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Performance indicators that predict success during counter-attacks in world cup matches

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INTRODUCTION:
It has been reported that although counter-attacks occur less frequently during soccer matches than organized attacks, they are the most effective style of play for scoring goals, especially against an imbalanced defense. Moreover, as football is a low scoring sport, general measures of offensive effectiveness such as scoring opportunities, shots on goal, and final third pitch entries have been proposed as good indicators. The present study aimed to investigate the factors associated with final third entries during counterattacks during men's, women's and u20 men's World Cup (WC) matches.
METHODS:
The sample consisted of 48 knockout World Cup matches (16 Men's WC 2018, 16 Women's WC 2019 and 16 u20 Men's WC 2019). The study design included the analysis of the following indicators: (a) situational indicators, (b) defensive performance indicators, (c) offensive performance indicators, (d) the possession result, "final third entry" or "no final third entry", was used as a dependent variable. Intra- and inter-reliability of the observational instrument was tested, as described previously, with mean kappa statistics of k=0.95 and k=0.89 classified as "perfect" agreement respectively. Binary logistic regression models were constructed for each tournament included the above performance indicators as predictors and the dichotomous result as the predicted variable. The backward Wald method was used and all assumptions of binary logistic regression were met.
RESULTS:
The following indicators increase the likelihood of entering into the final third during counter-attack for each World Cup tournament: (1) Men WC 2018 : low defenders' position, inside penetration zone, low pass number, high penetrative pass number, long duration and offensive half pitch recovery, (2) Women WC 2019 : low defenders' position, inside penetration zone, low pass number, high penetrative pass number, long duration and offensive half pitch recovery, (3) Men u20 2019 : low defenders' position, 4-5 defenders, 1-3 attackers, long duration and offensive half pitch recovery.

CONCLUSION:
The regression models identified common indicators in order to increase the likelihood of entering the final third during counter-attack between the three tournaments. No previous study has used final third entry as predicted variable for success during women's and youth's tournaments. Consistent with previous studies, our results revealed agreement for recovering inside opponent's penetration zone and inside offensive half pitch, with high proportion of penetrative passes, participating 1-3 attackers. The present results provide practical implications for training counter-attacks both from offensive and defensive point of view, as well as for coach's decision making prior and during matchplay.

Topic: Coaching

Presentation E-poster