



## Problem Title: Teaming Strategies

**Year:** 2020

**Student Level:** Undergraduate

**Source:** ICM

**Commentary:** Yes (2)

**Student Papers:** Yes (7)

### Problem

As societies become more interconnected, the set of challenges they face have become increasingly complex. We rely on interdisciplinary teams of people with diverse expertise and varied perspectives to address many of the most challenging problems. Our conceptual understanding of team success has advanced significantly over the past 50+ years allowing for better scientific, creative, or physical teams to address these complex issues. Researchers have reported on best strategies for assembling teams, optimal interactions among teammates, and ideal leadership styles. Strong teams across all sectors and domains are able to perform complex tasks unattainable through either individual efforts or a sequence of additive contributions of teammates.

One of the most informative settings to explore team processes is in competitive team sports. Team sports must conform to strict rules that may include, but are not limited to, the number of players, their roles, allowable contact between players, their location and movement, points earned, and consequences of violations. Team success is much more than the sum of the abilities of individual players. Rather, it is based on many other factors that involve how well the teammates play together. Such factors may include whether the team has a diversity of skills (one person may be fast, while another is precise), how well the team balances between individual versus collective performance (star players may help leverage the skills of all their teammates), and the team's ability to effectively coordinate over time (as one player steals the ball from an opponent, another player is poised for offense).

In light of your modeling skills, the coach of the Huskies, your home soccer (known in Europe and other places as football) team, has asked your company, Intrepid Champion Modeling (ICM), to help understand the team's dynamics. In particular, the coach has asked you to explore how the complex interactions among the players on the field impacts their success. The goal is not only to examine the interactions that lead directly to a score, but to explore team dynamics throughout the game and over the entire season, to help identify specific strategies that can improve teamwork next season. The coach has asked ICM to quantify and formalize the structural and dynamical features that have been successful (and unsuccessful) for the team. The Huskies have provided data[1] detailing information from last season, including all 38 games they played against their 19 opponents (they played each opposing team twice). Overall, the data covers 23,429 passes between 366 players (30 Huskies players, and 336 players from opposing teams), and 59,271 game events.

To respond to the Huskie coach's requests, your team from ICM should use the provided data to address the following:

- Create a network for the ball passing between players, where each player is a node and each pass constitutes a link between players. Use your passing network to identify network patterns, such as **dyadic** and **triadic configurations** and team formations. Also consider other structural indicators and network properties across the games. You should explore multiple scales

such as, but not limited to, micro (pairwise) to macro (all players) when looking at interactions, and time such as short (minute-to-minute) to long (entire game or entire season).

- Identify performance indicators that reflect successful teamwork (in addition to points or wins) such as diversity in the types of plays, coordination among players or distribution of contributions. You also may consider other team level processes, such as adaptability, flexibility, tempo, or flow. It may be important to clarify whether strategies are universally effective or dependent on opponents' counter-strategies. Use the performance indicators and team level processes that you have identified to create a model that captures structural, configurational, and dynamical aspects of teamwork.
- Use the insights gained from your teamwork model to inform the coach about what kinds of structural strategies have been effective for the Huskies. Advise the coach on what changes the network analysis indicates that they should make next season to improve team success.
- Your analysis of the Huskies has allowed you to consider group dynamics in a controlled setting of a team sport. Understanding the complex set of factors that make some groups perform better than others is critical for how societies develop and innovate. As our societies increasingly solve problems involving teams, can you generalize your findings to say something about how to design more effective teams? What other aspects of teamwork would need to be captured to develop generalized models of team performance?

Your submission should consist of:

- One-page Summary Sheet
- Table of Contents
- Your solution of no more than 20 pages, for a maximum of 22 pages with your summary and table of contents.

Note: Reference List and any appendices do not count toward the page limit and should appear after your completed solution. You should not make use of unauthorized images and materials whose use is restricted by copyright laws. Ensure you cite the sources for your ideas and the materials used in your report.

## Attachment

### [2020\\_Problem\\_D\\_DATA.zip](#)

fullevents.csv  
matches.csv  
passingevents.csv  
README.txt

This data set was processed from a much larger dataset covering nearly 2000 matches from five European national soccer competitions, as well as the 2018 World Cup.

## Glossary

**Dyadic Configurations:** relationships involving pairs of players.

**Triadic Configurations:** relationships involving groups of three players.

## Cited Reference

[1] Pappalardo, L., Cintia, P., Rossi, A. *et al.* *A public data set of spatio-temporal match events in soccer competitions.* *Sci Data* 6, 236 (2019).

## Optional Resources

Research in football (soccer) networks has led to many articles that discuss related topics. A few articles are listed below. You are not required to use any of these sample articles in your solution, nor is it a

comprehensive list. We encourage teams to utilize any journal article that supports their approach to the problem.

Buld , J.M., Busquets, J., Echegoyen, I. *et al.* (2019). Defining a historic football team: Using Network Science to analyze Guardiola's F.C. Barcelona. *Sci Rep*, 9, 13602.

Cintia, P., Giannotti, F., Pappalardo, L., Pedreschi, D., & Malvaldi, M. (2015). The harsh rule of the goals: Data-driven performance indicators for football teams. *2015 IEEE International Conference on Data Science and Advanced Analytics (DSAA)*, 1-10, 7344823.

Duch J., Waizman J.S., Amaral L.A.N. (2010). Quantifying the performance of individual players in a team activity. *PLoS ONE*, 5: e10937.

G RSAKAL, N., YILMAZ, F., A OBANO LU, H.,  
A ALIYOR, S. (2018). Network Motifs in Football. *Turkish Journal  
of Sport and Exercise*, 20 (3), 263-272.

## Commentary

### Judges' Commentary: Teaming Strategies

Various  
COMAP Inc.

### Experts' Commentary: The Soccer Team Problem

Brian Macdonald  
Director of Sports Analytics  
Stats & Information Group  
ESPN

Alexander J. Gates  
Network Science Institute  
Northeastern University

## Student Papers

## Team 2002526: Teaming Strategies

University of International Business and Economics, China

## Team 2003723: Teaming Strategies

Dongbei University of Finance and Economics, China

## Team 2006782: Teaming Strategies

Xidian University, China

## Team 2013140: Teaming Strategies

Xi'an Jiaotong University, China

**Team 2013245: Teaming Strategies**

Capital University of Economics and Business, China

**Team 2015044: Teaming Strategies**

New York University, NY, USA

**Team 2022868: Teaming Strategies**

The College of William & Mary, VA, USA