

Data Analyst - Application Project

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Exercise 1

It's Tuesday night, November 23rd, 2021 - Nashville SC has just defeated Orlando City SC 3-1 in the first round of the Playoffs. The team has training tomorrow to prepare for the upcoming match on Sunday vs. Philadelphia Union. The Head Coach has asked you for the following:

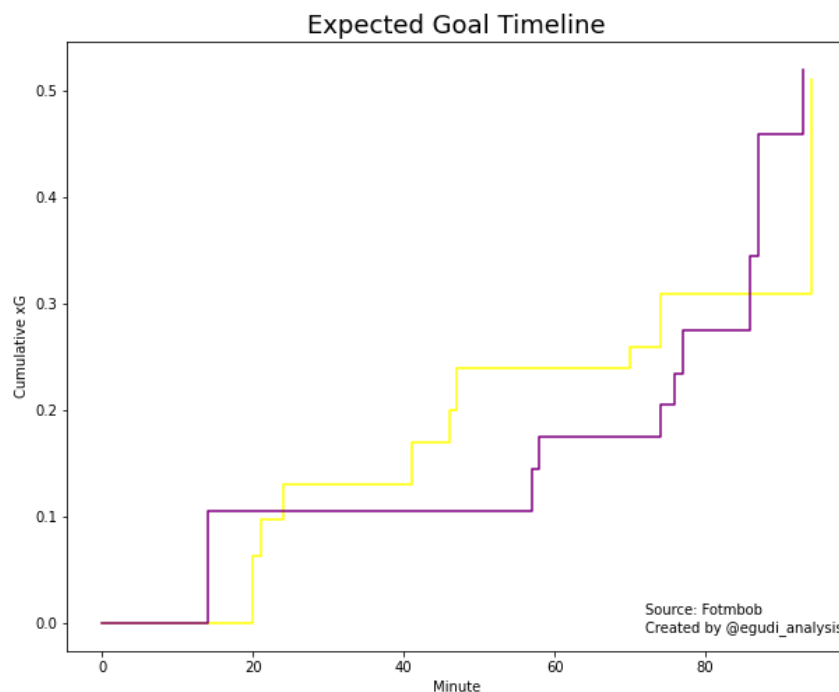
1. Review of match vs. Orlando City SC

What tactical trends for Nashville SC were evidenced by data? Include both positive and critical insights.

Nashville began the match set up in a 3-5-2 formation. CJ Sapong and Hany Mukhtar led the attack while Anibal Godgy, Randall Leal, and Dax McCarty made up the central midfield, with McCarty as the single pivot. Daniel Lovitz and Eric Miller provided the width as the two wing backs while the center back trio was composed of Alistair Johnston, Walker Zimmerman, and Jack Maher.

Meanwhile Orlando set up in a more conventional 4-2-3-1 with Daryl Dike as the lone striker, accompanied by Benji Michel and Chris Mueller on the wings. The midfield trio was composed of Mauricio Pereyra as the 10, with a double pivot of Junior Urso and Jhegson Mendez. Ruan, Robin Jansson, Emmanuel Mas, and Antonio Carlos made up the back line

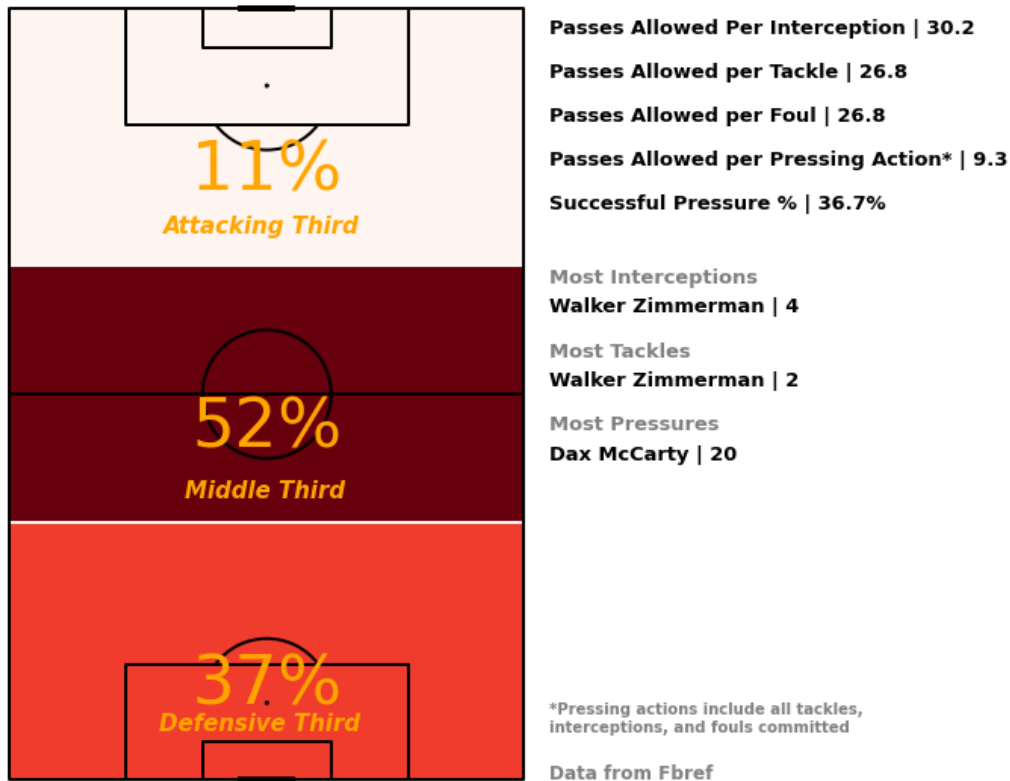
In terms of expected goals accumulated throughout the game, Nashville slightly outperformed Orlando for the majority of the game while Orlando edged out in the end with a couple medium quality chances.



The vast majority of Nashville's pressing activity (52%) occurred in the middle third of the field. Only 11% of their pressures occurred in the attacking third suggesting Nashville remained a fairly conservative defensive line. This allowed Orlando to keep the ball in their defensive third, thus enjoying the vast majority of the possession throughout the game. Nashville's press was slightly more intense than Orlando's, given a lower amount of passes allowed per pressing action, as the press intensified once Orlando entered the middle third of the field. Additionally, Nashville's press was more successful than Orlando's as they recovered the ball 36.7% of the time in which they pressed, compared to 22.6%.

Nashville SC Pressure Activity

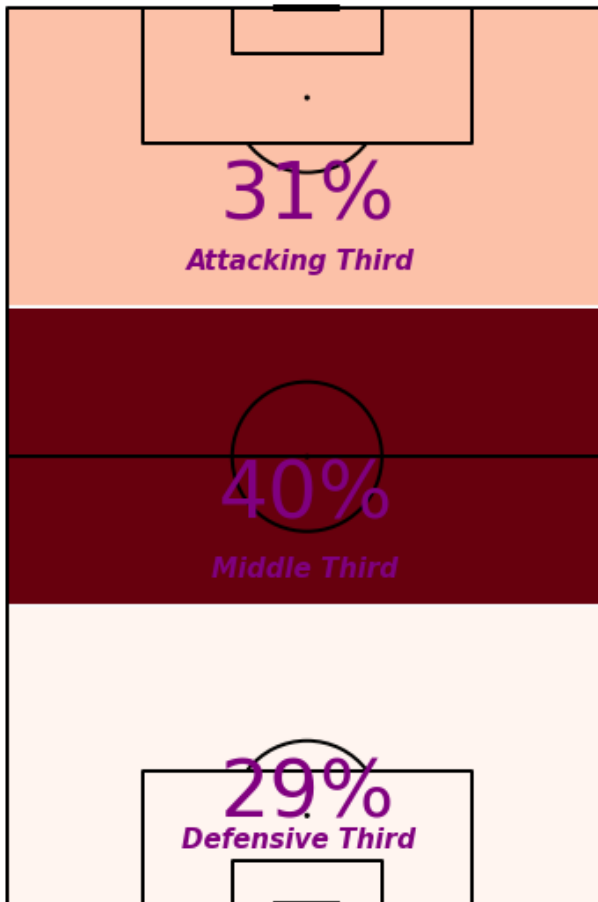
November 23, 2021 - MLS Playoffs



In contrast, Orlando's pressure activity was more evenly distributed across the pitch, with the majority occurring in the middle and attacking third. This suggests Orlando maintained a higher line and attempted to press higher up the pitch; however, the press was slightly less intense, given a greater value of passes allowed per pressing action. Furthermore, Nashville was able to more consistently beat the higher press as Orlando only gained possession 22.6% of the time in which they pressed.

Orlando City Pressure Activity

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Passes Allowed Per Interception | 31.46

Passes Allowed per Tackle | 40.9

Passes Allowed per Foul | 24.06

Passes Allowed per Pressing Action* | 10.22

Successful Pressure % | 22.6%

Most Interceptions

Emmanuel Mas | 5

Most Tackles

Emmanuel Mas | 3

Most Pressures

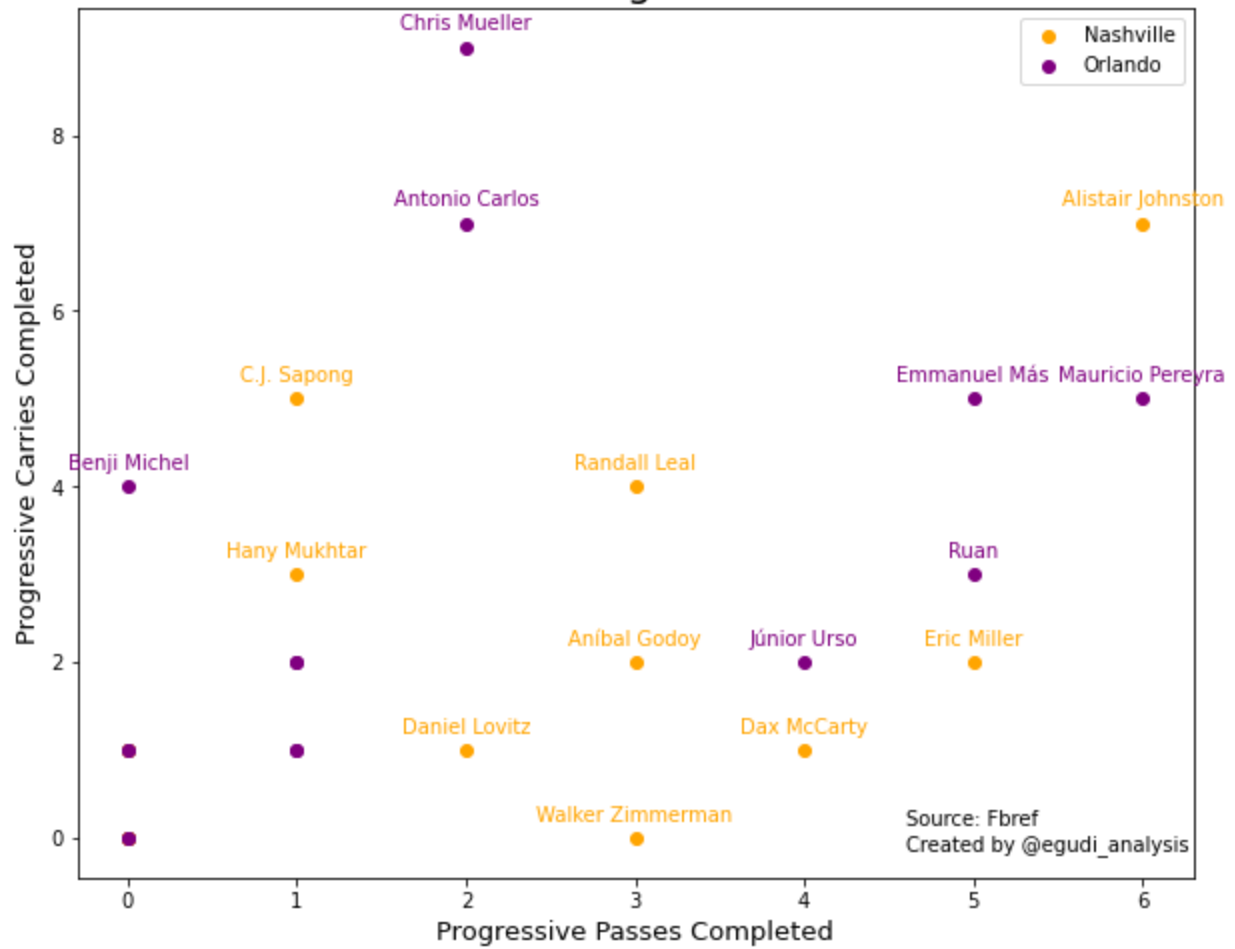
Mauricio Pereyra | 20

*Pressing actions include all tackles, interceptions, and fouls committed

Data from Fbref

In terms of ball progression, Nashville's main ball progressors were Alistair Johnson, Eric Miller, Randall Leal and CJ Sapong. Johnson was able to progress the ball frequently from a center back position, both by carrying the ball forward into space and through passes. Meanwhile Miller contributed with five progressive passes from a wing back position. CJ Sapong put up a decent amount of progressive carries, as he drove forward into dangerous zones once Nashville was in the attack. Johnson and Miller's cumulative progressive actions highlight the importance of Nashville's defenders in progressing the ball forward during counter attacks.

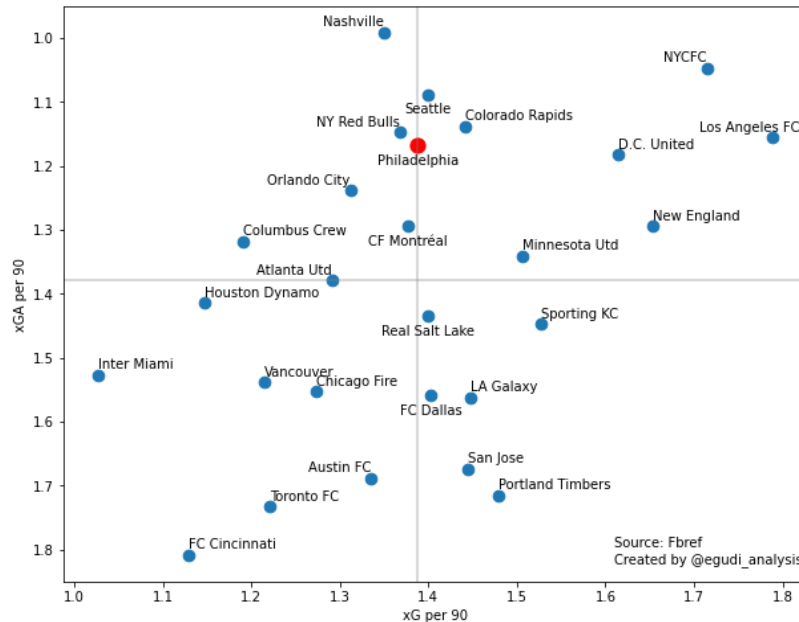
Ball Progression



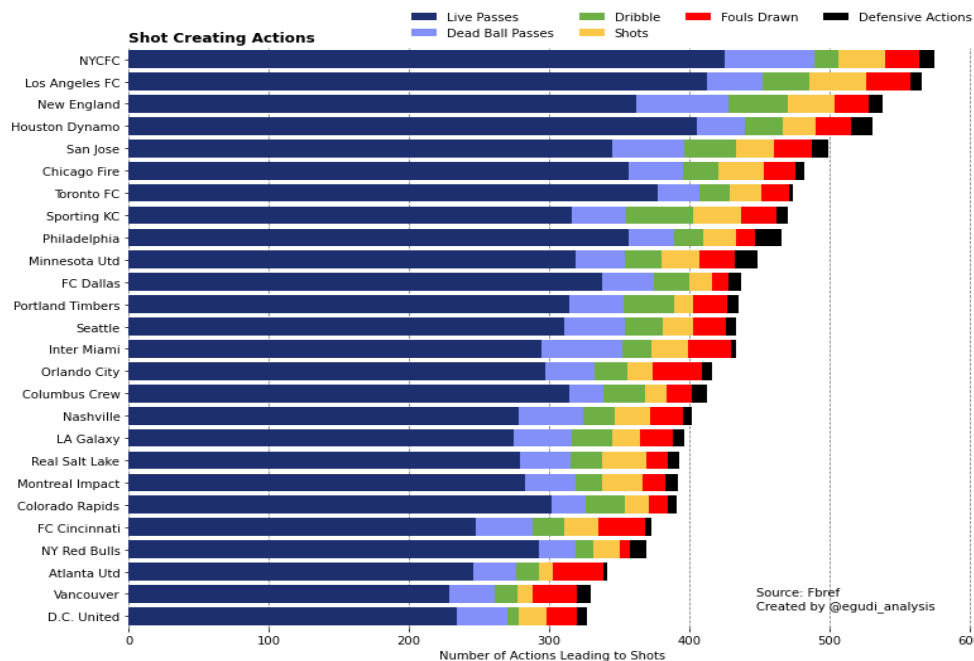
2. Opposition report for next match vs. Philadelphia Union

What data-supported insights can you provide to aid in preparation for the opponent? Include both team and individual player insights.

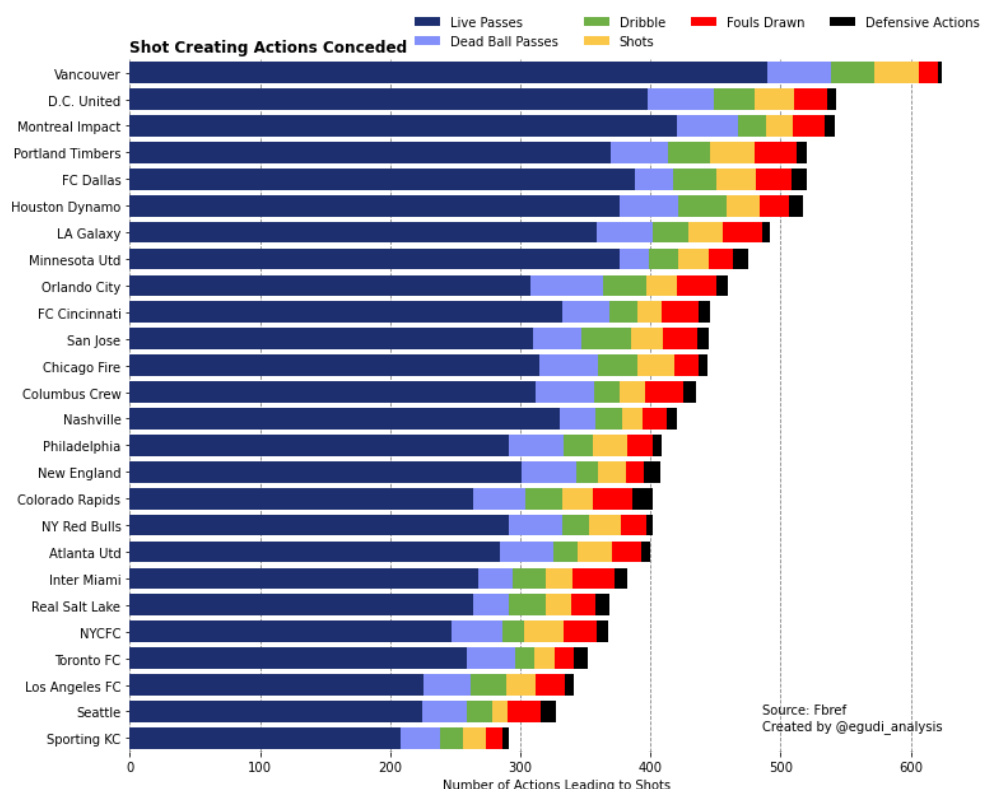
Throughout the season, Philadelphia has exhibited excellent defensive metrics, given they have the sixth lowest expected goals conceded per 90 minutes. Meanwhile their chance creation, evident by their expected goals per 90 minutes, has been on par with the league median.



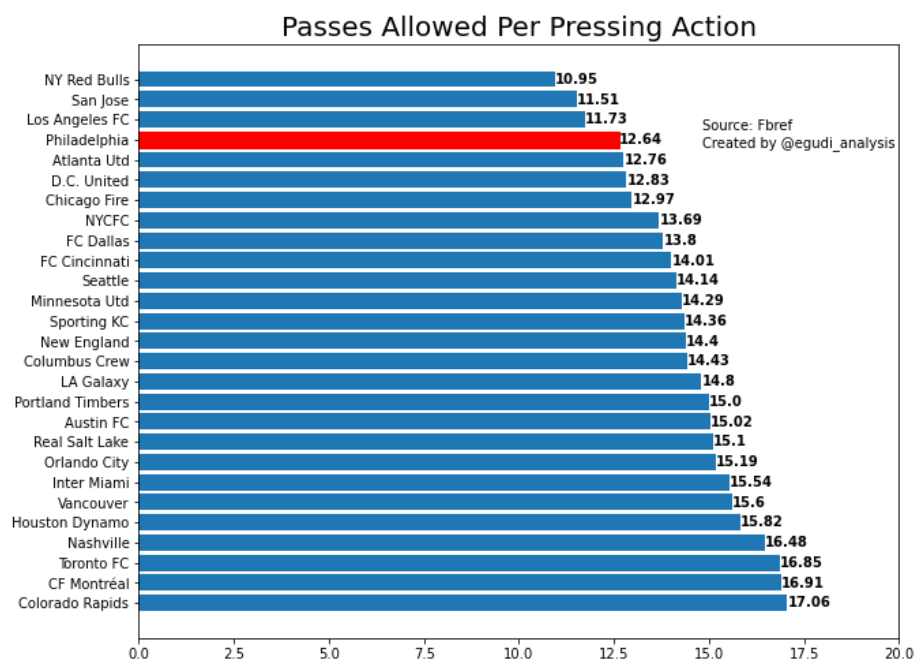
The vast majority of Philadelphia's shot creating actions came from live passes but also relied more on defensive actions relative to the rest of the league.



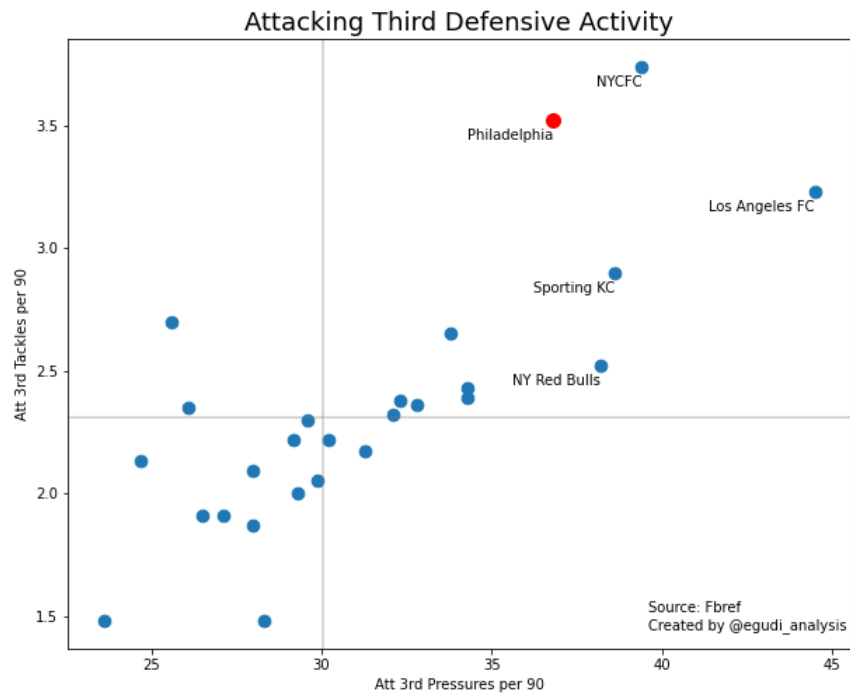
In terms of shot creating actions conceded, much like the rest of league, the actions that led to the most shots against Philadelphia occurred in open-play, followed by passes from dead balls.



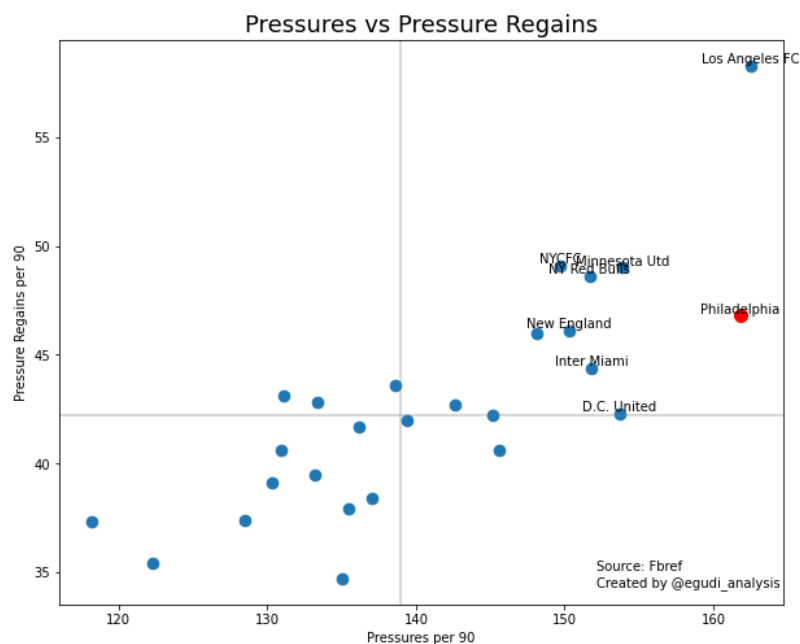
In terms of pressing intensity, Philadelphia has had the fourth most intense press, evident by the fourth lowest amount of passes allowed per pressing action. This suggests that Philadelphia has employed the fourth most aggressive press throughout the season.



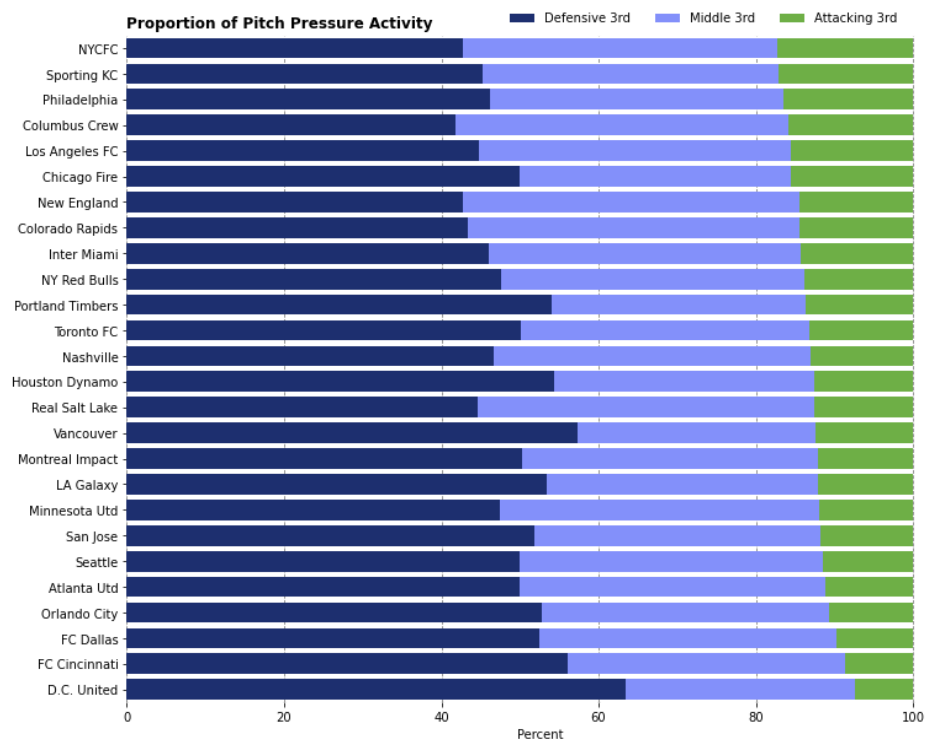
Not only has Philadelphia been one of the most aggressive pressing teams in the league, but they are also winning the second highest amount of tackles in the attacking third as they will attempt to limit the amount of passes played in the attack as much as possible.



Although Philadelphia has recorded the second highest pressures per 90, their press is not as effective as other high pressing teams such as LAFC or NY Red Bulls, evident by the amount of pressure regains per 90. This suggests some vulnerabilities behind Philadelphia's press relative to other high pressing teams.



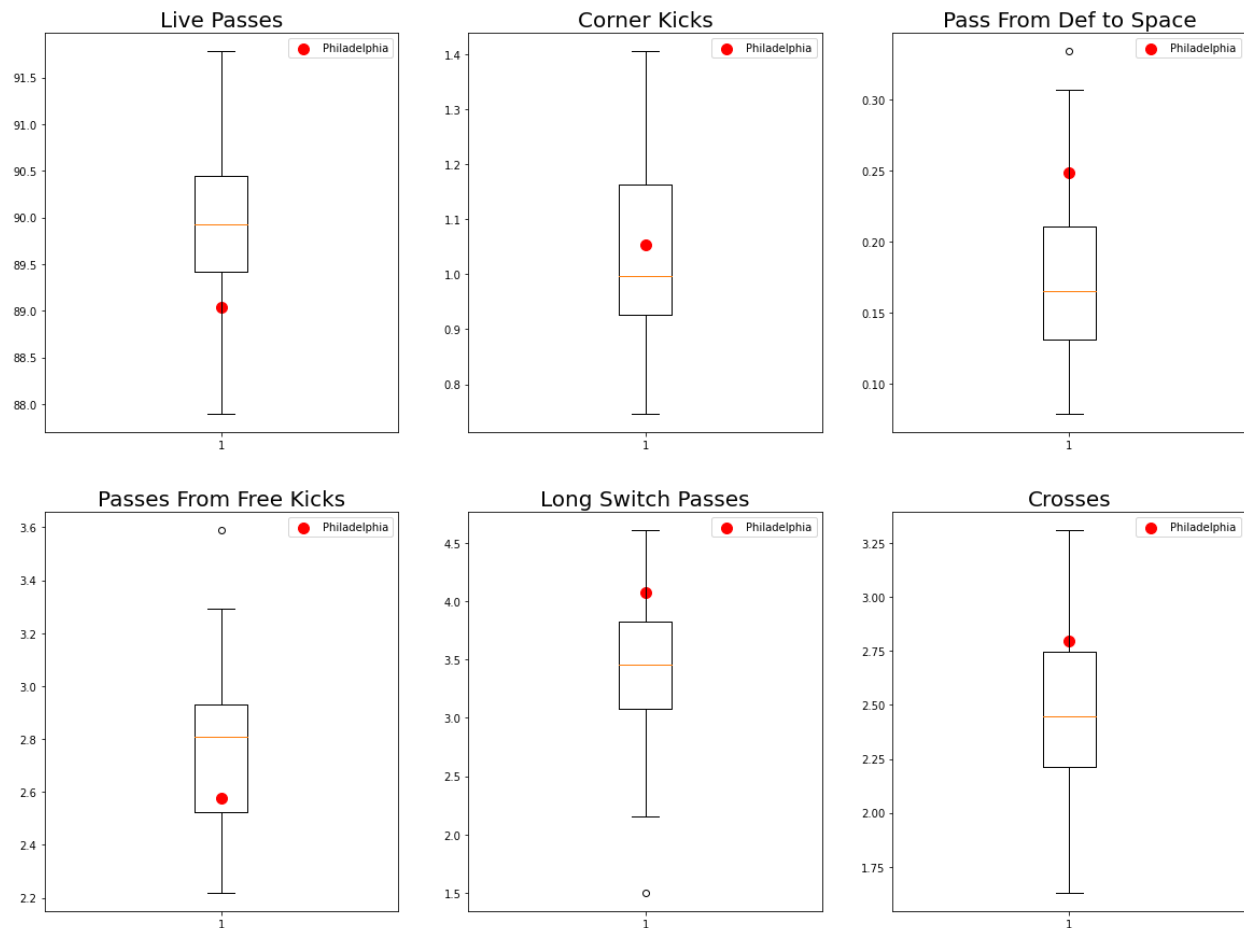
Unsurprisingly, Philadelphia employs the third largest percentage of pressures in the attacking third, further illustrating the nature of their defensive structure.



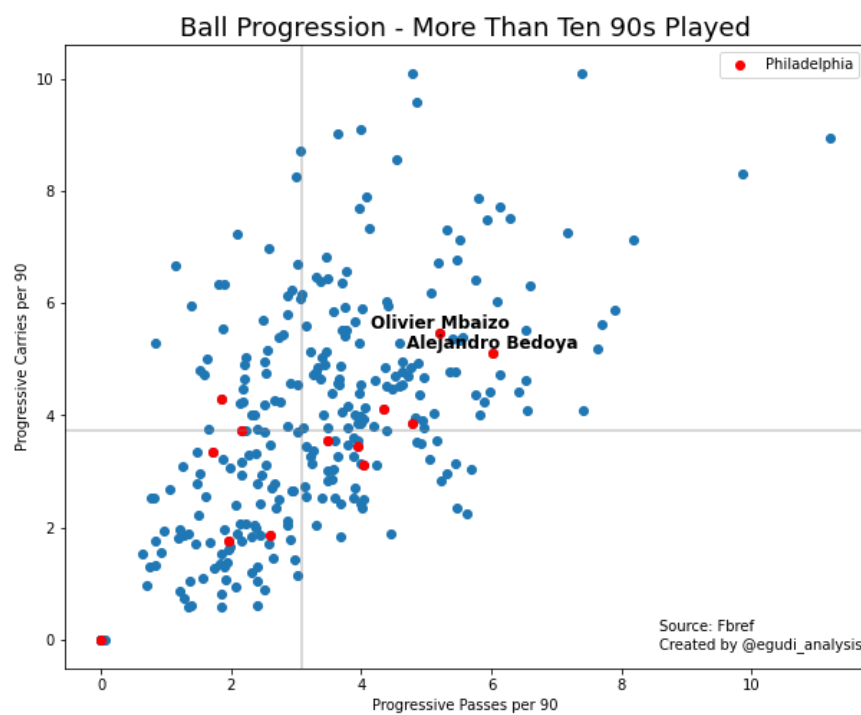
Source: FBref
Created by @egudi_analysis

When observing their passing patterns, Philadelphia plays a smaller portion of live passes than their peers. Relative to the rest of the league, Philadelphia likes to have their defenders play balls into space, while they also switch the ball long and cross more often as a share of their total passes.

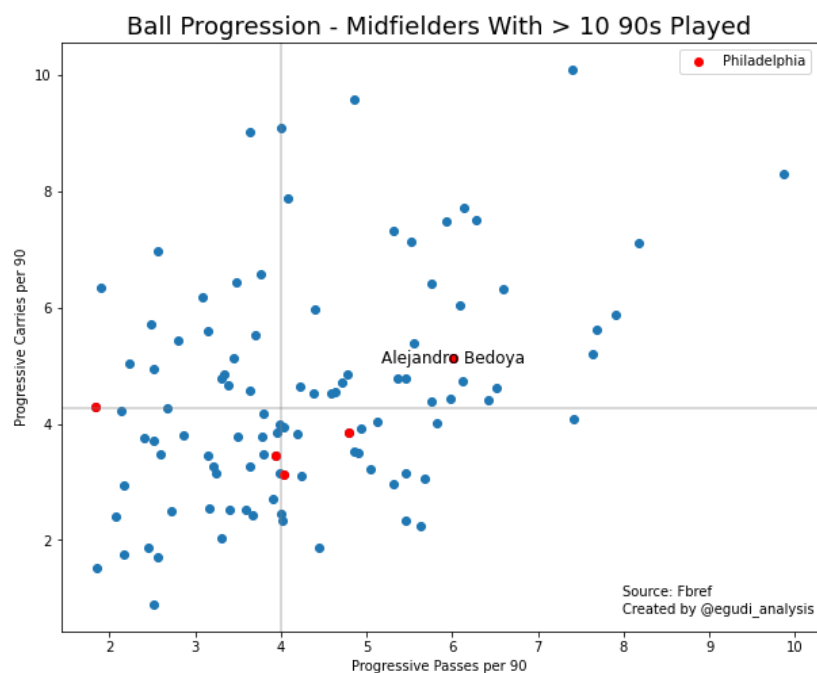
Pass Types Played per Passes Attempted (%)
Source: Fbref



Moving on to individual players, their most dangerous ball progressors are outside back, Olivier Mbaizo, and central midfielder, Alejandro Bedoya. Both put up decent output in terms of ball progression, well above the mean in both progressive carries per 90 and progressive passes per 90.



Among midfielders, Bedoya stands out somewhat again as Philadelphia's most dangerous midfielder, though still lags a decent portion of the league in both metrics.

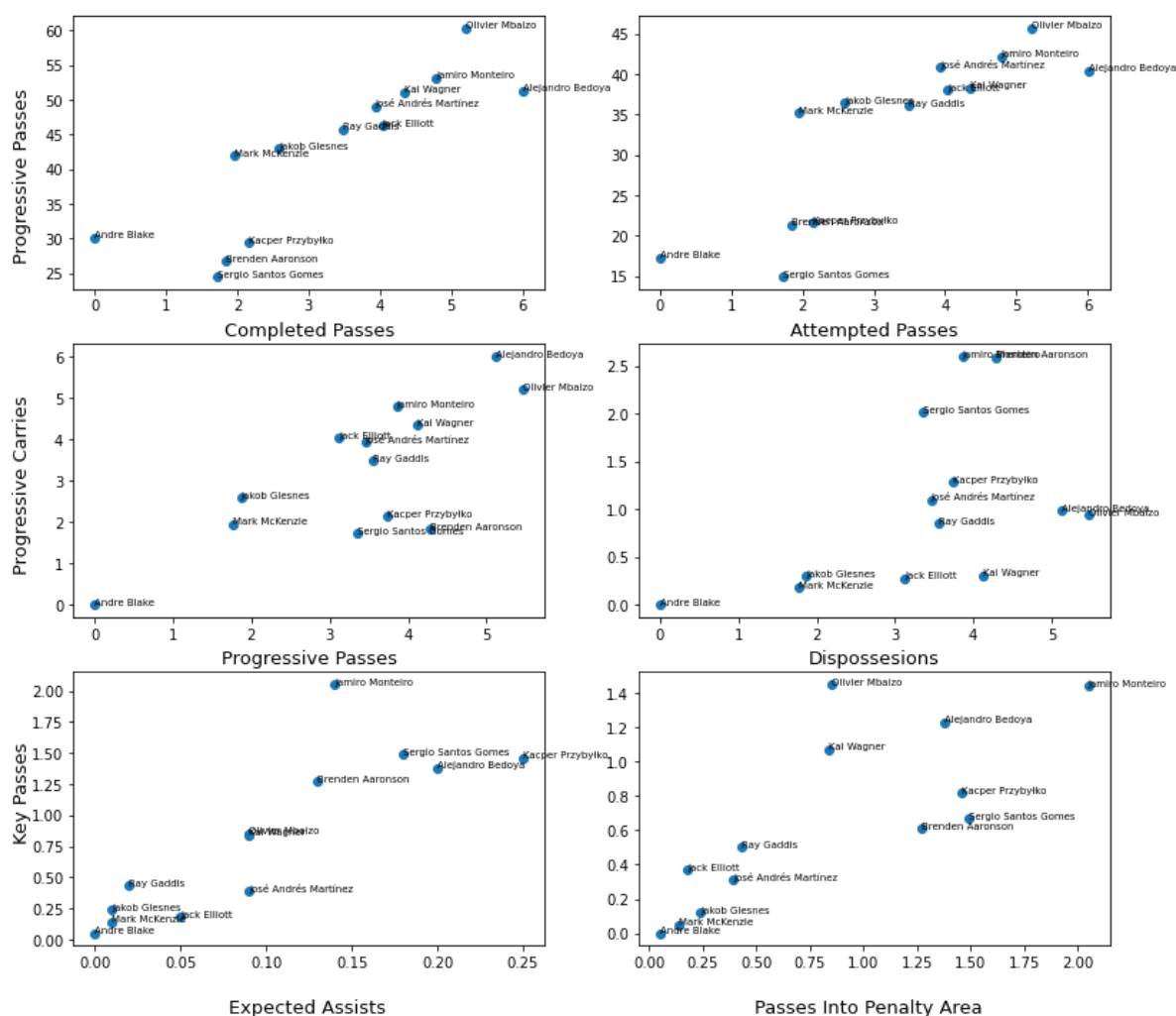


Again, Bedoya stands out as one of Philadelphia's elite ball progressive passers, while also completing and attempting the most passes within the team, highlighting his role in both progressing the ball in the attack and in maintaining possession. As mentioned earlier, Mbaizo is the team's most prolific progressive passer but also is involved in possession almost as much as Bedoya.

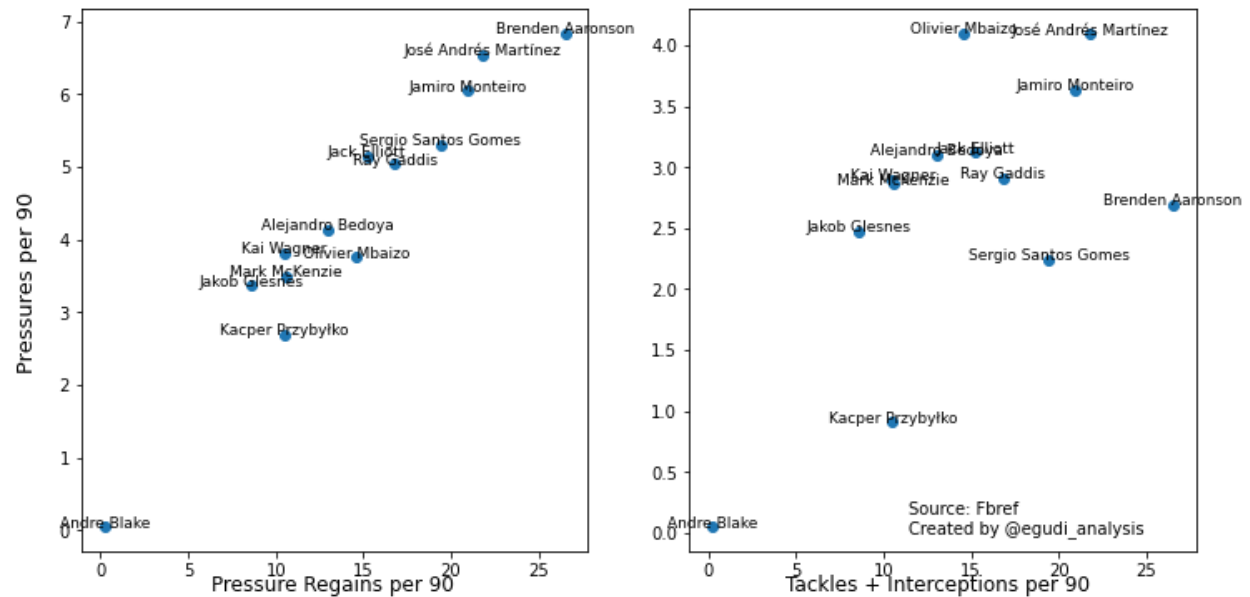
Again, Bedoya and Mbaizo stand out as they limit dispossession to about one a game, despite their tendency to play forward most often. Left back, Kai Wagner, also stands out in terms of carrying the ball forward down the wing and limiting dispossession, while Jamiro Monteiro and Paxten Aaronson progress the ball forward through carries quite often; though they tend to lose the ball a lot relative to their teammates.

Monteiro, leads the team in key passes per 90 while Bedoya and Przybylko are also heavily involved in chance creation given their expected assists values between 0.20 and 0.25. Monteiro also tends to play passes into the penalty area more often, leading the next three players by almost more than half a pass per 90.

Philadelphia Passing Metrics per 90 More Than Ten 90s Played



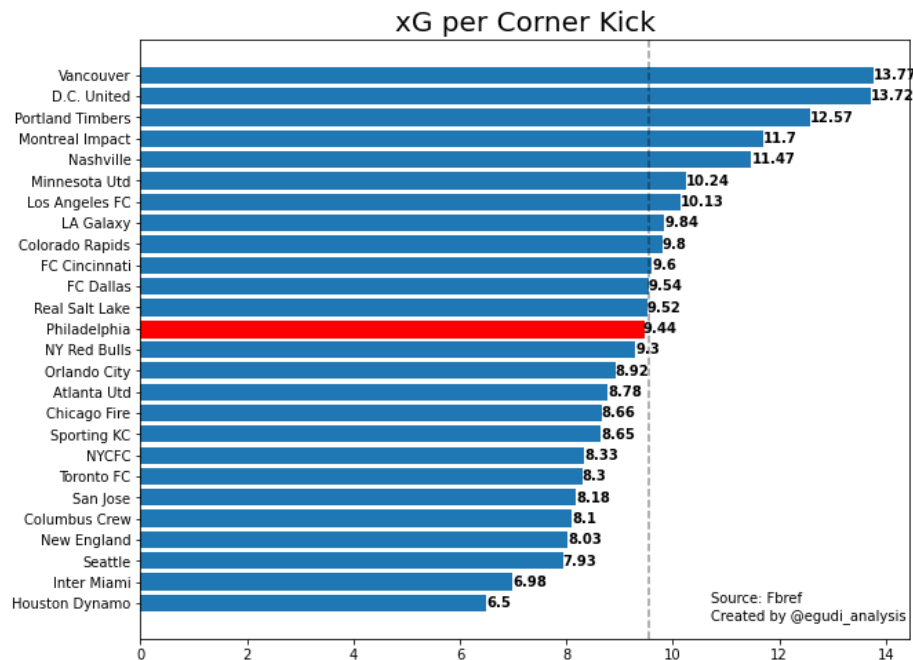
Looking at pressing activity, pressures and pressure regains are mostly concentrated within attacking players such as Aaronson and Monteiro. Another player that stands out is Jose Martinez as he ranks highly among the team in pressures, pressure regains, and defensive actions, thus highlighting the importance of his role within the team's pressing structure.



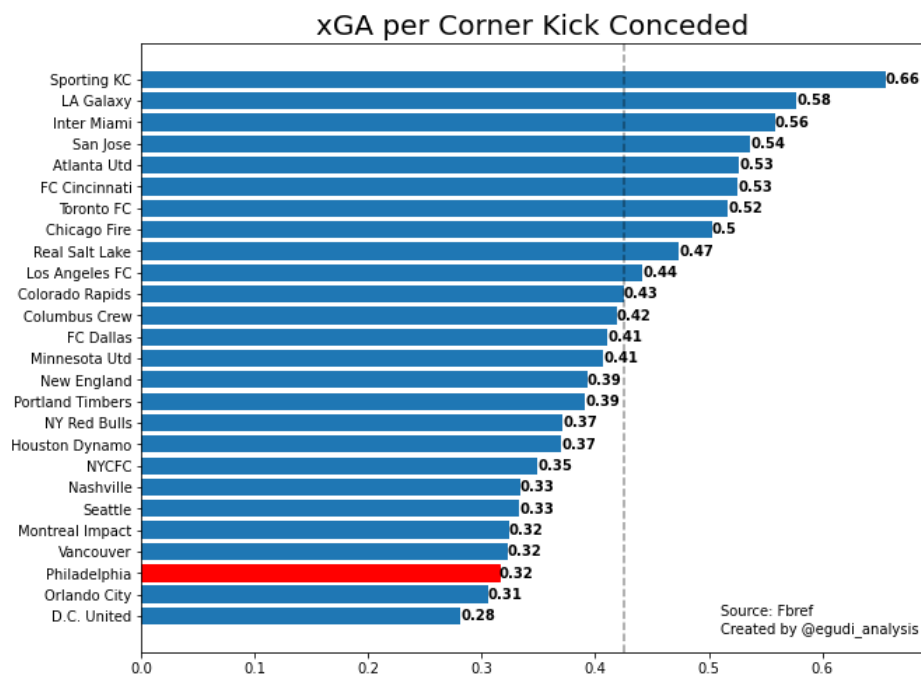
3. Set-piece report for next match vs. Philadelphia Union

What are some statistical trends for the opponent's set piece behavior?

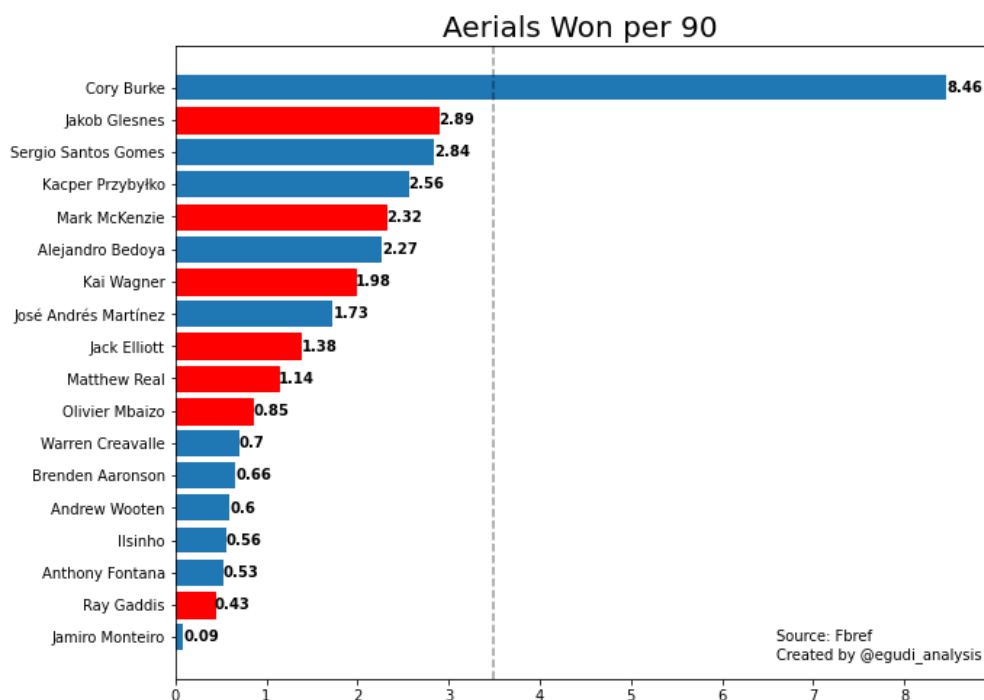
Looking at Philadelphia's trends from corner kicks, Philadelphia has been converting 9.44 expected goals per corner kick taken, which is right about the average conversion rate in the league.



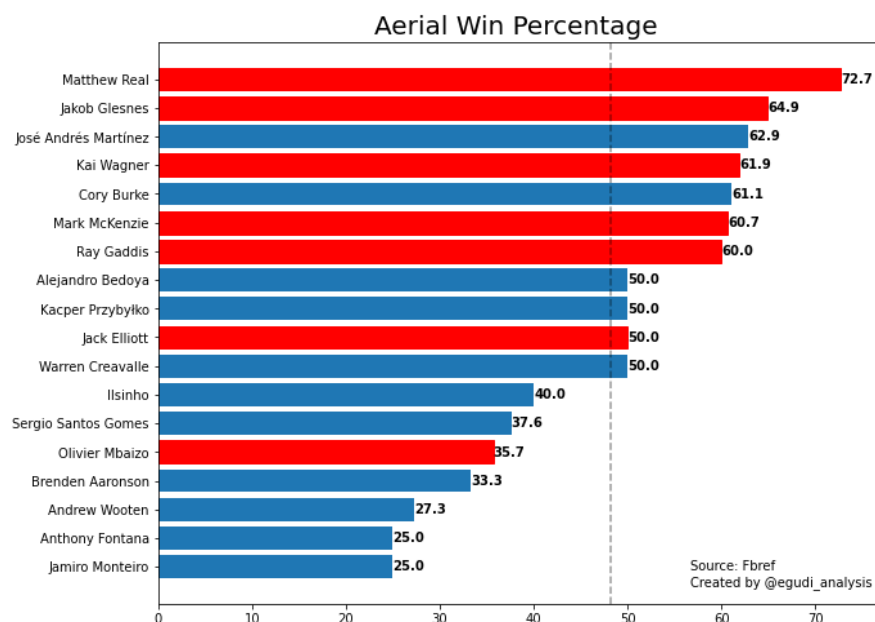
However, defensively they look excellent as they are conceding the third lowest expected goals per corner kick conceded in the league, highlighting their defensive solidity when it comes to set pieces.



In order to point out any potential players to target, when taking offensive set pieces, we looked at Aerials won overall. Red bars represent defensive players. The forward, Cory Burke has won almost four times as much as the next highest, although he may rarely be found in the box defending corners. Interestingly enough, only one defender stands out in the top four of aerials won per 90.



However, when looking at aerial win percentage, three out of the top five are defenders, while Burke falls down to fifth. Center back, Jack Elliott, seems like a potential player to target, given he only wins 50% of aerials and is probable to be involved in defending corners due to his defensive duties. Mbaizo could also be a target but unlikely given his minimal role within corner kicks as a wide player.



Lastly, examining corner kick type trends for Philadelphia relative to the rest of the league, Philadelphia prefers playing outswingers over inswingers.

