

2022 Season J1 League Report.



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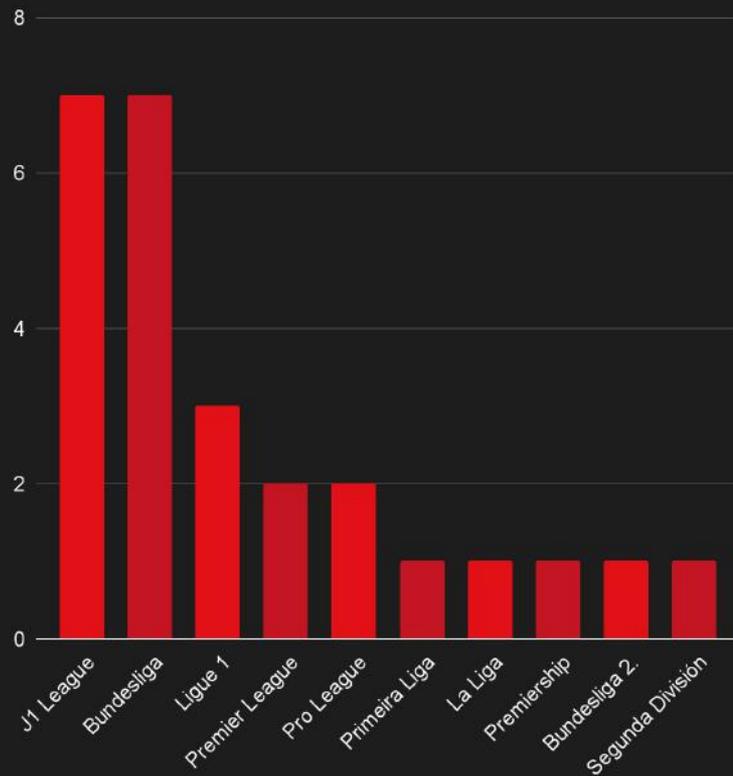
The Continual Growth of Japanese Football

Japanese football is one of the fastest growing regions in it's popularity and it's quality. The J1 League is seen globally as a place that nurtures it's talent and provides a platform for players to perform to a high physical and technical level, and has become a key market for the biggest leagues in the world to scout from.

The J1 League has always provided a steady stream of exports to Europe's top leagues and in recent years we've seen Japanese players succeed in the Scottish Premiership, German Bundesliga, and even directly to the English Premier League in the case of Kaoru Mitoma at Brighton & Hove Albion.

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Japan called upon players from **ten different leagues** for their 2022 World Cup squad



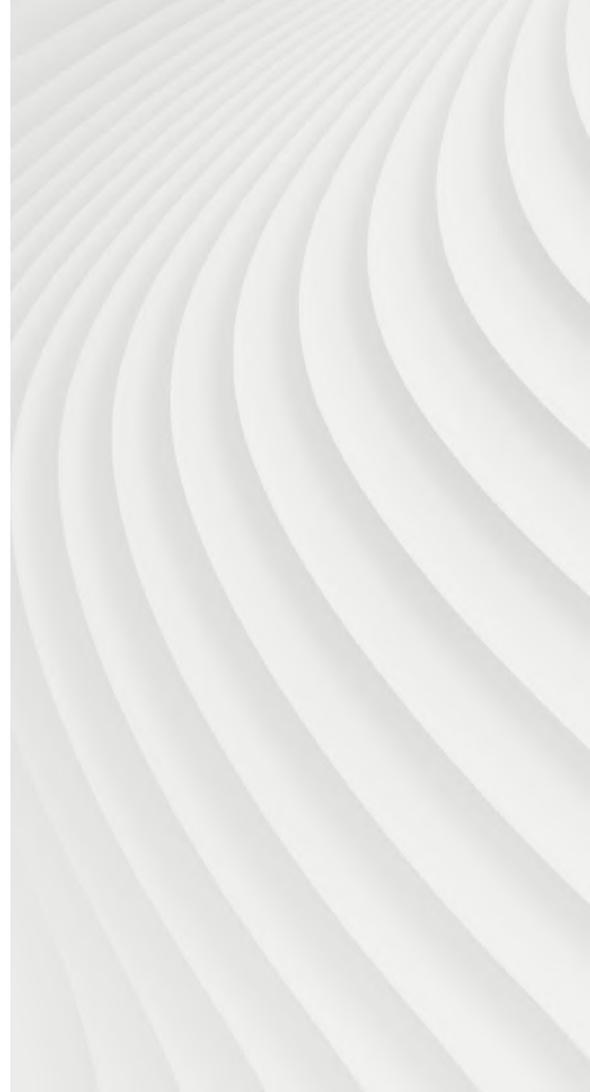
The Value of Data in Scouting

The use of data in football continues to play a big part in the scouting and recruitment of leagues such as the J1 League around the world, as teams and organisations continue to invest in a competitive edge that still costs less than a single player's annual salary.

The benefits of using data in player recruitment and performance analysis are numerous:

- **Wider player pool:** increasing the amount of players you scout means you're able to get the best player possible within your budget.
- **Resource management:** only invest scouting resources in players that suit your team's playing style.
- **Performance benchmarking:** monitor the performance of your players and compare their outputs against other players in your league.
- **Opposition analysis:** save time and resources by identifying team performance trends and insights in seconds.

The use of data remains one of the most efficient ways of maximising resources within your organisation - one that presents a clear and tangible return on investment.



Comparing the J1 League to Europe

The J1 League and Japanese football in general has built a reputation for being played at a high technical level whilst also being fast and physically accomplished.

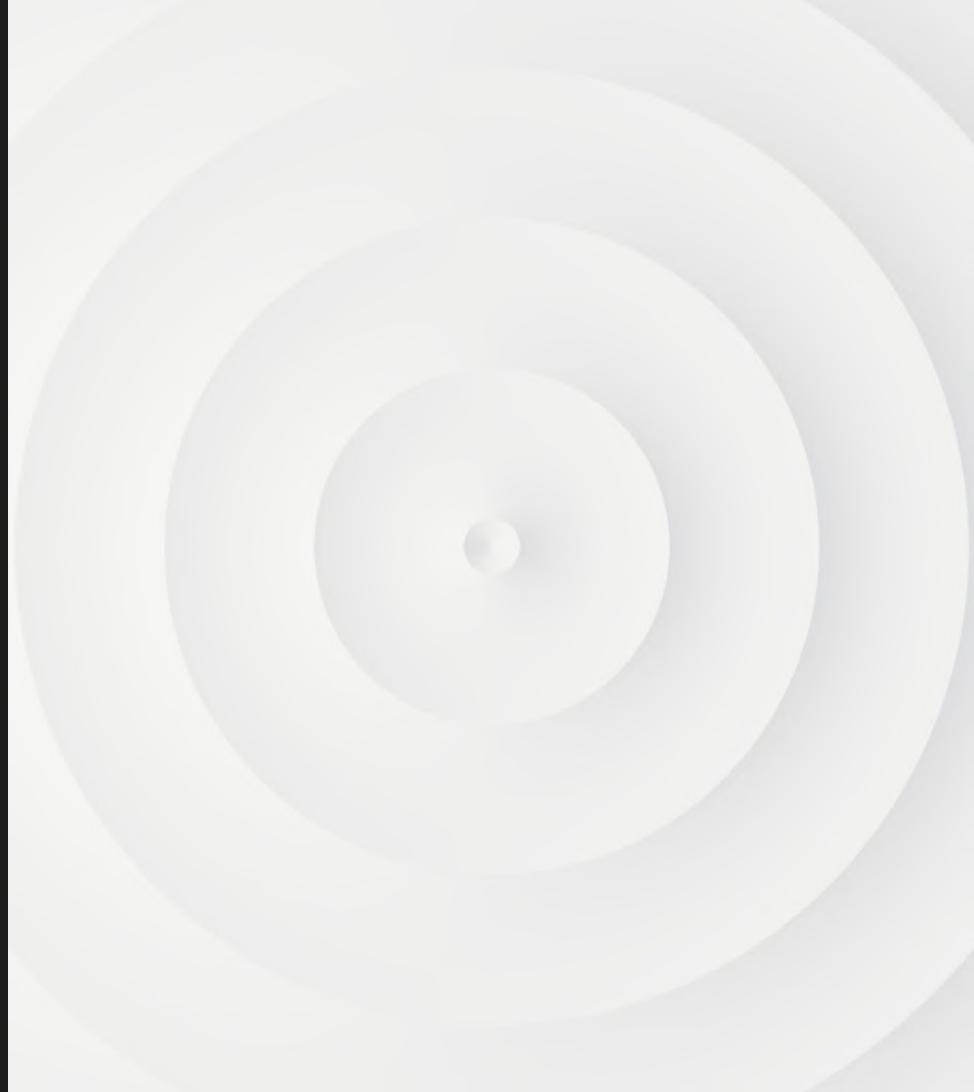
With many players going on to play in Europe's Big 5 Leagues*, it's interesting to see how the J1 League compares in certain metrics to benchmark its style against it's European counterparts:

- It's notable that the J1 League ranks highly for the number of possessions in a game, the speed with which each team attacks, and also the amount of pressures exerted in the opposition team's half. This points to a league that is played at a fast pace.
- The high number of pressures and high number of shots following a successful high press also point to Japanese teams' emphasis on employing a coordinated press and being organised out of possession.

How does the J1 League compare to the Big 5 European Leagues?

Metric	J1 League Rank (out of 6)	Top League (1st)
Goals	5th	Bundesliga (Most)
Ball In Play Time	4th	Ligue 1 (Longest)
Possessions	1st	J1 League (Most)
Average Goalkeeper Pass Length	5th	Ligue 1 (Shortest)
Dribbles	6th	Ligue 1 (Most)
Pace Towards Goal	3rd	Bundesliga (Fastest)
Shot Distance	5th	Premier League (Closest)
Pressures In The Opposition Half	1st	J1 League (Most)
High Press Shots	2nd	Ligue 1 (Most)

Expected Goals (xG).



StatsBomb xG

Expected Goals (xG) is a metric designed to measure the probability of a shot resulting in a goal. An xG model uses historical information from thousands of shots with similar characteristics to estimate the likelihood of a goal on a scale between 0 and 1. For example, a shot with an xG value of 0.43 would be expected to be converted into a goal 43% of the time.

Teams use xG because it's the most accurate available predictor of future team and player performance. It allows us to look beyond current results to get a better idea of the underlying quality of both teams and players.

StatsBomb's Expected Goals (xG) model uses more contextual events and better quality data than any other provider to accurately measure the quality of chances, including features such as the goalkeeper's position, the position of surrounding defenders and the pressure on the ball, and the height of the ball at the moment it was struck.

Independent analysis and our own research shows our xG to be more accurate and more predictive than competitors models.

[Click here to see more about our Expected Goals model >>](#)

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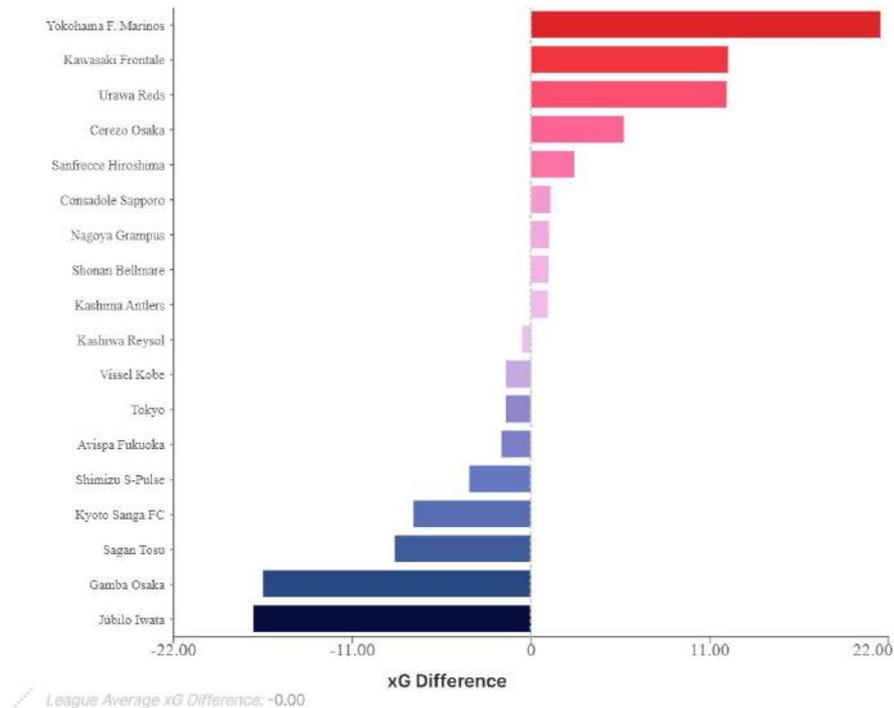


Expected Goals (xG)

2022 J1 League champions Yokohama F. Marinos were deserved title winners according to their expected goal difference (expected goals created minus expected goals conceded). Their xG Difference of +21.5 was by far the best in the league.

18th-placed Jubilo Iwata had the worst expected goal difference and were likely deserving of their relegation to the J2 League. Perhaps Gamba Osaka were fortunate not to have joined them? They finished in 15th place despite having a comparable expected goal difference.

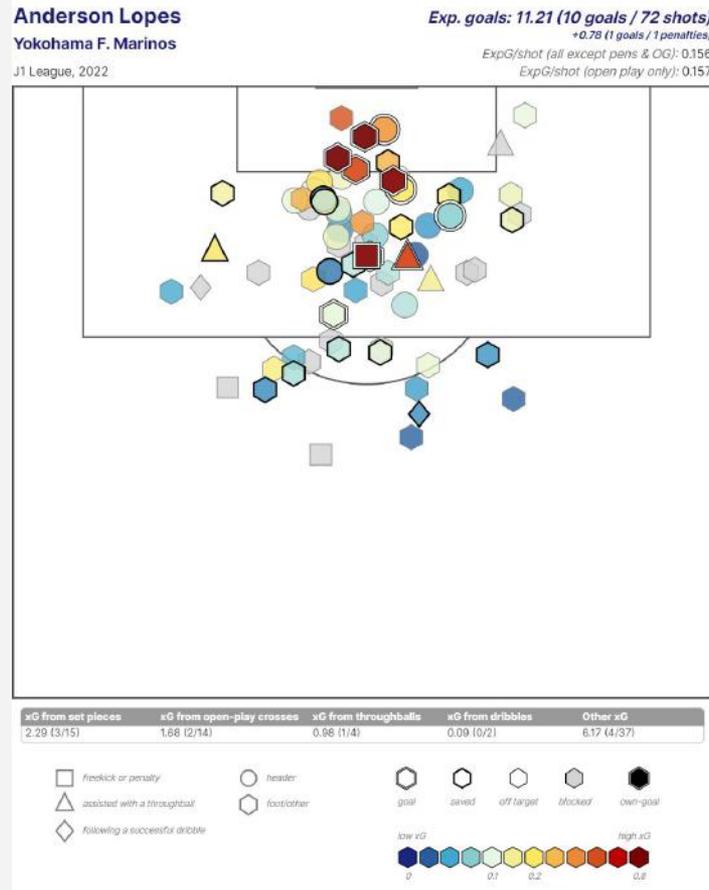
Urawa Reds may feel they could have finished higher in the table. They had a +9 goal difference and +12.1 expected goal difference, but could only finish midtable.



Expected Goals (xG)

Thiago Santana (Shimizu S-Pulse) finished as the top scorer in the 2022 J1 League with 14 goals – 13 when excluding penalties. However, he scored his 13 non-penalty goals from an xG of 7.97, meaning he overperformed his expected goals by over 60%.

The player with the most xG in the 2022 season was Anderson Lopes of Yokohoma F. Marinos, who accumulated 11.21 xG but was only able to score 10 non-penalty goals.



Expected Goals (xG)

Makoto Mitsuta
Sanfrece Hiroshima

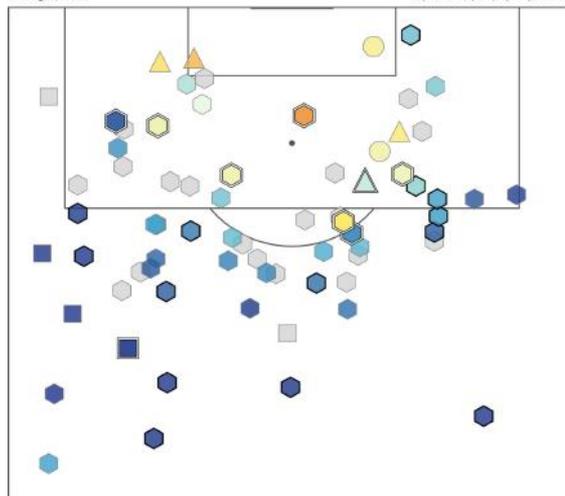
Exp. goals: 4.46 (9 goals / 72 shots)

+0.00 (0 goals / 0 penalties)

ExpG/shot (all except pens & OG): 0.062

ExpG/shot (open play only): 0.070

J1 League, 2022



xG from set pieces	xG from open-play crosses	xG from throughballs	xG from dribbles	Other xG
0.25 (1/2)	0.23 (2/2)	0.02 (1/4)	0.00 (0/3)	3.96 (9/5)



Anderson Lopes
Yokohama F. Marinos

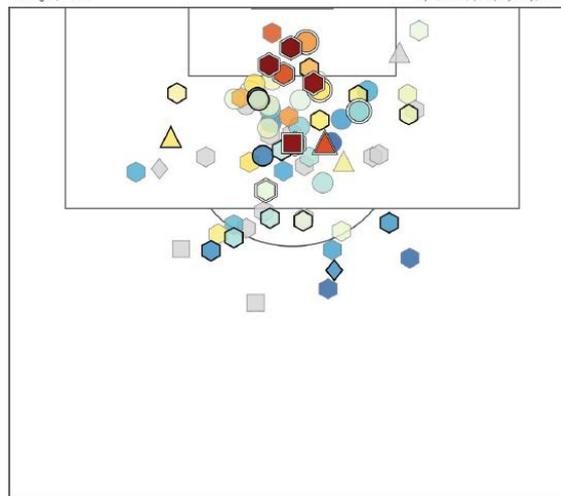
Exp. goals: 11.21 (10 goals / 72 shots)

+0.78 (1 goals / 1 penalties)

ExpG/shot (all except pens & OG): 0.158

ExpG/shot (open play only): 0.157

J1 League, 2022



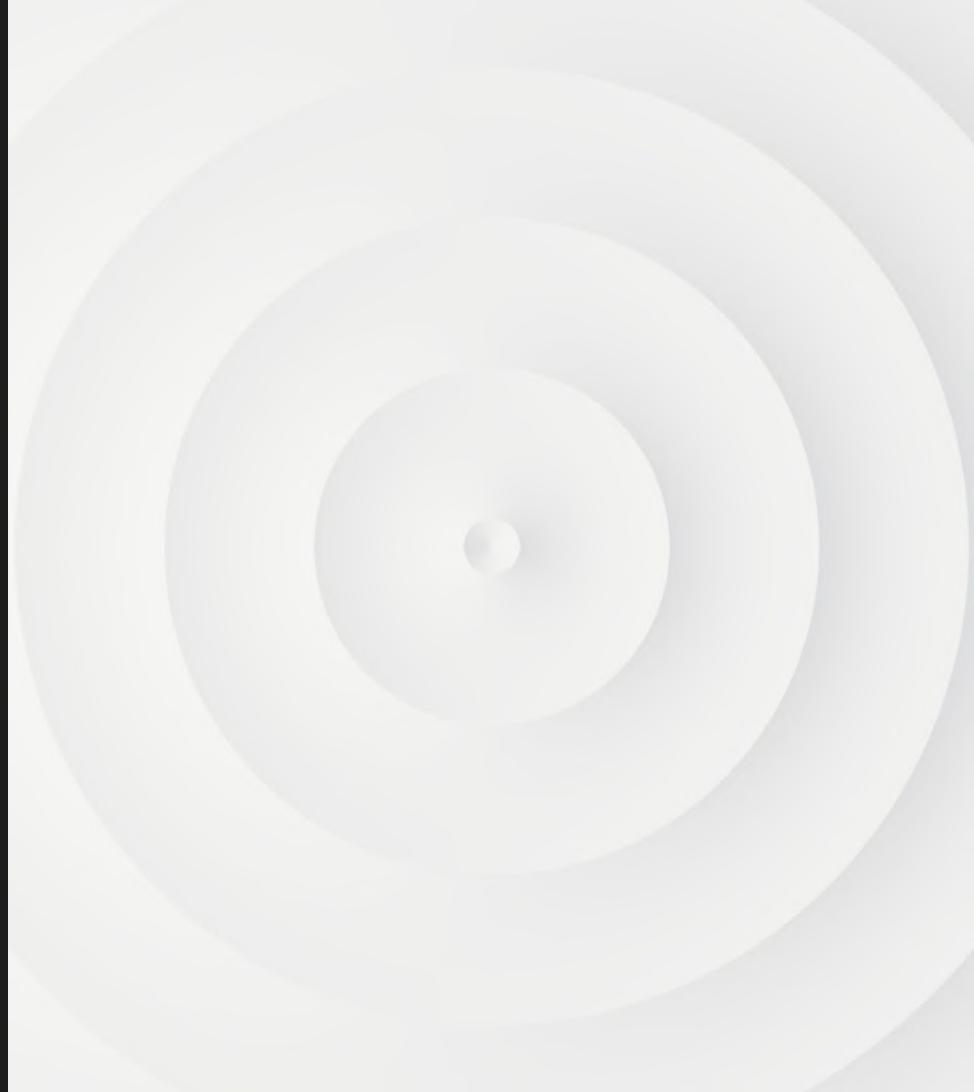
xG from set pieces	xG from open-play crosses	xG from throughballs	xG from dribbles	Other xG
2.29 (3/5)	1.88 (2/4)	0.38 (1/4)	0.09 (0/2)	6.17 (4/7)



To further illustrate the power of expected goals, consider that Makoto Mitsuta (Sanfrece Hiroshima) had the same number of shots in the 2022 season as Anderson Lopes (72 shots), but Lopes had more than double Mitsuta's expected goals (4.46) because of shooting from much better locations.

Pressures.

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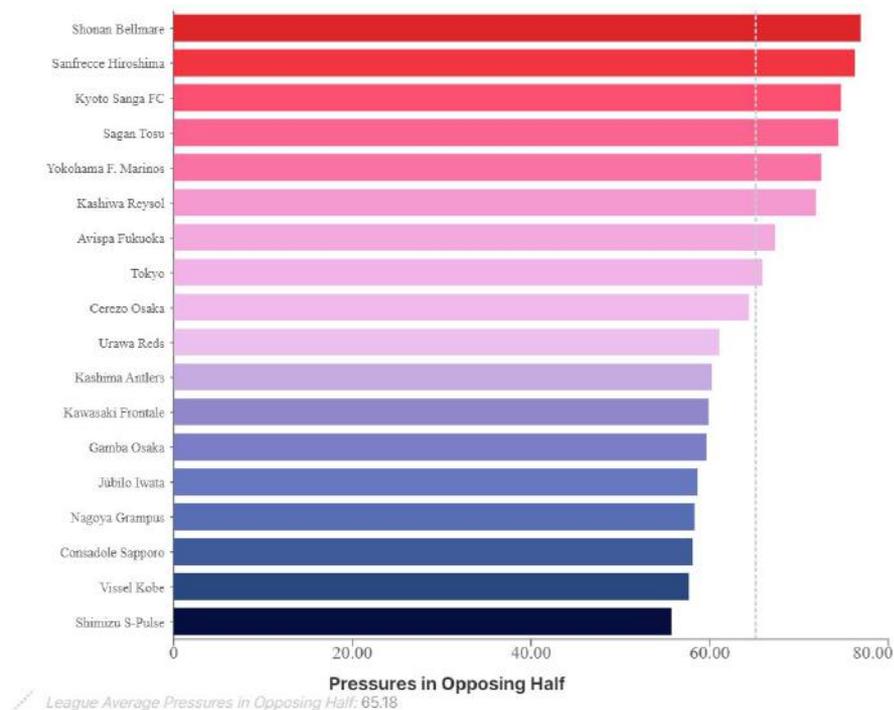


Pressures

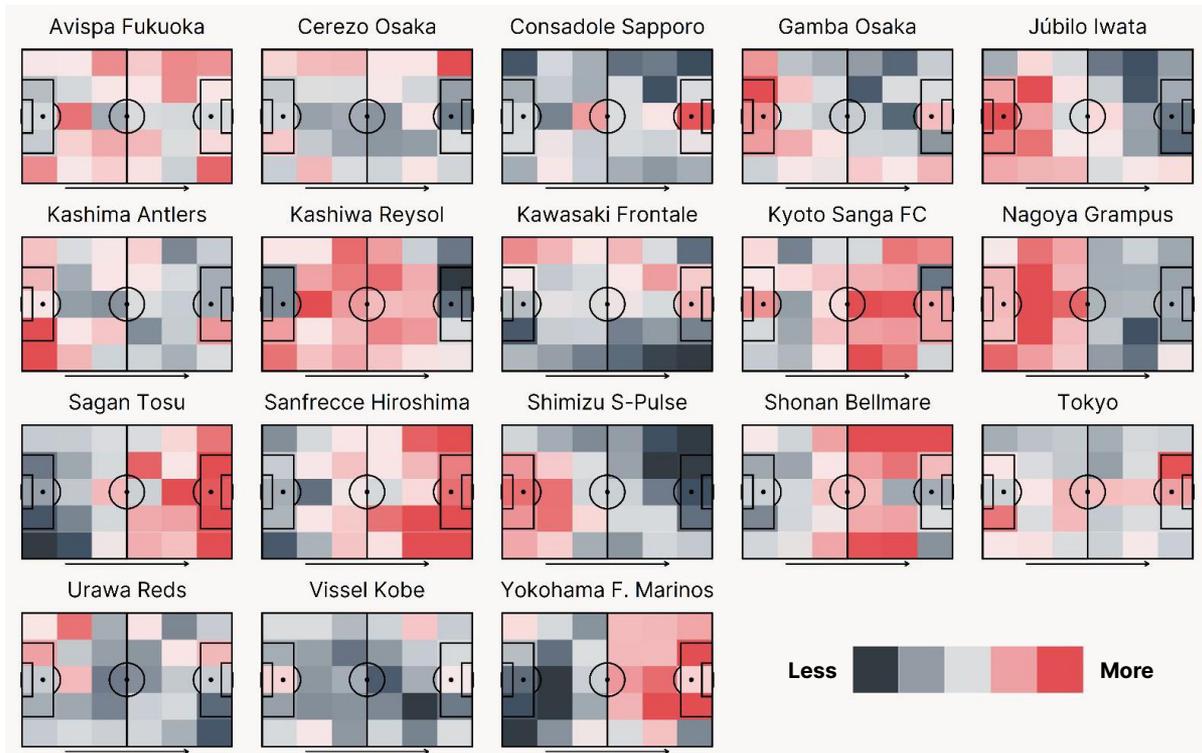
StatsBomb is the only data provider to collect accurate pressure at an event level, allowing analysis of how players and teams press and how they perform under pressure.

The graph on the right shows the amount of pressures each team made in the opponent's half on average in each game.

The high-pressing approach of teams such as Shonan Bellmare, Yokohama F. Marinos and Sagan Tosu show up towards the top of the table, whereas the teams who favour a more conservative pressing approach appear at the bottom, such as Shimizu S-Pulse and Nagoya Grampus.



Defensive Activity Compared To League Average

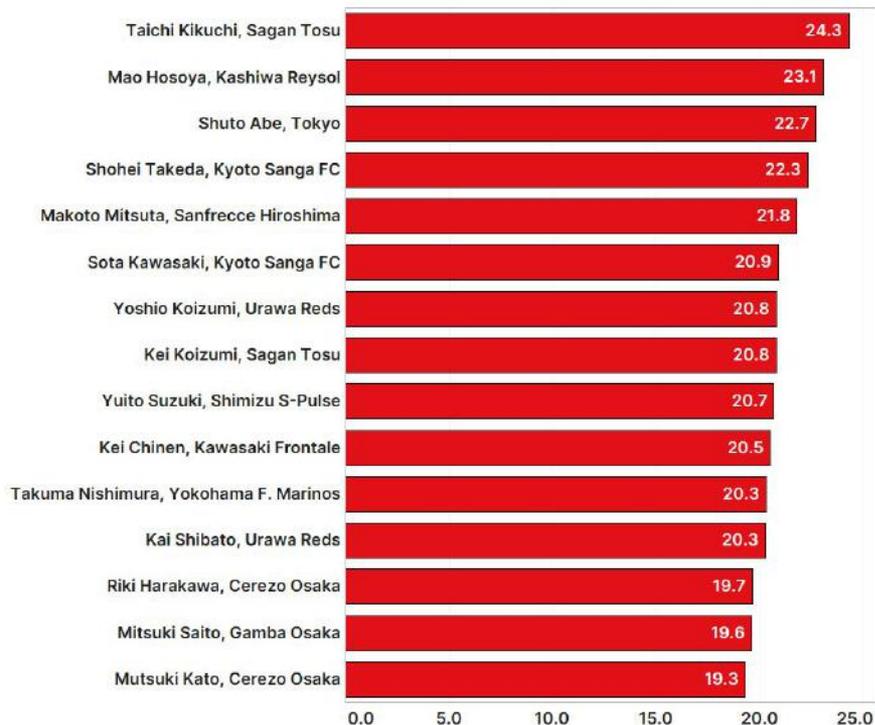


Pressures

Pressures can also reveal plenty of useful and actionable information on a player level. Identifying which players are active in the press and whereabouts on the pitch they perform their pressing actions can be crucial information for performance and recruitment analysts, as well as looking at player actions performed under pressure.

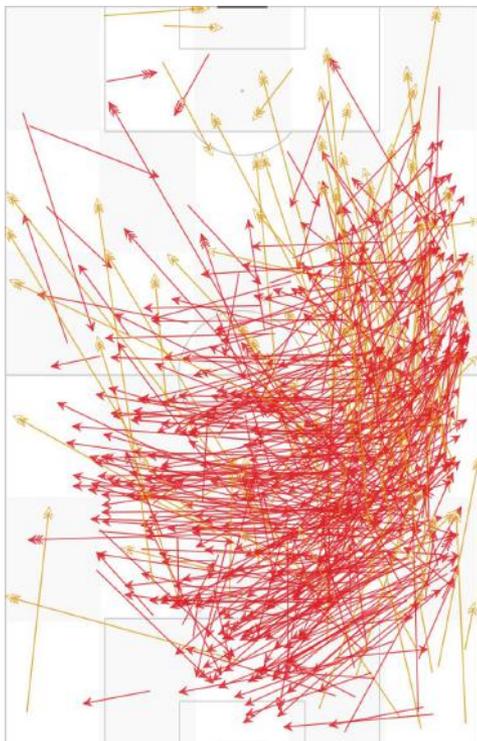
The chart of the right shows the top 15 players in the 2022 J1 League season for Pressures performed per 90 minutes played. Taichi Kikuchi averaged 24.3 pressing actions per 90 minutes despite playing for a team which had the majority of the possession on average (55%).

Riki Harakawa (Cerezo Osaka) ranked 13th for Pressures, but his Counterpressure rate (pressures performed within 5 seconds of a turnover) was much higher and indicated the majority of pressures he performed were immediately after a turnover: he ranked 5th for Counterpressures.

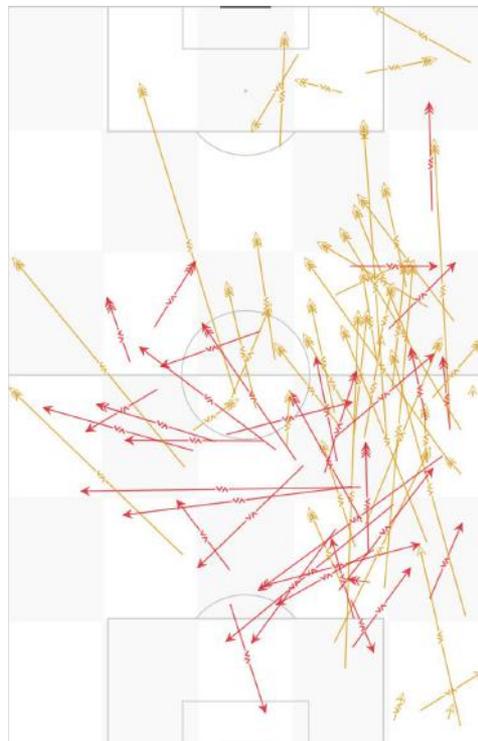


Pressures

Unpressured Passes - 84.5% Completion



Pressured Passes - 44.0% completion



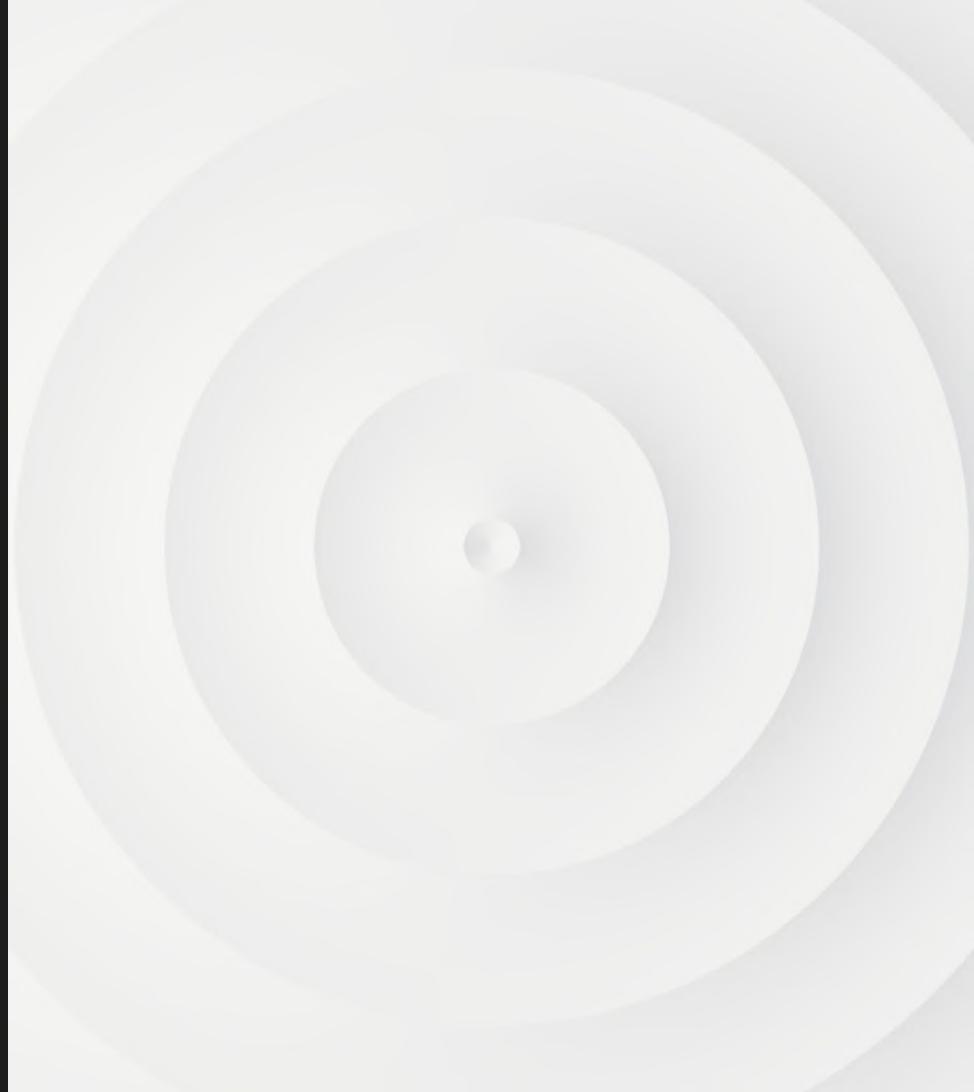
Direction of play for Kyoto Sanga

We could also use pressures to look at how players performed in possession when under opposition pressure.

Kyoto Sanga's Hisashi Appiah Tawiah was one of the worst performing players under pressure in the 2022 season – his pass completion % dropped from 84.5% for unpressured passes to 44% when put under opposition pressure.

**Line-breaking
passes.**

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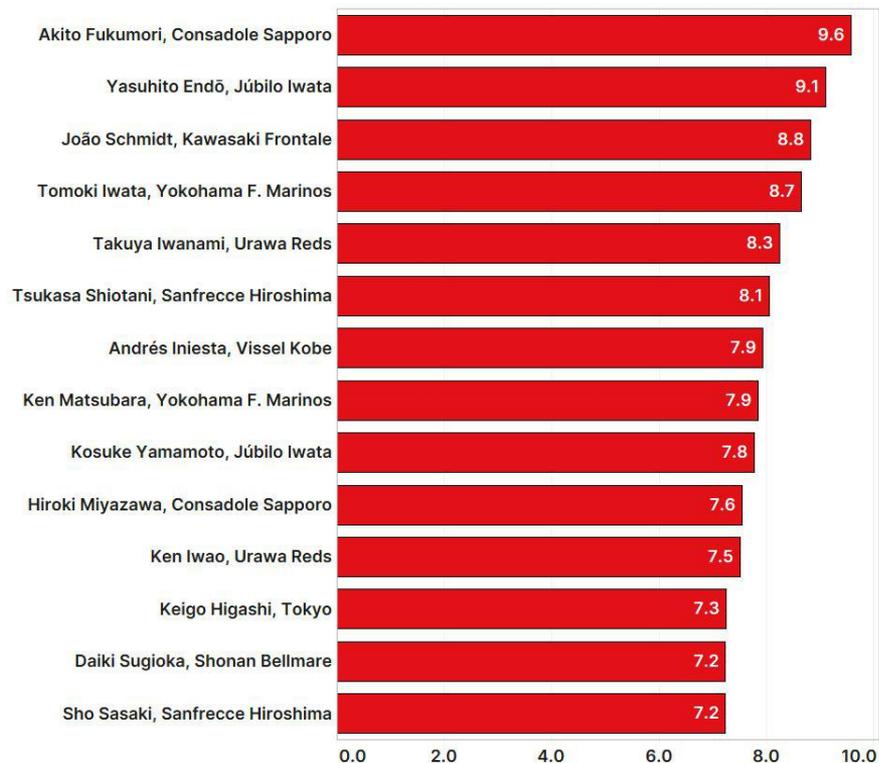
Line-breaking passes

In attacking play, analysts tend to be interested in three types of player: those who can score goals, those who create goals, or those who progress the ball towards goal.

Line-breaking passes is a metric that serves the latter, and has long been a measure that video analysts would refer to when evaluating ball-progressing players, but without being able to quantify it reliably – until now.

A line-breaking pass advances the ball at least 10% closer to goal, and either intersects a pair of defenders in close proximity or ends behind a line of defenders

Here we can see the players who played line-breaking passes most frequently in the 2022 J1 League season.

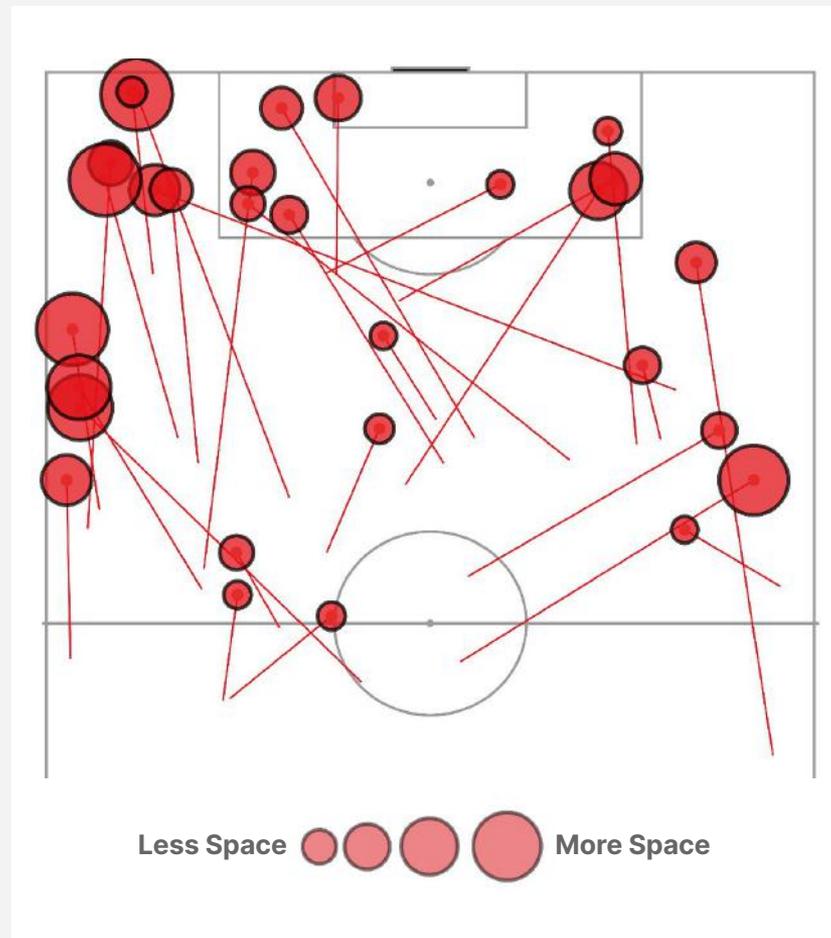


Per 90 minutes + Regular Season only
Successful open play footed passes only

Line-breaking passes

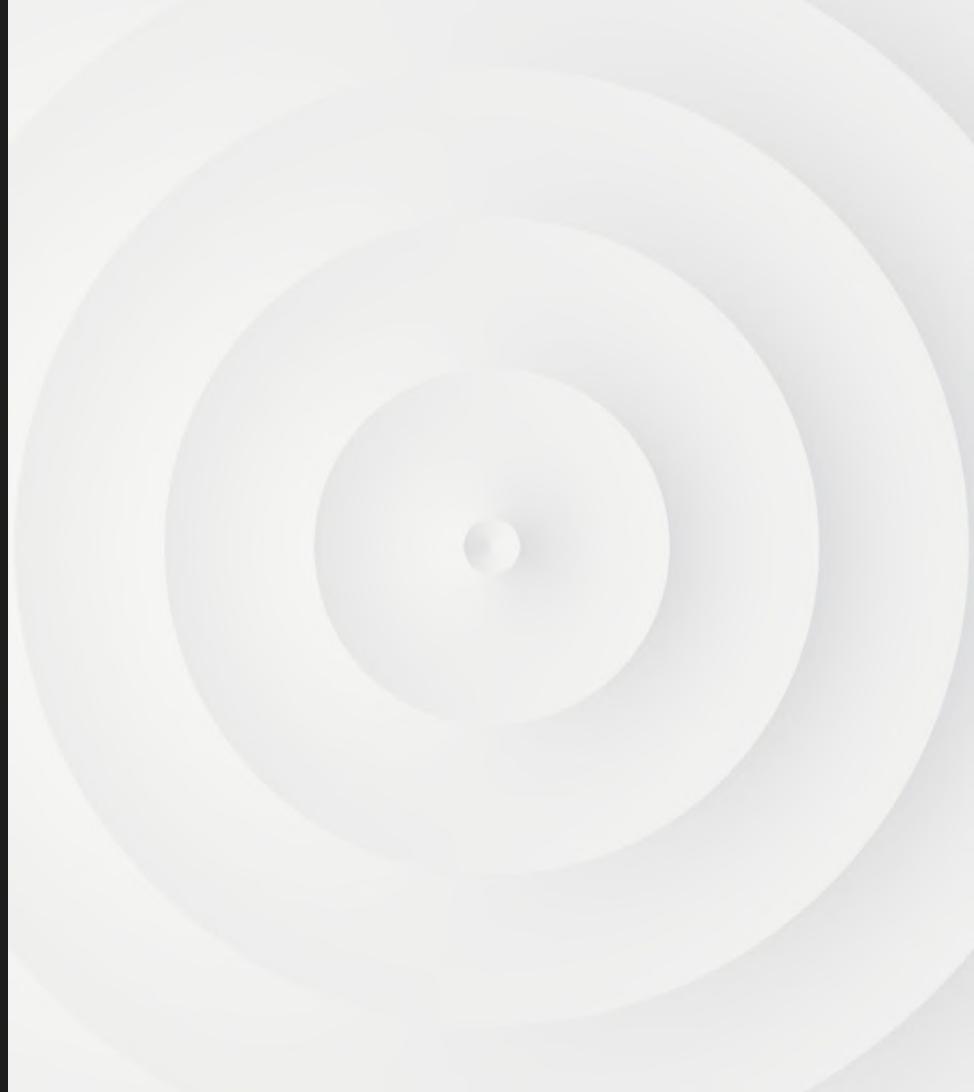
We can also pair line-breaking passes up with more context - in this case the amount of space the ball receiver was in when they received the pass. This can identify players who can break line with their passing and also find players in space on the pitch.

Andrés Iniesta is a great example of this. On the right you can see his line-breaking passes that ended inside the opposition half and that also found the receiver in at least 5 metres of space. The size of the node is scaled to the amount of space the receiver was in.



Dribbling & Ball Carrying.

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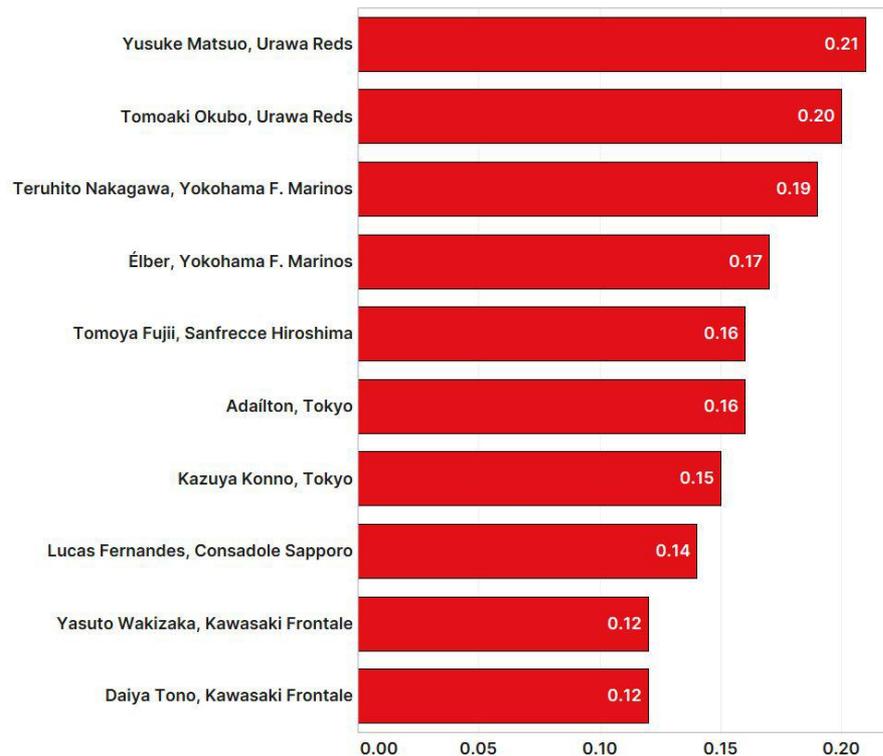


Dribbling & Ball Carrying

In 2021, StatsBomb launched its On-Ball Value (OBV) metric. OBV is a model that values each action based on the positive or negative impact it has on the team's likelihood of scoring and conceding.

Where once analysts used to count the number and success rate of dribbles that players were attempting in order to evaluate their dribbling skill, now we can be more precise with our evaluation of a player's ball carries by assigning a value to them based on the impact the carry had on their team's likelihood of scoring during that possession.

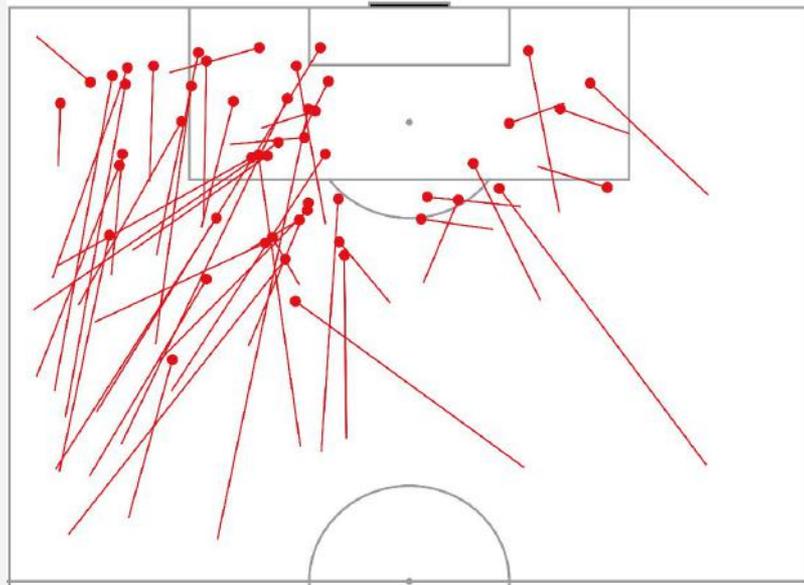
Here we can see the players who added the most value from their dribbles and carries in the 2022 J1 League season.



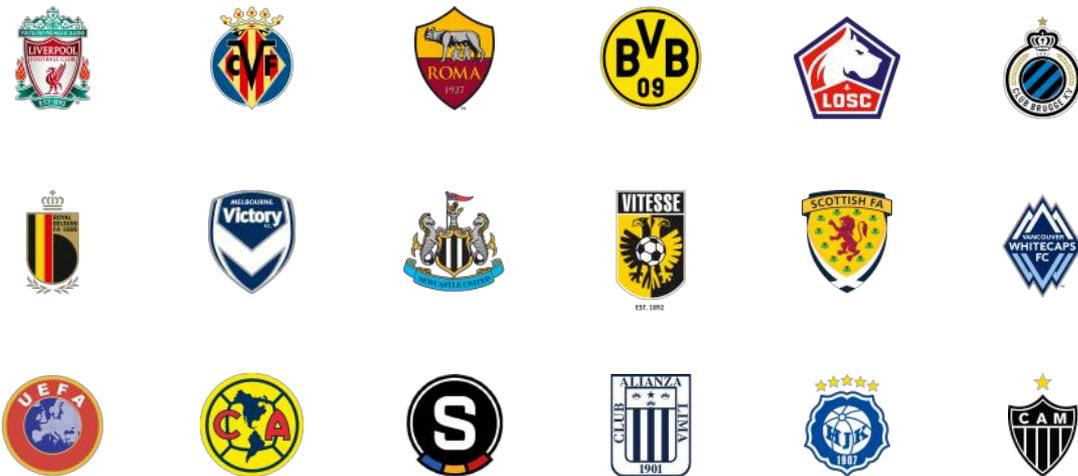
Dribbling & Ball Carrying

Yusuke Matsuo added more value from his dribbling and ball carrying than any other player in the J1 League in 2022.

The plot on the right shows Matsuo's 50 most valuable carries as determined by OBV, and highlights his ability to carry the ball over great distances in the attacking half, penetrating the opposition from deep or attacking the penalty box from wider positions.



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