Premier League – 2025/2026 Season

Defensive Midfielder Offensive Activity Analyses

Throughout the first 5 PL games

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1st part – Inclusion criteria

For the analysis, as I wanted to select and analyze the same profile of players, I needed to make a selection based on several criteria :
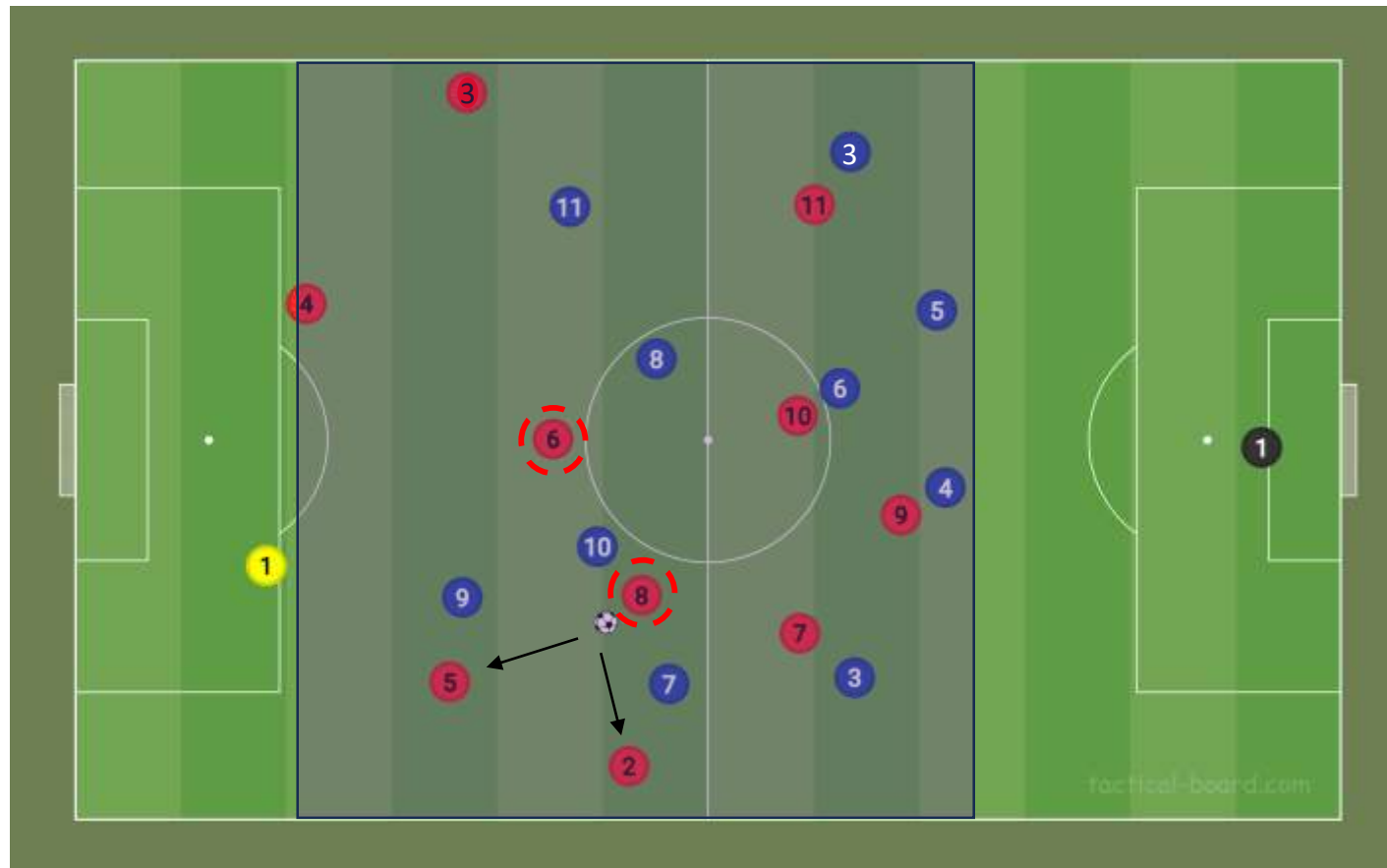
<u>Players' most common position</u> ➜ Defensive Midfielder or Centre Midfielder

<u>Team's most common formation</u> ➜ Backline of 4

<u>Minimum of minutes played</u> ➜ < 360min out of 450 minutes since the start of the season (5 games)

The objective is to analyze the offensive activity of starters who have a pivot role in a deep position.

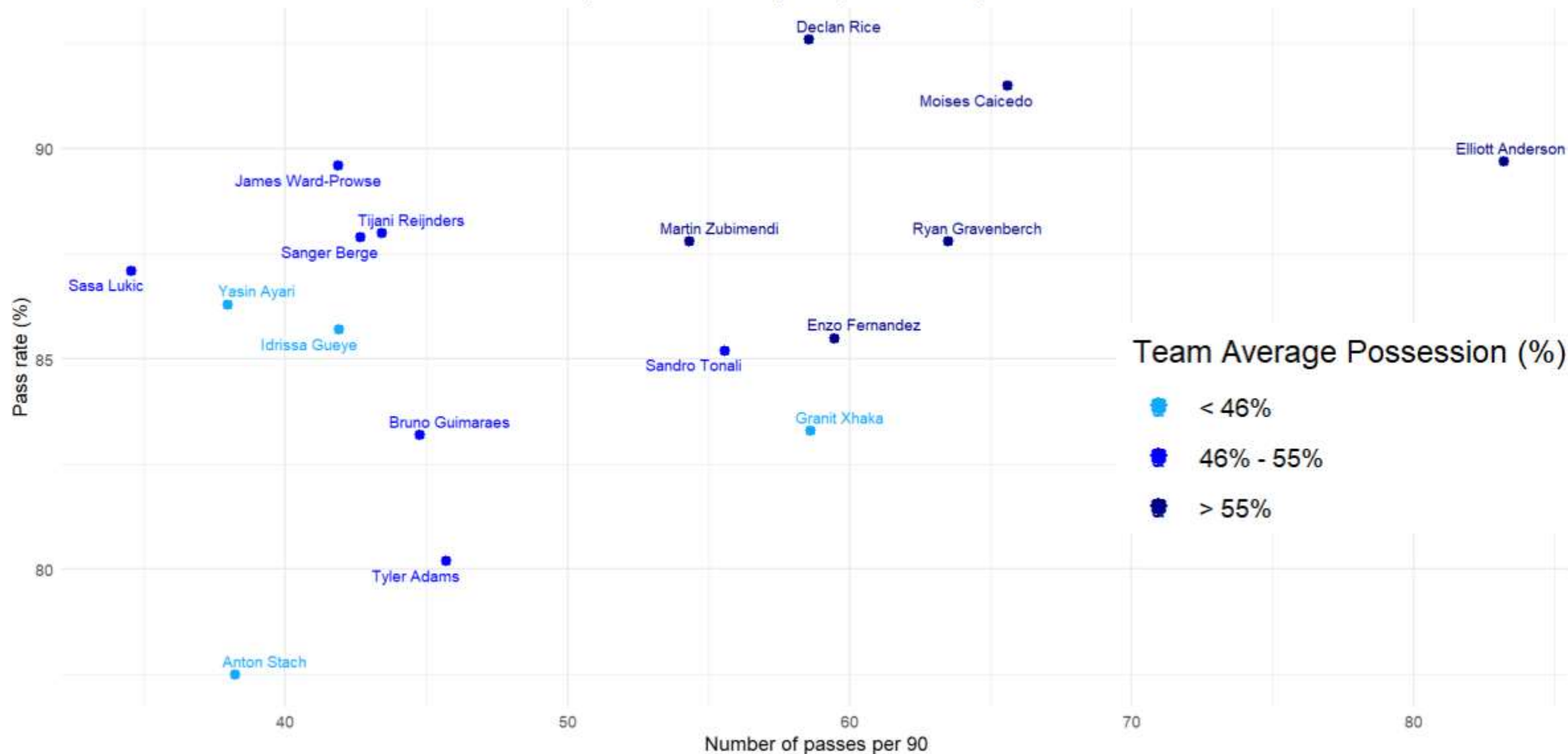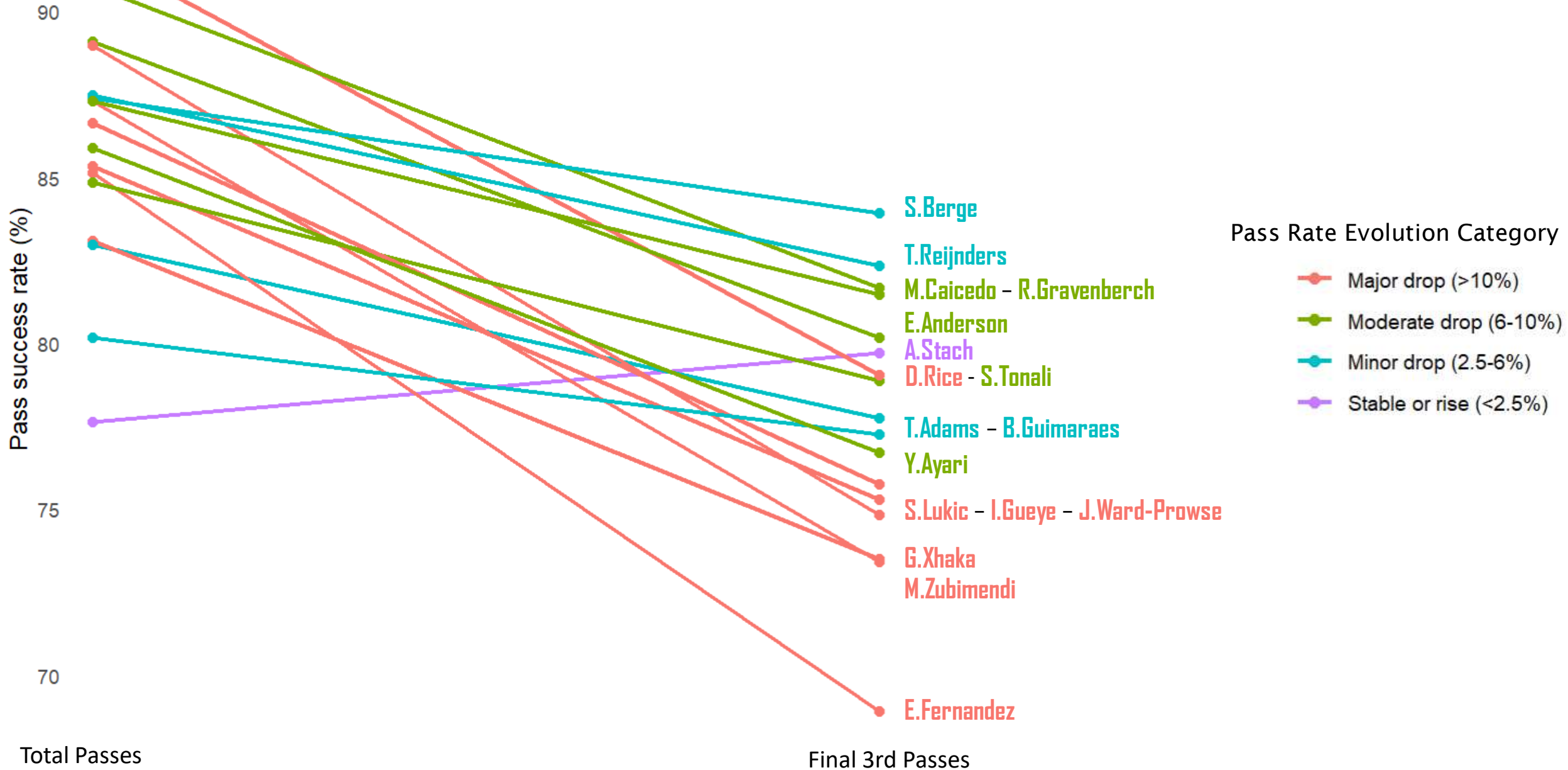# 2nd part - Keep possession and move forward with the ball

1- Passes Activity

Players' number of pass per 90 and pass rate

Pass completion Rate Evolution

Interactive figure link

Pass success rate (%)

90

85

80

75

70

S.Berge

T.Reijnders

M.Caicedo – R.Gravenberch

E.Anderson

A.Stach

D.Rice – S.Tonali

T.Adams – B.Guimaraes

Y.Ayari

S.Lukic – I.Gueye – J.Ward-Prowse

G.Xhaka

M.Zubimendi

E.Fernandez

Total Passes

Final 3rd Passes

Pass Rate Evolution Category

Major drop (>10%)

Moderate drop (6-10%)

Minor drop (2.5-6%)
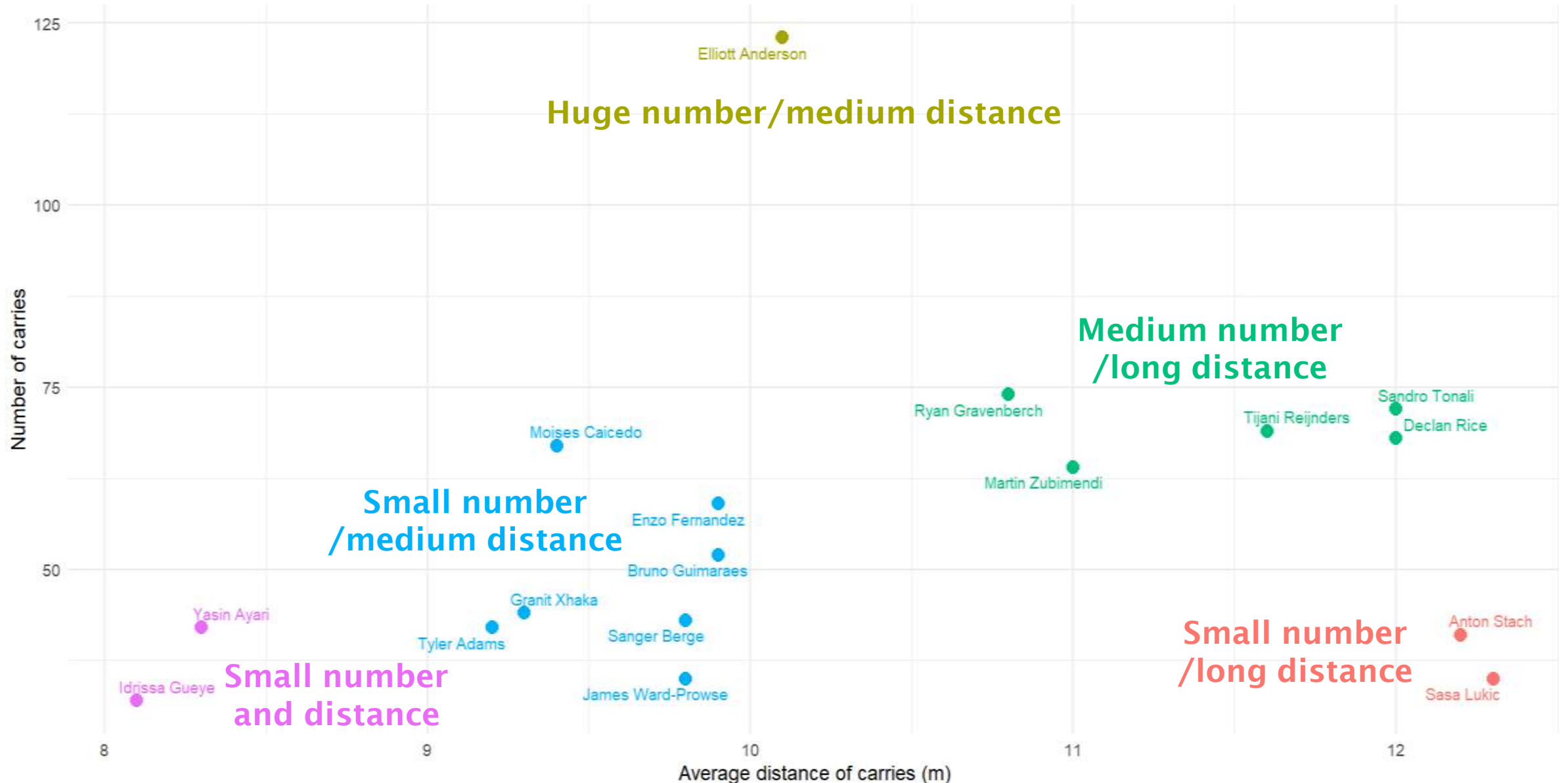
Stable or rise (<2.5%)

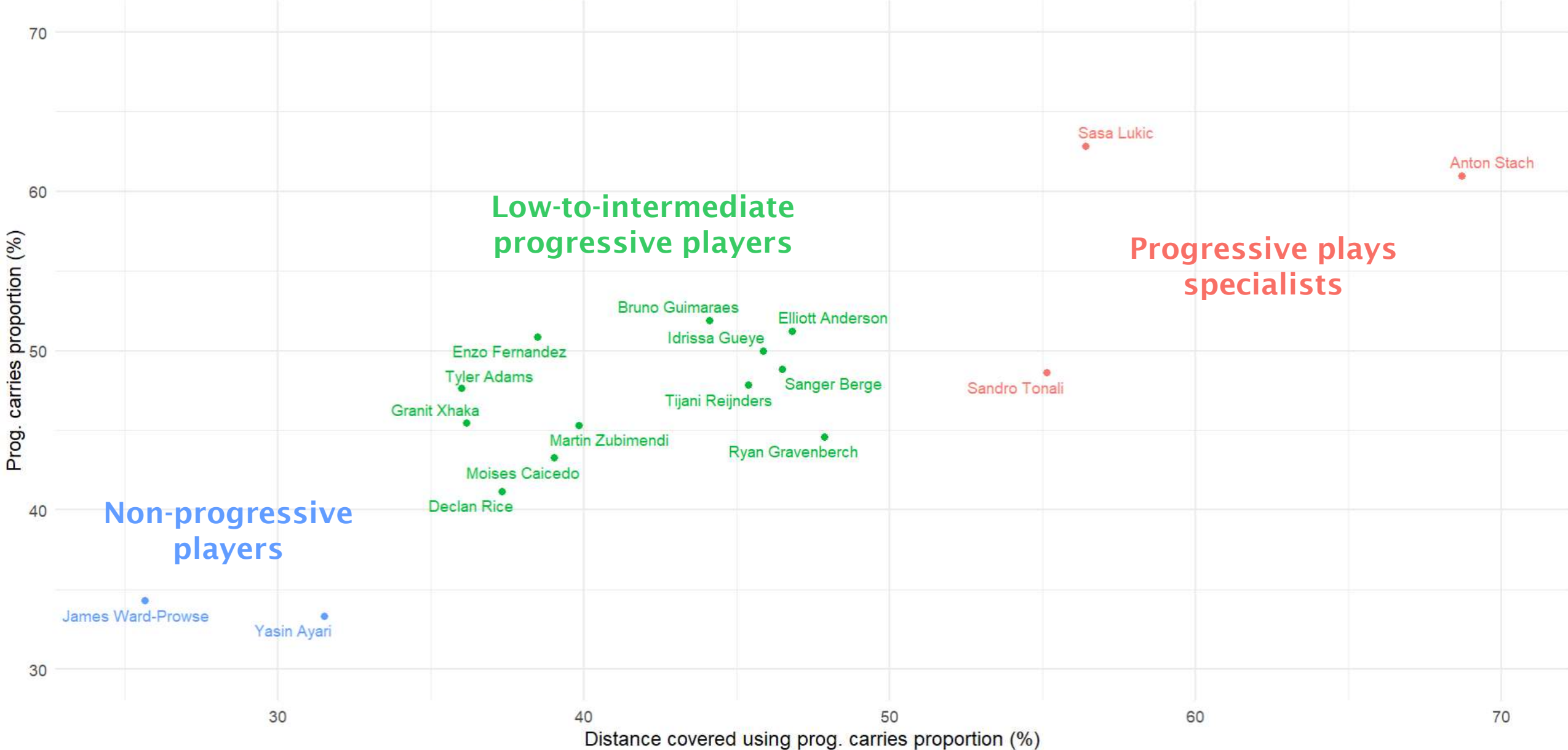Players' final 3rd passes proportion and completion rate comparison

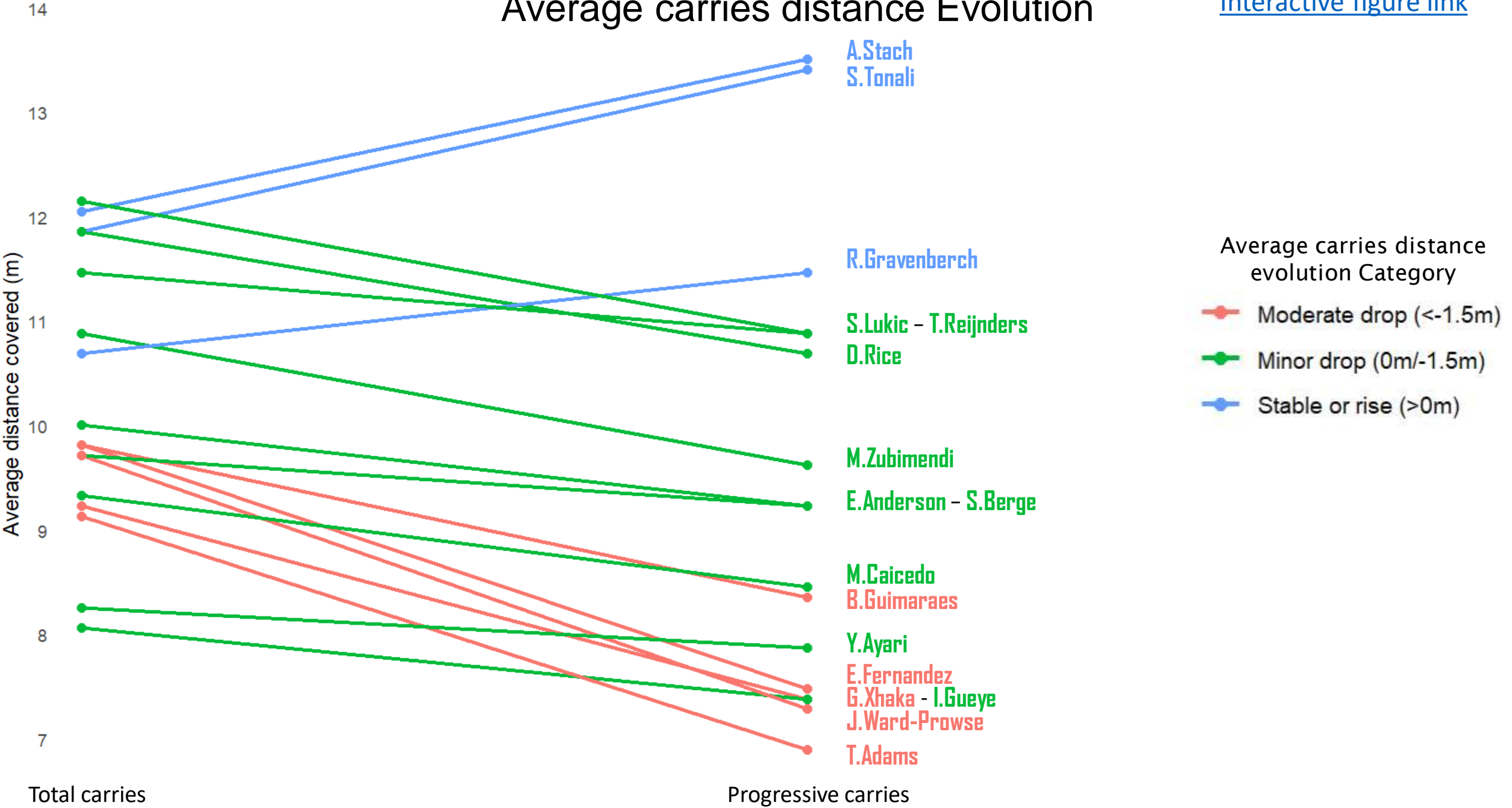# 2- Carries Activity

Carries number VS average distance

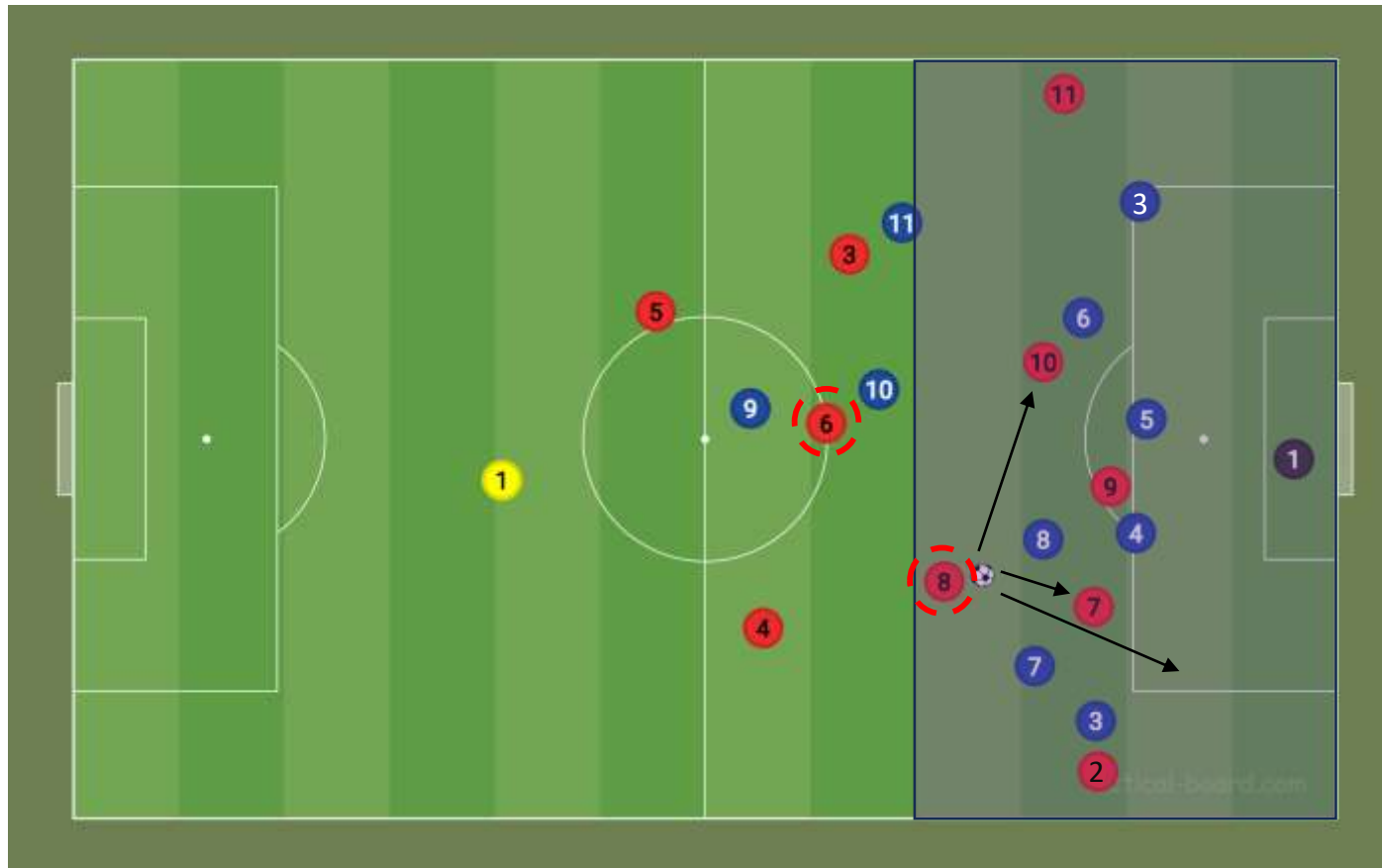Players' progressive carries proportion and distance covered using prog. carries proportion comparison

Average carries distance Evolution

3rd Part - Unbalance the opponent and finish with a scoring opportunity

Play areas of interest

Players of interest

1- Goals' contributions

		Number of Players
0 G/ 0 A	T.Adams – S.Lukic – S.Tonali – S.Berge – J.Ward-Prowse	5
0 G/ 1 A	E.Anderson – D.Rice	2
1 G/ 0 A	I.Gueye – Y.Ayari – B.Guimaraes	3
1 G/ 1 A	A.Stach	1
0 G/ 2 A	G.Xhaka	1
2 G/ 0 A	M.Zubimendi	2
1 G/ 2 A	T.Reijnders	1
2 G/ 1 A	E.Fernandez – R.Gravenberch	2

2- Openplay xG and xA

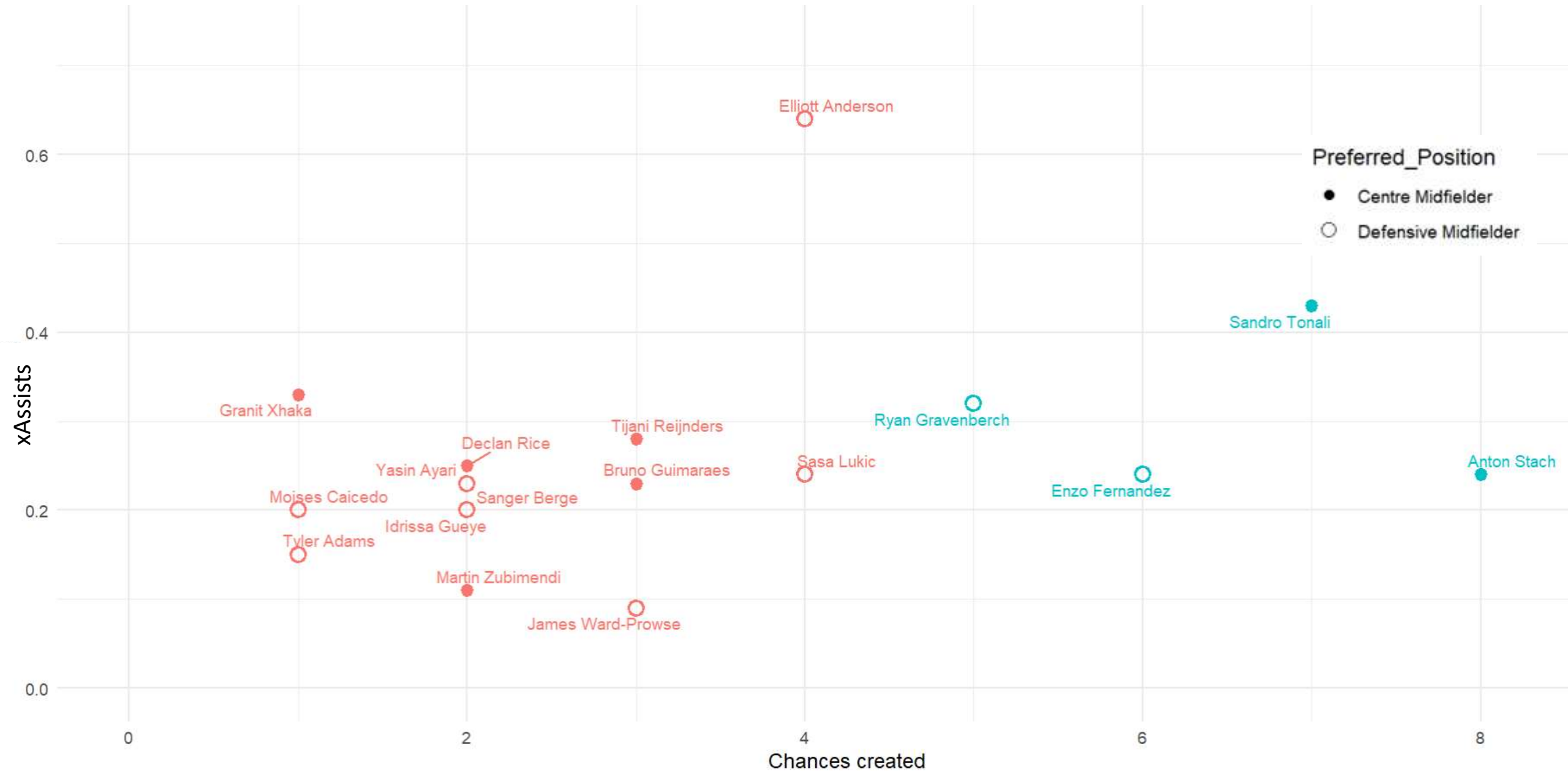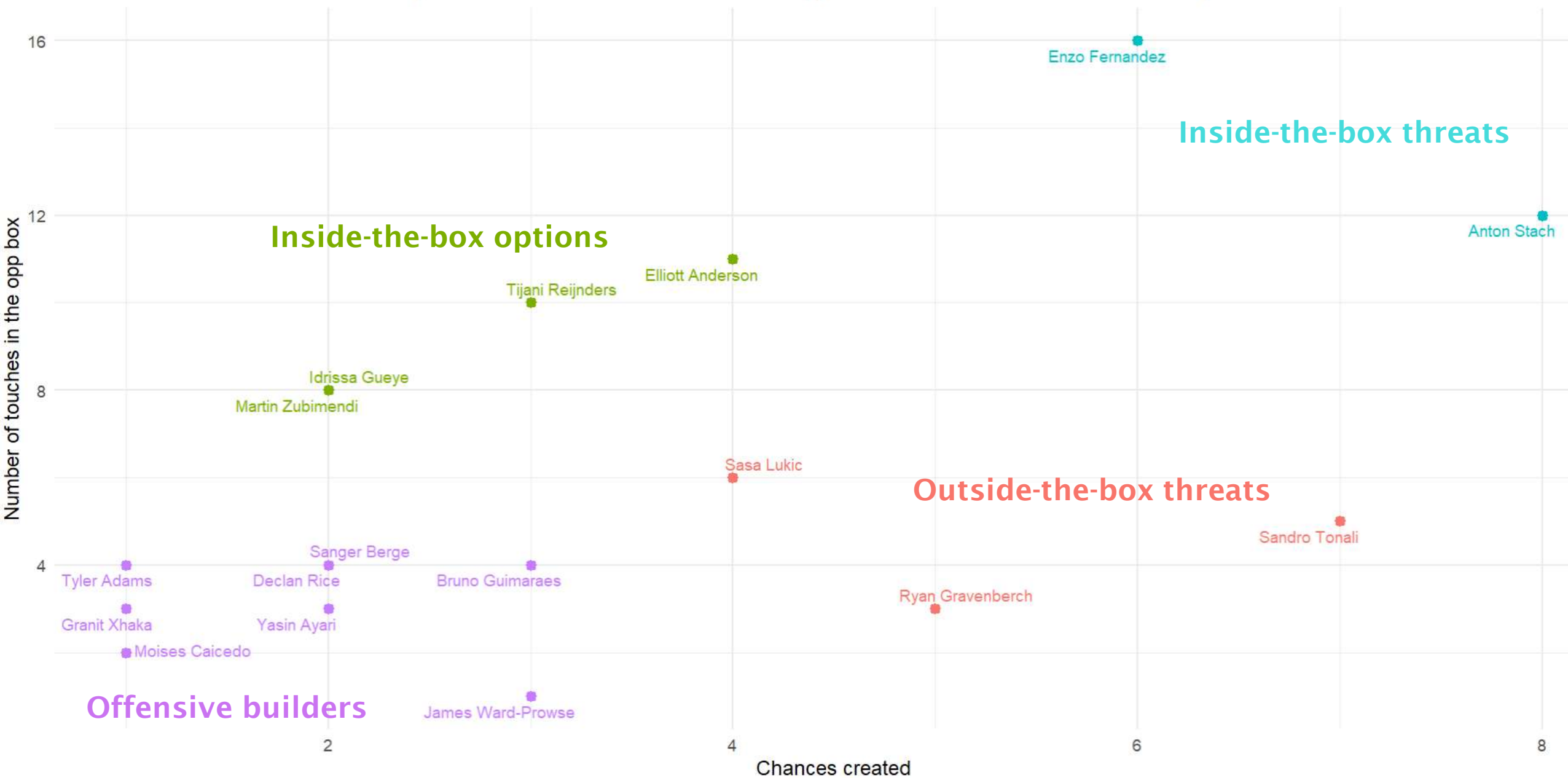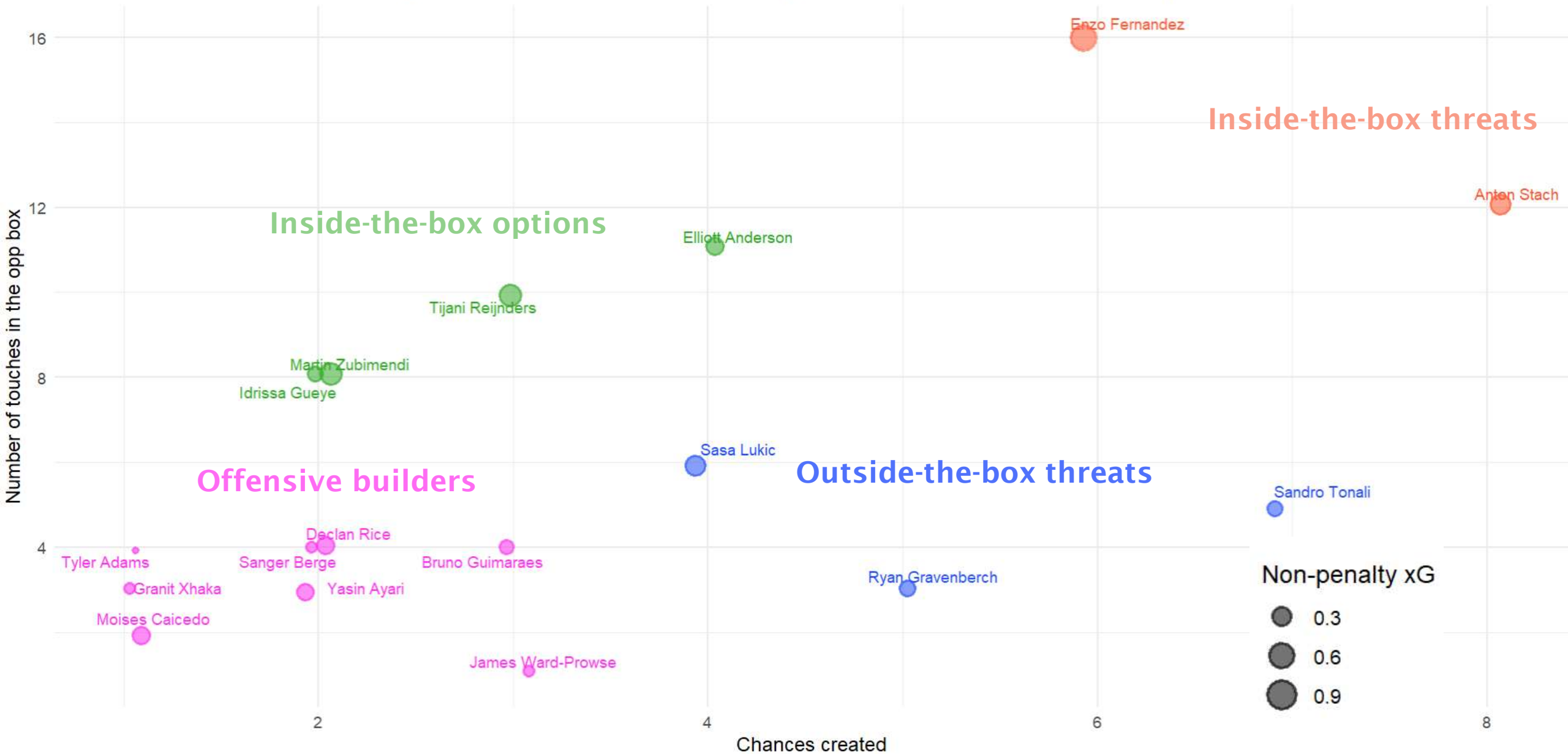# 3- Chances created and touches in opp. box

Players' number of touches in the opp box and chances created comparison

Inside-the-box threats

Inside-the-box options

Outside-the-box threats

Offensive builders

Number of touches in the opp box

Chances created

Enzo Fernandez

Anton Stach

Elliott Anderson

Tijani Reijnders

Idrissa Gueye

Martin Zubimendi

Sasa Lukic

Sandro Tonali

Sanger Berge

Tyler Adams

Declan Rice

Bruno Guimaraes

Ryan Gravenberch

Granit Xhaka
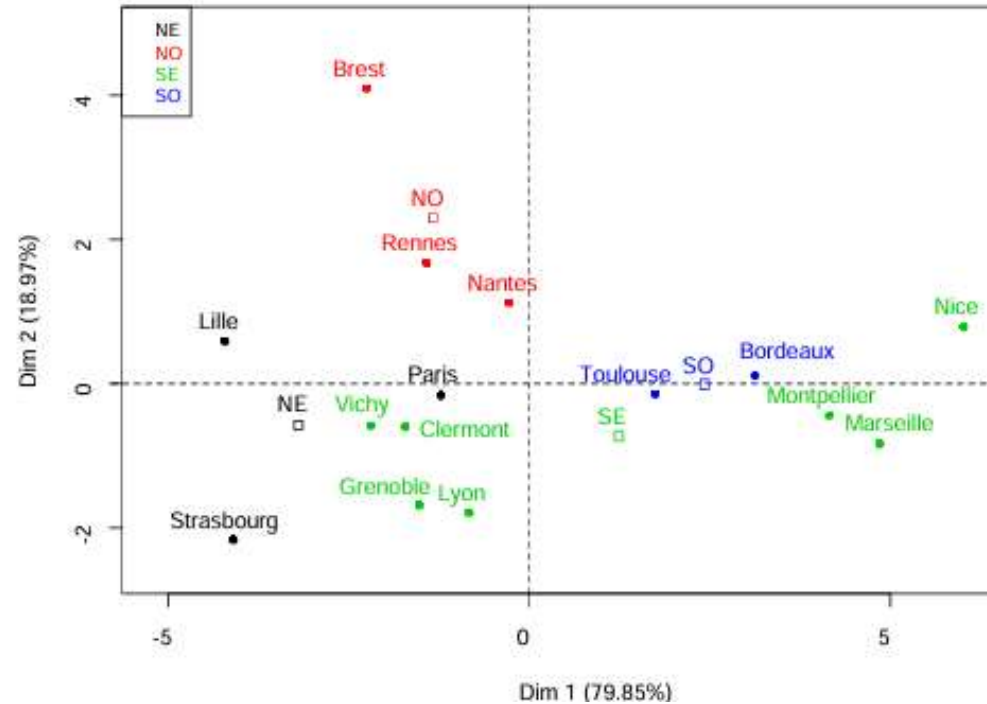
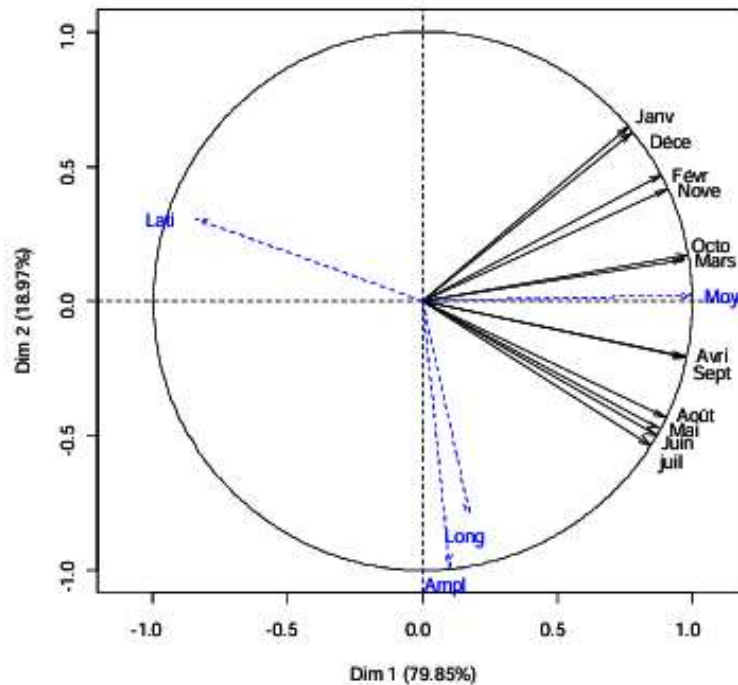Yasin Ayari

Moises Caicedo

James Ward-Prowse

Players' number of touches in the opp box and chances created comparison
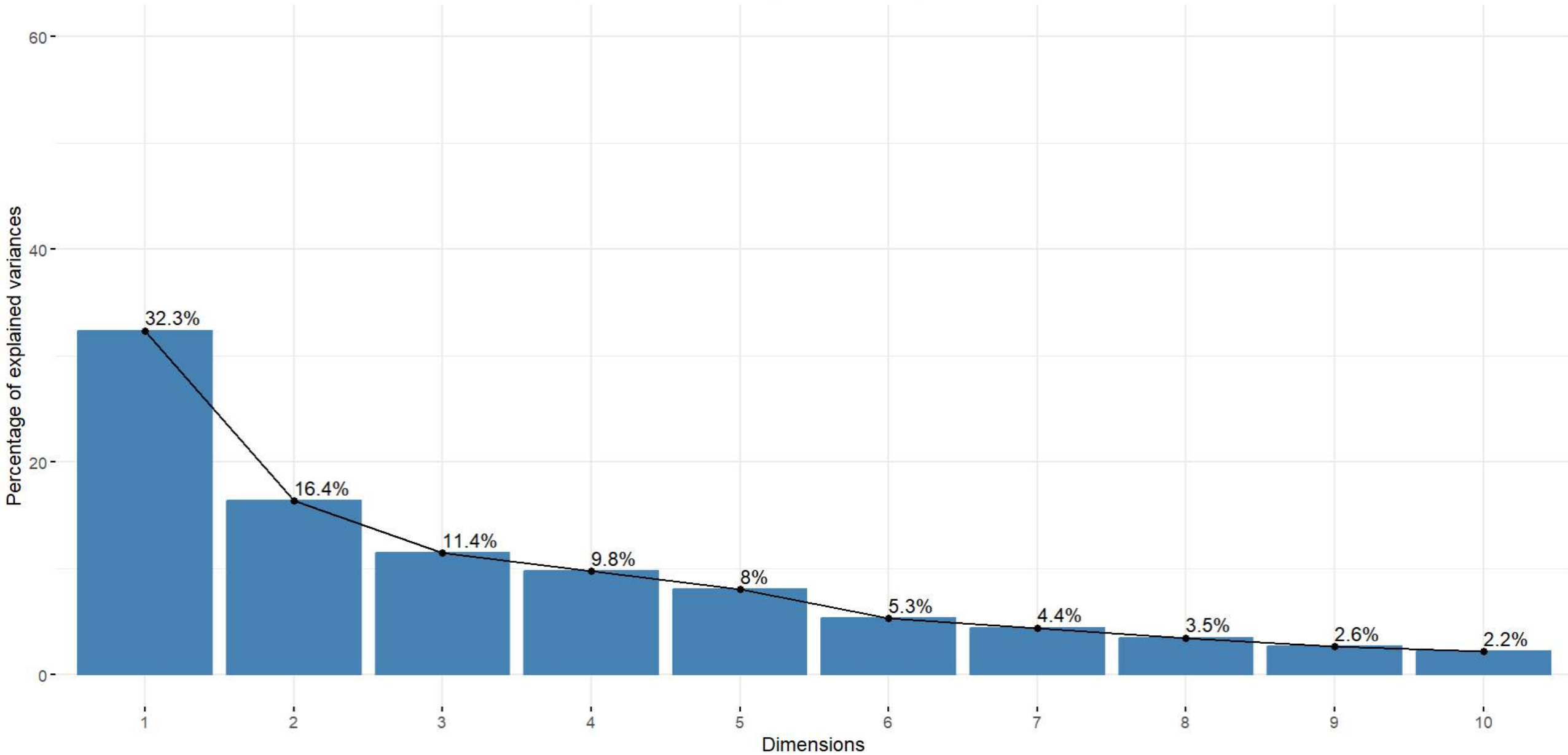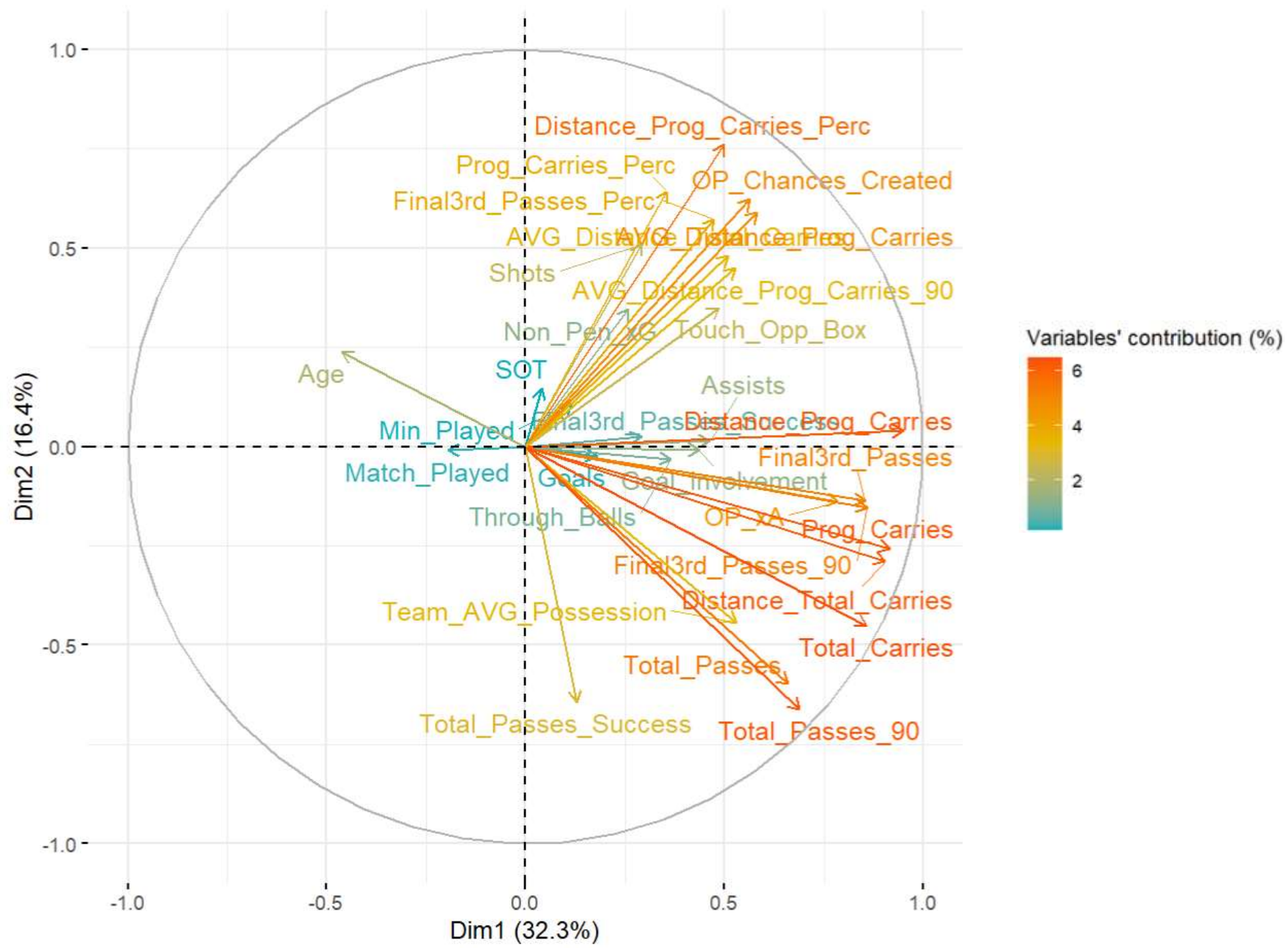
4th part - Principal Component Analysis (PCA) and Hierarchical Classification on principal components (HCPC)
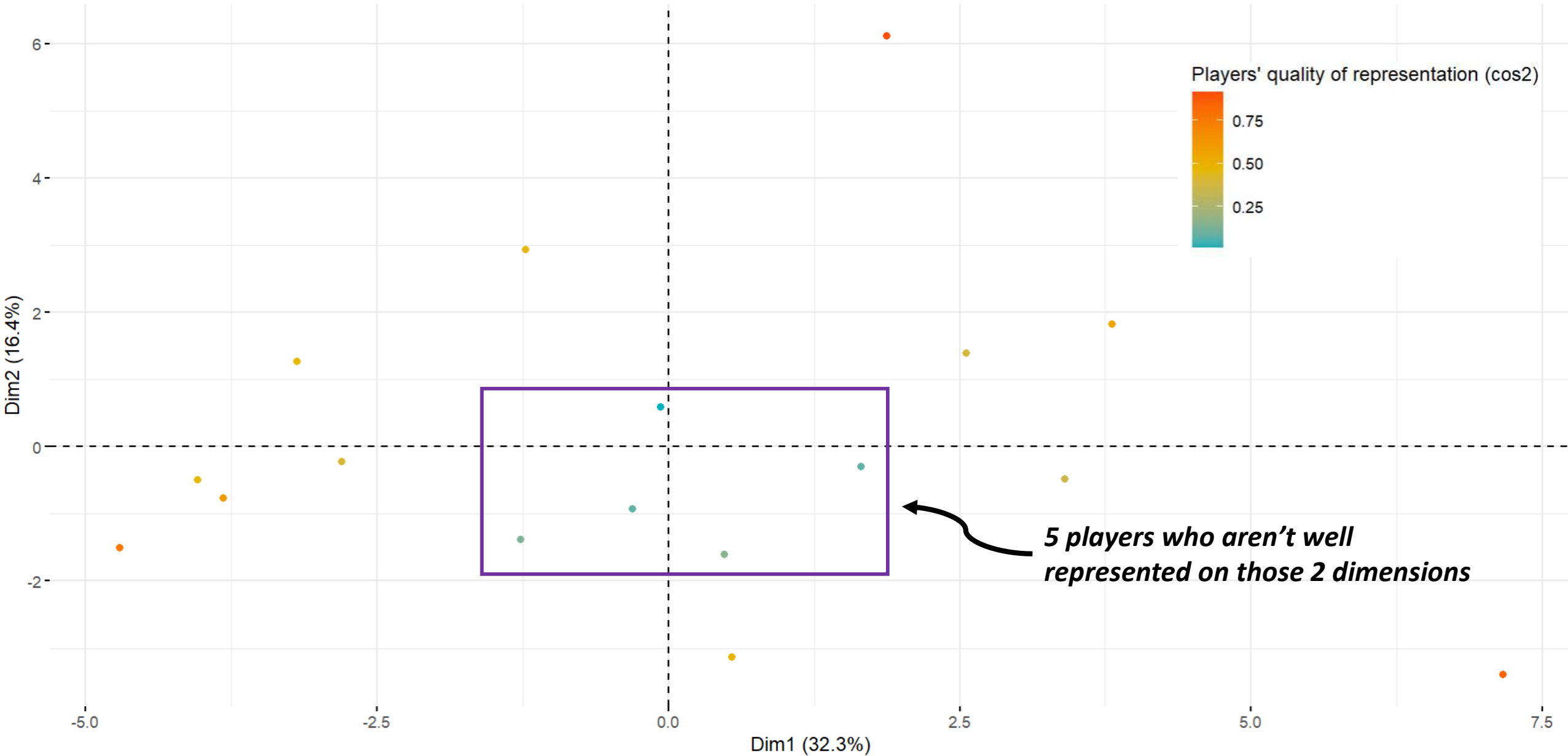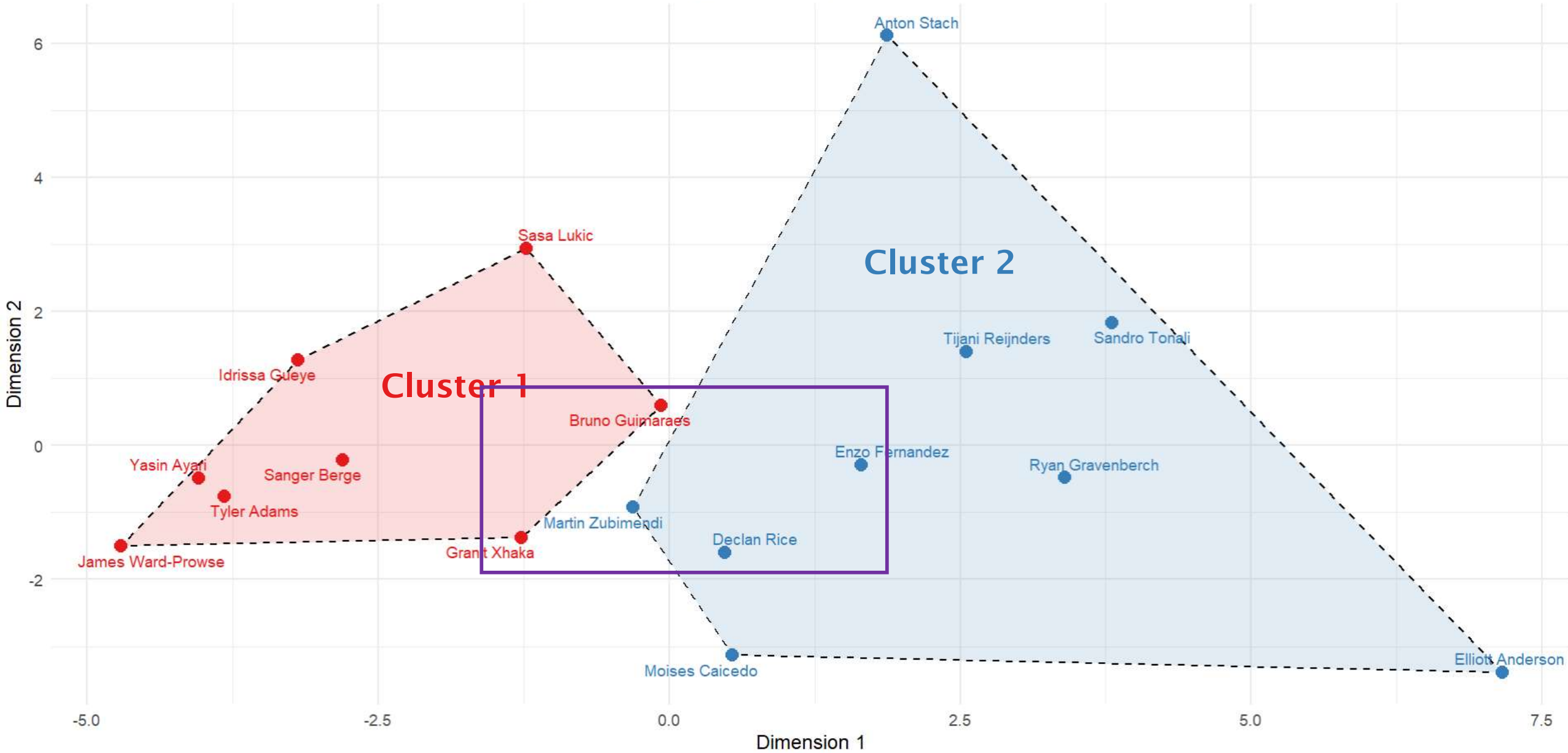
Explained variance percentage per dimension

ACP - Correlation Circle

ACP - Players' positioning through the first 2 dimensions

5 players who aren't well
represented on those 2 dimensions

Players' clustering according to the first 2 dimensions

Statistical comparison of variables between the two clusters

Variable	Cluster1	Cluster2	p.value
Age	28.6 ± 4.6	24.7 ± 1.7	<0.05
Team_AVG_Possession	48 ± 3	55.5 ± 6.1	<0.01
Goal_Involvement	0.6 ± 0.7	1.9 ± 1.1	<0.05
OP_Chances_Created	2.2 ± 1	4.2 ± 2.4	<0.05
Total_Passes	202.2 ± 42.9	274.9 ± 66	<0.05
Total_Passes_90	43.5 ± 7.1	58 ± 13	<0.05
Final3rd_Passes	56.6 ± 19.6	82.2 ± 18.5	<0.05
Final3rd_Passes_90	12.2 ± 4.3	17.3 ± 3.6	<0.05
Total_Carries	40.6 ± 6.4	70.8 ± 21.9	<0.01
Distance_Total_Carries	388.2 ± 74.6	771.6 ± 214.6	<0.001
AVG_Distance_Total_Carries	9.6 ± 1.3	11 ± 1	<0.05
Prog_Carries	19 ± 4.8	33.9 ± 11.3	<0.001
Distance_Prog_Carries	158.3 ± 56.5	356.2 ± 114.3	<0.001
AVG_Distance_Prog_Carries	8.2 ± 1.4	10.6 ± 2.1	<0.05
AVG_Distance_Prog_Carries_90	1.8 ± 0.3	2.3 ± 0.5	<0.05

Interactive table link

5th Part - Conclusion

By combining players' clustering and comparing the variables of both clusters, we can observe and admit that, over the first five games of the season, two profiles of central midfielders stand out :

Cluster 1 : Holding midfielders
- who are far from the danger zone
  (goal contributions, chances created, final 3rd passes)

- in a non-dominant squad *(team possession)*

- so less passes and carries
  (passes and carries metrics)

Cluster 2 : Offensive playmakers
- who contribute to chances and goals,
  (goal contributions, chances created, final 3rd passes)

- dictate the team ball's activity,
  (number of passes, number and distance of carries)

- and progressive plays in the opponent's half
  (final 3rd passes, number and distance of progressive carries)

Last Part – Cautions and Perspectives

- We cannot draw any conclusions from this work, since we only worked on the first five games of the season, and the dimensions chosen for the PCA do not define the group of players precisely enough.

- To go further :
  - Automate data extraction (web scraping or API)
  - Continue the analysis over the entire season (will include many more players)
  - Include GPS data in order to process with runs' directions with/without the ball, or % of runs at x km/h…