STATS PERFORM

optapro

Long or Short? Understanding how the short goal kick rule is impacting the men's and women's game

Tom Worville | @Worville | #OptaProForum

Goal Kicks – Setting the scene

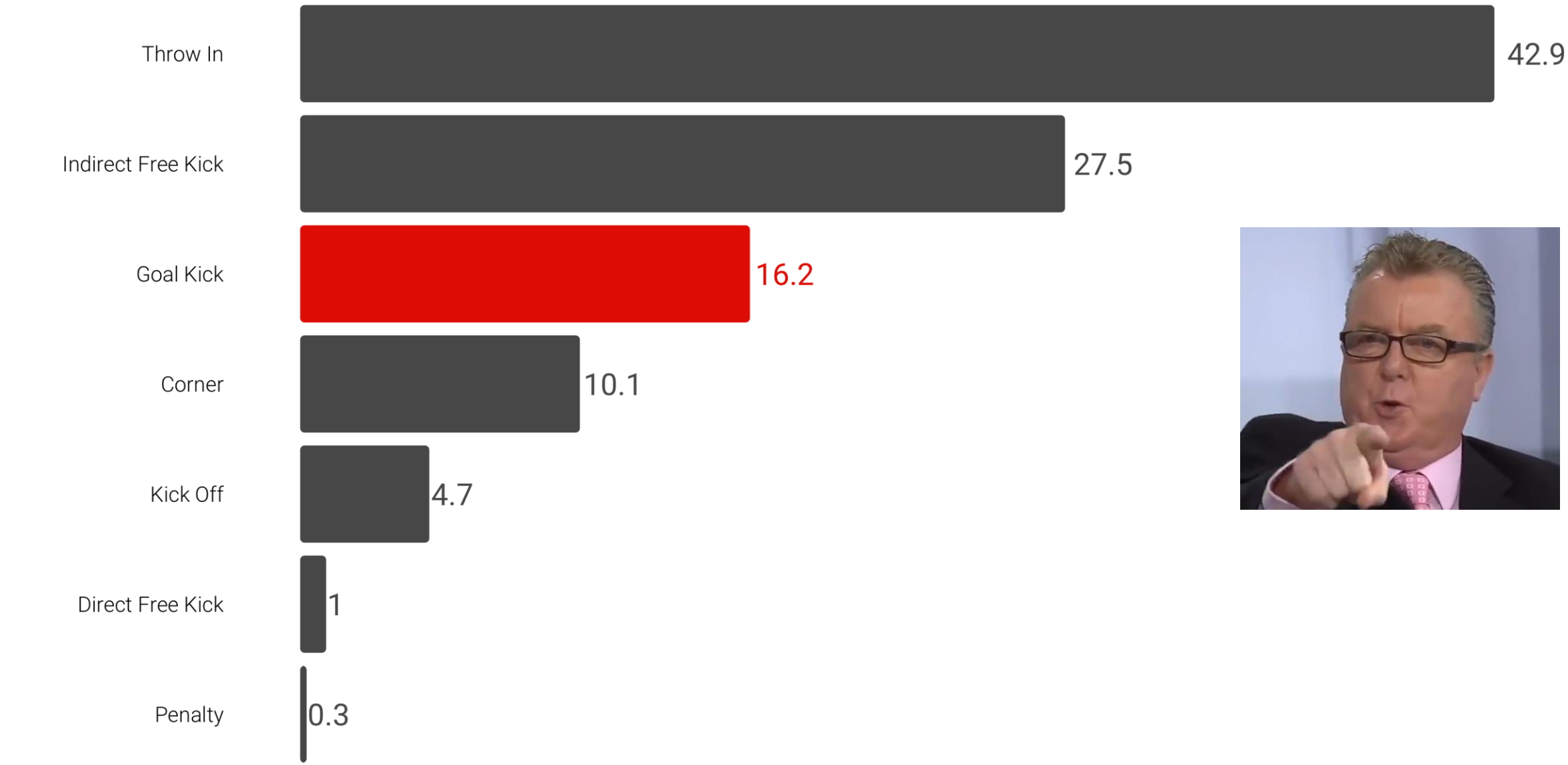
- Why do goal kicks matter? Do they matter?
- What do teams do with them?
- How have pass tendencies changed since the introduction of that rule?
- Do teams create chances from Goal Kicks? Do they concede chances?
- What's the quality of the chances created?
- What about ball progression?
- Takeaways

Why do goal kicks matter? Do they matter?

Pros	Cons
You have possession of the ball	You can't get further away from the opponent's goal
You have time to get setup	Your opponent has time to get setup
You can practice set plays	High risk if you turn the ball over close to goal
The chant of "you're $**t ahhhh" always goes down well	Feelings can get hurt

Number of Set Pieces by Type per Game

Top 5 European Leagues - 2018/19 & 2019/20



What do teams do with them?

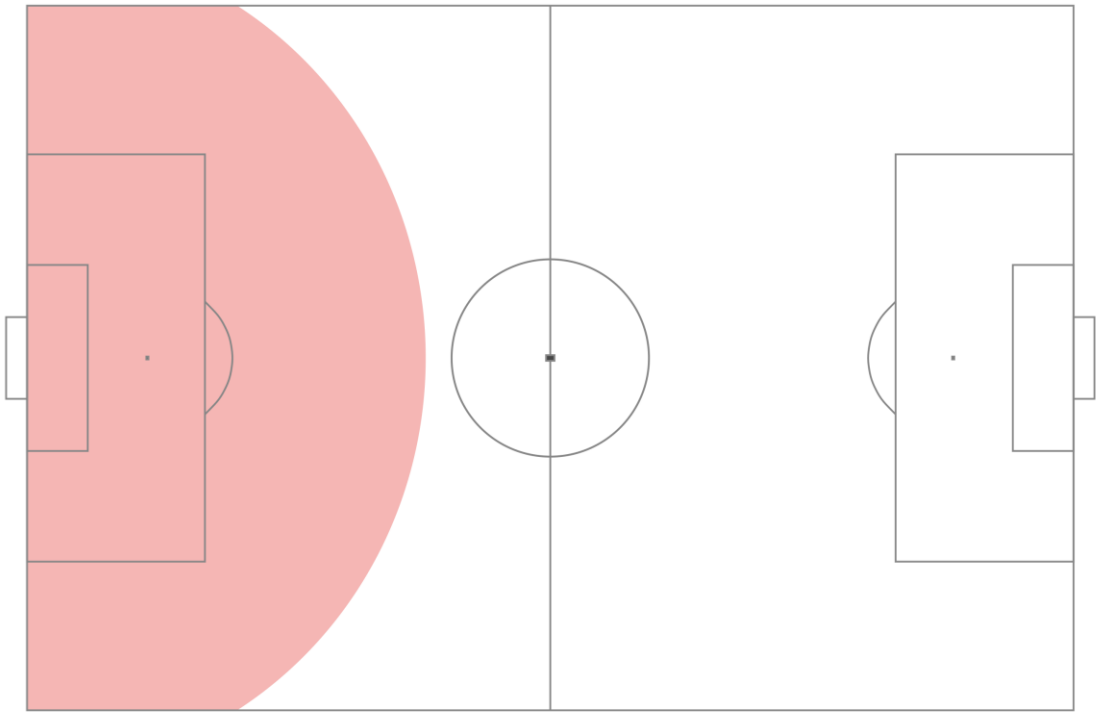
Choose to do one of two things:

- Go long
- Go short

These have various outcomes:

- Pass complete
- Pass incomplete
- Retain Possession

Short Goal Kicks end within 40m of a team's own goal



Pass Completion vs Possession Retention Rates

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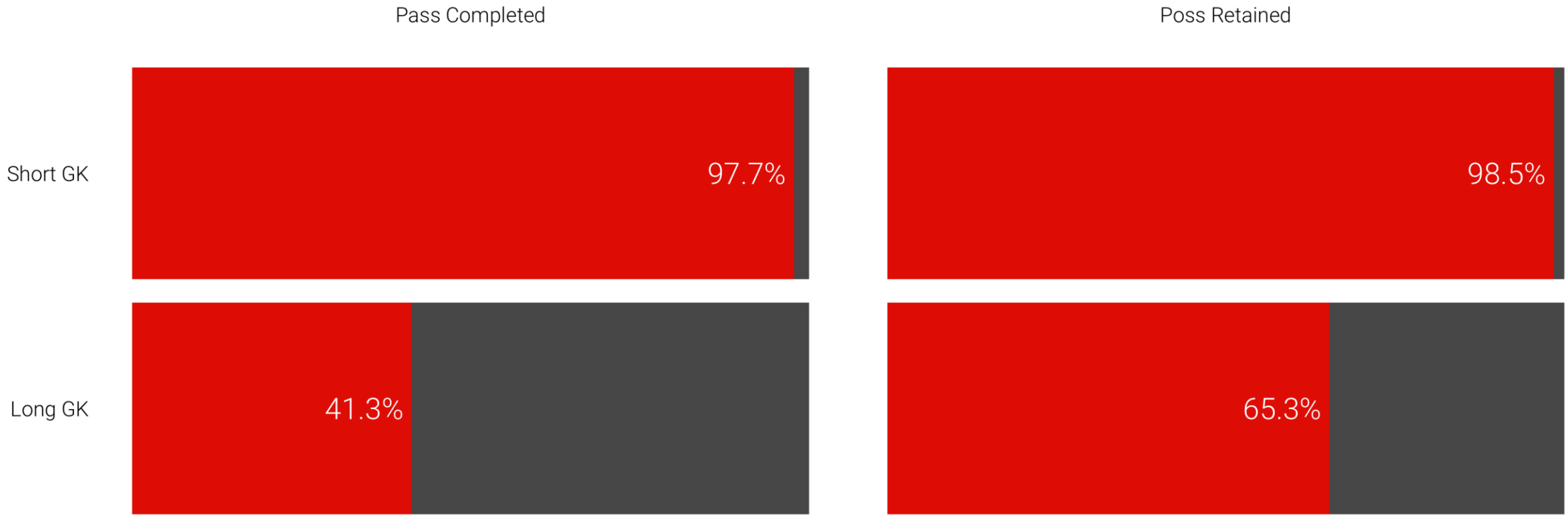

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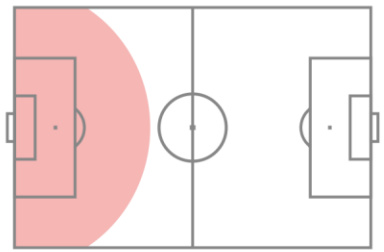


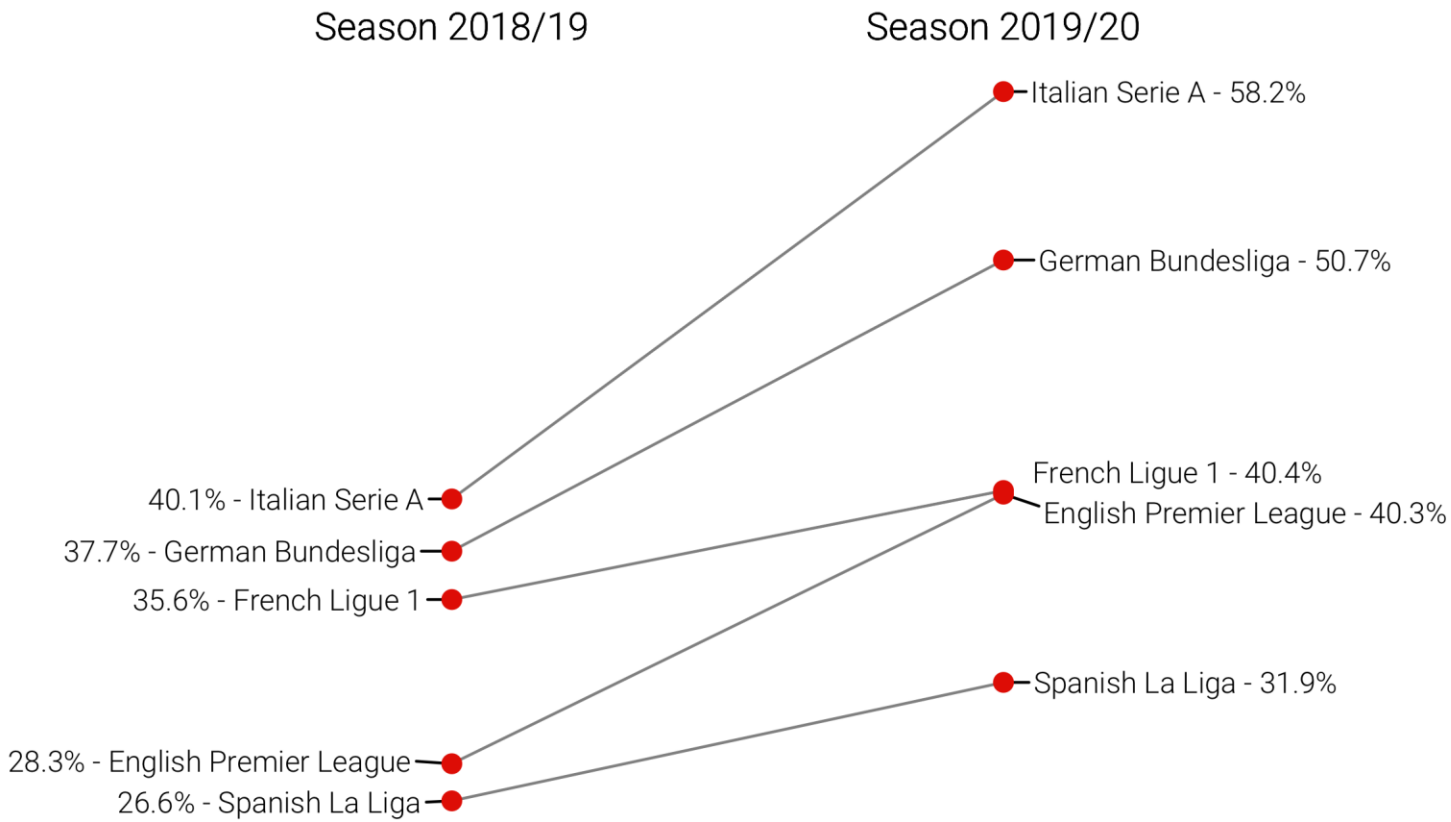
How have pass tendencies changed since the introduction of *that* rule?

- The first thing we can look to compare is whether or not there's been wholesale changes in a league's approach to taking goal kicks

- Additionally, which teams have changed their GK strategy the most?

Difference in share of Short Goal Kicks

Top 5 European Leagues - 2018/19 vs 2019/20



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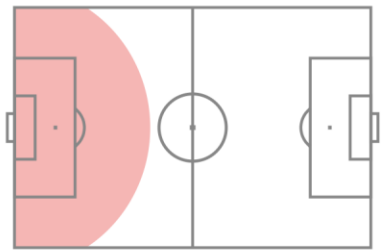
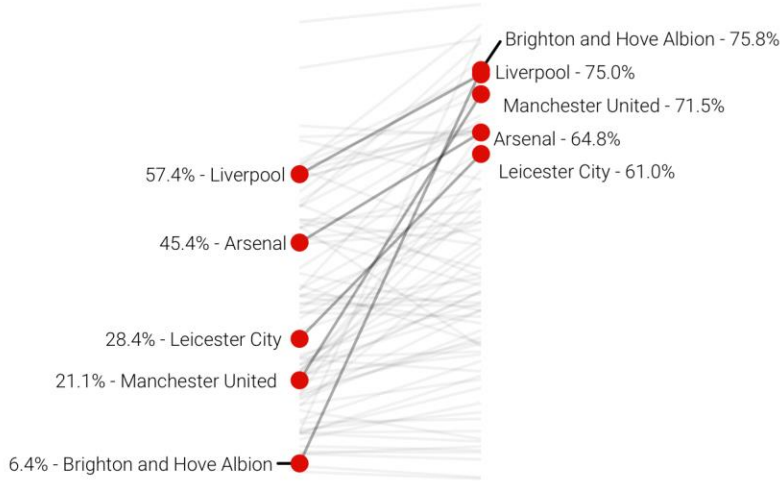


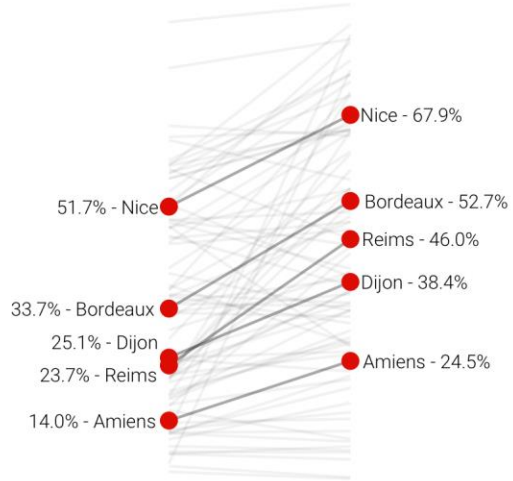
Alongside three coaches, Genoa have seen the highest jump in the number Short Goal Kicks taken this season

Top 5 European Leagues - 2018/19 vs 2019/20

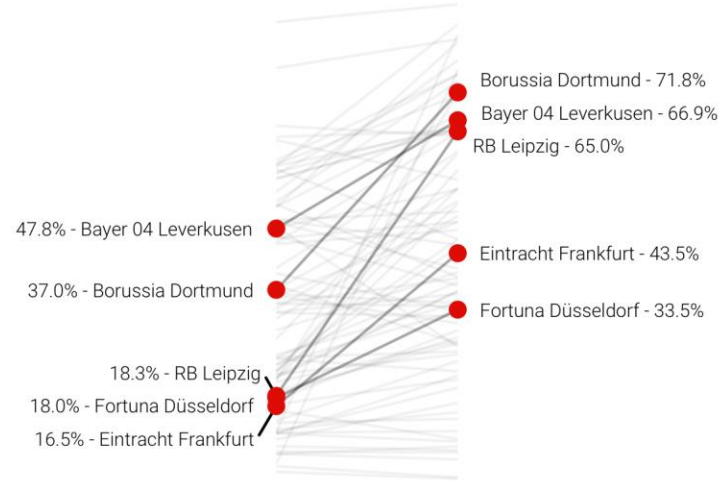
English Premier League



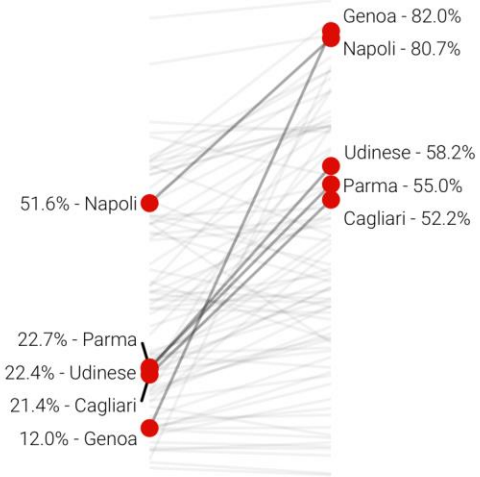
French Ligue 1



German Bundesliga



Italian Serie A



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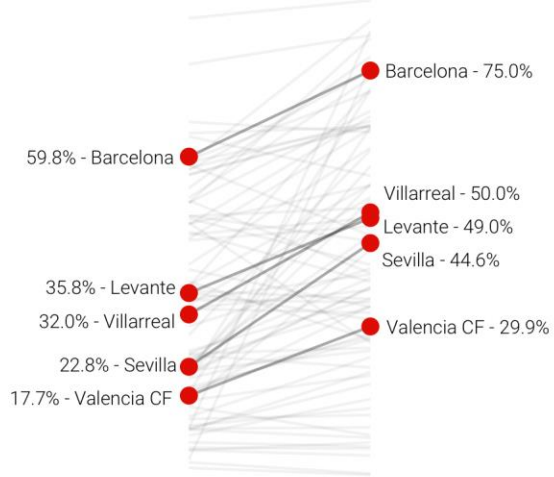

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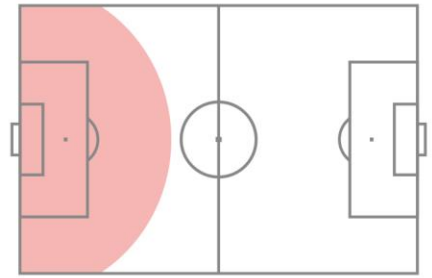

Do teams create chances from Goal Kicks? Do they concede chances?

- Need to decide upon some parameters for whether a chance was due to a short goal kick, or not.

- **Shots for:**
  - Sequence starts with a goal kick
  - Sequence is fewer than 30 seconds long
  - Ball cannot go out of play in this time
  - Sequence results in a shot

- **Shots against:**
  - Sequence starts with a goal kick
  - Sequence from the goal kick is fewer than 30 seconds long
  - Opponent sequence is fewer than 30 seconds long
  - Opponent sequence starts in open play – want to capture shots from transition

"Transition, or controlling transition…most important part of the game now"

Chris Davies – Assistant Manager, Leicester City

Source: The Independent

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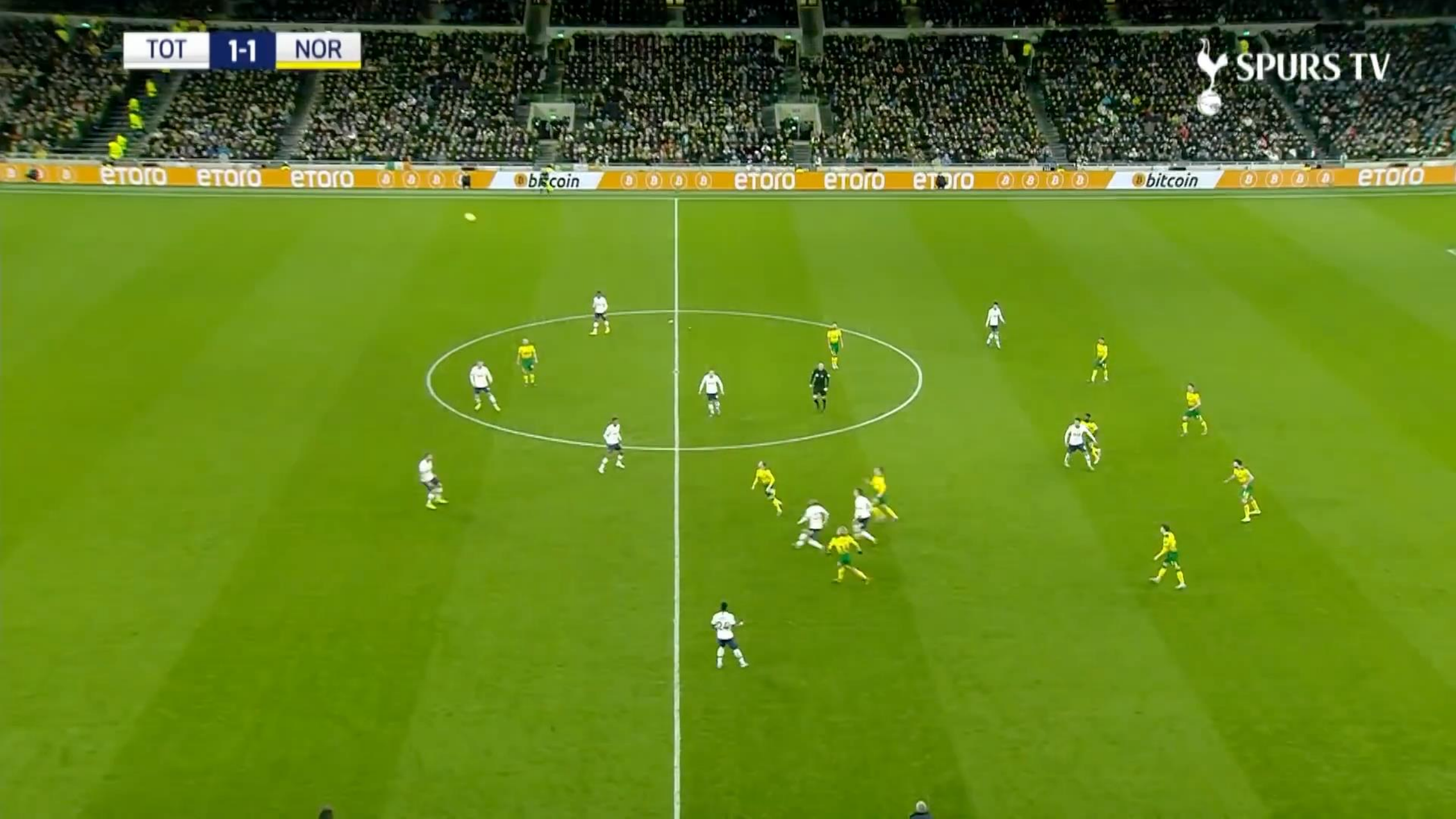
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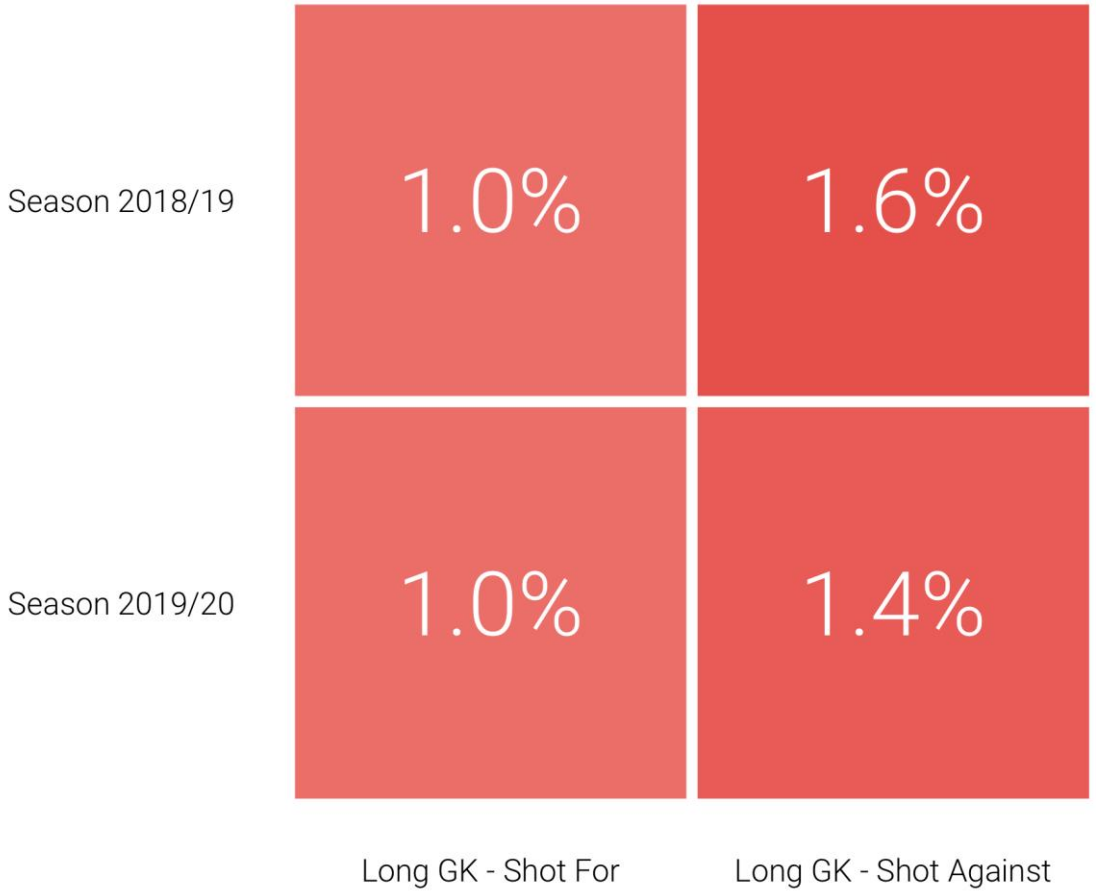
Shots For vs Shots Against - Long Goal Kicks

Top 5 European Leagues - 2018/19 & 2019/20



Shots For vs Shots Against - Short Goal Kicks

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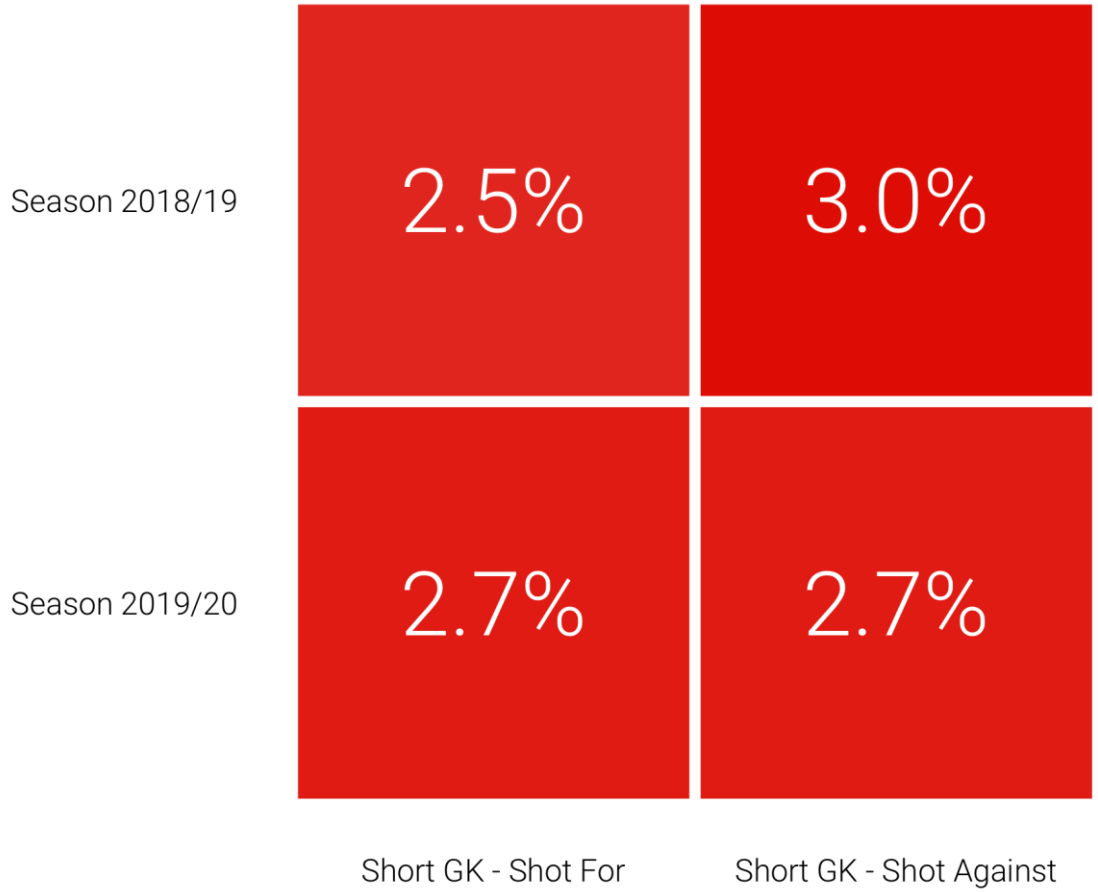

What's the quality of these chances?

- The volume of shots created and conceded from these different Goal Kick types tell us one thing, but Expected Goals can give us an understanding of the quality

- Additionally, we care about the distribution of these chances – averages don't tell you everything!

xG/Shot For vs xG/Shot Against - Long Goal Kicks

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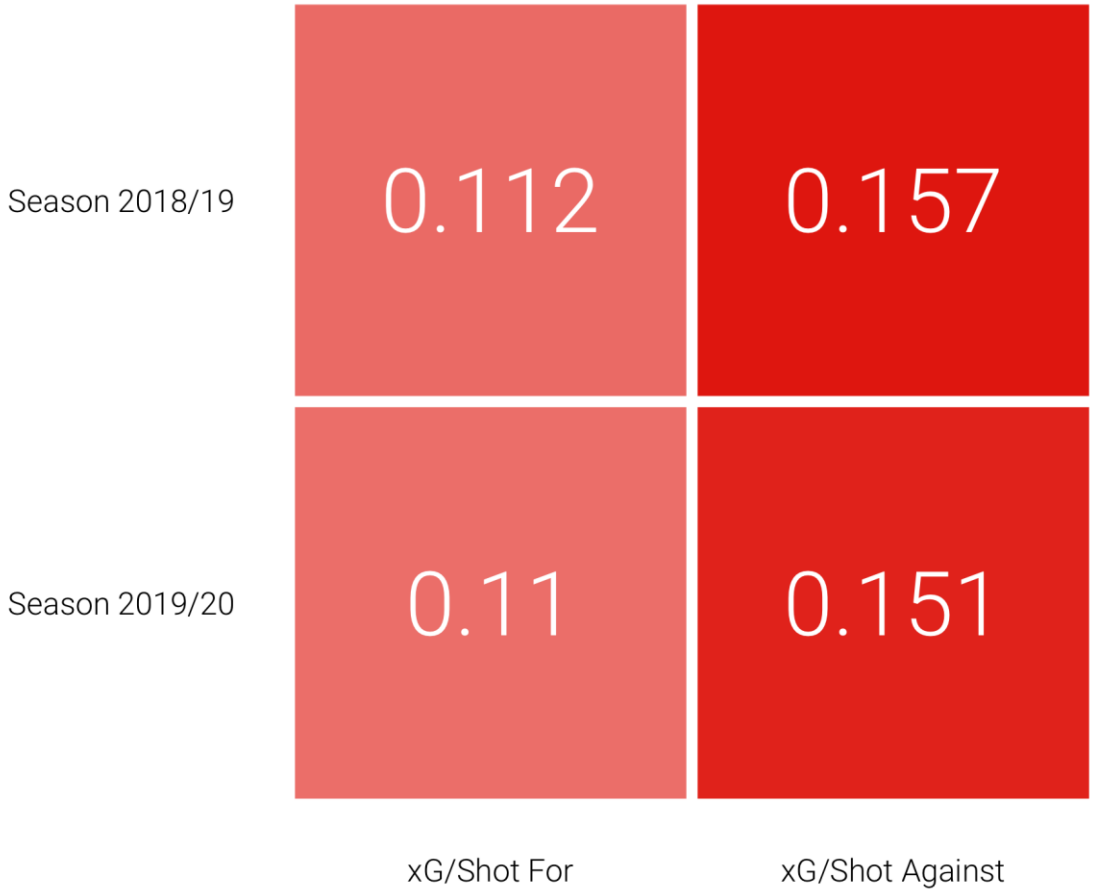

xG/Shot For vs xG/Shot Against - Short Goal Kicks

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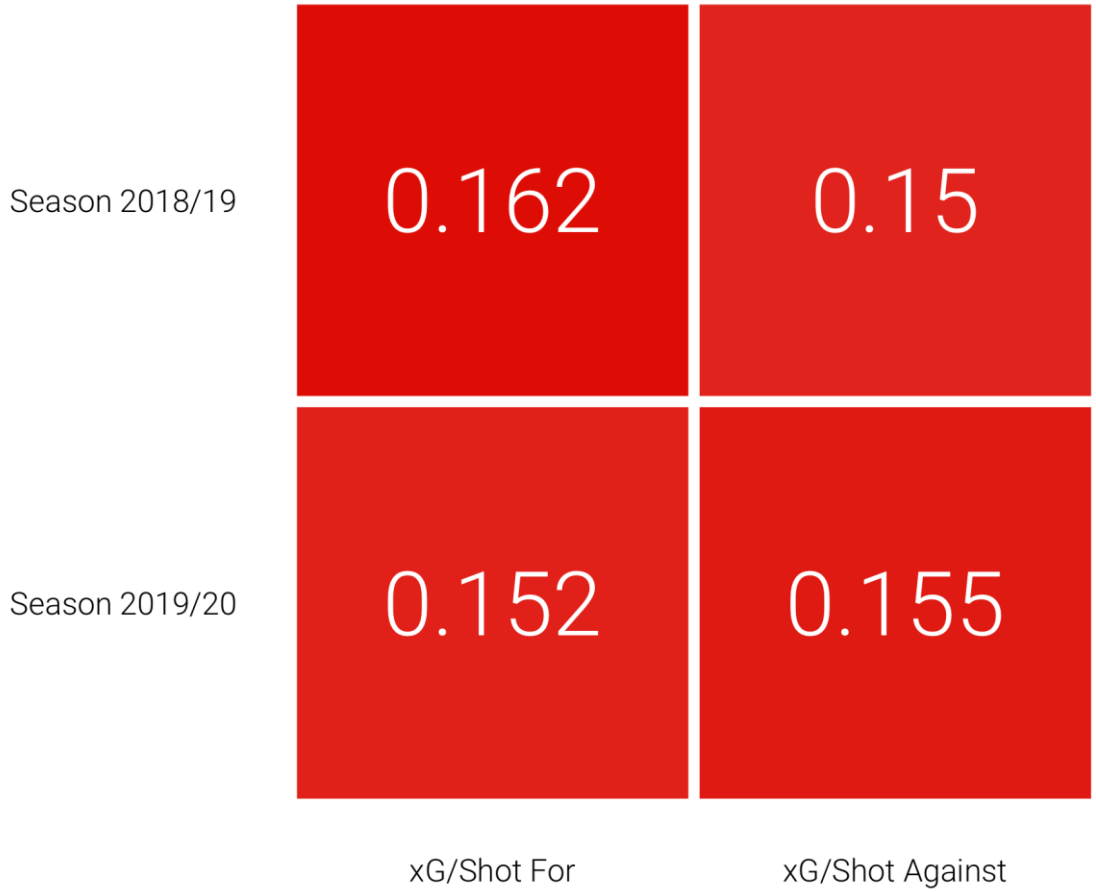

The distribution of xG Against shows the risk of conceding higher quality chances from Short Goal Kicks

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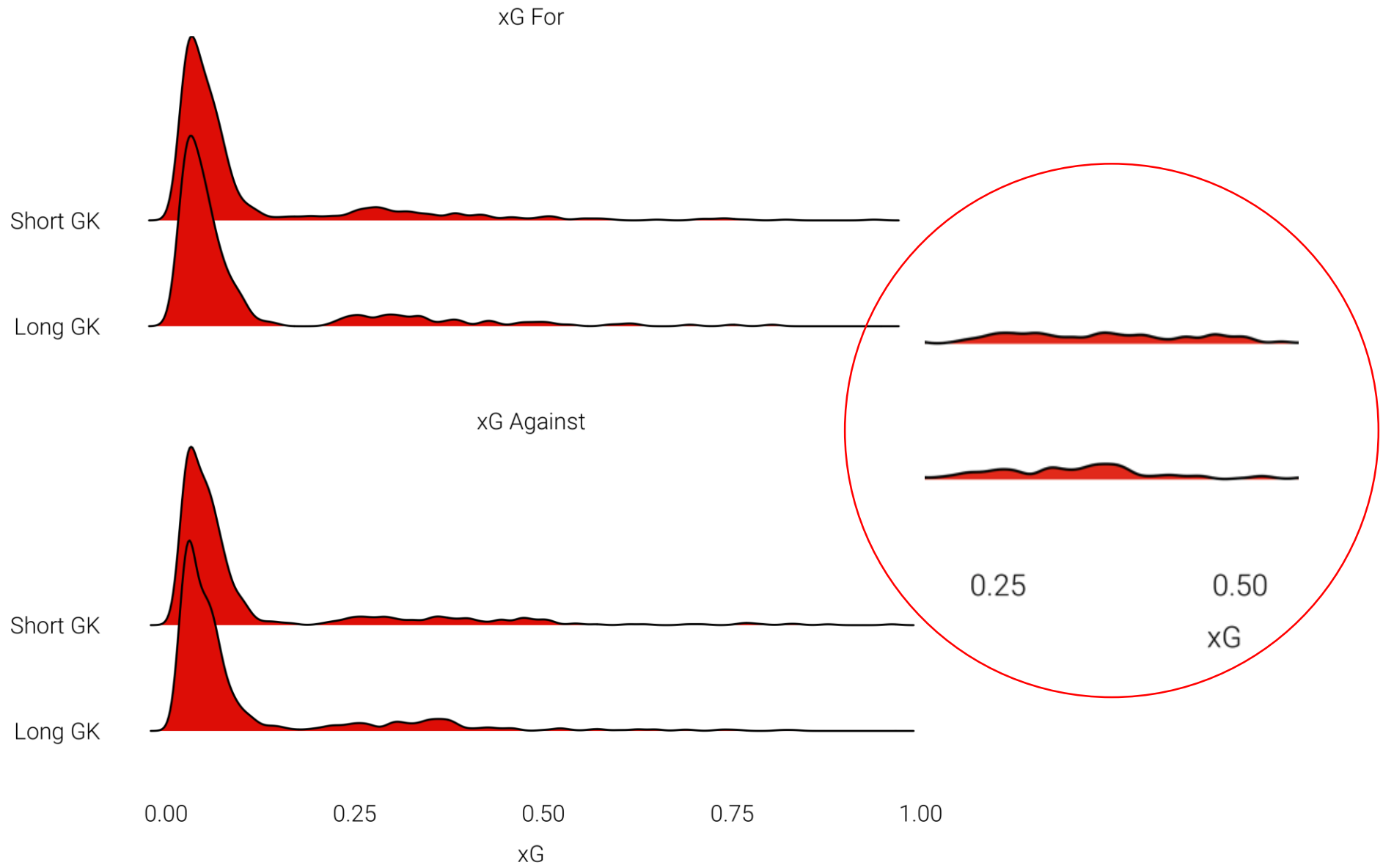
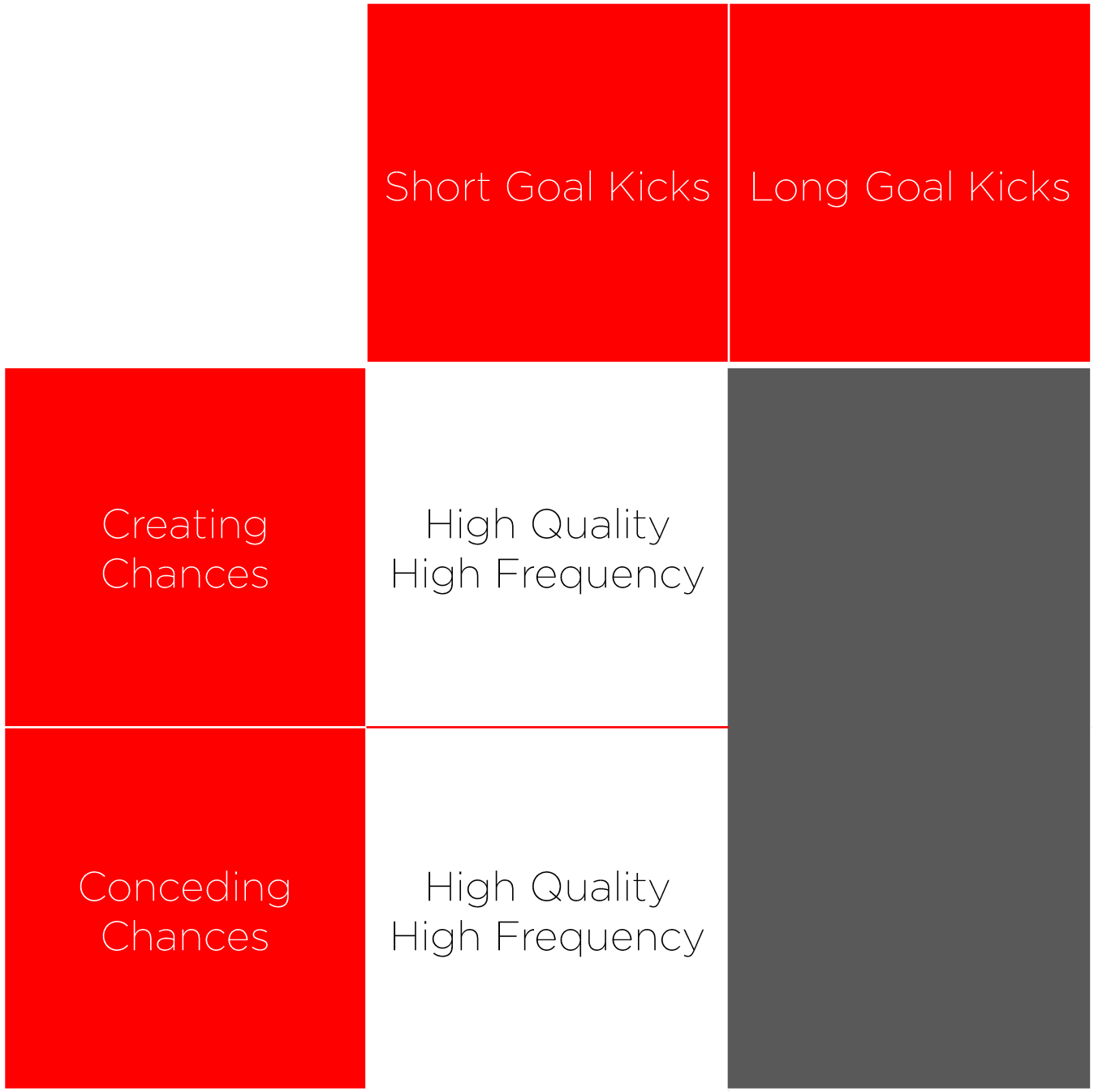


Short Goal Kicks
Long Goal Kicks
Creating Chances
High Quality High Frequency
Low Quality Low Frequency
Conceding Chances
High Quality High Frequency
High Quality Low Frequency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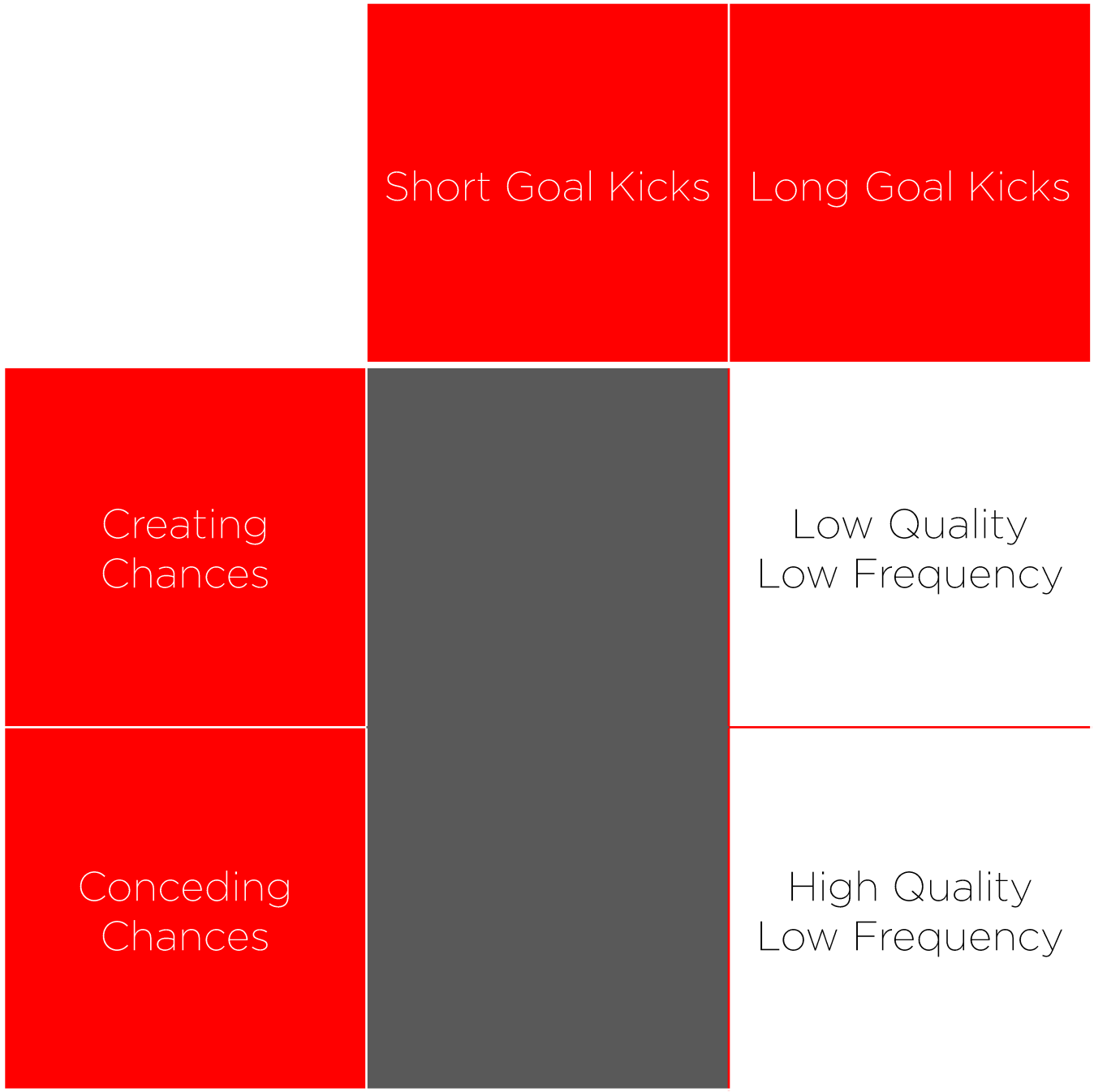
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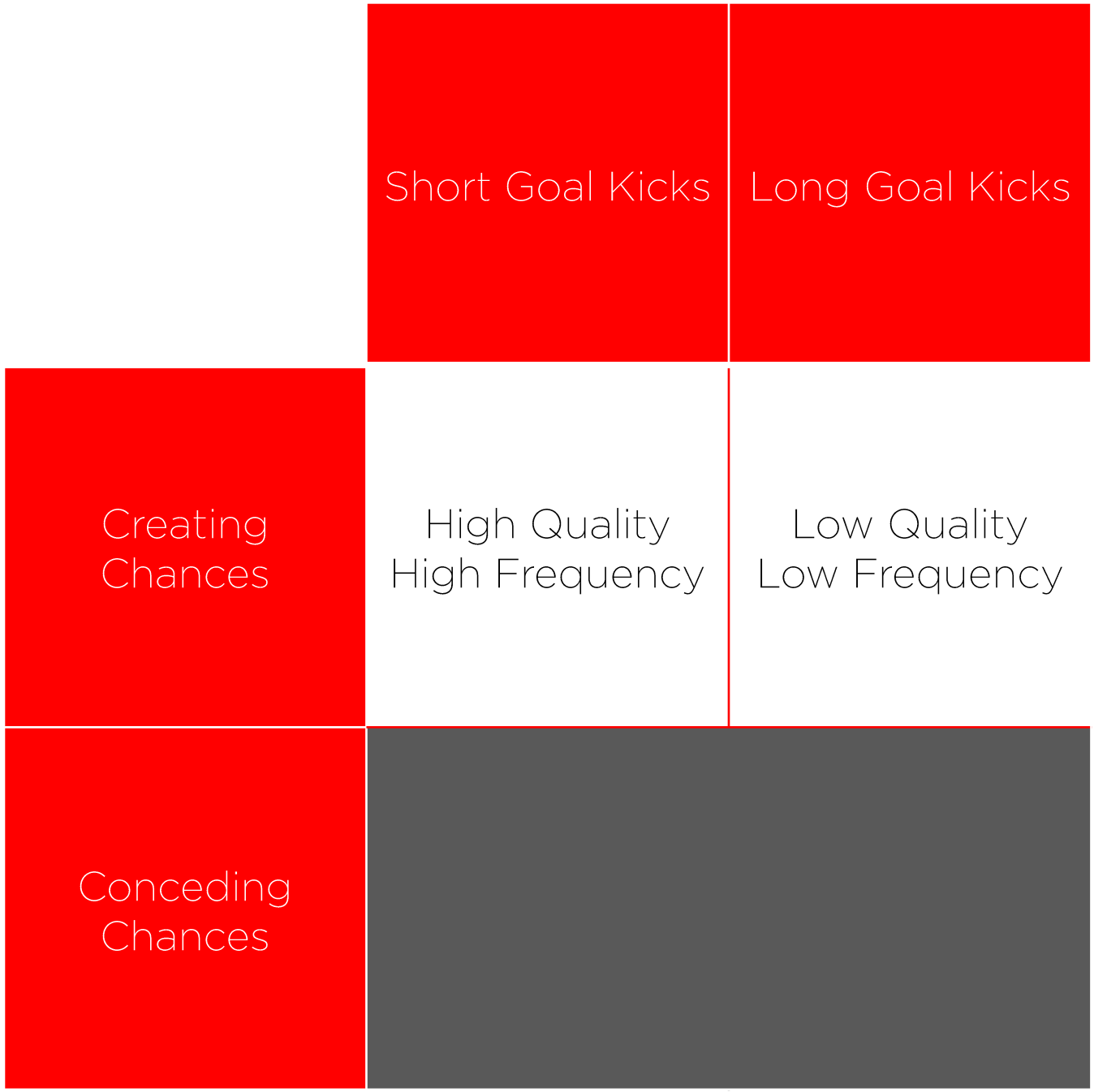
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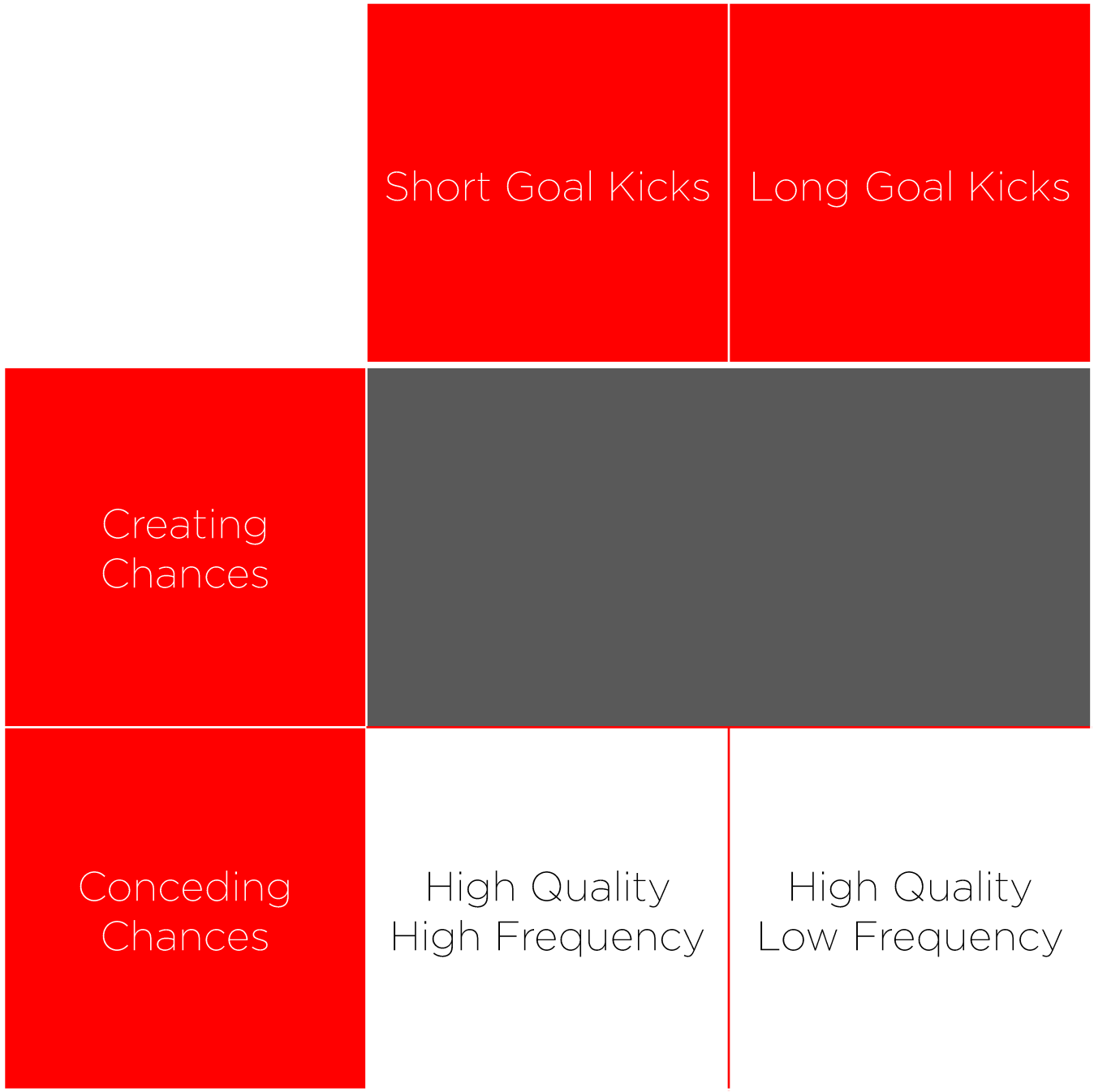
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What about ball progression?

- Due to the relatively rare nature of shots resulting from Goal Kicks, ball progression is the next clear focus

- What's the best way to measure ball progression from Goal Kicks?

    - If a sequence started with a goal kick, how far did the team get up the pitch with control of possession?

    - If the sequence ended but possession is retained, where does the next sequence start from?

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When it comes to ball progression, Short Goal Kicks are the better option compared to Long Goal Kicks

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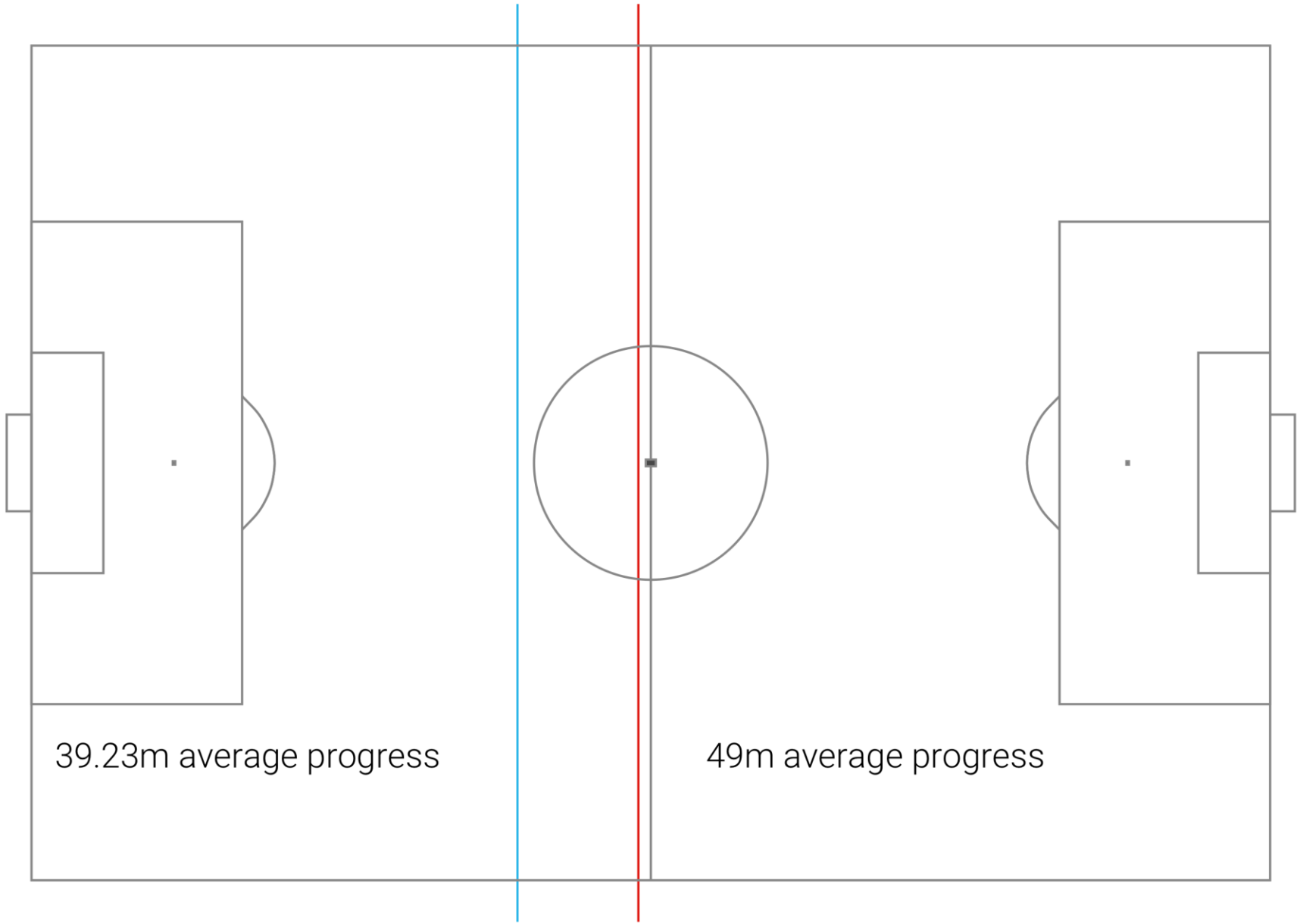
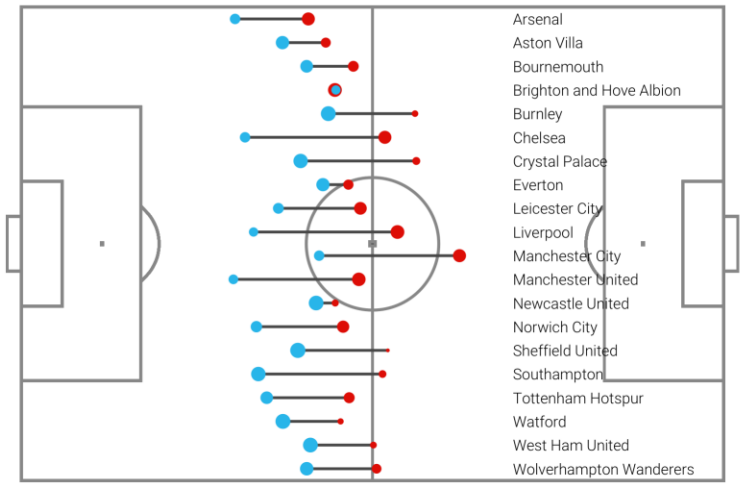


The difference in progress between Short Goal Kicks and Long Goal Kicks is clear

Top 5 European Leagues - 2018/19 vs 2019/20

English Premier League



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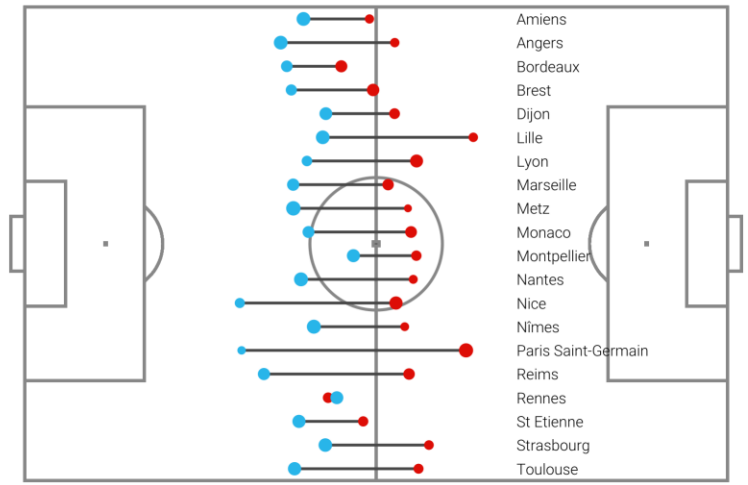

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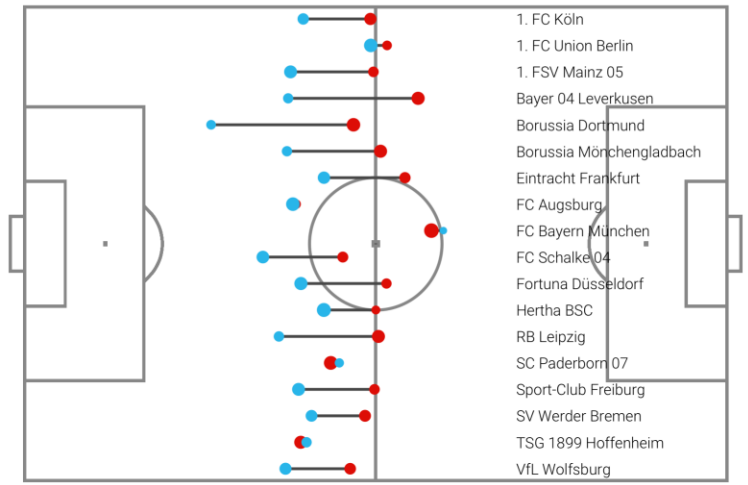

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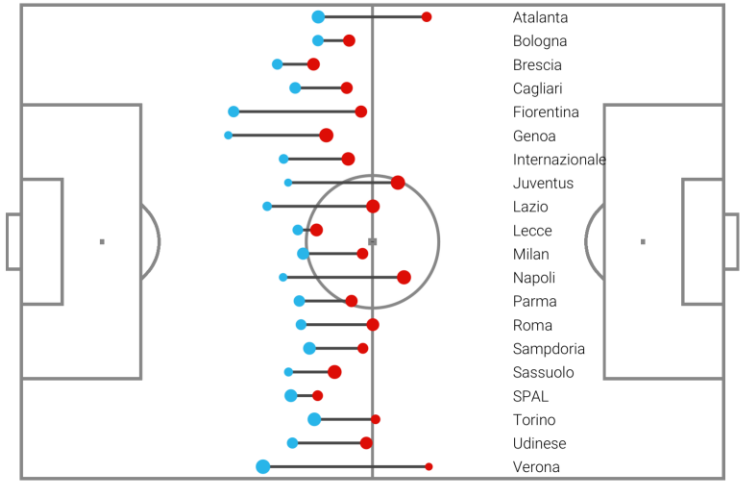

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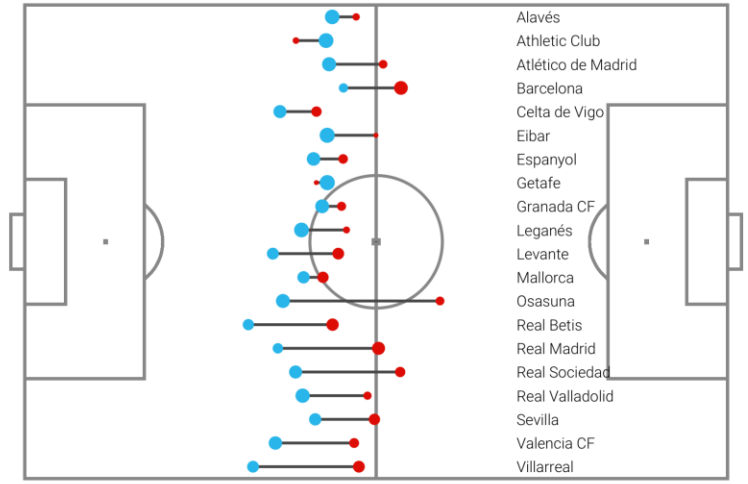

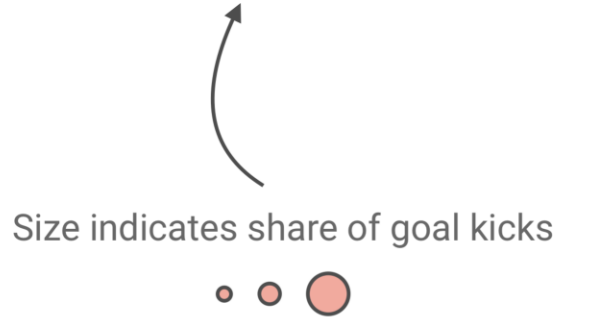

Takeaways

- Risk/Reward trade-off when looking to go short – can create chances directly of (relative) high quality, also open self up to conceding chances

- Short goal kicks offer better option for most sides to build – reflected in ball progression numbers

- Long goal kicks offer a chance to release potential pressure, but are the poorer option for most teams for progressing the ball

- Controlling transitions is key

- Ideal strategy is the one that is reactive to current game state

Free Ideas

- How does the pressure on the ball impact a team's ability to progress from a goal kick?
- Can we identify common routes that teams take from goal kicks?
- How effective is a short-to-go-long routine vs a short-and-stay-short one?

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Thank You