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"2 Steps Forward, 3 Steps Back"- What went wrong with Sevilla in Last 2 years



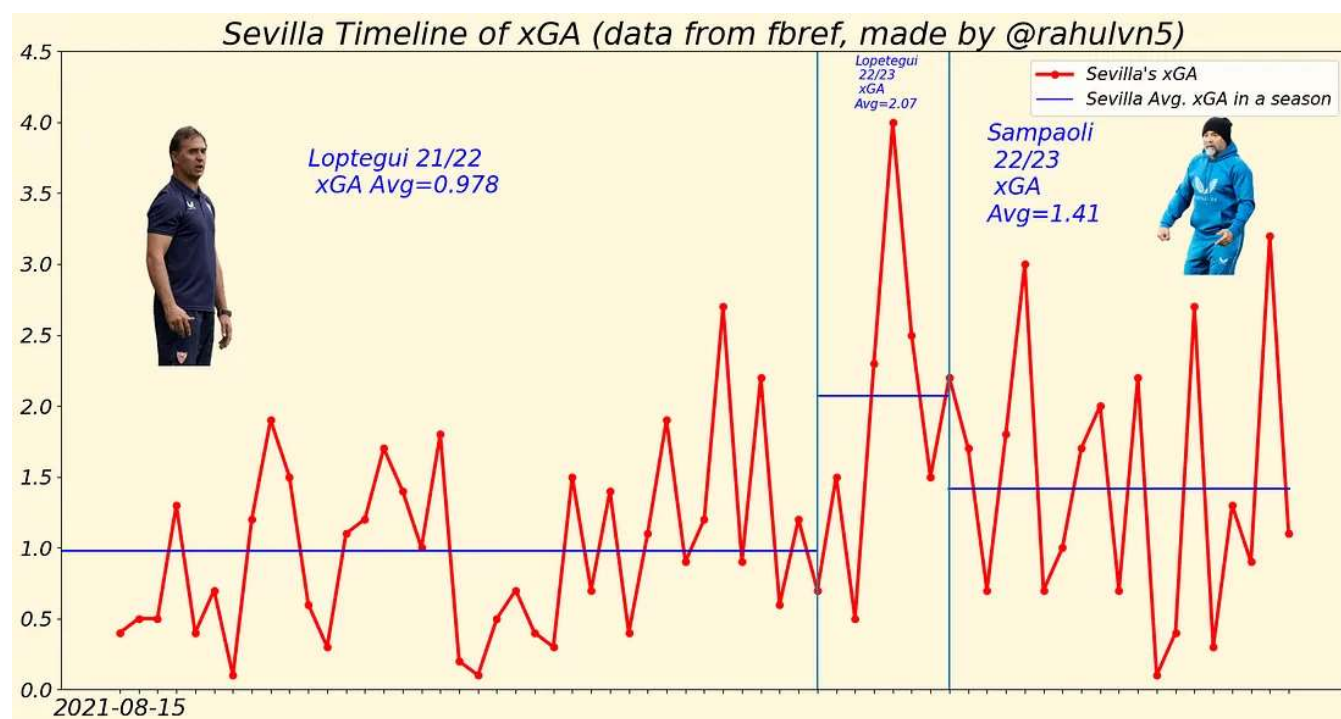
It was about 3 years ago in 2020 Julen Lopetegui's were Europa Kings for 6th time. 3 years Later they are far from Qualifying for it

Sevilla's Journey since 2005 is reminiscent of the title of this article. They managed to win the 2006 UEFA Cup (Europe League) with Iker Casillas & host of other trophies including a CDR, UEFA Super Cup all these in the 2

years between 2005 & 2007. Then went on a drought of trophies & underperforming with 5 coaching changes in 6 years before Unai Emery stepping in to delivering a hattrick of Europa Leagues in 2014, 2015 & 2016 before going in another managerial merry go round only this time they change 6 coaches in 3 years spanning 2016–2019 including a 1st stint with current coach Sampaoli before Julen Lopetegui steps in, win another Europa League in 2020 & his eventual downspiral of results costing the job.

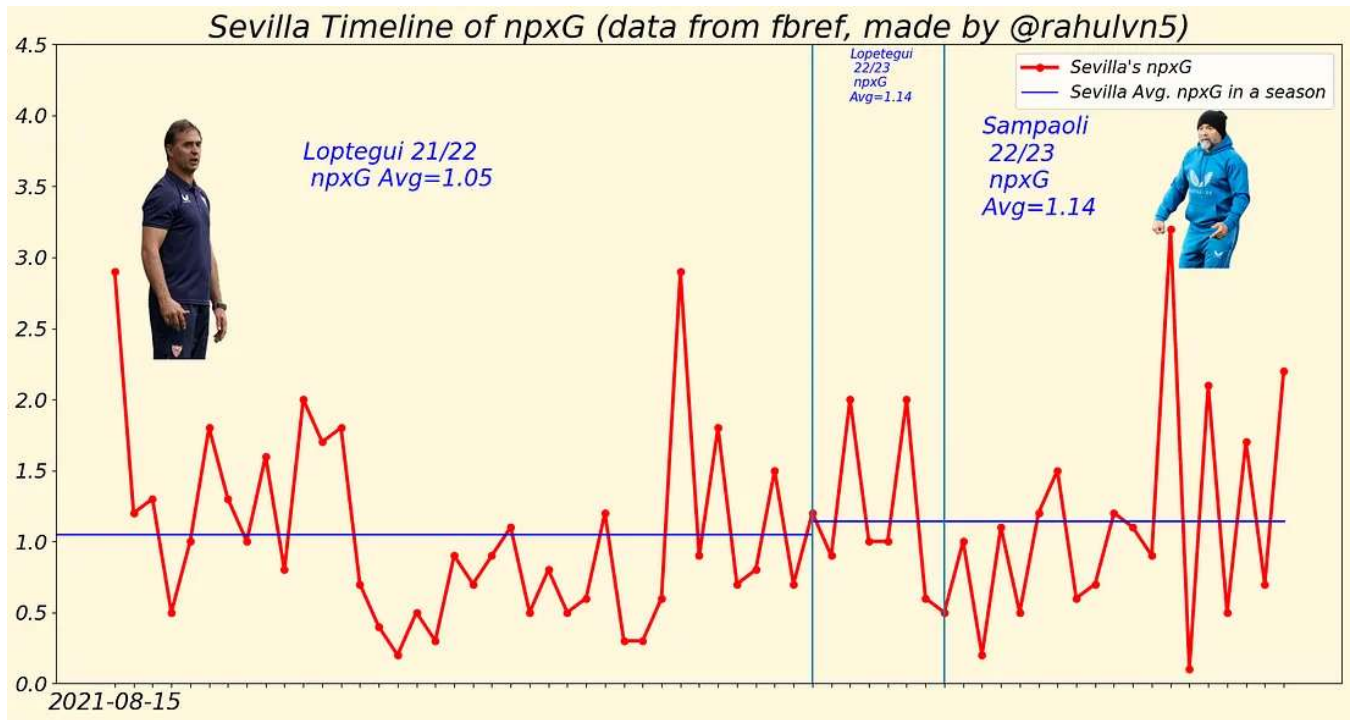
Through this article we aim to look at the factors that had Lopetegui finishing 4th a season Prior in 2021/22 season & then Sevilla dropping to relegation places & their eventual fight that still undergoes under Sampaoli since October.

A SURFACE LEVEL LOOK AT THE LAST 2 SEASONS WRT ADVANCED METRICS



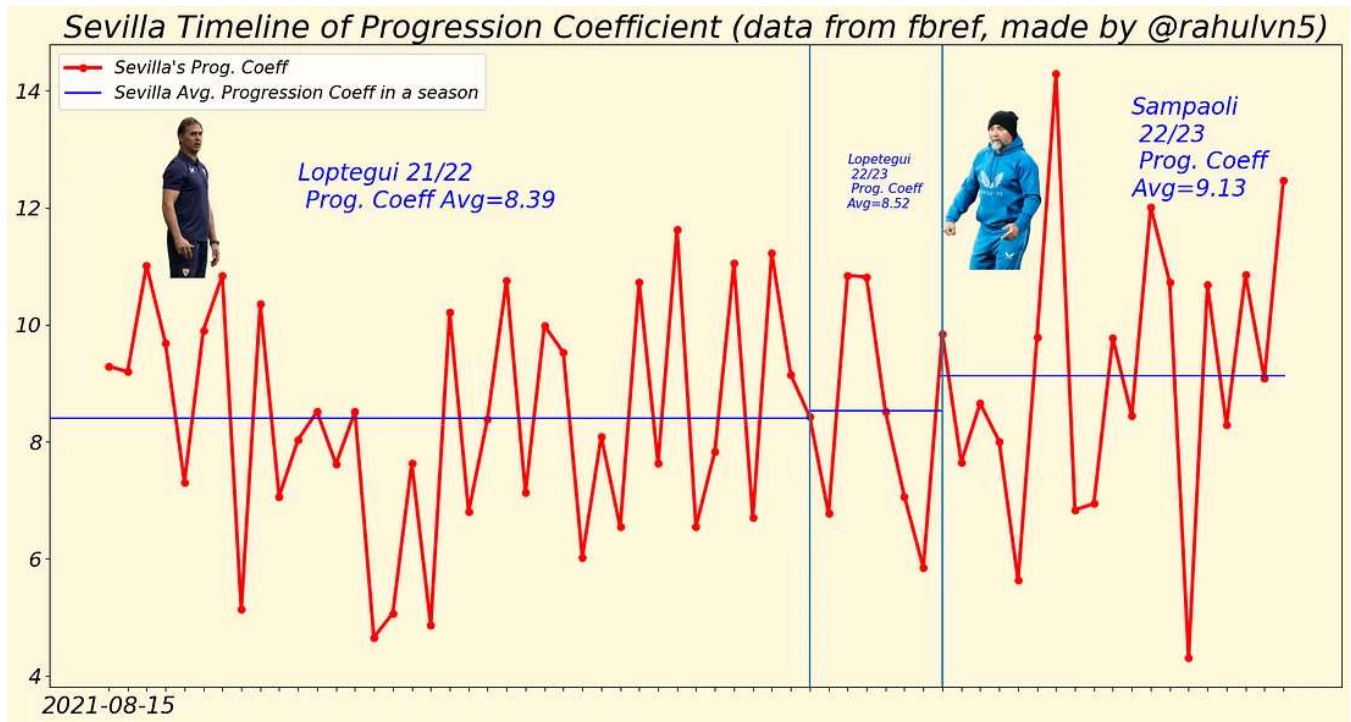
Pic 1: Sevilla's xGA game to game basis in Last 2 seasons

The foremost thing to look at when starting with this study is to look on a surface level how Expected Metrics for Sevilla have panned out in last 2 seasons. In a season where Sevilla conceded the least goals in La Liga in 21/22, their xGA average turned out in line with that, a 0.978 or less than a goal per game expected. Come a few months after 21/22 when 22/23 season started, Sevilla's xGA average shot up more than twice to 2.07 Per game & with an increasing trend, Lopetegui was relieved from his duties & Sampaoli stepped in, who alibeit managing to reduce it to 1.41 showing reasonable improvement, it's still close to 1.5 Goals Per game Expected.



Pic 2: Sevilla's npvG game to game basis in Last 2 seasons

While the defensive metrics turned upside down from 21/22 to 22/23, it's worthwhile noting that Sevilla's offensive Expected metrics didn't improve either, in a season where they conceded the least in 21/22, they also generated lesser expected goals excluding penalties with just over 1 goal a game (1.05) & finished 6th in Goals scored in the league with 53 despite a top 4 Finish. By 22/23, this didn't improve much just a meagre increase of 0.09 in both Lopetegui & Sampaoli's case, but with a high xGA against Lopetegui it was never going to be sustainable. With Sampaoli, a decrease in xGA (which is albeit still higher than npvG avg a lot) helped somewhat stabilize the ship.



Pic 3: Sevilla's Progression Coefficient game by game Last 2 seasons

A look at Progression Coefficient may give some ideas as to how Proactive teams can be wrt progressing the ball relative to the touches they take ie per 100 touches how many progressive actions a team attempts/makes. Again Sevilla's Progression Coefficient didnt marginally improve from a low 21/22 average, but in Sampaoli's Tenure it has reached a better value meaning Sampaoli has improved the proactiveness of this Sevilla side.





With these 3 pictures alone, is it safe to say Lopetegui had to be sacked & Sampaoli has revived Sevilla?? Not exactly because on a surface level this gives a initial insight into the tenure of both coaches but assesing the factors that led to these conditions can give an idea whether those factors were controllable by Lopetegui or Sampaoli.

A LOOK AT MARKET SESSIONS IN LAST 2 SEASONS

Transfers In [\[edit \]](#)

Date	Position	No.	Player	From	Fee
4 July 2021	GK	1	 Marko Dmitrović	 Eibar	Free
26 July 2021	RW	17	 Erik Lamela	 Tottenham Hotspur	Free
13 August 2021	RB	2	 Gonzalo Montiel	 River Plate	€11,000,000
15 August 2021	LB	3	 Ludwig Augustinsson	 Werder Bremen	€5,500,000
20 August 2021	CF	12	 Rafa Mir	 Wolverhampton Wanderers	€16,000,000
25 August 2021	DM	18	 Thomas Delaney	 Borussia Dortmund	€6,000,000
14 January 2022	RW	9	 Jesús Corona	 Porto	€3,000,000
Total					€41,500,000

Transfers Out [\[edit \]](#)

Exit Date	Position	No.	Player	To	Fee	Ref.
30 June 2021	GK	1	 Tomáš Vaclík	 Olympiacos	End of contract	[8]
30 June 2021	AM	22	 Franco Vázquez	 Parma	End of contract	[9]
30 June 2021	LB	18	 Sergio Escudero	 Granada	End of contract	[10]
30 June 2021	GK	—	 Juan Soriano	 Tenerife	Released	[11]
30 June 2021	LB	—	 Guilherme Arana	 Atlético Mineiro	€2,500,000 ^[A]	
1 July 2021	RB	17	 Aleix Vidal	 Espanyol	Released	[12]
26 July 2021	LW	-	 Bryan Gil	 Tottenham Hotspur	€25,000,000 ^[B]	[13]
28 July 2021	CB	3	 Sergi Gómez	 Espanyol	€1,300,000	[14]

Pic 4: Sevilla's Transfer Session before 21/22 Season

In 21/22, a season where Sevilla finished in 4th while also conceding the least goals in the League, they managed to release older veterans like Vasquez, Escudero, Vaclik, Sergi Gomez (their respective ages were 33,32,32, & 30) & signed players like Montiel (Eventual WC winner with Argentina at age 25), Delaney (seasoned campaigner with Dortmund), Rafa Mir (scored 13 La Liga goals with Huesca a season prior on loan from Wolves at age 25) to a total spend of 41.5 Million while recuperating 25 Million from an eventual sale of Bryan Gil.

Transfers [edit]

In [edit]

Date	Player	From	Type	Fee
30 June 2022	Óscar	Getafe	Loan return	
30 June 2022	Juan Berrocal	Sporting Gijón	Loan return	
30 June 2022	Alejandro Pozo	Almería	Loan return	
30 June 2022	Rony Lopes	Olympiacos	Loan return	
30 June 2022	Oussama Idrissi	Cádiz	Loan return	
30 June 2022	Luuk de Jong	Barcelona	Loan return	
1 July 2022	José Ángel Carmona	Sevilla Atlético	Promotion	
1 July 2022	Kike Salas	Sevilla Atlético	Promotion	
11 July 2022	Marcão	Galatasaray	Transfer	€15M
4 August 2022	Alex Telles	Manchester United	Loan	
8 August 2022	Isco	Real Madrid	Transfer	Free
17 August 2022	Tanguy Nianzou	Bayern Munich	Transfer	€16M
31 August 2022	Adnan Januzaj	Real Sociedad	Transfer	Free
1 September 2022	Kasper Dolberg	Nice	Loan ^[A]	
4 January 2023	Loïc Badé	Rennes	Loan ^[A]	
17 January 2023	Lucas Ocampos	Ajax	Loan return	
30 January 2023	Pape Gueye	Marseille	Loan	
30 January 2023	Bryan Gil	Tottenham Hotspur	Loan	

Out [edit]

Date	Player	To	Type	Fee	Ref.
1 June 2022	Diego Carlos	Aston Villa	Transfer	€31M	[14]
6 June 2022	Alejandro Pozo	Almería	Buyout clause	€3M	[15]
1 July 2022	Anthony Martial	Manchester United	Loan return		
2 July 2022	Luuk de Jong	PSV Eindhoven	Transfer	€3M	[16]
7 July 2022	Javi Díaz	Tenerife	Transfer	Free	[17]
8 July 2022	Óscar	Celta Vigo	Loan		[18]
11 July 2022	Ludwig Augustinsson	Aston Villa	Loan		[19]
11 July 2022	Juan Berrocal	Eibar	Transfer	Free	[20]
27 July 2022	Oussama Idrissi	Feyenoord	Loan		[21]
29 July 2022	Jules Koundé	Barcelona	Transfer	€50M	[22]
8 August 2022	Juanlu Sánchez	Mirandés	Loan		[23]
10 August 2022	Antonio Zarzana	Marítimo	Loan		[24]
24 August 2022	Rony Lopes	Troyes	Loan		[25]
31 August 2022	Munir	Getafe	Transfer	Free	[26]
31 August 2022	Lucas Ocampos	Ajax	Loan		[27]
31 August 2022	Iván Romero	Tenerife	Loan		[28]
21 December 2022	Isco	Released			[29]
2 January 2023	Kasper Dolberg	Nice	Loan return		[30]
11 January 2023	José Ángel Carmona	Eiche	Loan		[31]
30 January 2023	Thomas Delaney	1899 Hoffenheim	Loan		[32]
31 January 2023	Kike Salas	Tenerife	Loan		[33]

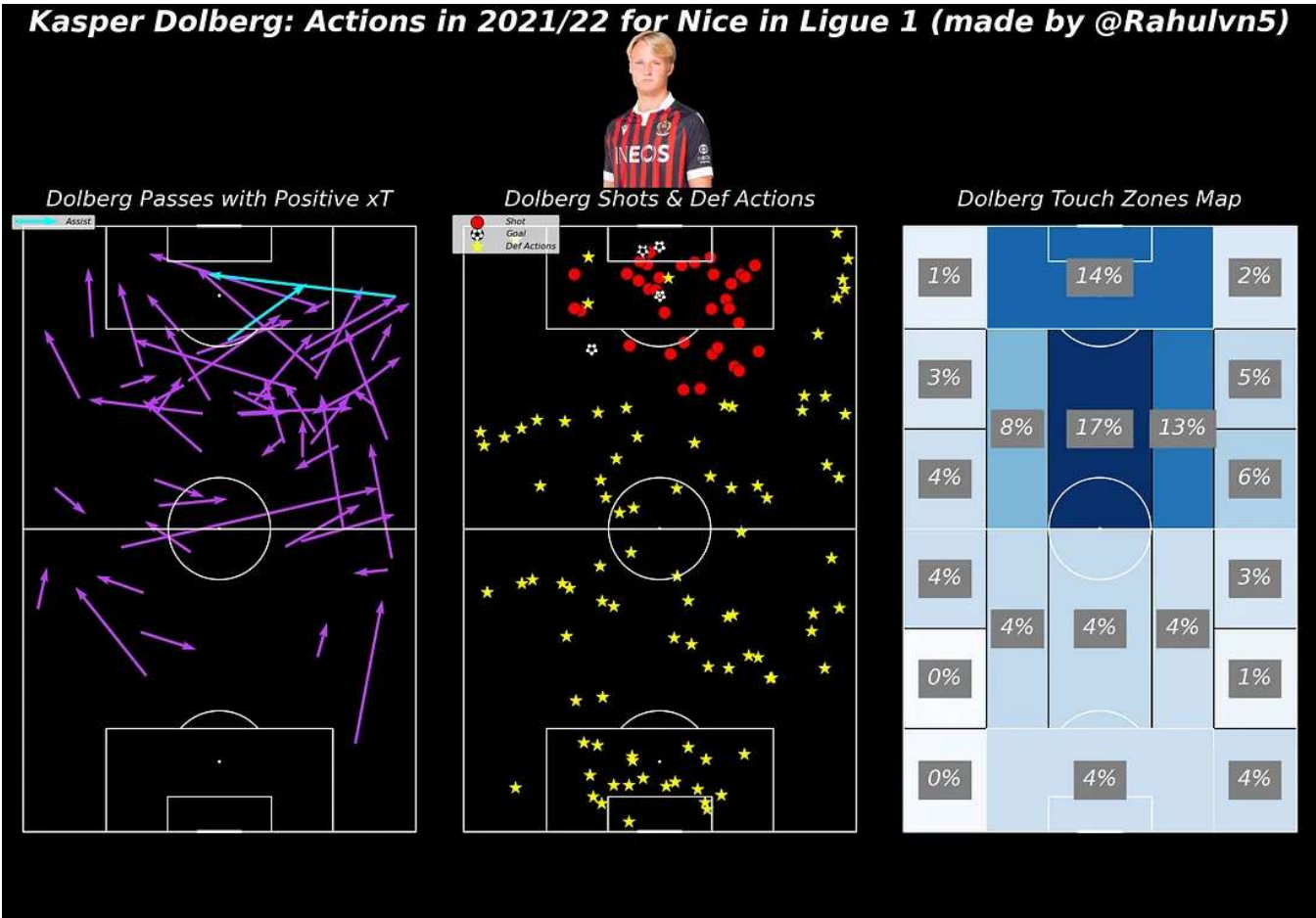
Pic 5: Sevilla's Transfer Session before 22/23 Season

In 22/23 season, Sevilla had considerably more departures than arrivals & some of these players crucial to Sevilla's overall performances, namely Jules Kounde & Diego Carlos, the CB partnership that kept an average of 0.9xGA per game & lowest goals conceded in La Liga replaced by Marcao & Nianzou whom we will later assess with the former pair wrt performances & other factors. Players like Januzaj, Kasper Dolberg, Isco all left in January who arrived as high profile arrivals erstwhile Ocampos who left in summer to Ajax was back. With the whole team dynamics changing within matter of months, it could be said that it didnt help provide a stable environment albeit change of coaches from Lopetegui to Sampaoli also were influential in some of the departures & arrivals mentioned.

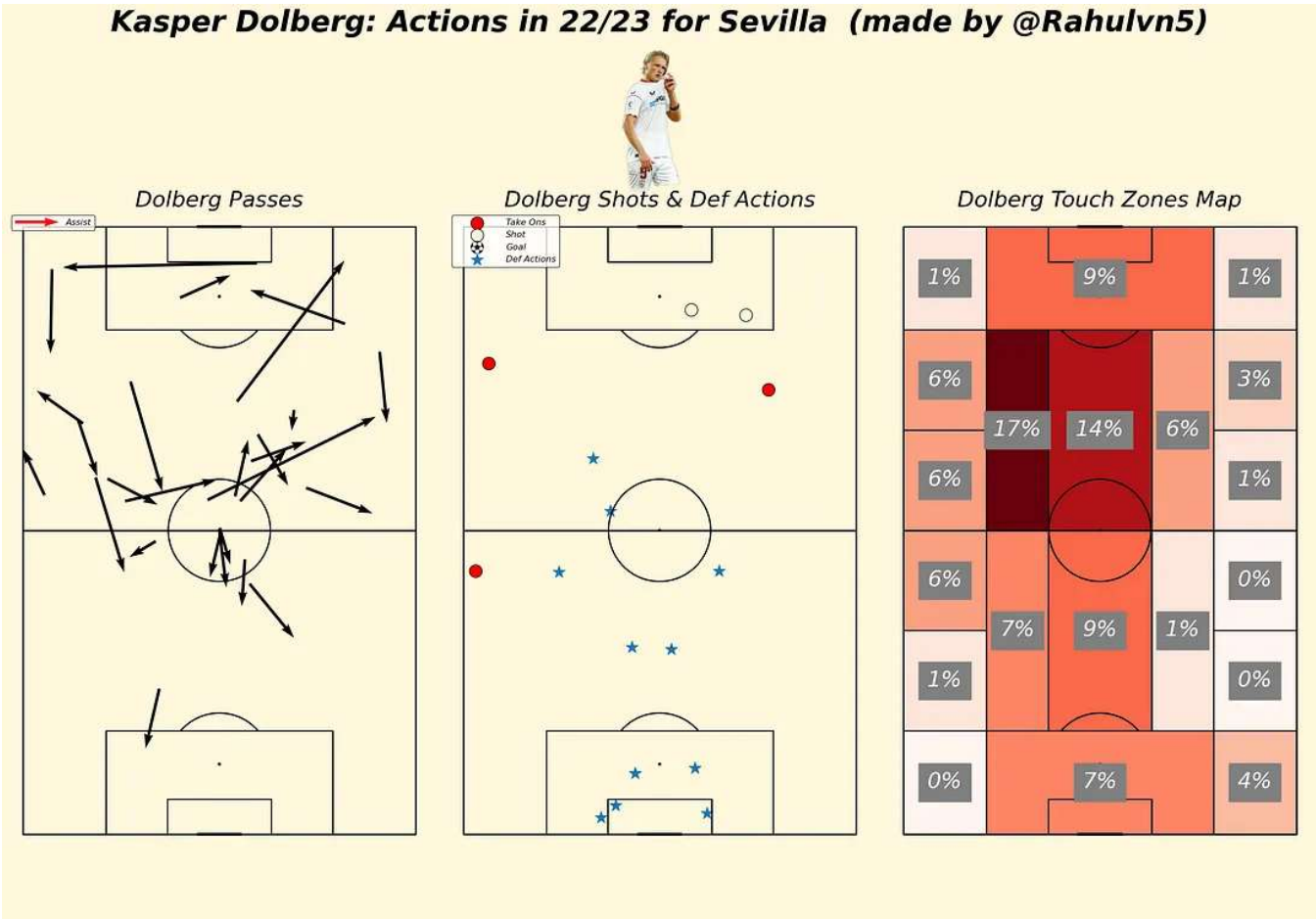
HOW DID THE NEW SIGNINGS & PLAYERS WHO RETURNED FROM LOANS PERFORM COMPARED TO THE ONES THEY REPLACED

1. THE KASPER DOLBERG & ADNAN JANUZAJ CONUNDRUM

With the exit of Luuk De jong to PSV & then Munir to Getafe, Sevilla signed Kasper Dolberg on Loan from Nice & Januzaj as a Free agent. Dolberg was supposed to be a good option to provide competition for Youssef En Neysri who came off a low scoring season in 21/22. Alas Dolberg just appeared 4 times for Sevilla starting only 2 games despite no injuries with Lopetegui not relying much on him.



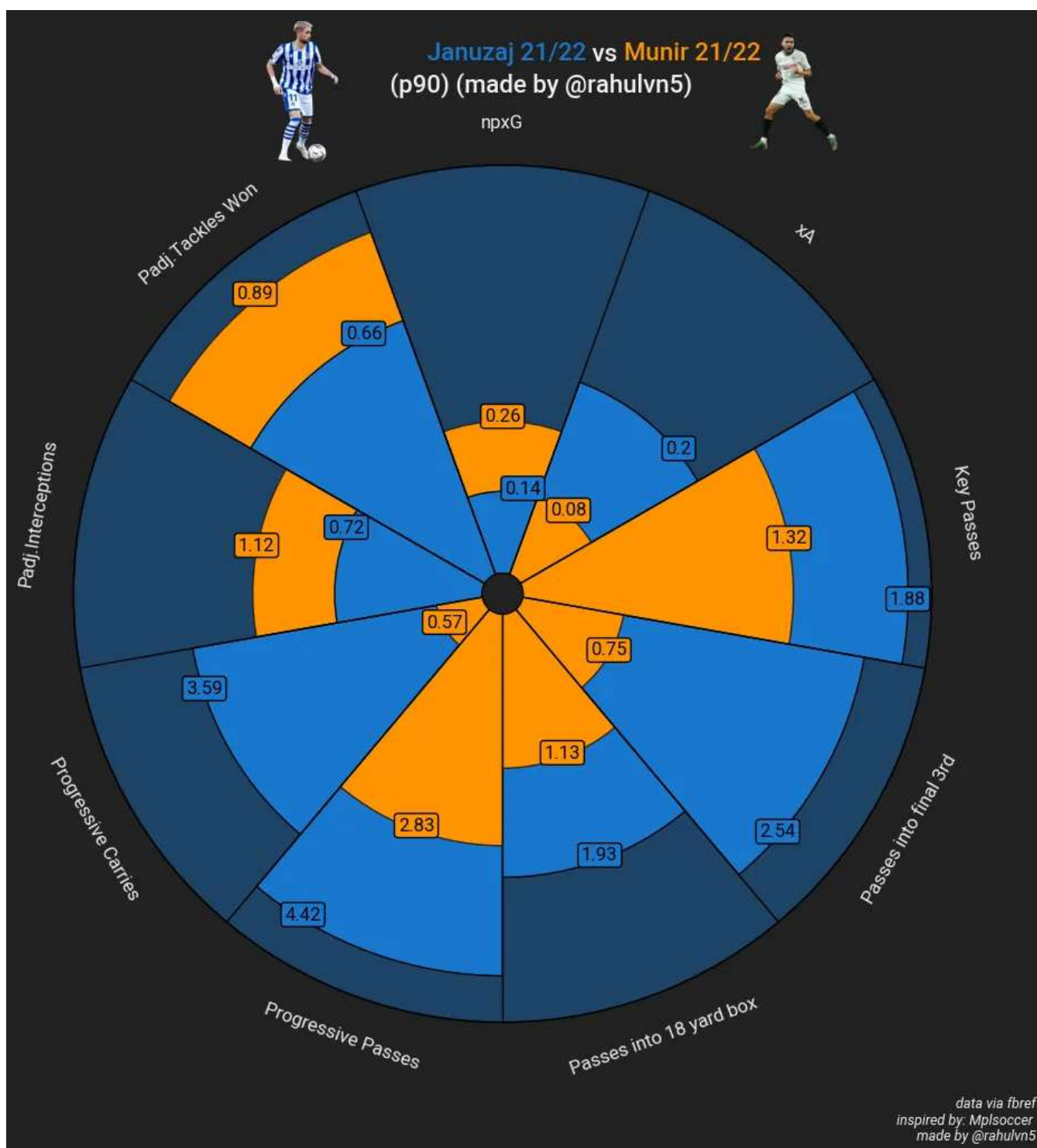
Pic 6 (a) : Dolberg with Nice in 21/22 played 1492 Minutes scoring 6 & assisting 2



Pic 6 (b): In contrast, Dolberg only played a mere 197 Minutes with Sevilla despite no injury concerns

To completely conclude Dolberg's failure as a mistake on Lopetegui can be too early in this article to say but there could be a case made that Sevilla's Hierarchy didn't do give a well thought to whether Dolberg could have fit the team dynamics of Sevilla that Lopetegui envisioned

Now Coming on to Adnan Januzaj. Januzaj arrived as a free signing for the outgoing free transfer of Munir himself. With Munir only playing 474 minutes for Sevilla in 21/22 season, in hindsight it was apparent that Munir would depart & a replacement would arrive. That replacement was Januzaj, who played 1625 Minutes with Sociedad & himself arriving as a free agent.



Pic 7: Comparing Januzaj & Munir's Seasons in 21/22

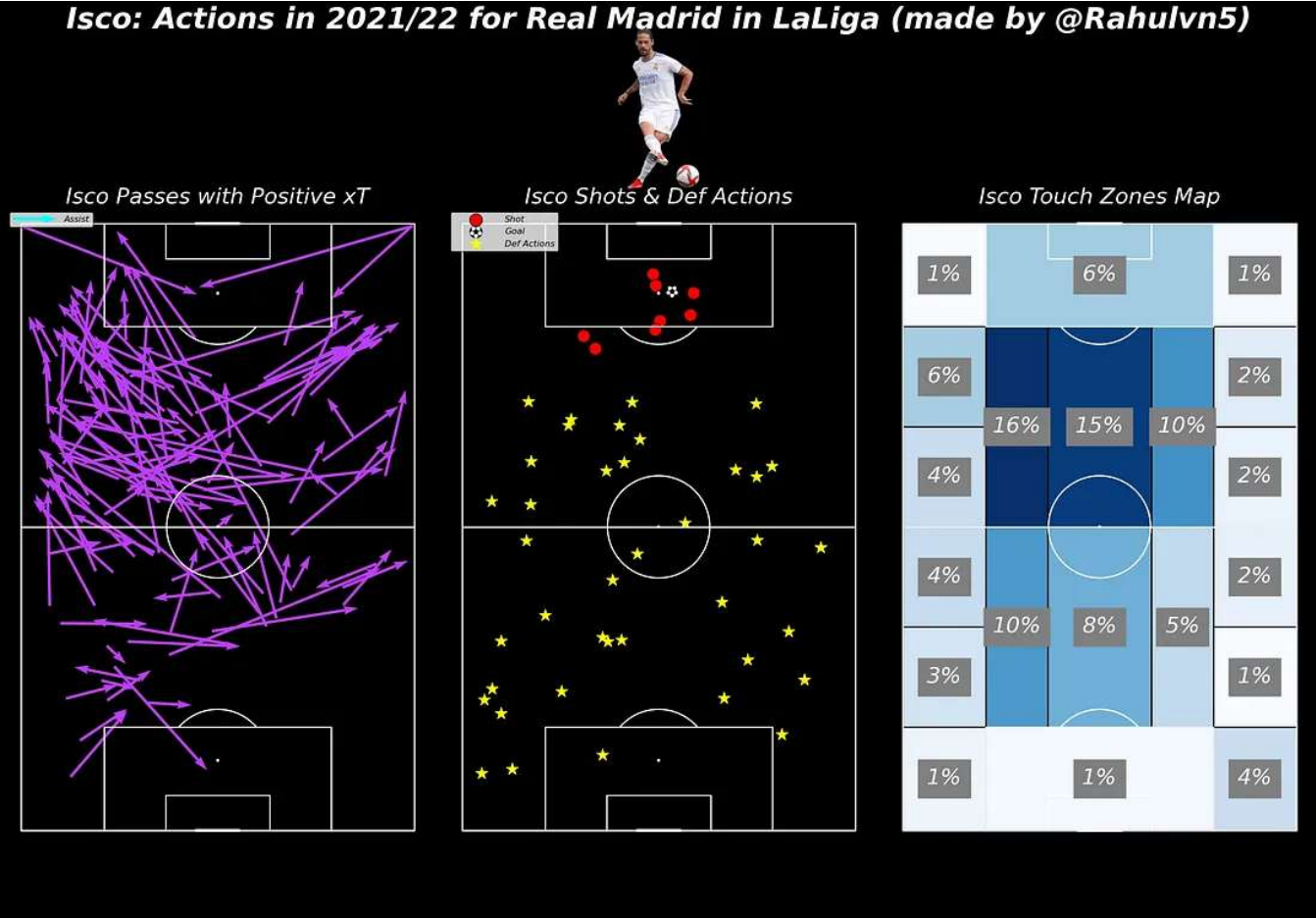
While Januzaj's metrics on a Per90 Basis looked like an improvement in many departments or atleast a like to like replacement at the least considering Munir's less playing time & departure. But Januzaj managed a paltry 47 Minutes in the League before eventual Lopetegui departure & arrival of Sampaoli didnt change much as he was considered surplus to requirements soon after when he left on a loan to Basaksehir in January.

Once again like in case of Dolberg, whether Januzaj was a right fit or not for Sevilla's big picture can be questioned when an outgoing coach like Lopetegui & Sampaoli deemed him surplus to what they had. While these both moves itself raises eyebrows on Sevilla's transfer mismanagement, there's another player that raises it further.

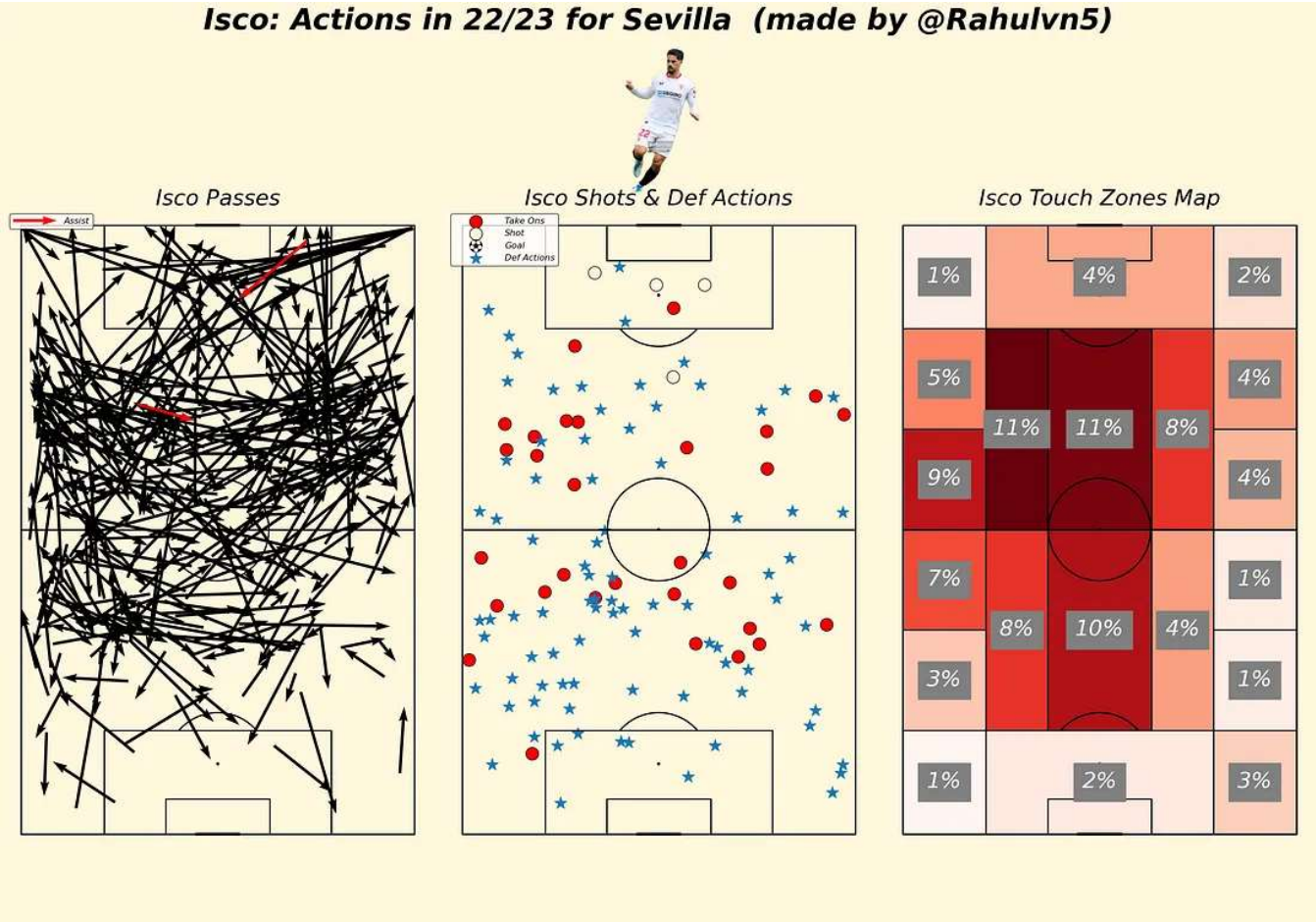
2. HE CAME, HE SAW & HE LEFT— THE SEVILLA-ISCO FIASCO

On a club level, Isco's achievements could be matched by very few considering the spectacular list of honors he won. But it was also true that Isco saw minutes at Real reduce year by year, reaching just 331 minutes in the League & making only 3 starts. The fact that he had recurring back injury problems theoretically didnt justify a move but with Lopetegui Keen on Isco, a contract offer was made & while Isco did see a steady stream of minutes as a starter under the erstwhile Sevilla coach playing 800 mins in the 1st half of season before WC break.

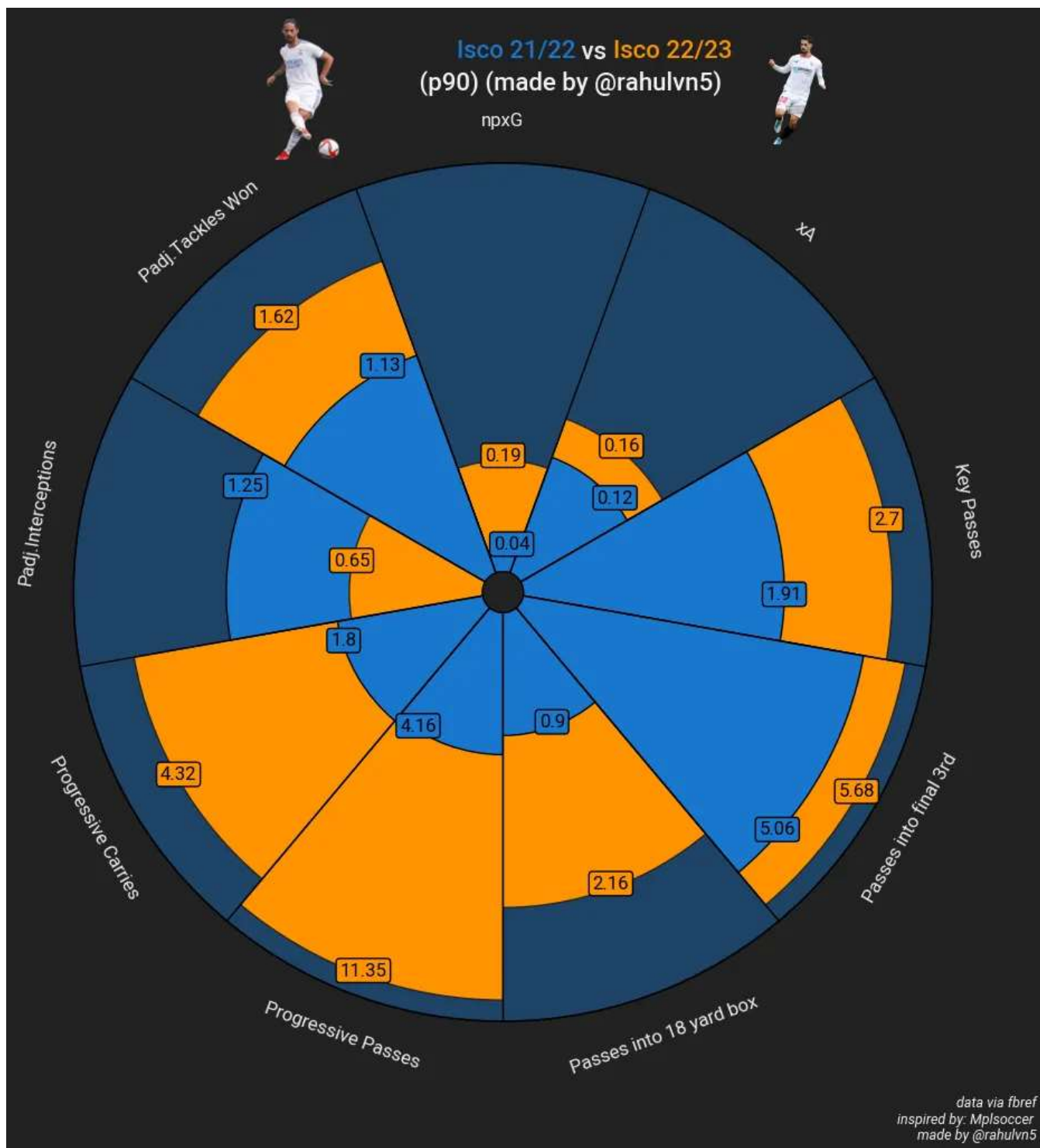
But rumors of a frosty relationship with Monchi meant Isco's only admirer in the club was Lopetegui & that raised doubts as to how long the club & player could maintain a sustainable relationship.



Pic 8 (a): Isco’s season with Real Madrid in 2021/22 Season



Pic 8 (b): Isco’s season with Sevilla in 2022/23



Pic 8 (c): A comparison of Isco's Performances with Real & Sevilla on a Per90 Basis

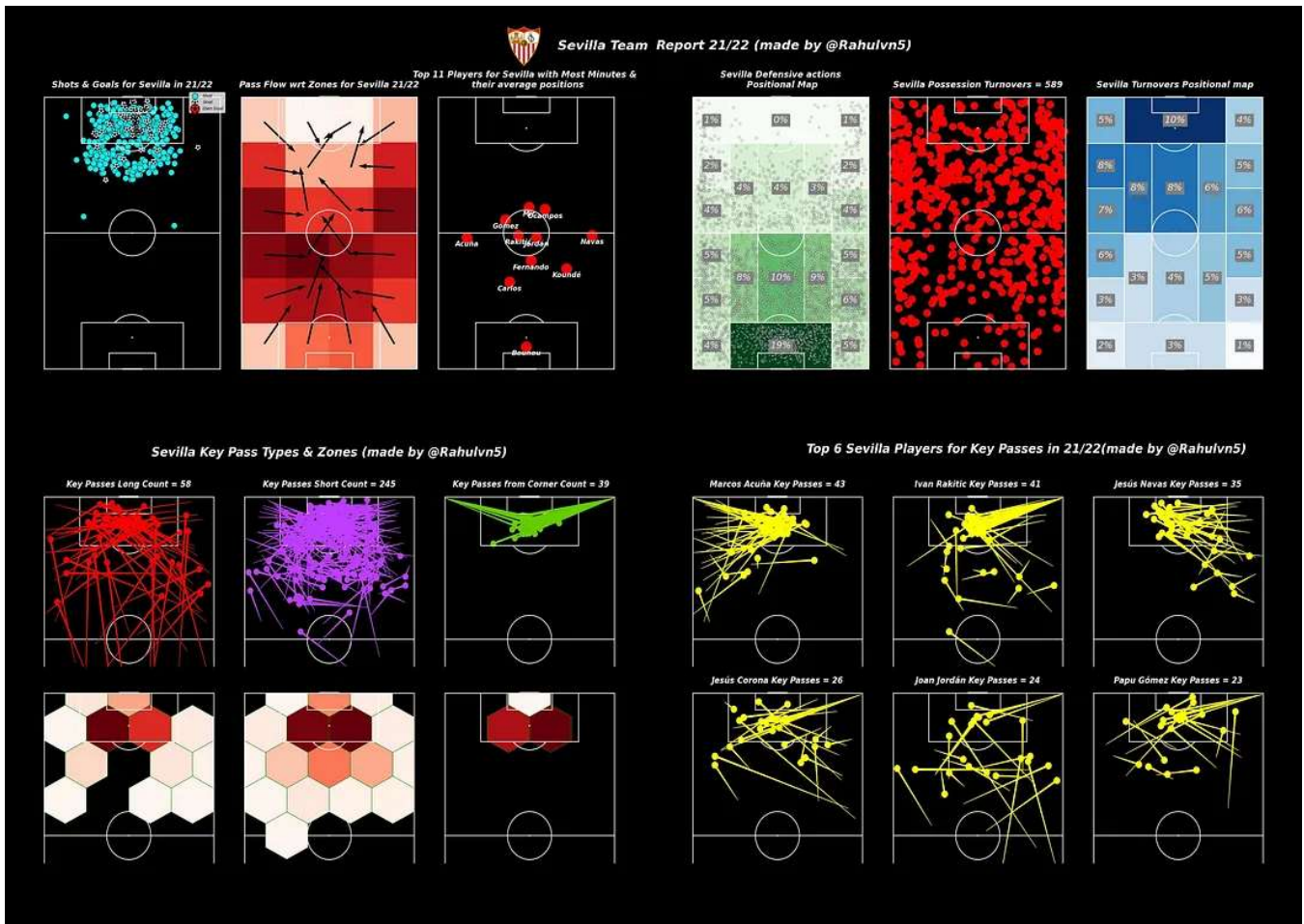
When you look at Pic 8 (c), you cant help but wonder that why Isco, despite his performance levels on a statistical level were better than what he produced at Real he was shown the door out once Sampaoli came in & whether it was a case of Sampaoli weighing if Isco was fit for his system or Isco's drop off under Sampaoli wrt his level, it was a transfer that left a bitter taste when Isco terminated his contract in January & once again raised questions to Sevilla's upper management on how a 3rd summer signing after Dolberg-Januzaj were now out of the club after all 3 were deemed to be signings to revive the club.

THE LOPETEGUI-SAMPAOLI EQUATION



Pic 9: The 2 Seville coaches when they met each other as opposite Dugouts

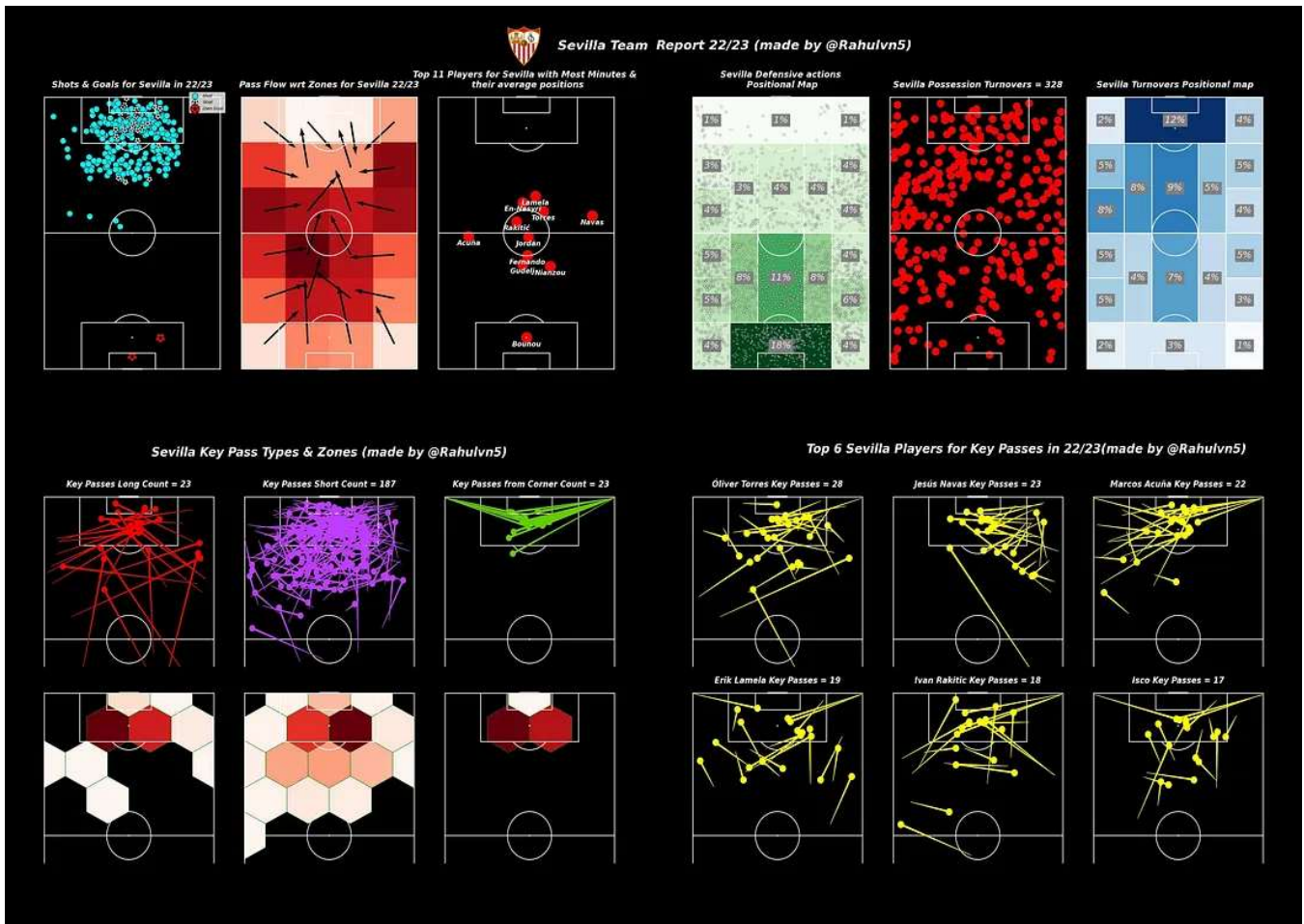
Around 2018, both Lopetegui & Sampaoli were preparing for the World cup campaigns for their respective countries. It wasn't days before the actual campaign that Lopetegui left his post as the Spanish National Team coach while Sampaoli would eventually himself leave Argentina after the tournament turned a nightmare for him. In the 4 years that followed, Lopetegui's Madrid stint didn't go exactly how he'd planned, Sampaoli took various jobs before eventually landing the Sevilla Job from Lopetegui.



Pic 10: Sevilla Team report Under Lopetegui 21/22

Under Lopetegui in their 21/22 Campaign Sevilla were a team that depended a lot on wide play to generate chances for the team. This was evidenced by 2 of the top 3 Key pass (passes leading to shots) were the Fullbacks Acuna & Navas when we look at Pic 10 showing the Top Key passes by players in Bottom right. Sevilla Also played a 4 back formation that had width maintained often by the Fullbacks (again a look at Pic 10 at top left) & wingers like Ocampos-Gomez played more inside in halfspaces alongside Rafa Mir.

As we look at their Key Pass composition, they maintained a big balance in generating them with Longer passes & Shorter ones (in fact Sevilla ranked Number 1 in 21/22 La Liga in terms of Long passes attempted (3745) & were clear of the likes of Real Madrid (2902), Barcelona (2912) & Atletico Madrid (3060) by a long shot). In terms of short Passes they ranked 3rd Behind the Real-Barca Duo meaning Sevilla played a Balanced play style under Lopetegui that got them in a title race with Real which only eventually collapsed.



Pic 11: Sevilla Team Report Under Lopetegui & Sampaoli 22/23

With all the departures & their impact discussed earlier, it became increasingly unstable from a defensive standpoint for Lopetegui to continue in the hotseat. The conclusions made from Pic 1 have a string support from the team report above where Sevilla's possession turnover zones increased in the central defensive space in their own half (Pic 11 top right). But once Sampaoli came, his brand of football meant a whole change in dynamics, system & more newer signings arriving which meant Sevilla going from a 4 back system to a 3 back, a move that saw several players leave & others arrive.

Also Sampaoli's style preferred a more short game, evidently making just 23 Long Key passes so far (Pic 11 bottom left) with 26 games gone, just 40% of the amount they made in 21/22 under Lopetegui. Evidently, their shorter Key Passes has already raked to 187, 76% of the total they played in 21/22 & they still have 12 games to go to easily go beyond last year's number.

With too many things changing too soon, you cant but think the impact it had on the team.

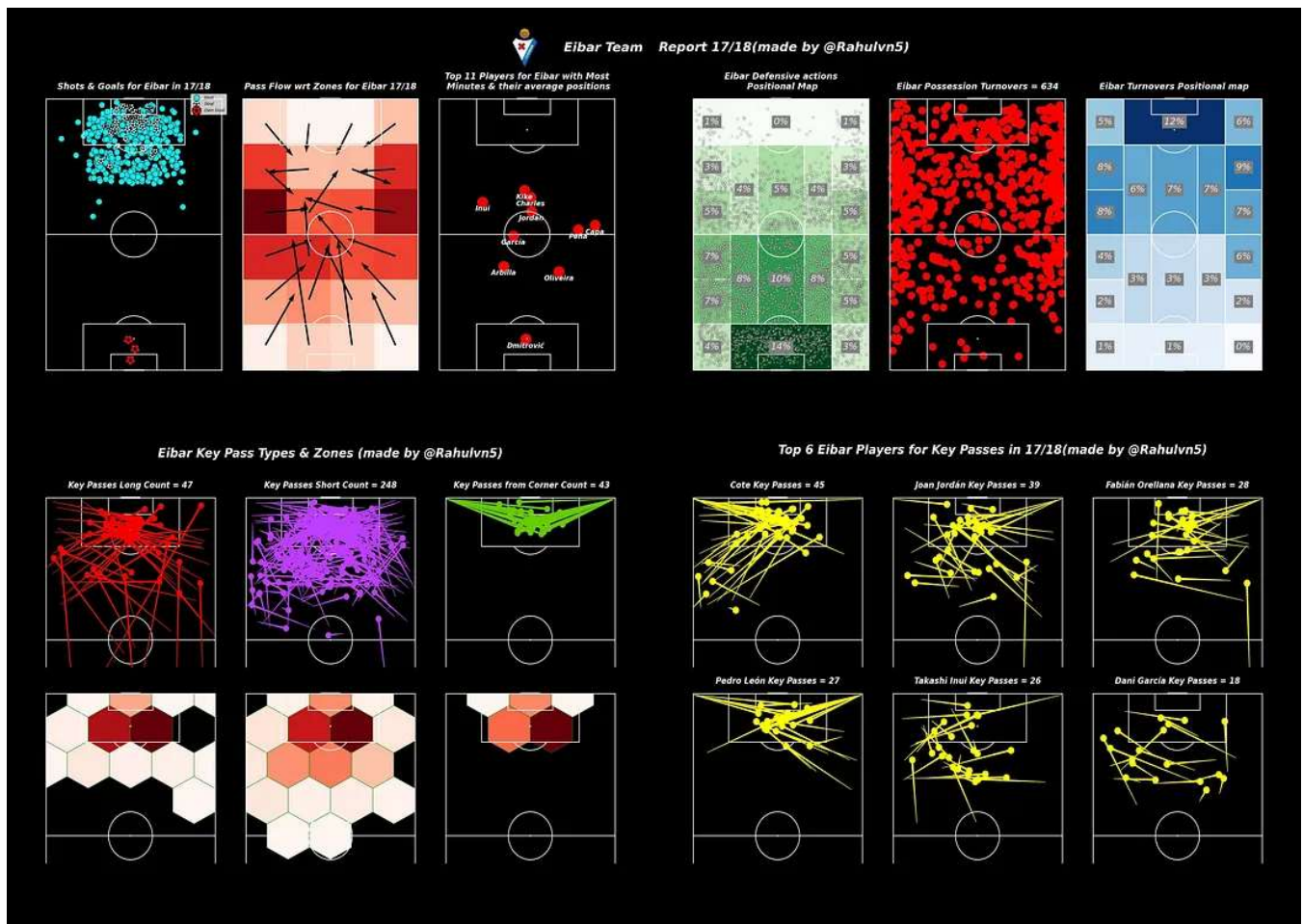
CONCLUSIONS: WHAT LIES AHEAD & WHAT CAN SEVILLA DO TO AVOID MESS LIKE THIS AGAIN

By the time I finish and drafting this section, news rang all over social media that Sampaoli had been relieved of his duties & now Jose Luis Mendilibar, previously of Eibar who had a long stay there coming in as Sevilla's new head coach with just 1.5 Months of season to go.



Pic 12: Mendilibar's already been signed on as the coach until end of season

With players such as Bryan Gil, Joan Jordan, Mendilibar finds some of his ex players of Eibar that can help him transition faster but ultimately his job will all be evaluated on whether he can be the man to save Sevilla from relegation.



Eibar's Team report in 17/18 La Liga Season under Mendilibar

One interesting thing can be that Mendilibar's style of play in theory has lots of similarities with what Lopetegui implemented (a back 4 system with a balanced style of play in terms of chance creation with Long & short pass game). Another thing could be wrt Joan Jordán, who was one of the leaders in key passes in Eibar's best finish in La Liga in 17/18 season and was also one of the key pass leaders under Lopetegui in 21/22 but in 22/23 season he's not been amongst the top contributors in this aspect.

Will Sevilla survive & rebuild back to a more stable era of challenging for glory?? Or will they survive the ultimate blow of relegating to second division?? Let's wait & watch for the next 2 months!!

