Patterns of Ball Recovery of the Spanish National Soccer Team in the 2010 FIFA® World Cup

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Abstract

In soccer, keeping the ball far from the team’s defensive third is regarded as being a secure approach, since allowing the opposition to have the ball within this sector provides great risks to the team’s goal (Gréhaigne, 1992). Therefore, considering the defensive success of the Spanish National Soccer Team in recent UEFA® and FIFA® tournaments, this study aimed to verify Spain’s patterns of ball recovery during the 2010 FIFA® World Cup, with respect to the zones of the field of play where the Spanish Team regained possession of the ball. The sample comprised 608 offensive sequences performed by the Spanish Team during their seven matches in the 2010 FIFA® World Cup. The location of the field where ball recovery took place was categorized in 12 zones, following the model proposed by Gréhaigne, Mahut, and Fernandez (2001) and . Chi-squared ($\chi^2$) test was performed to compare the frequency of actions of ball recovery between each field zone ($p<0.05$). Standardized residuals (R) were used to examine the significance (R>2.0 and R<-2.0) of each zone to the model . Results displayed that the Spanish Team recover a significantly higher number of balls ($p<0.001; R=10.71$) within the right defensive midfield zone, whereas the central offensive zone provided significantly less recovered balls ($p<0.001; R=-6.97$) than any other zone of the field. Such findings indicate that besides being regarded as a team who employ very offensive playing methods, Spain displayed a pattern of ball recovery that suggests they prefer to regain possession in their defensive half of the field, probably intending to perform fast counter-attacks immediately after recovering the ball.

Keywords: Soccer; Ball Recovery; World Cup.

References


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