Annual Performance Analysis Report - Bayer Leverkusen

Executive Summary

This report analyzes Bayer Leverkusen's attacking and defensive performance, revealing a versatile attacking portfolio capable of adapting to various opponent strategies. A key strength lies in leveraging rapid vertical attacks and structured wide probes. The team exhibits a strong attacking bias towards the right wing, while struggling to generate the same threat on the left. Defensively, a vulnerability exists in the central area just outside the penalty box, while the team performs well in neutralizing threats from wide positions.

Attacking Patterns Overview

This report breaks down the team's attacking patterns from the full season into three distinct styles, identified through clustering analysis. Each style represents a different tactical approach to creating goal-scoring opportunities.

Cluster 0 – Structured Wide Probes

This represents Leverkusen's methodical, controlled possession game, most often used against a set, organised defensive block. These sequences are patient and involve the entire team, typically lasting about a minute and involving close to 20 passes. The key strategy here is to stretch the opposition horizontally by circulating the ball from one touchline to the other, creating overloads in wide areas. Unlike the pure speed of the **Rapid Vertical Attacks**, this style is about manipulating the opponent's shape to create an opening for a cross or a cutback. It is the foundation of their build-up play but lacks the suffocating pressure of a **Final-Third Siege**.

Key traits:

- **Methodical Build-Up:** A patient approach lasting around 60 seconds, designed to systematically break down a defence.
- **Full Team Involvement:** Utilises almost the entire outfield team (~9 players), demonstrating a connected and cohesive structure.
- **Dominating the Flanks:** Characterised by significant activity in the wide channels of the pitch, aiming to get wing-backs and wingers into dangerous crossing positions.
- **Primary Source of Crosses:** This style produces the highest number of crosses, making it the team’s main method for creating chances from wide areas.

Cluster 1 – Rapid Vertical Attacks

This is Leverkusen at their most devastating and direct. Triggered by turnovers or winning the ball in midfield, these attacks are lightning-fast sprints towards the opponent's goal. The primary objective is to exploit a disorganized defence before it can reset. The ball travels vertically through the pitch with minimal passes and players involved, aiming to get a shot off in under 20 seconds. This style is less about control and more about pure speed and aggression, bypassing midfield build-up entirely. It contrasts sharply with the other two styles by prioritizing tempo and immediate penetration over patient possession.

Key traits:

- **Short and Sharp**: Attacks are explosive, typically lasting around 20 seconds with only 5-6 passes.
- **High Efficiency**: Despite the speed, these sequences show the highest net progress towards the goal, indicating a very direct, vertical style.
- **Small Group Raids**: Involves the fewest players on average (~5), relying on the speed and combination play of a few attackers rather than the whole team structure.
- **Minimal Tricks, Maximum Speed:** Features very few dribbles or crosses, focusing on quick, forward passes into space for runners.

Cluster 2 – Sustained Final-Third Siege

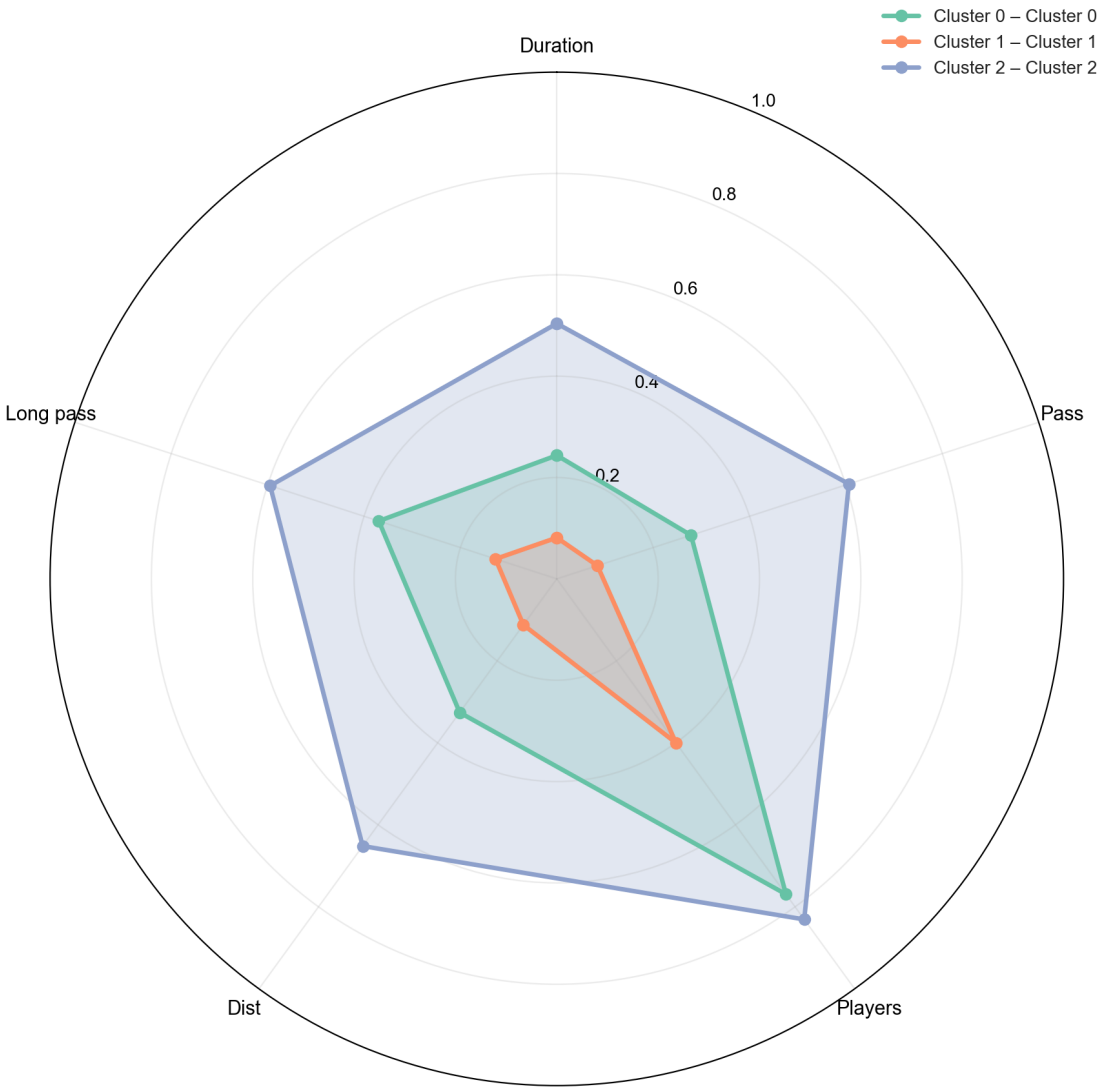
This is the ultimate expression of tactical dominance, occurring when Leverkusen has an opponent completely pinned deep in their own half. These are exceptionally long sequences, often lasting over two minutes with 40+ passes, where the ball is relentlessly circulated around the penalty area. The goal is to suffocate the opposition, forcing a defensive error through constant pressure and movement. This style is distinct from the **Structured Wide Probes** due to its sheer duration and the extreme depth of possession in the opponent's territory. Long, diagonal passes are frequently used to switch play and unbalance a compact, low block that has abandoned any attempt to press high.

Key traits:

- **Territorial Strangulation:** Extremely long possession spells (avg. 127 seconds) that take place almost exclusively in the opponent's defensive third.
- **Total Possession:** Involves the entire team (~10 players) in recycling the ball and maintaining immense pressure.
- **Breaking Down the Low Block:** Designed to defeat parked-bus defences through patient probing and rapid ball circulation.
- **The Switch of Play:**Employs the highest number of long passes, a clear tactical instruction to shift the opponent’s defensive block from side to side until a gap appears.

Summary

Bayer Leverkusen's attacking identity is built on a potent and balanced mix of these three styles. **Rapid Vertical Attacks** are their most frequent weapon (~55% of sequences), making them a constant transition threat. The **Structured Wide Probes** (~35%) serve as their default method for breaking down organised opponents, providing control and width. Finally, the **Sustained Final-Third Siege**(~10%) is their specialist tool for dismantling the most defensive, low-block teams. This tactical flexibility is their greatest strength; they can hurt you with speed when you're open, patiently pull you apart when you're organised, and suffocate you when you sit back, making them a formidable and unpredictable attacking force.

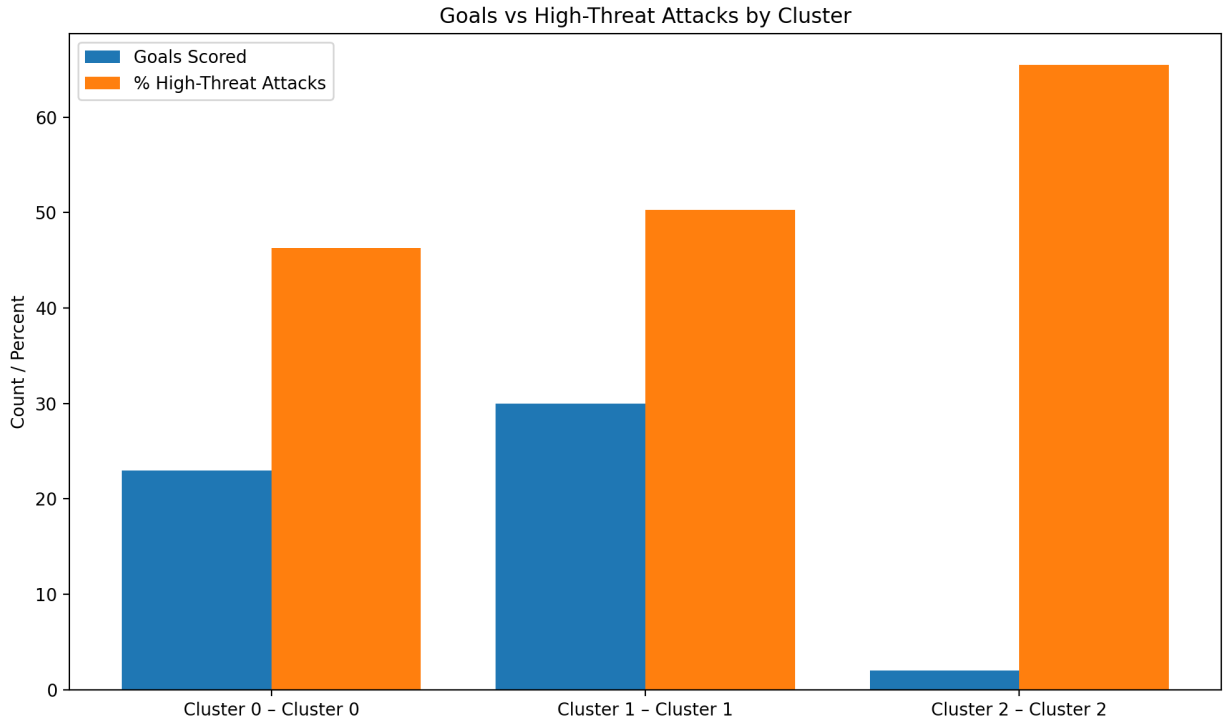


Portfolio Summary & Tactical Implications

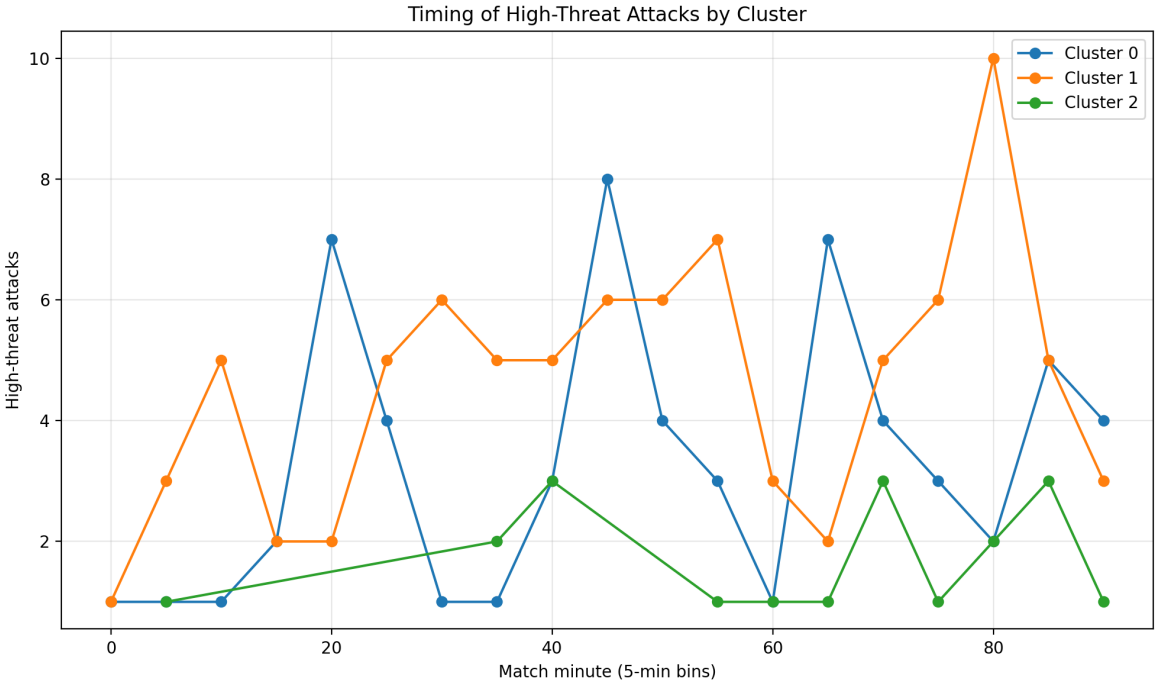
Analyzing the output of these clusters reveals distinct attacking efficiencies and threat profiles. Cluster 1 is the most active, generating the highest volume of total attacks and goals. In contrast, Cluster 2 is highly selective, producing the fewest attacks but boasting the highest rate of creating high-threat chances (65.5%). Cluster 0 represents a balanced approach, with solid volume and a respectable threat creation rate. This suggests that while some patterns rely on high volume to generate success, others are more focused on creating specific, high-quality opportunities.

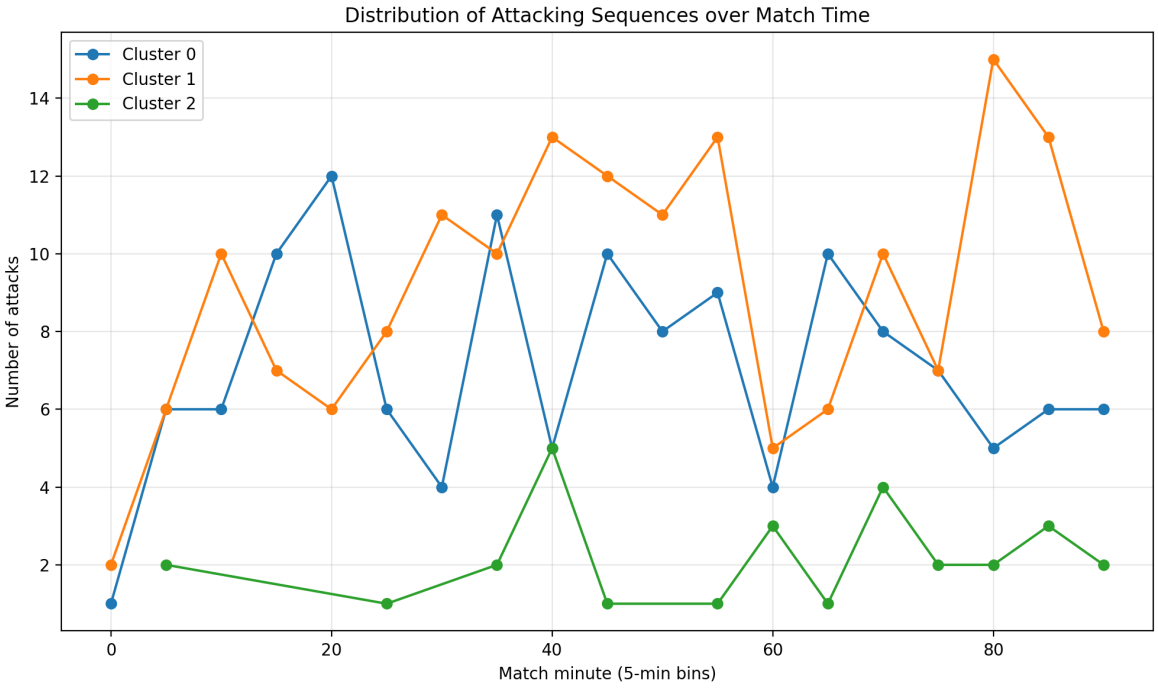
cluster label	cluster name	total attacks	goals scored	high threat attacks	High threat rate pct	Success metric
0	Structured Wide Probes	134	23	62	46.26	0.37
1	Rapid Vertical Attacks	173	30	87	50.28	0.34
2	Sustained Final-Third Siege	29	2	19	65.51	0.10

However, a high rate of threat creation does not always equate to goals. As the chart shows, Cluster 2's high-threat attack rate fails to translate into scoring success, resulting in the fewest goals by a wide margin. Clusters 0 and 1 demonstrate a more direct relationship between creating dangerous opportunities and converting them. This indicates that the types of attacks characteristic of Cluster 2 may lack the clinical finishing or final action required to be effective, despite their promising build-up.

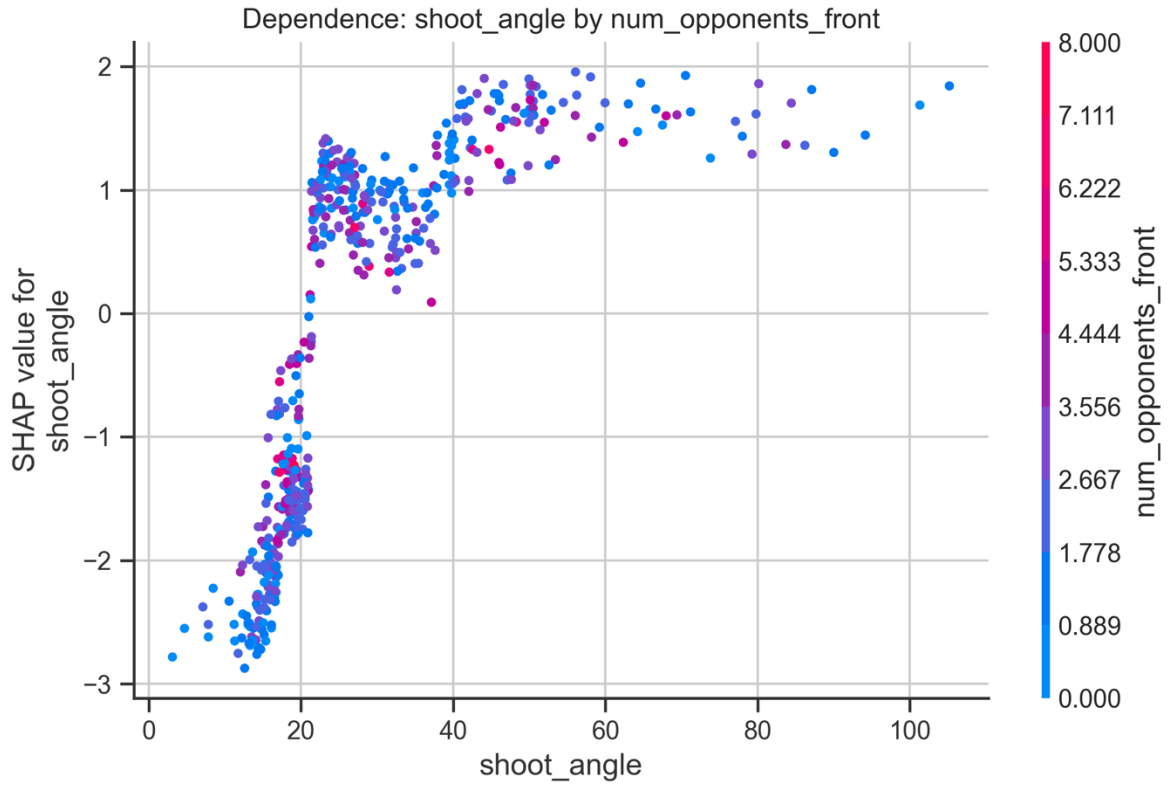


The timing of attacks further differentiates these patterns. Cluster 1 applies consistent pressure throughout the match, while Cluster 2's high-threat attacks peak sharply after the 75-minute mark, likely targeting opponent fatigue. This late-game specialism is a key feature of its profile. Overall attack distribution shows that volume tends to increase in the second half across all patterns, but the timing of the **most dangerous** attacks varies significantly. This indicates that different attacking styles are deployed or become more effective at different stages of the game.





Shot Quality Insights



Simple Insight:

A wider shooting angle significantly boosts our chances of scoring, especially once it's over 20 degrees. However, having many defenders between the shooter and the goal cancels out this advantage. The best shots come from wide angles with a clear view of the goal.

In-Game Decision Checklist:

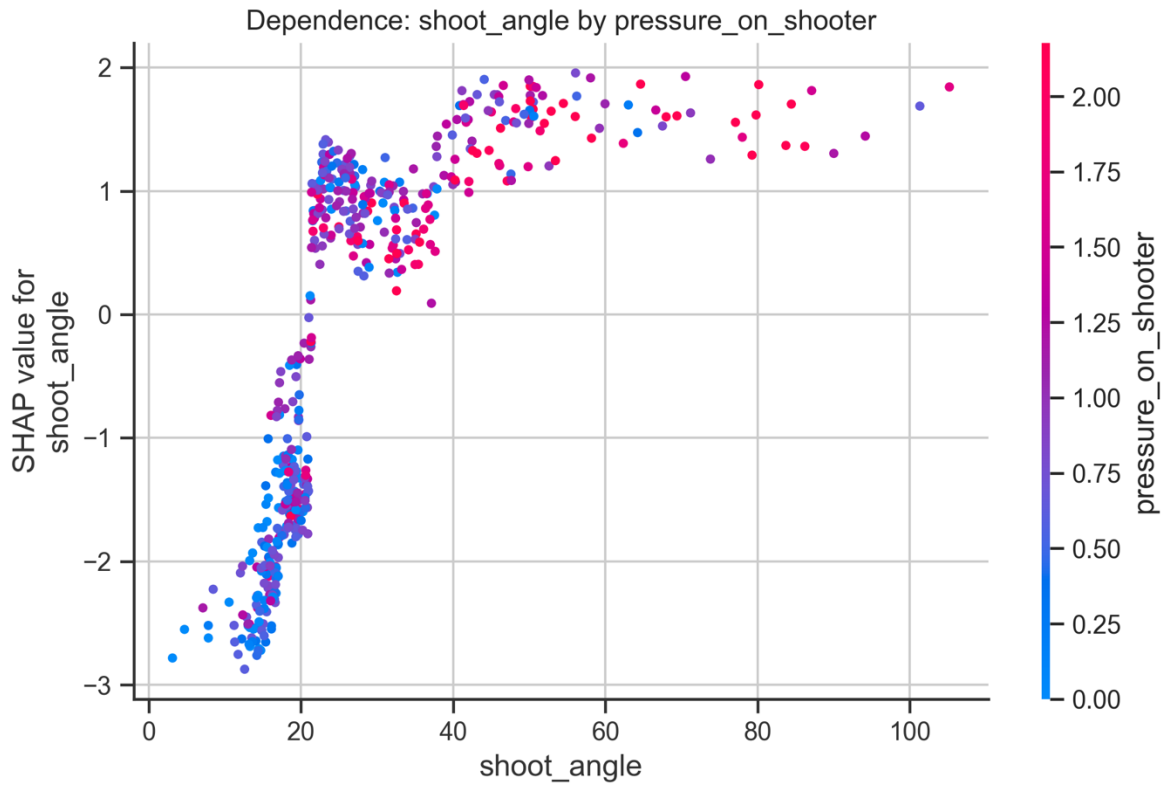
- If angle < 20° → dribble to widen the angle or pass to a teammate.
- If angle > 20° but the path is blocked by defenders → play a quick combination or fake to create a clear lane.
- If angle > 20° and the path to goal is clear → shoot!

Training Recommendations:

- Decision-making shooting drills: attackers vs. defenders in the final third, focusing on creating wide angles with clear lanes before shooting.
- Practice quick combination plays (e.g., one-twos, third-man runs) on the edge of the box to shift defenders and open shooting paths.

KPIs:

- % of shots taken with an angle > 20°.
- Average number of defenders in front of the shooter (trend: decreasing).
- Goals scored from shots with < 2 defenders in the shooting lane.



Simple Insight:

When the shooting angle is over 20°, the chance of scoring goes up. But if the shooter is under heavy pressure, a good angle loses its advantage. Creating a moment of separation from the defender right before the shot is critical.

In-Game Decision Checklist:

- If angle < 20° → pass or move to open the angle.
- If angle > 20° and pressure is low → shoot immediately.
- If angle > 20° and pressure is high → use a fake shot or a quick touch to create space, then shoot.

Training Recommendations:

- 1v1 finishing drills with an active defender closing down the shooter to force quick decisions and fakes.
- Drills focused on a quick "touch and shoot" to minimize the time defenders have to apply pressure.

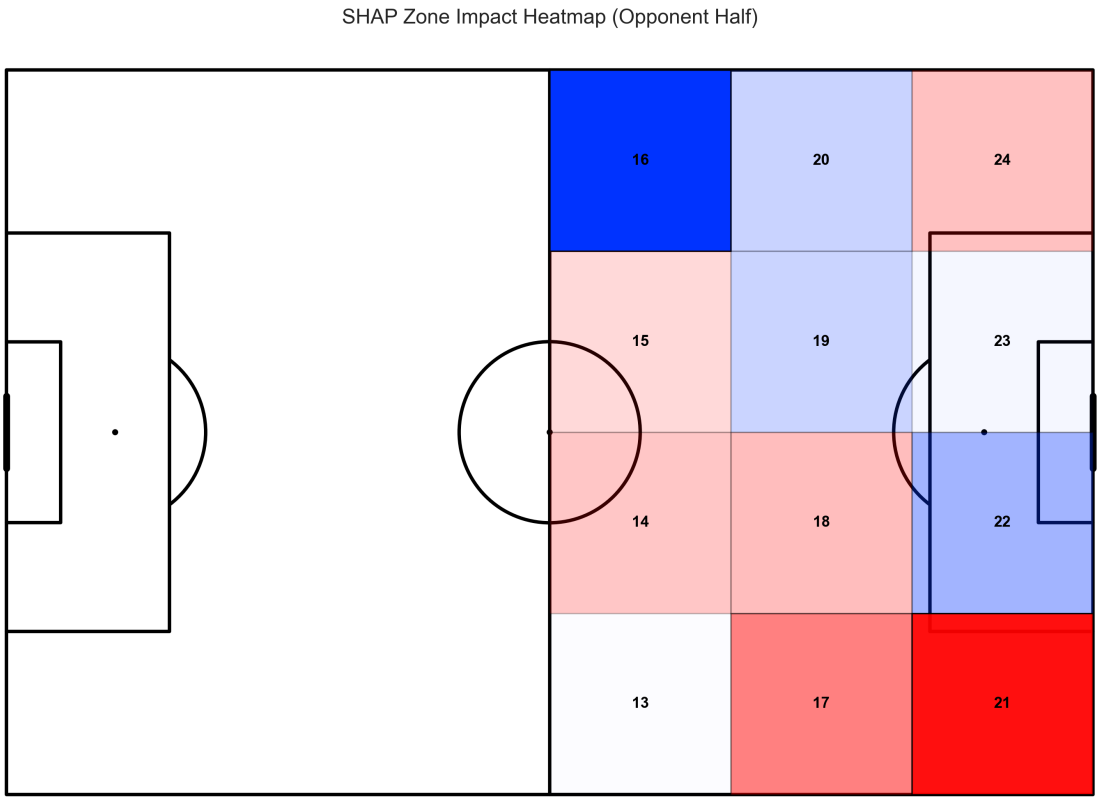
KPIs:

- % of shots taken under low pressure.
- Average pressure value at the moment of shot (trend: decreasing).
- Goal conversion rate from low-pressure shots vs. high-pressure shots.

Zone-Level Performance

Part 1 – Zone-Level Performance

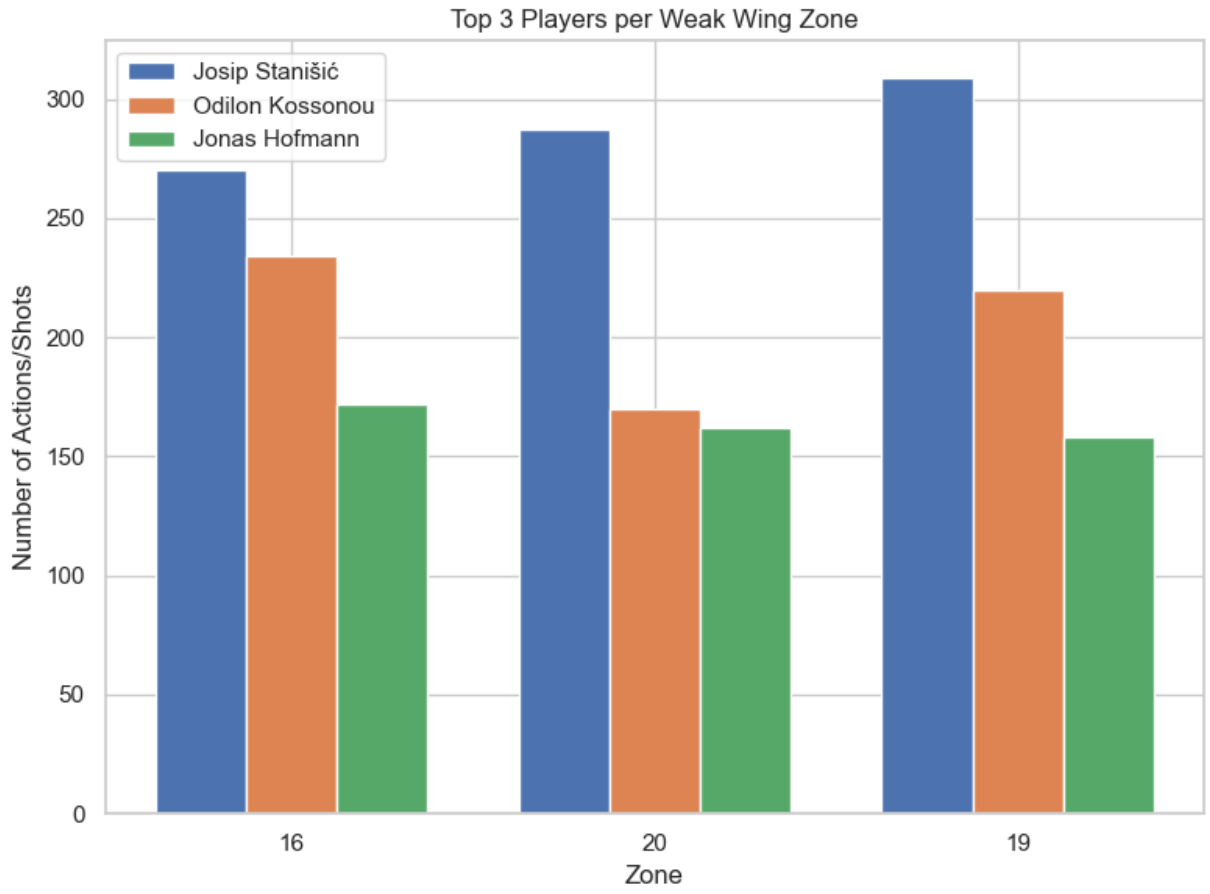
Our attacks are most dangerous when built through the right side and central areas just outside the box. We consistently create high-quality chances from the right half-space (Zone 20) and the right side of the penalty area (Zone 23). In contrast, the left wing (Zone 16) struggles to generate the same threat, and attacks down that flank often fail to progress into dangerous situations. The left side of the penalty area (Zone 22) is also a concern, as it's a weak spot for our finishing.



Part 2 – Wing & Player Analysis

Over the season, our right wing has been significantly more effective at creating dangerous attacks than our left wing. The imbalance is clear, with the team finding it much easier to build threatening plays on the right flank.

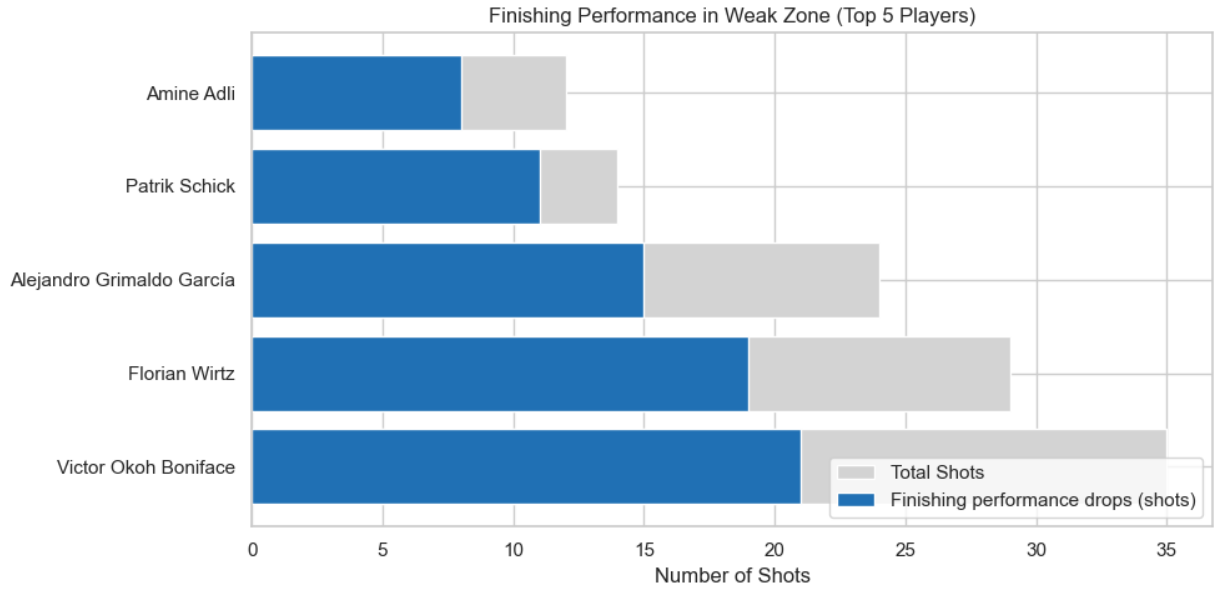
The main problem on the weaker left side is in the wide channel (Zone 16), where our build-up consistently fails to produce quality chances. The players most frequently involved in these less effective sequences are Josip Stanišić (270 actions), Odilon Kossounou (234), and Jonas Hofmann (172). Their activity in this zone is not translating into dangerous outcomes, suggesting a breakdown in how we progress the ball down that side.



Part 3 – Finishing Analysis

When it comes to finishing, we are less effective from the left side of the penalty area (Zone 22) compared to the right (Zone 23). This area has become a source of rushed or low-quality shots, reducing our overall goal threat from that side of the pitch.

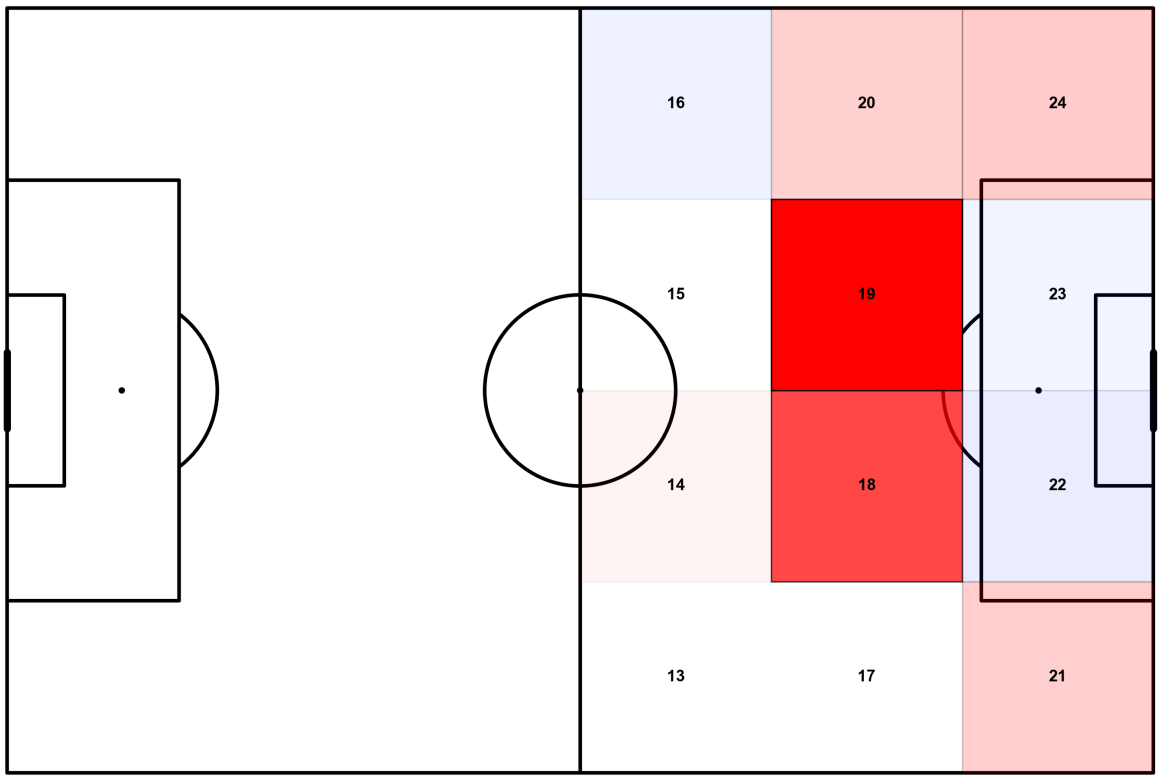
Alejandro Grimaldo is the most frequent shooter from this weaker zone (24 shots), with half of those attempts being of below-average quality. Other key players also struggle to find good shooting positions here; over half of the shots taken by Amine Adli (58%), Patrik Schick (57%), and Piero Hincapié (63%) from this zone are from poor positions, which limits their effectiveness.



Defensive Heatmap Analysis

Coach, this chart shows where we were strong and weak defensively. Our main vulnerability is the central area right at the top of our box, often called 'Zone 14'. When opponents got the ball in that pocket or in the channel to our left, they created very dangerous scoring opportunities. On the other hand, our defensive structure out wide is a major strength. We did an excellent job of forcing teams out to the flanks and completely neutralizing their threat from those areas. In short, we are strong on the perimeter but need to tighten up that central space in front of goal.

SHAP Zone Impact Heatmap (Opponent Half) — Defence



Conclusion

This analysis underscores Bayer Leverkusen's tactical versatility in attack, balanced against defensive vulnerabilities. The attacking strength on the right wing contrasts sharply with the inefficiencies on the left. Defensively, addressing the vulnerability in the central zone outside the box is crucial. Recommendations include focusing attacking play down the right flank, refining the build-up play on the left, and implementing strategies to protect the central area defensively. Targeted training and tactical adjustments will be essential to capitalize on strengths and mitigate weaknesses in the upcoming season.