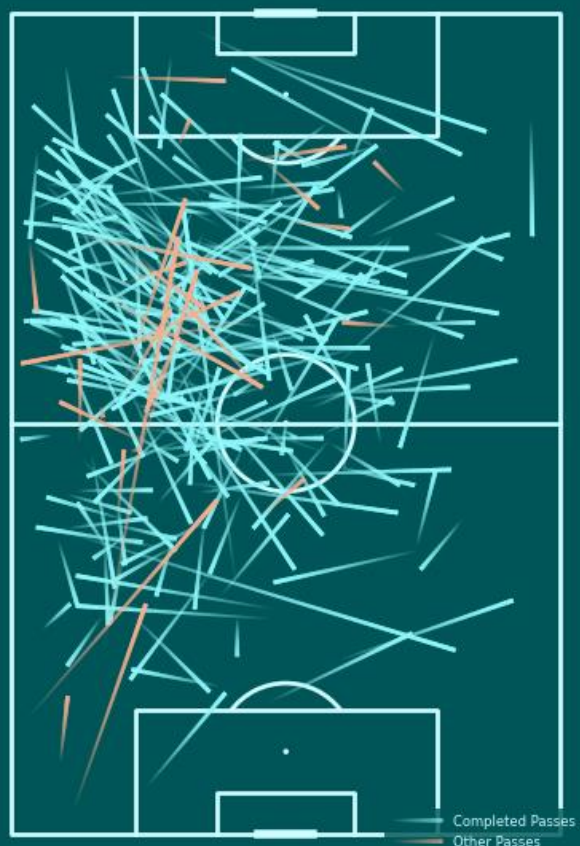
In 2022, Argentina won their first FIFA World Cup since 1986, and third overall. While Lionel Messi finally captaining Argentina to a World Cup win made most of the headlines, Alexis Mac Allister was one of my standout players at the tournament.

Mac Allister chipped in with a goal and an assist over the six games he played at the World Cup, a respectable return for a midfielder. However, the quality that stood out most was the ability to maintain possession and keep the ball moving during sustained attacks.

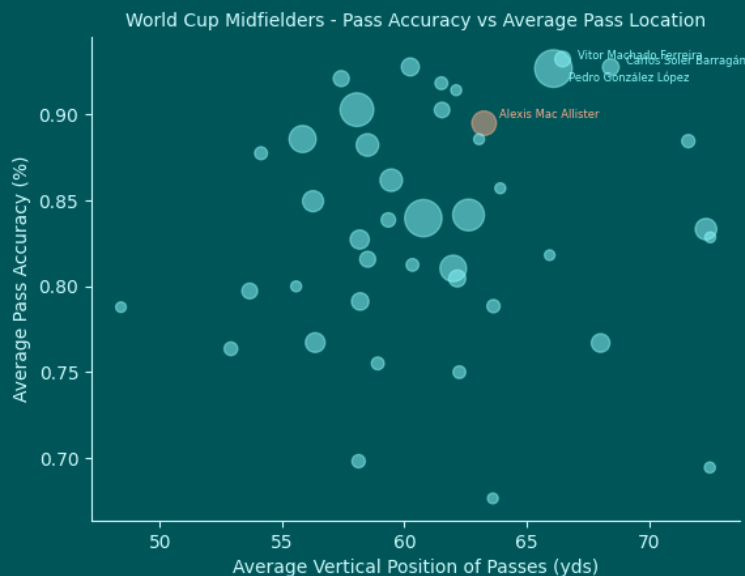
To analyse this, we will visualize Alexis Mac Allister's passes and compare his pass accuracy and vertical position to other central midfielders at the world cup.

In the adjacent figure, we plot all of Mac Allister's passes from the 2022 FIFA World Cup, with successful passes coloured light blue and unsuccessful passes coloured red. We can see that Mac Allister played the majority of his passes in the opposing half with a left side bias. We can also see that the vast majority of his passes were successful, which matches the initial belief that he was particularly good at keeping possession in advanced areas. Finally, most of Mac Allister's passes are played horizontally rather than progressing the ball into the box, indicating he was mostly tasked with moving the ball into less densely populated areas of the pitch.

Alexis Mac Allister - 2022 World Cup Passes



To determine whether this is a standout part of Alexis Mac Allister's game however, we need to compare him to other central midfielders. It could be the case that what he does is typical for players in his position.



The scatterplot to the left plots the pass accuracy vs the vertical position of players' passes for all midfielders with 30+ passes at the 2022 World Cup. Here we are attempting to compare players' ability to keep the ball moving in advanced areas. We have highlighted Mac Allister in red, and we see that although he may not be significantly above average in either aspect, he had a pass completion of 89%

while his passes were on average 72yds from his own goal, meaning only three players had more accurate passing further up the pitch than Mac Allister.

We also include pass volume through the size of player dots, with larger dots indicating a higher number of passes made throughout the tournament. Combining all three metrics provides good evidence that Mac Allister was important for Argentina in cycling the ball through the final third, with only Pedri outperforming him in all three metrics at the tournament.

Based on watching Argentina at the World Cup, we have identified that Alexis Mac Allister looks to be gifted at maintaining possession and keeping attacks moving in advanced positions. Through data, we can see his passes are in fact predominantly in the opposition half with the majority of his passes being successful. When comparing to other midfielders at the tournament, we can see again that his ability to play many accurate passes high up the pitch is among the best in the world. Our analysis has strengthened our initial hypothesis around Mac Allister's strengths in this area.

Improvements:

- It would be beneficial to include more information around losing possession through being tackled and evading challenges when comparing to other players as this is another important part of keeping possession.
- Including information around time spent on the ball, as the ability to move the ball quickly in the final third is closely related to the above analysis and very useful information.
- Would like to normalize pass volume by minutes played for obvious reasons, but I ran out of time to do this by the due date.