

Is Valverde one of the Copa América's most influential midfielders in adverse game situations?

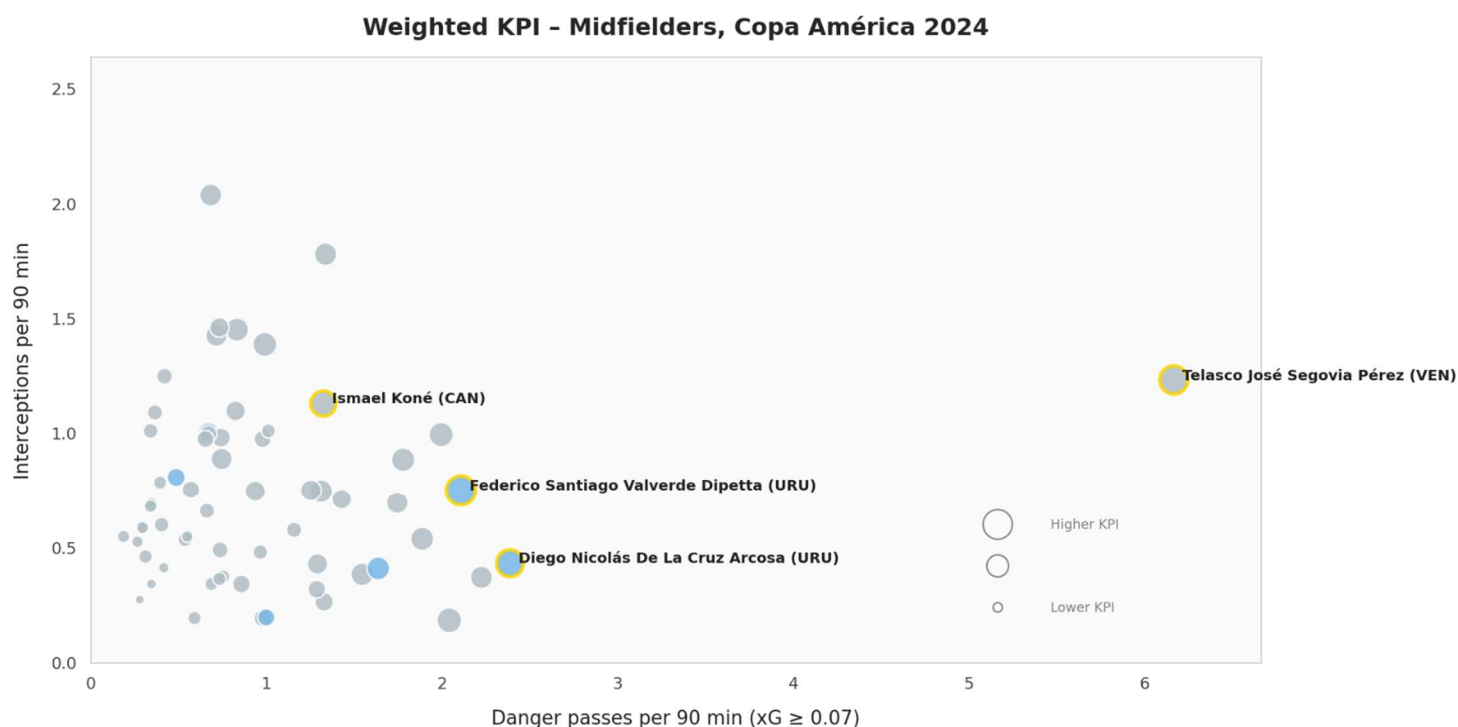
Federico Valverde didn't stand out for goals or assists during Copa América 2024. On paper, his impact may seem modest. But anyone watching Uruguay could see how involved he was — recovering the ball, connecting passes, and pushing the team forward when the result wasn't going their way.

This project set out to explore whether that influence could be measured. The focus was on midfielders across the tournament, and only on actions performed when their teams were **drawing or behind** — situations that demand initiative.

A custom KPI was built around two actions:

- **Danger passes:** completed passes that led to a shot with $xG \geq 0.07$ within 15 seconds.
- **Interceptions:** recoveries made when the team was not ahead.

These actions were normalized per 90 minutes and weighted by the square root of minutes played, allowing for fair comparison between players with different amounts of game time.

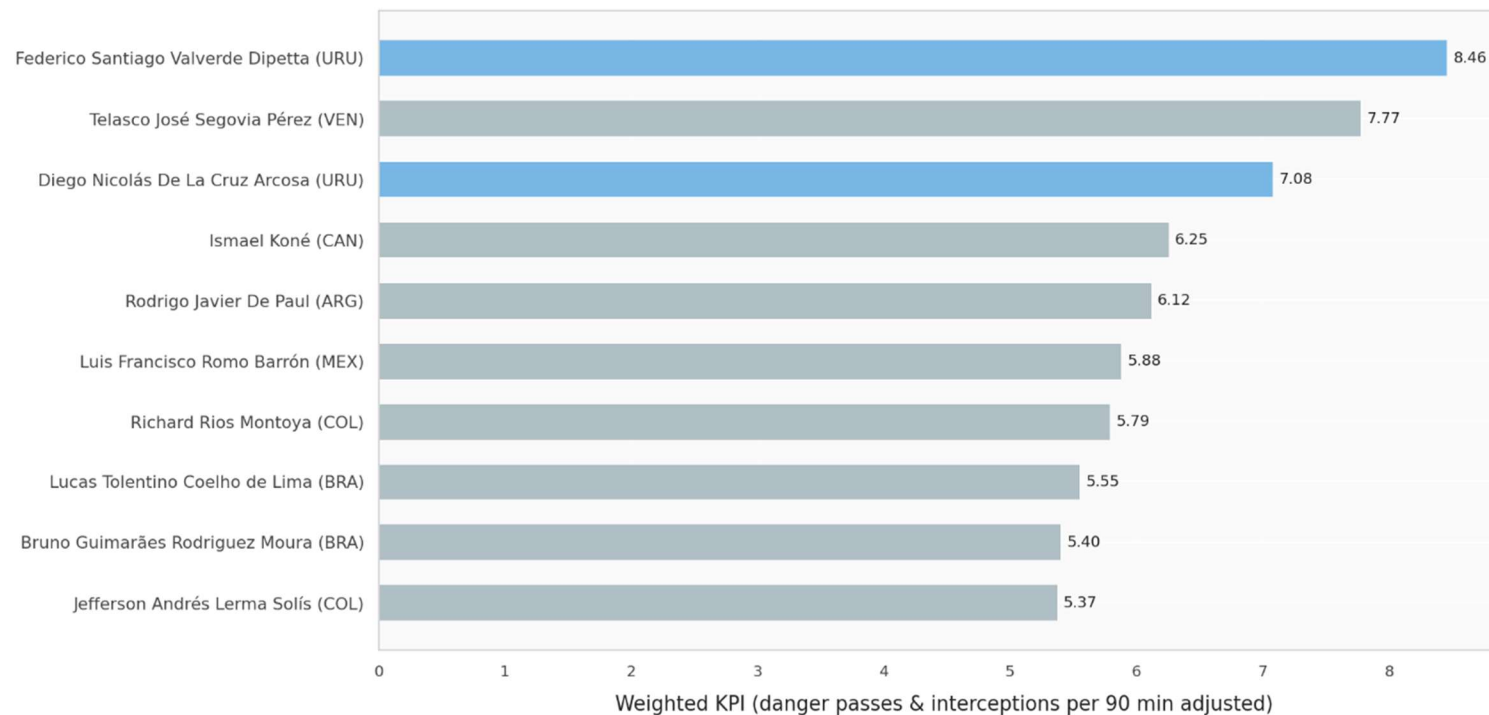


Valverde's role in Uruguay's system often places him between lines — not as a pure attacker, but as a midfielder responsible for covering ground, recovering possession, and connecting play through the middle third. That type of role rarely leads to goals or final passes, but it's essential in transition phases, especially when chasing a result.

The first graph — a scatter plot — maps all midfielders by their danger passes and interceptions. A few players appear consistently high in both metrics, with Valverde among them.

The second visual ranks the top 10 by the weighted KPI. Valverde leads the list — not for finishing plays, but for contributing regularly in moments where control and recovery matter most.

Top 10 Midfielders by Weighted KPI - Copa América 2024



Conclusion

The data supports what many observers saw on the pitch. Valverde didn't dominate through final actions, but through a steady presence that helped Uruguay respond in adverse moments.

His role is built around linking, recovering, and pushing forward — and this analysis shows that, among Copa América midfielders, **he did it more consistently than most.**

Full project and code available at:

github.com/rr77/soccermaticspro