

Homework 2
MSBA 6410
Group 5

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Introduction

Our team, Atlético Madrid (“Atlético”), plays in Spain's premier professional football league, La Liga. Since your hiring in 2011, we won La Liga once in 2013-2014, but finished third or worse in the other four seasons. FC Barcelona (“Barcelona”) and Real Madrid are consistently the two best teams in the league, and we have traditionally placed behind in third.

The long-term goal is to consistently win La Liga, and this requires beating our main competitors, Barcelona and Real Madrid. To do this, we must maximize the likelihood of acquiring a successful result in each match, which depends on the game situation. Specifically, success and failure are defined as:

- **Success:** A win in any situation, a draw against a stronger team, or an away draw against an equal team.
- **Failure:** A loss in any situation, a draw against a weaker team, or a home draw against an equal team.

To increase the likelihood of success (specifically against Barcelona and Real Madrid), we provided recommendations into the following disciplines:

- **Team Tactics:** Recommendations to improve on-field decisions related to team formations and playing style.
- **Roster Management and Player Development:** Recommendations to enable the design of a tailored training regime to resolve team weaknesses, to maximize the talent level, and to develop an acquisition plan for prospects to mediate team weaknesses.

Tactics

Formation Recommendation: Eliminate Use of ‘4-5-1’ Formation

Atlético’s performance against Barcelona and Real Madrid do not provide us with enough clarity on what you can utilize to win against these teams. However, it is important that Atlético do not drop points against weaker sides.

Over the years, Atlético primarily fields a ‘4-4-2’ formation. This formation grants significant defensive depth as well as the ability to attack in numbers. However, if not executed perfectly, it allows opposition space to create goal scoring opportunities. In comparison, La Liga teams primarily field a ‘4-5-1’ formation. This formation is generally associated with a defensive approach, as illustrated by the number of defenders and midfielders it contains and relative paucity of attacking players.

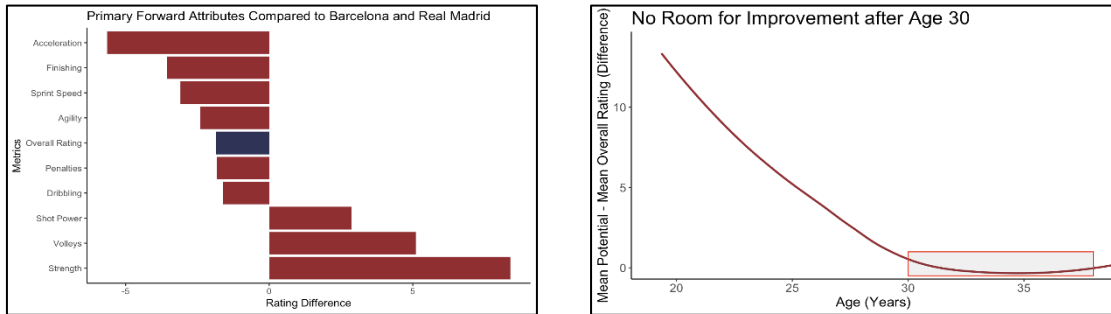
Whenever Atlético employs a ‘4-4-2’ formation against a weaker opponent we win almost 81% of the time. In comparison, Atlético lost all matches against a weaker opponent at home while fielding a ‘4-5-1’. Atlético should avoid fielding this formation against a weaker opponent to avoid dropping points. Since we are employing a ‘4-4-2’ against all weaker opponents, it would be wise to use it against Barcelona and Real Madrid due to familiarity.

Playing Style Recommendation: Reduce Crossing Frequency When Attacking and Be More Conservative While Defending

In matches where Atlético lost to a weaker opponent, Atlético employed a strategy of high frequency of crossing and shooting while on the attack and pressured opponents more aggressively on the defensive end. This strategy is high-risk, high-reward. It is prone to dispossession while creating chances and provides more space for opponents to create goal scoring chances. Therefore, we recommend avoiding this strategy while playing against weaker opponents.

Player Development and Roster Management

Forwards Recommendation: Start More Explosive Forwards



As the figure above shows, Atlético has quality forwards, but they are lacking certain physical attributes, specifically acceleration, speed and agility. Atlético's forwards are also lacking in finishing skills. A weak point of their attack has been Fernando Torres. His overall rating of 79 is the second lowest of all Atlético starters, he is associated with lineups that draw the most out of all starters. Additionally, Torres is 32 years old, and the above figure shows that players over 30 do not tend to improve. Based on these factors, he is a strong candidate for replacement. Furthermore, backup Yannick Carrasco has a strong association with lineups that win, and is only 23 years old with high potential. A comparison of the two players is found below. Carrasco possesses superior physical attributes in comparison to Torres.

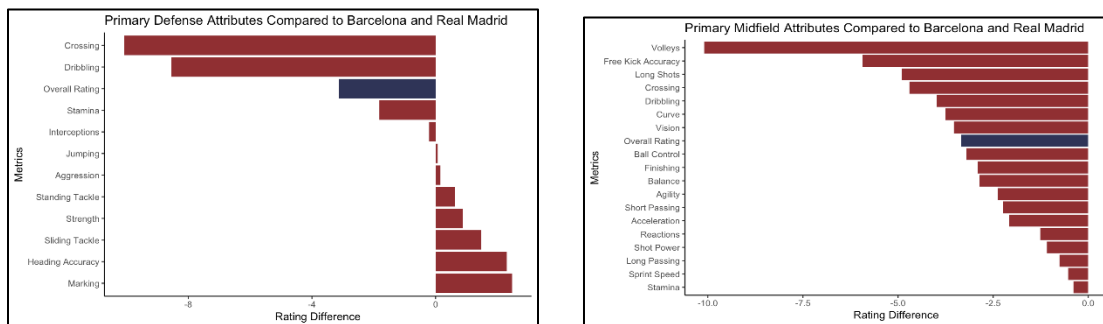
Table 1: Forward Comparison

Player	Age	Overall	Potential	Acceleration	Sprint Speed	Agility	Finishing
Fernando Torres	32	79	79	77	79	74	77
Yannick Carrasco	23	80	85	87	88	90	72

As for roster management, Yannick Carrasco is well-equipped to become a starting forward in 2017 so Atlético may realize value by selling Torres to a new team if a transaction is made promptly. However, replacing Torres with Carrasco exacerbates the lack of finishing ability across the forward line. Therefore, we suggest prioritizing finishing in training to improve this weak spot.

Midfielders and Defenders Recommendation: Focus Training on Crossing and Dribbling

Defenders Recommendation: Seek External Replacements on Defense



The midfielders and defenders of Atlético have been the weak link of the team across the past two seasons. As the figures above show, when compared to Barcelona and Real Madrid, both midfielders and defenders severely lack crossing and dribbling skills. Defenders also have notably low stamina relative to our rivals. Midfielders have many more weaknesses at an aggregate level. We recommend devoting more

practice time to crossing and dribbling drills to improve those skills. These skills are important for both midfielders and defenders and are necessary to generate incremental success.

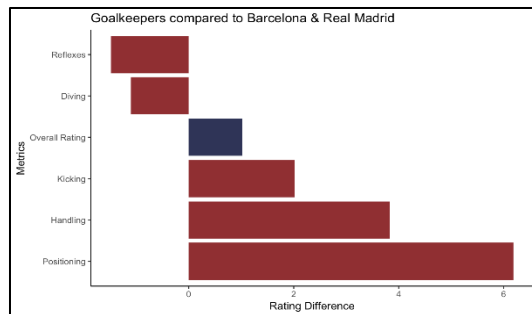
Atlético has plenty of young, promising midfielders at this time with 4 midfielders under 27 years old that have a potential rating above 80, so we would suggest focusing on their training rather than signing a player. As for the defenders, one starting player that may be a contributor to poor play is Filipe Luis. Filipe Luis is associated with lineups that result in losses the most out of all defenders. In addition, at 31 years old, he is unlikely to improve any further. We could not identify suitable potential replacements for Filipe Luis on Atlético's roster. We instead identified three affordable (overall rating less than 76) young left backs that excel at crossing and dribbling who could be scouted and eventually signed to replace Luis.

Table 2: Defensive Prospects

Player	Age	Overall	Potential	Crossing	Dribbling	Stamina
Arthur Masuaku	23	74	84	75	78	75
Rafa Soares	21	70	83	79	73	71
Raphael Guerreiro	23	75	83	75	77	75

Once Atlético's scouts have identified a player that best fits Atlético's playing style, we recommend acquiring the new player and placing Filipe Luis on the transfer market after signing the younger replacement.

Goalkeepers Recommendation: Train Reflexes and Diving



Further, we also compared to the goalkeeper-specific ratings for Atlético compared to the goalkeepers for Barcelona and Real Madrid. As the figure above shows, Atlético's goalkeepers are superior to Barcelona and Real Madrid's, primarily due to superior handling and positioning ability. However, Atlético's goalkeepers have below average reflexes and diving skills. As such, we recommend focusing on running drills in training that focus on these skills.

Conclusion

With the goal of consistently winning La Liga, we provided several recommendations to improve our team. Using the '4-4-2' formation rather than experimenting with a '4-5-1', reducing crossing frequency, and being less aggressive on defense will mitigate our chances of losing to weaker teams, and will provide a consistent style of play that we can master. In terms of individual players, we should start Carrasco over Torres. We recommend spending more time training crossing and dribbling skills for midfielders and defenders. We also recommend recruiting a young player to eventually replace Filipe Luis. Finally, it is important to focus goalkeeper training on reflexes and diving. These improvements should improve our chances of beating Barcelona and Real Madrid, but it is important to note that the results may take time to materialize.