

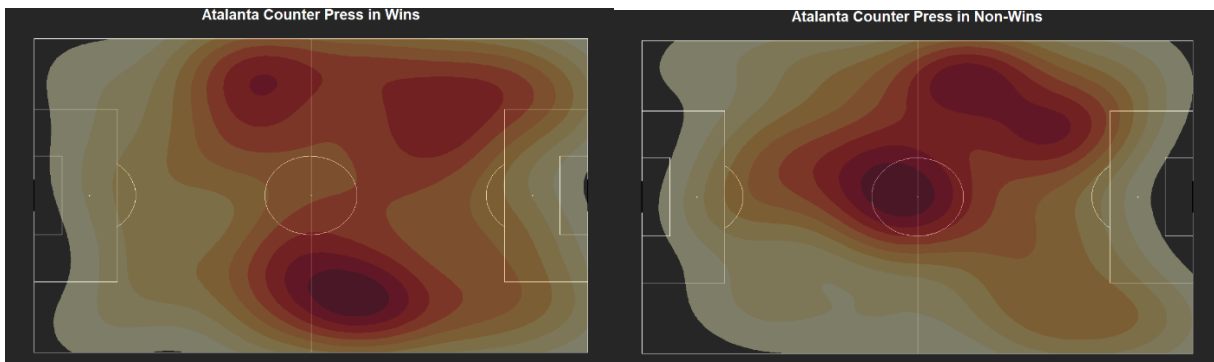
Analysis of Atalanta using the 4-2-3-1 Formation in the 2015/16 Season

By: Nick Rovelli

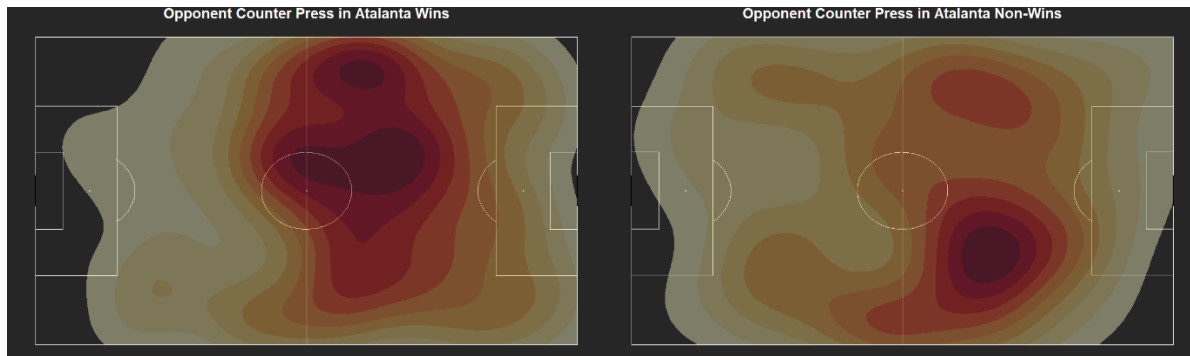
Data Source: StatsBomb

In the 2015/16 Serie A season, Atalanta initially played in a 4-3-3 formation, winning 5 out of 10 games. However, they struggled afterward, winning only 2 out of the next 19 matches. Manager Edoardo Rojas then switched to a 4-2-3-1 formation. With this change, Atalanta won 4 games and drew once out of 7 matches. I analyzed their pressing tactics and performance against the press in both wins and non-wins.

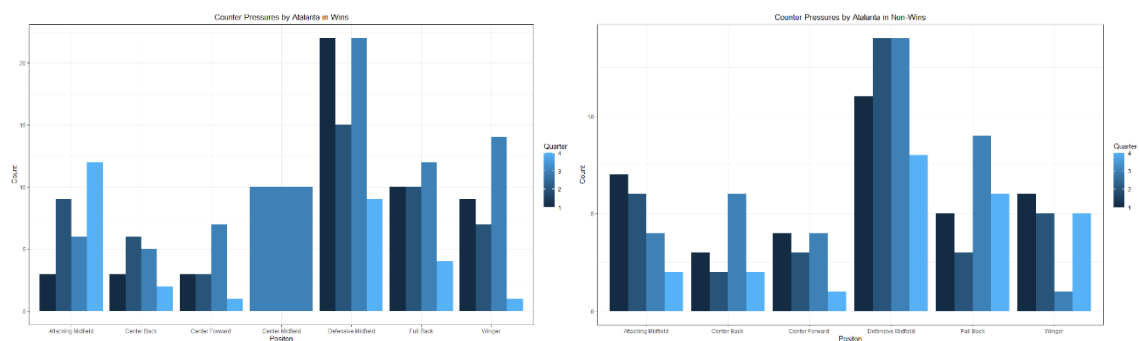
After losing possession, preventing quick line breaks by opponents is crucial to avoid conceding scoring chances. When Atalanta counter presses in wins, they have the most presence in the wide areas where one of the wingers and the center forward can work together and create pressure on the opposing defense. In addition to this, the first heat map shows there is still pressure being given when that first line is broken. This is due to the full backs and defensive midfielders working well together to create pressure which helps prevent the opponent from driving into the heart of the defense. However, when Atalanta does not win, this almost completely changes. While the winger and center forward are still working well together on the left side, there is significantly less pressure coming from the right. Also, pressure is coming from the middle, which means that the opponent can drive centrally which will create more opportunities to create space as well as scoring opportunities. Pressure is not being applied in that second line of defense which can be attributed to when the opponent drives past the first line, they were more easily able to have time on the ball and let better opportunities develop.



When looking at how the opponent presses when Atalanta wins, we can see that they put pressure high and left with the left winger/midfielder and striker but fail to on the right side. In addition to this, pressure is coming centrally which is a result of Atalanta being able to drive into the middle which to create more options to create a dangerous pass. With almost no pressure coming deeper, once Atalanta breaks this first line, they have more time and opportunity to be able to create. However, when the opponent wins, they can put pressure on both sides with the right side being the more dominant side. Especially in the two losses where Boukary Drame played, a lot of pressure was put on him and he was not successful in dealing with this.

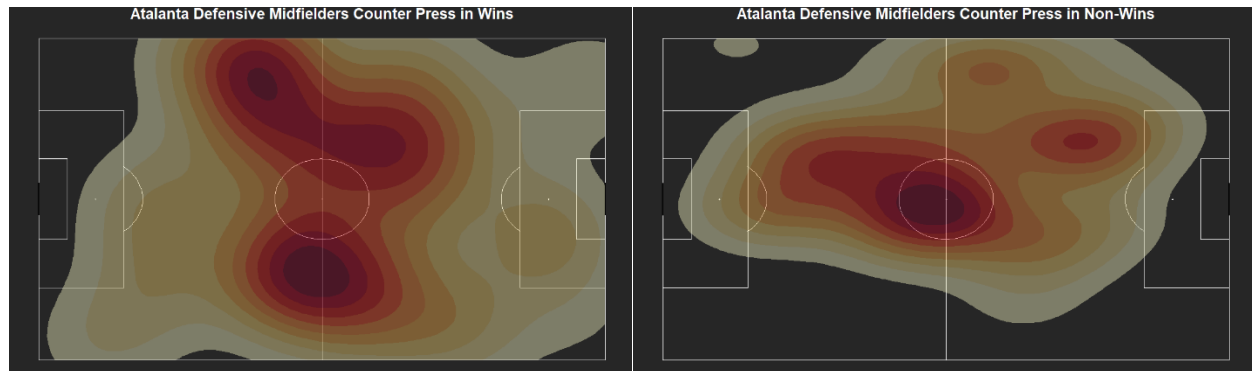


After looking at the heat maps, I wanted to look into how each position counter pressed and the variation throughout the game. We can see the players that are applying the press the most are defensive midfielders as well as full backs and wingers. In addition to this, we see the press being applied the most in the first half of both the first and second halves. This is likely due to the players having more energy after coming out of the tunnel. When comparing this to games where Atalanta did not win, Atalanta not only did not press as much, but there are portions of the game where the full backs and wingers did not apply pressure nearly as much as they did in wins. As seen in the heat maps this is the most seen on the right side where Marco D'Alessandro was featured.

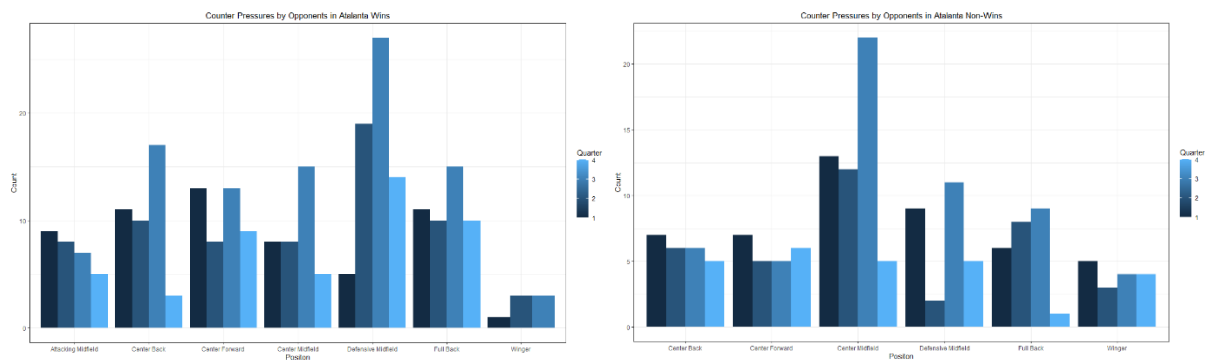


With the defensive midfield being an integral part of the Atalanta counter press, I wanted to take a deeper look as to where they were the most effective. In wins we can see that the two primary defensive midfielders, Marten de Roon and Luca Cigarini, are able to make an impact across the pitch combining with the full backs, attacking midfielders, and wingers to pressure the opponent. In contrast, when Atalanta didn't win, the defensive midfielders only had a

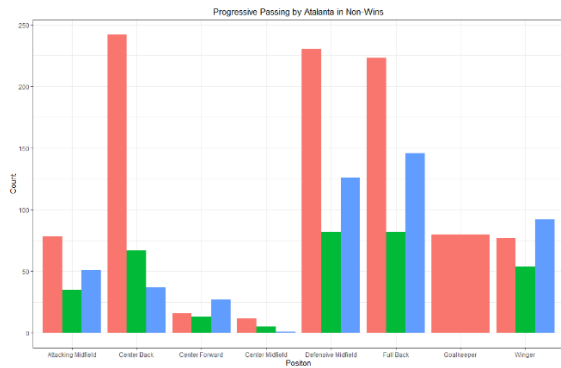
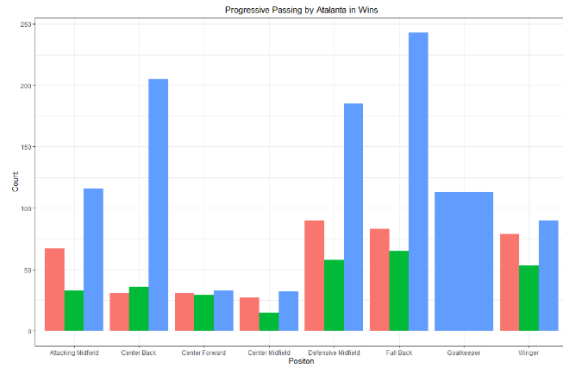
presence centrally and lacked the ability to force the opponent wide and use the sideline to their advantage. In addition, the defensive midfielders were likely more isolated in the middle, leading to a lack of quality in pressure.



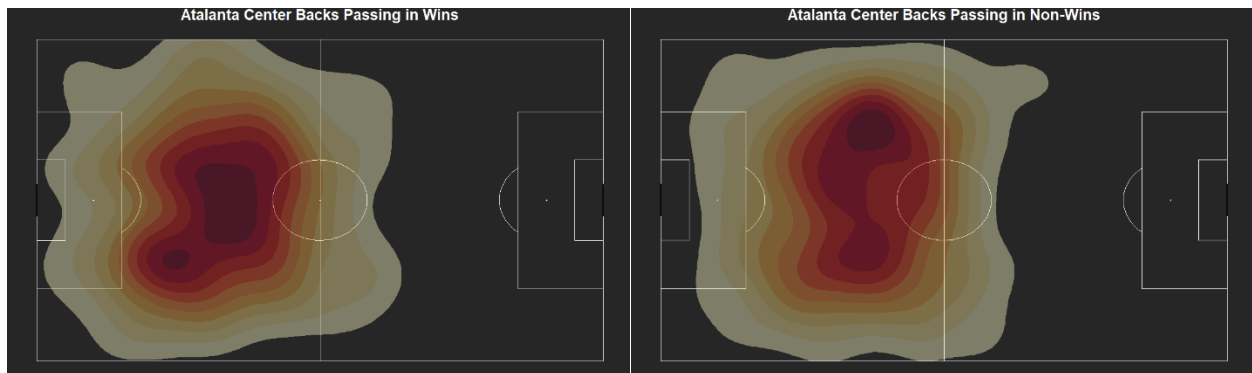
When Atalanta won, we were able to see that the opponent wasn't able to press as much in the first half of the first half, allowing Atalanta to control possession. In addition to this there was a lack of a press coming from wingers and outside midfielders which allowed Atalanta to control both outside flanks in wins. However, when Atalanta did not win, there was much more pressure coming from center midfielders as opposed to defensive midfielders. Because of this pressure was applied further up the pitch which does not allow Atalanta to get as deep into the opposing half.



After winning the ball, it is crucial for a team to pass positively. More negative passing can lead to the team going into a lull as well as positive passing leading to dangerous attacks, especially on the counter. In Atalanta wins we can see many more positive passes to negative when compared to when Atalanta does not win. This difference is especially apparent in center back where the amount for each type of pass is just about flipped.



Because of this stark contrast between passing of center backs between Atalanta wins and non-wins, I wanted to take a deeper look at if there was any difference between pass locations in the two types of games. While center backs are passing similarly in how high they are up the pitch, we see that pass locations are more central in wins. This can allow for forward passes to be deadly and break lines.



By looking at how the opponent passes in successful and unsuccessful games for Atalanta, we can try and get a better understanding of the types of game in which Atalanta was successful. Atalanta was able to win games in which the opponent had a higher number of positive passes compared to games in which Atalanta did not win. This points toward the idea that Atalanta preferred to play in a faster paced and more direct type of game.

