

Assignment 1: Plotting Actions

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Jack Grealish's passes in the 2020 Euros

The aim of this assignment is to show, explain and contextualise Jack Grealish's impact on the English National Team during the 2020 Euros. The former Aston Villa player had an impressive 2020-2021 Premier League season for the Birmingham team, for which he scored 6 goals and provided 10 assists. The 2020 Euros, held at the end of the 2020-2021 season, was an unbeatable scenario to prove himself with the National Team.

According to the stats taken from *fbref.com*, Jack Grealish took part in 5 games throughout the tournament: he came off the bench in 4 of those, only being part of the starting 11 against Czech Republic, the second game of the group stage. In total, he played 176 minutes, most of the time playing as a left winger in a 3-4-3 (occasionally, as an offensive midfielder in a 3-5-2). The ex-Villain attempted 77 passes, from which 64 were successful (approximately, reaching a 83% of accuracy). In the next image, we can see all those passes, including their trajectories.

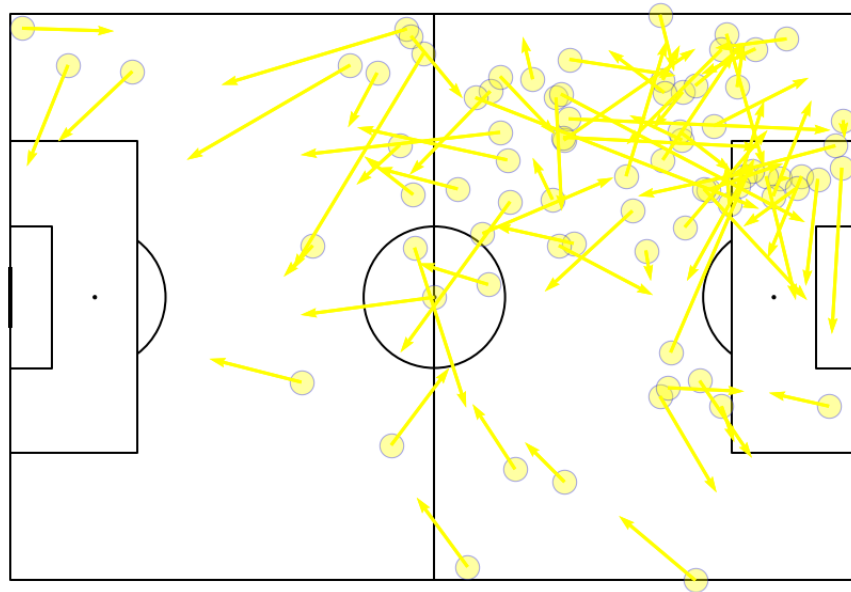


Figure 1: All Jack Grealish's passes in the 2020 Euros

As we clearly see and according to the position he played in, most of the passes are carried out in the final third of the pitch, specially in the left side of the pitch. That area is, precisely, where he managed to provide 2 assist. The first one was an amazing cross for Raheem Sterling against Czech Republic, which

turned out to be crucial for achieving the 3 points (the game ended 1 – 0 for the Three Lions). The second one was even more important, since it sealed the victory against Germany in the round of 16. The cross made by Grealish turned out to be a brilliant pass to Harry Kane, whom with a pretty difficult header scored, in the 86th minute, the second goal for England.

To appreciate the importance of the former Aston Villa player, we have displayed above a heatmap showing danger passes made by England per game.

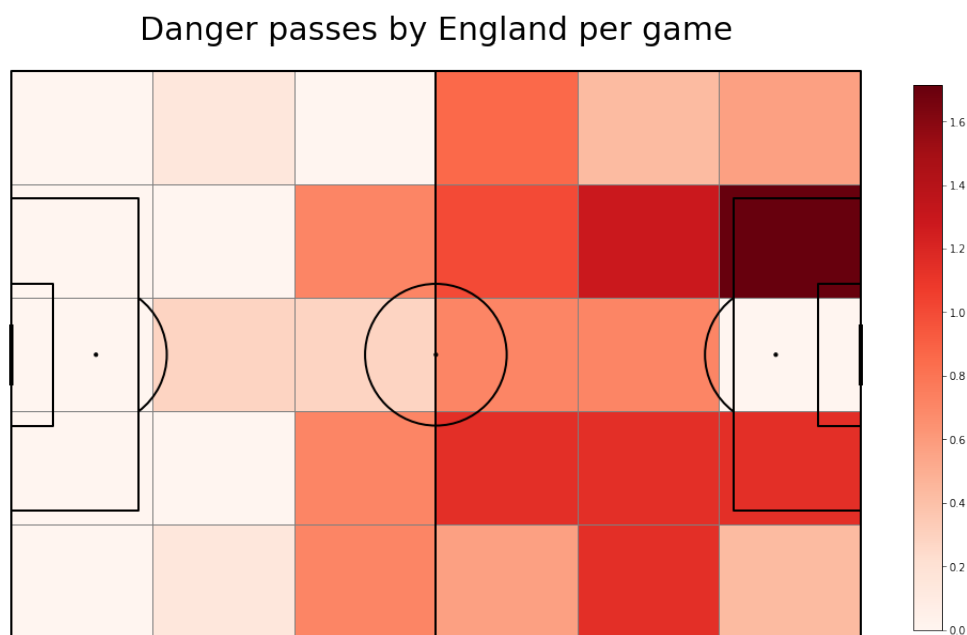


Figure 2: Danger passes by England per game

We can easily see that the area where more danger passes were carried out by the Three Lions per game matches the area where Jack Grealish made more passes and, additionally, where his both assists came from. Moreover, he made almost 1.8 danger passes per game, same as Raheem Sterling (who had an outstanding performance scoring 3 times and providing an assists throughout 7 games) and Calvin Phillips, who also played a very important role against the odds.

All in all, Jack Grealish met the expectations gathered around him and showed he could play an important role in such a competitive and skillful squad as the Three Lions. Probably, his performance in the 2020 Euros helped Manchester City to make up their mind and sign the Brummie, becoming the most expensive English player of all time.