

Travastos Stat Final Write Up

This summer the UEFA European Championship (Euros) and the CONMEBOL Copa America Championship (Copa) took place. These tournaments occur concurrently every 4 years in coordination with the World Cup so one occurs every other year. As one might expect, the Euros are a tournament of the best European nations and Copa is a tournament of the best nations from the Americas. The host countries for 2024 were Germany and the United States respectively. This is quite exciting for soccer fans around the world because, unlike the World Cup, with games across so many different time zones, there were high level games on all day. I personally enjoy international soccer more than club competitions. The national pride and distinct team identities add an element to the game that you do not typically see in club matches. These tournaments forced me to be planted on my couch this summer.

The juxtaposition of the two different tournaments was at times quite comical. There were countless memes on Twitter about the noticeable distinction of the games in the mornings and in the evenings. The general consensus was that the earlier games – the Euros, were meticulously thought out tactical chess matches. These games were slower, teams were more organized, and goals were the result of complicated and creative offensive play. On the other hand the Copa games later in the day were comparable to a street fight. These games were fast, back and forth, hectic games with goals seemingly appearing out of thin air by way of masterful individual creativity or head scratching defensive breakdowns. Both tournaments were wildly entertaining, especially in the knockout stages.

What I set out to find was whether or not these were legitimate differences. Did the two tournaments have statistically significant differences? Or was it something that the soccer watching community fabricated and snowballed until it seemed plausible. Maybe our perception was impacted by the stretch of games all day. Or perhaps were there predisposed ideas associated with the nationality and stereotypes of the players and teams competing. I am in deep with soccer Twitter and everyone seemed to agree there was a notable change but it is still Twitter so, who knows.

I ended up finding almost all of the data I was looking for. I compared goals, expected goals, shots, passes, and fouls per game for each tournament. In a perfect world I would have also been able to juxtapose the player tracking data, specifically distance covered and speed. Unfortunately those are rarely publicized. Similarly some possession statistics would also have been interesting but those are not always recorded and are typically kept in house by teams.

I ran t tests and graphed the data and I found that goals and xg were pretty comparable but shots and fouls had a statistically significant difference between the competitions. The passing statistics however, had a stark difference and were extremely statistically significant between the two tournaments. These are a great indicator of the differences that fans were able to note, especially the passes in the offensive half of the field. With this data I was able to reject the null hypothesis and conclude that there was a legitimate statistical difference between the Euro and Copa America tournaments.