

Original Article

Solving one-on-one game situations by outside midfielders in top-level football

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Abstract

One-on-one game situations in football are an important factor that very often decides the outcome of football matches. Repeated one-on-one game situations are solved by outside midfield players, who are predestined for this by their player's role and the player's space. Solving one-on-one game situations by outside midfielders both in the attacking and defensive phases of the play can be implemented in different ways. The aim of this paper is to gain knowledge on solving these critical game situations by outside midfielders of the national team of Slovakia. The basic method for data collection was indirect observation using video recordings from EURO 2016 qualifying matches. In terms of the attacking phase of the play, outside midfield players most commonly used in avoiding their opponent a short dribble - 116 times (out of the total number of 302) with a 50 percent success rate. Taking into account the defensive phase of the play, outside midfielders when tackling the ball most frequently run into pass - 35 times (out of the total number of 160) with a success rate of 68.5 percent. For statistical processing of the data obtained, we used the test of significance of relative values and Mann-Whitney U test.

Keywords: football, one-on-one game situations, attacking phase of the play, defensive phase of the play

Introduction

One of the limiting factors of the success rate in football, which leads to victory of the team in the match, is an effective solution of one-on-one game situations both in the attacking and the defensive phases of the play (Žamba and Holienka 2012). The football match itself is a continuous sequence of occurrence of one-on-one game situations. In an analysis of the football game Kačáni (2005) says that game situations are the smallest part of the game or the current status in the game. Bisanz and Vieth (2000) refer to the game situation as to "the initial part of the game".

In the football literature experts often call one-on-one game situations as game micro situations or personal duels. These game situations are typical features of contemporary football matches. They form a substantial part of the exciting game situations in the play, because of which football is the most watched and the most popular sport among viewers. The success rate in solving game situations creates differences between the two teams. Differences in the success rate of their solution will then decide the outcome of matches.

Peráček and Pakusza (2011) characterize one-on-one game situations as a duel of two players to get the ball in any spatial section of the field with the effort to create a better starting option for players of one's team. Rutemoller (1994) states that the team, which wins most one-on-one duels, wins the match. This quotation known in football is, however, not confirmed in every match. In spite of this, the ability to solve one-on-one game situations should regularly improve in the training process from the youngest age groups (Marques 2011, Verardi 2016).

Contemporary football training is to a considerable degree a training to solve one-on-one game situations. Actions of the player in one-on-one game situations is a task still topical for every player and in the training process regularly and systematically drilled (Stapelfeld 1993).

The effort of a player in a match is to get the ball under his control. Depending on whether he has the ball under his control, or is just trying to get it, we analyze one-on-one game situations in terms of the attacking phase or in terms of defensive phase of the play.

In dealing with these game micro situations the player should be confident about his success in the fight with an opponent's player. If players do not believe in their abilities, are not sufficiently self-confident, they will not seek one-on-one game situations in the match and will avoid them. Such players are unnecessary in today's modern football (Abdullah 2016). A player with a big stack of solutions for personal duels, on the contrary tries to seek such typical game situations and thus help his team to reach success in the match. Football belongs to sports that require players when dealing with one-on-one game situations maximum demonstration of all speed abilities (Holienska 2003, Barbosa 2014). The basic and important element for a successful solution of game situations are coordination skills. According to Holienka (2010), the ability to response, the balance ability and

in particular the ability of connecting various movements appear in football almost constantly in solving all game situations.

Methodology

In our research monitoring - ex post facto research, we aimed at gaining knowledge on ways and success rate of solving one-on-one game situations by outside midfielders of the Slovak team both in the attacking and defensive phases of the play in the EURO 2016 qualifying matches. We gained the knowledge using the method of indirect observation, which is based on the perception of objects through a visual analyzer. Indirect observation is characterized by efficiency, planning and concentration, i.e. by controlled sensual perception. To analyze how the game situations were dealt with we used DVD recordings of matches of the Slovak national team. The object of the observation were 6 players (Table 1) who played in the matches in the position of an outside midfielder player. The average age of the players studied was 28.1 ± 3.04 years, with an average height of 178.2 ± 5.79 centimeters and an average weight of 72 ± 3.16 kilograms.

Table 1 Outside midfielder players of the Slovak national team in EURO 2016 qualifying matches

Player's name	Number of matches	Number of minutes	Number of goals
V.W.	8	583	1
M.S.	7	256	1
R.M.	9	618	2
M.D.	6	273	0
S.Š.	3	90	1
D.Š.	4	315	0

We analyzed all 10 qualifying matches of Slovakia. Before analyzing the qualifying matches we assumed from the point of view of solving one-on-one game situations the following:

- in the offensive phase of the play the most frequent use to avoid an opponent was a short dribble,
- in the defensive phase of the play the most often use of tackling the ball was stealing,
- a higher frequency of solving one-on-one game situations at opponents' playing fields from the point of view of the defensive phase of the play,
- a higher success rate of solving one-on-one game situations in home matches from the point of view of the offensive phase of the play.

Results

In the EURO 2016 qualifying matches we registered among outside midfielders of the national team of Slovakia large, in some cases even striking, differences in the ways to avoid opponent's players, respectively to tackling the ball.

In the offensive phase of the play Slovak outside midfielder players tried to avoid opponents in the ten qualifying matches a total of 302 times (average per match 30.2). The most commonly used method was a short dribble (116 times) with a 50 percent success rate. The least used way was pull a ball (6 times) with a 33 percent success rate (Figure 1).

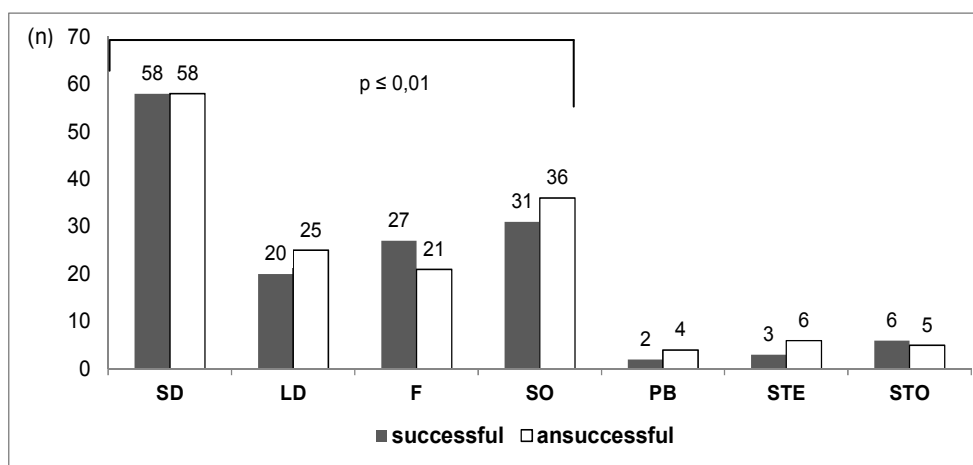


Figure 1 Ways of avoiding opponents by outside midfielders of the Slovak team

SD - short dribble F - feint PB - pull a ball
 LD - long dribble SO - shifting opponent STE - stepping on the ball
 STO - stoppage a ball

In the defensive phase of the play Slovak outside midfield players attempted to tackling the ball a total of 160 times (average of 16 per match). The most frequently used way to tackling the ball was running into pass (35 times) with a 68.5 percent success rate (Figure 2).

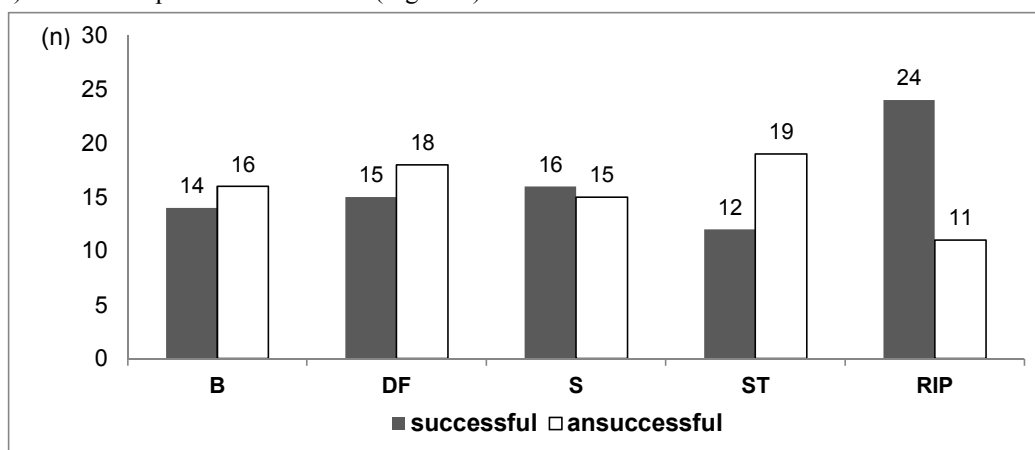


Figure 2 Ways for tackling the ball from the opponent by outside midfielders of the Slovak national team
 B - blocking S - stealing RIP - running into pass
 DF- dive forward ST - sliding tackling

The frequency of solving one-on-one game situations by outside midfielders depends on many factors. It depends on the basic playing system, on the way how the team plays, on the quality of the team (playing skills), and as it turned out on the importance of the match. A higher frequency of solving one-on-one game situations in terms of the defensive phase of the play was posted by midfield players in home games, the average per game is 19.4. On playing fields of the opponent the average frequency was 16 per match (Table 2).

Table 2 The frequency of solving one-on-one game situations in terms of the defensive phase of the play by outside midfielders in Slovakia's team

Game	No. 1	No. 2	No. 3	No. 4	No. 5	∑	Ø / match
Home	24	23	15	16	19	97	19.4
Away	21	20	21	9	9	80	16

The success rate of solving one-on-one game situations by outside midfielders has a big impact on the success of the team in the match. Their success depends primarily on individual preconditions of the player taking into account the technical, tactical, fitness, coordinating, and mental aspects. The player's confidence is in many cases the "main motive" to successfully solve these game situations.

The analysis of solving one-on-one game situations in terms of the offensive phase of the play showed that outside midfield players of the Slovak national team reached almost the same success rate in matches played at home and away. The minimum difference in the average success rate is only 0.2 percent (Table 3).

Table 3 The success rate of solving one-on-one game situations in terms of the offensive phase of the play by outside midfielders of the Slovak national team

Game	No. 1	No. 2	No. 3	No. 4	No. 5	Ø success rate
Home	33	75	47	62	51	53,6 %
Away	55	59	58	47	48	53,4 %

Discussion

In the offensive phase of the play outside midfield players in one-on-one game situations in the monitored qualification matches applied seven basic ways of avoiding an opponent. As we expected, the most commonly used way of avoiding an opponent was a short dribble - 116 times out of a total of 302. Based on the tests of the significance of relative values we stated a partial hypothesis that was confirmed at the significance level of $p \leq 0.01$. The second most frequent way of avoiding an opponent was shifting - 77 times.

In the defensive phase of the play outside midfield players in one-on-one game situations applied five basic ways of tackling the ball. Among the particular methods we recorded only minor differences in terms of quantity (Figure 2). We assumed that from the point of view of player's space where outside midfielders play, the most commonly applied way to tackling the ball would be stealing. However, this assumption was not fulfilled. The most common way of tackling the ball was running into pass - 35 times. Žamba and Holienka (2012) found that in the team of Italy (World Champions in 2006) and in the team of Spain (European Champions in 2008) stealing the ball was the second most frequent way to tackling the ball.

The frequency of solving one-on-one game situations in particular stages of the game is influenced by the way the team plays and the percentage of holding the ball under control. When playing on the opponent's fields we assumed in another partial hypothesis that under the impact of a higher gaming activity of the home team the frequency of solving by outside midfield players of the team of Slovakia will be higher from the point of view of the defensive phase of the play. This assumption was not fulfilled even at a significance level of $p < 0.05$ ($U = 9$; $Z = 0.6266$, $p = 0.5287$). We believe that an important role here was played by a different quality of individual teams.

The **success rate of solving one-on-one game situations** is significantly affected by the home environment. The confidence and courage of players to deal with these game situations at home is usually at a higher level. For this reason, we also assumed that the percentage of solving one-on-one game situations in terms of the offensive phase of the game would be in the monitored outside midfield players higher in home matches than in away matches. The success rate of solving in home games was 53.6 percent and in opponents' fields 53.4 percent. The values measured represent only minimal differences and the significance at a level of $p < 0.05$ ($U = 12.5$, $Z = 0.1044$, $p = 0.9203$) was not confirmed in this case.

Conclusions

Solving of one-on-one game situations in top-class football is an issue which has gained considerable attention for various reasons. We tried to record this important game "micro situation" and its solving in outside midfielders of the Slovak team in the EURO 2016 qualifying matches.

Summary:

- In the offensive phase of the game the most common way of avoiding opponents was a short dribble. It seems that this way of avoiding is mainly used due to the large spatial distress when dealing with one-on-one game situations.
- In the defensive phase of the play, running into pass is applied most often. This way confirms in particular the efforts of players to constructively tackling the ball.
- The frequency and success rate of solving one-on-one game situations in a match is significantly influenced by the different playing quality of teams (individuals) in qualification groups.

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