Analyzing NCAA Men's Soccer Trends for Michigan's Advantage

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Introduction

One of the most impactful aspects of any organized soccer team's success is their ability to scout opponents. This includes reviewing statistical reports from their opponent's games to find trends in style of play as well as identify positional strengths and weaknesses.

The objective of this analysis is to assist the Michigan Men's Soccer staff in reviewing recent match reports for each of their opponents and identify relevant trends that Michigan can use to gain a competitive advantage.

Methodology

Match reports for every game of Michigan's opponents can be found on the online soccer library Wyscout. Each report is roughly 25 pages and contains hundreds of statistics and graphics representing the results of each game.

For each Michigan opponent, it would be most helpful to analyze their 4 most recent games to get a good understanding of their recent style of play. From there, the data could be condensed into shorter scouting reports on each team including 10 trends, a mixture of general observations, strengths, and weaknesses.

The effectiveness of these scouting reports can be analyzed in 2 ways:
1. Reviewing Michigan's performance against each opponent and determining if the recent trends continued, or if Michigan was able to take advantage of weaknesses and limit effectiveness of strengths
2. Request feedback from the Michigan Men's Soccer staff on the scouting report material and usage
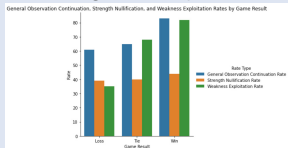
Results and Analysis

Example from Scouting Report (Oct. 1 vs Wisconsin)

Team Analysis: Most of Wisconsin's crossing and offensive production come from the left side summarized by 48% of their attacks coming from the left side and 70% of their expected goals coming from the left as well. However against Michigan, Wisconsin managed only 20% of their attacks from the left for 0.00 xG indicating we successfully nullified this strength

Wisconsin Left-Side Offensive Production

	Vs Marquette	Vs Indiana	Vs Northwestern	Vs Maryland	Overall	Vs Michigan
% of Attacks	48%	30%	53%	53%	48%	20%
% of xG	58%	67%	74%	74%	70%	0%

Scouting Report Analysis Results

General Observation Continuation, Strength Nullification, and Weakness Exploitation Rates by Game Result

Michigan Soccer Staff Feedback

The following responses are from Assistant Coach Jhojan Obando:

Question: How often are the scouting reports used when determining how Michigan will prepare the team for upcoming games?
   Answer: Every report has 1 or 2 comments that we implement
Question: Are there specific types of statistics the staff prefers to see in the reports?
   Answer: xG, possession, and positional strengths

Conclusions

Based on the anaysis of the results stemming from the scouting reports and the feedback receiving from the Men's Soccer coaching staff, the scouting reports were a helpful tool that can be reasonably used to predict how Michigan's opponents may play and create opportunities to gain a competitive advantage on the field.

The grouped bar chart shows how all 3 of the different analysis types (general observation continuation rate, strength nullification rate, and weakness exploitation rate) are all highest in Michigan's wins and lowest in their losses. This means that Michigan performs its best when their opponents are more predictable and they are able to account for the trends identified in the scouting report.

The feedback provided by Assistant Coach Jhojan Obando also proves that the scouting reports have been helpful for the coaching staff throughout the season. Obando, who evaluated the scouting report performance at midseason and a the end of the season, had high praise in both evaluations often citing the usefulness and accessibility of the reports as impactful when preparing the team for upcoming matches.

Awknowledgements and References

Wyscout Platform, platform.wyscout.com/app/. Accessed 31 Oct. 2023.
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