

# JFA Platform for Football Analysis

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**Abstract:** The aim of the article was to present a Java Platform for Football Analysis, designed and implemented for football game analysis. The framework presents capability on game analysis based on players coordinates inputs and helping coaches and players to extract information from processed games. The analysis tools to achieve this aim used collective metrics based on player's positioning on the three team sectors: defensive; middle and; offensive. This allows analyzed player's collective behaviors before critical situations (e.g., shot on goal). Data revealed that a decrease on interpersonal distances between the defensive sector and the offensive sector affords an opportunity to score.

## 1 INTRODUCTION

Football has a large impact in our society. Starting with the media to entrepreneurs, also going through all the supporters who weekly fill football stadiums around the world. This phenomenon leads to the increase of frameworks linked to football. These frameworks can range from the simple application, which allows watching the games and results in real time, to the more complex ones that collect data, process data and calculate game statistics, such as team ball possession, individual players distance traveled or individual player's number of passes performed.

One issue that hasn't been fully explored is the player's collective behavior during a match. The idea of this kind of analysis is to find out, collective metrics which accurately describe the interactive behavior of a set of players. Therefore, the aim of this study was to create an user friendly platform where performance analysts and coaches can easily analyze player's collective behaviors, usually associated to tactical performance.

Recent studies have been create and developed several coordinative variables aiming to analyze collective performance in team sports (McGarry et al., 2002) (Frencken et al., 2012) (Vilar et al., 2012). As an exploratory work, for our platform we decided to use players interpersonal distances as the coordinative variable which describes player's interactive behavior (Duarte et al., 2012). This variable allows us to collect data of intrateam and interteam collective behaviors. One main issue of our work was to relate the

behavior of this collective variable with player's team performance. Thus our platform provide the following options: i) uploading data games files (from video cameras or GPS); ii) analyze data directly on the platform; iii) export data in a csv format; iv) select the game time window. All this in just one click away and totally user-friendly. Therefore, the main goal of this study is to develop an analysis platform in web browser environment capable of supporting sports analysts and coaches on decision making and team performance analysis.

## 2 RELATED WORK

This platform increases the ease of access of data analysis. The main goal to achieve with this platform is that team's sports analysts or simple practitioners which have access to any data collection device (e.g., GPS) may upload data and analyze team collective performance. Moreover as previously stated this platform provides data mainly focus on collective behavior analysis, for instance the interpersonal distance between a team defensive 'line' and the opposition team offensive 'line'. This goes beyond the most common notational analysis mainly focus on the frequency os passes performed or distances traveled by the players.

## 2.1 Sports Platforms

Most of the platforms that are currently on the market have its main focus on the notation of each individual player technical skills and/or physical abilities.

Inmotio (Inmotio, 2015) is one of those platforms. Its main modules support three main areas: i) physical analysis; ii) injury prevention; and iii) tactical analysis. The first two modules are used by various teams to improve physical conditioning, player’s individual performance and even to help in the player’s injury recovery. In the tactical analysis, we see some metrics like: i) Transition moments; ii) ball possession statistics of both teams; iii) the number of passes when there was ball possession; iv) the duration of the ball possession; v) pass options to detect and visualize the pass options of a player during a game.

Data collection is done by technology LPM (Local Position Measurement), which is based on a wireless communication system. It’s a sort of technology is already very used, but requires players to use a transmitter to communicate their position at every moment of the game to the base station, how we can see in Figure 1. The position calculation is performed automatically and in real time (live) and therefore the measured data can be analyzed even during the measurements.

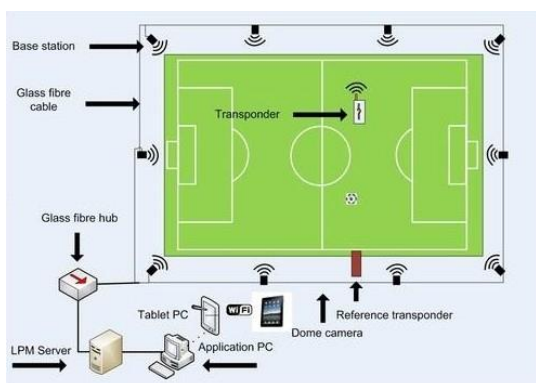


Figure 1: LPM technology (Adapted from (Inmotio, 2015)).

Viper Software (Technologies, 2015) is another platform that uses this type of data collection. It has a similar approach to Inmotio, however it has a module of tactical analysis rather interesting for selecting blocks of players and interpret their collective performance in critical moments. One of drawback of this platform is that it doesn’t allow us to visualize the ball’s position at every moment.

With the players is easy to have their position through the transmitter, but the ball position implies the usage of transceiver attached to the ball. By video observation the ball tracking is possible. Inmotion has

developed this kind of technology and it is, also, possible to get the position of several balls during training.

## 2.2 Technology

This game analysis platform has been developed using Bootstrap (Bootstrap, 2015), a powerful open-source framework for creating web applications. It contains HTML and CSS design templates for interface and uses JavaScript to define and interact with buttons, forms and other interfaces. It was also used another framework - Code Igniter based on Model-View-Controller development pattern. Used for building dynamic web sites with PHP. This framework allows to create the connection to the database and manages inserts, deletes and updates. Another very important feature is the creation of controllers of each web page that we have in the framework. The controllers permit the passage of data to the database by the POST Method, i. e., the values are sent by a HTTP message and not written in the page URL (GET method), because in this way, everyone could have access to confidential data. The controllers also allow redirect one page to another.

Users	Games
user_id (pk)	game_id (pk)
name	game_description
last_name	data_file
mail	link_video
SHA1(password)	availability
image	user_id
nationality	status
activation_code	

Figure 2: Database tables.

The database only has two tables. In the Figure 2 we can see the attributes of users and he game tables. Both are identify with id.

The password will be encrypted with SHA1 (Secure Hash Algorithm) (Eastlake 3rd and Jones, 2001) and stored in the database. This kind of encryption only works in one way, i.e., we can always generate the same encryption code using the password, but we can’t get the password from encryption code. The activation code is necessary to prevent register from bots (piece of software designed to complete a minor but repetitive task automatically) on our website. The email field is used as username for the user login, it is a unique key. It is also asked for the name of each user and their nationality, because it’s interesting to

know how many countries are reached by our framework. Finally, the image is optional and is only for user identification. If the login is done through API Google with a Google account (one of the functions provided to register), the user's image is the image that is associated with that account.

The game's table contains a description of the game and it can only be the name of the teams that are competing. It contains the data file with the respective coordinates, which will be explain in detail in subsection 3.1, Data Collection. The link field contains the URL of the video, which is preloaded on a video sharing platform. The availability on the game's table, indicates which games are available for all users or only to the user who uploaded the game. If the availability is public, all users have access to the game, if it's private, only the user who uploaded have access to the game. That user is identified by user id that works as a foreign key. Lastly, the status is a Boolean: if status = false, game is not approved yet, status = true, game is already approved.

### 3 SOFTWARE IMPLEMENTATION

With the aim to be generic, the platform is implemented as a web service. Using a computation unit expressed by a PC or tablet with an installed web browser and internet access the developed game analysis is accessible without restrictions. Comparing with windows based applications designed for game analysis the web based platform may be used through the browser independent by the operation system.

#### 3.1 Data Collection

The used data to test the developed platform have been video recorded at 25 fps (frames-per-second). Due to data collection technological constraints this video data are coordinates x and y for the 22 players in the game (home team and away team), and coordinates x, y and z for the ball. The file containing this data is in .csv (comma-separated values) format. Our platform affords to load another files for further analysis. This file has to comply with the format and specific rules to be correctly interpreted in the virtual simulator.

These data were provided by SportVU (SportVU, 2015) for testing. These data are from a match of the Dutch League of the 2011/2012 season, which ended with the victory of the away team by 0-2.

#### 3.2 Web Interface

As we can see in the Figure 3 below, the GUI is expressed by a control panel with some options to interact with the applet, we have a video that has to be previously loaded from a video-sharing website like Youtube, lastly we have charts that show metrics about the game.

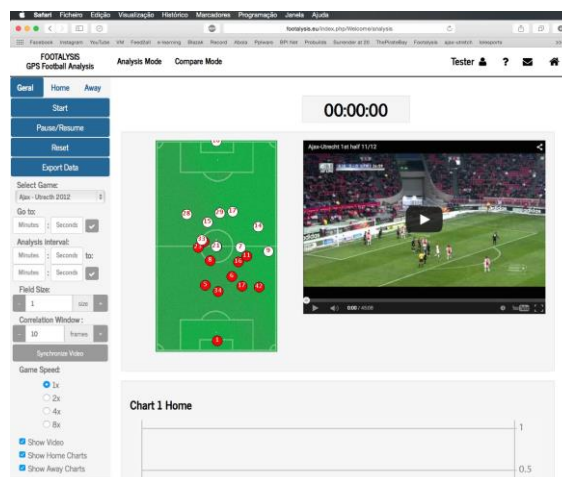


Figure 3: Panel options in analysis mode.

To access the interface showed in Figure 3 is required to make the registration in the website. After registration, any registered user may upload the video and coordinates to our platform. (If the file isn't available in this moment, it's because we need to validate him). The file must comply with the formatting rules, which they are explained on the screen where the upload is done. Data integrity must be maintained. It is difficult to ensure that files are always sent in the correct format. Due to this, it is necessary to make a manual validation to the file after the upload is done, so is only available for analysis after that validation has been successfully performed.

Some of the analysis mode functionalities are graphical expressed in Figure 4. Three groups of options were considered:

- General option – includes information related to both teams;
- Home option – includes information for the home team;
- Away option – include information for the away team;

##### 3.2.1 General Options

In this tab we have the standard options, like: 'Start', 'Pause/Resume' and 'Reset'. These options make the interaction with the virtual representation and the



Figure 4: Platform control panel in analysis mode: (a) general options, (b) options for each team (home in this case).

video. Another implemented functionality is 'Export Data'. This one makes it possible to export data in csv format that is collected throughout the game. We have the possibility to choose the analyzed period of time and the metrics that are considered for each team.

Options such as: forward in time, analysis period setup, change the correlation window, change the field size and change the game speed are presented in Figure 4. a..

### 3.2.2 Home/Away Options

In Figure 4.a. we only can see 'Home' tab because the options are the same, regardless of team. In the beginning we have all the players identified by number, along with a checkbox. This checkbox allows

the player to appear or not in the field (virtual representation). We can change the colors of equipment and numbers of the players. It's possible to select the tactics of each team. This option is very important because it's based on a tactic where the lines are calculated: defensive, midfielder and offensive. You can see them in the virtual representation with their respective colors. You can choose the line color using the checkbox and the color picker. Another option, which is much easier to see without resorting to graphic, is 'Show Lines Distances', which will show the distance, in meters, between the lines. Finally, the last option allows the thickness increase of the line, only for visual effects.

### 3.2.3 Analysis Mode/Compare Mode

The framework has two modules: Analysis mode and Compare Mode. Both of this modes, contains: i) virtual representation of the game; ii) video of the game; iii) timer; iv) charts. In the first one, we have an analysis of one game, with the options mentioned in 3.2 Web Interface. The charts show the metrics we analyze in the framework, it's explained on the subsection metrics 3.4. We have two charts, one for each team, and each chart presents the distance between lines and their correlation. We use two axes to present the metrics in the same chart.

The second one, Compare Mode, has as main goal compare two different parts of the game. For example, we want to see the behavior of the team, in the first 10 minutes, and compare it with the last 10m in the first half. In this mode, this kind of approach is possible. The time is totally customizable, i.e., we can choose the analysis interval we want. In this window is showed two virtual representations, and four charts, two for each part we are comparing. The panel control is almost the same, having only one more option that allows us to select the time each part of the game that we will compare.

## 3.3 Game Virtual Representation

The game virtual representation was implemented in Java and exposed on browser as an applet (Farrell, 2011).

As it can be observed in the Figure 5, a simplified representation of a football game is provided the included elements were: 22 players and 1 ball. The representation is updated at 25 frames per second. The implemented applet performs file reading and shows the information contained on the pitch. Many of the functions available on the interface web are interpreted by the applet, like export data, fast forward or step in the time during the game.



Figure 5: Example of virtual representation with applet.

Java Technology was chosen due to the facts:

- Cross-platform solution web (Windows, OS X and Linux);
- Totally scalable with the number of users / clients;
- Java applets are fast - similar performance to native installed software;
- Easy to develop with java language and debug the applet.

### 3.4 Metrics

The perception of the space is a crucial issue to decide and act during a football match. The space between lines (e.g., the distance between the midfielder line and the defensive line) may provide the players with different opportunities for action (e.g., shot on goal; or pass to a team mate). Passos et al., (2011) and Duarte et al., (2012) used the player's interpersonal distances as coordinative variable to describe player's interactive behavior during the game. Thus to measure the space that is available we used the distance between imaginary horizontal lines, parallel to the field end line. Accordingly the distance to the goal the lines under analysis were i) the defensive line; ii) the midfielder line; and iii) the offensive line.

#### 3.4.1 Distance between Lines

Figure 6 presents the lines madden by the three-team sectors. The computation of these lines, which defines each sector, depends by the current tactic chosen for the team. In presented case, the team was chosen 4-4-2 as tactical system. Accordingly with the team tactical system it is possible to change the computed lines, through the GUI, as it can be observed in Figure 4 .b. The defensive line is computed based on the position of the four players closest to the pitch bottom line (i.e., the pitch end line; the end line closest its own goal).

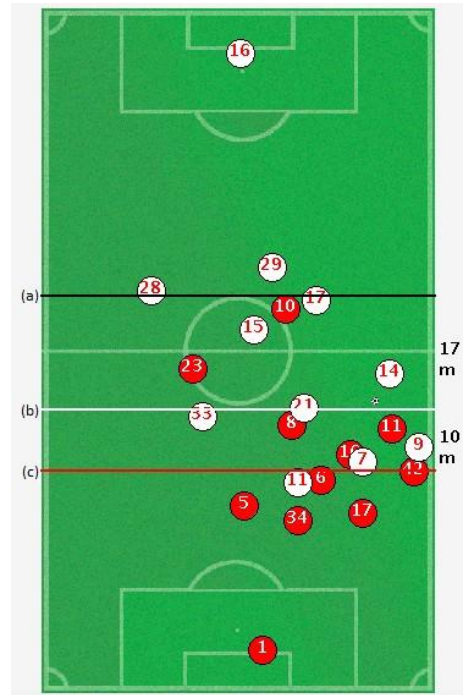


Figure 6: Representation of the lines during the game: (a) defensive line, (b) midfielder line, (c) offensive line. The values on left side show the distance between lines in meters.

The midfielder line is composed by the next four players, and the offensive line by the two players farthest the pitch end line. Note that the goalkeeper positions it wasn't used to calculate these lines.

The computation of these lines takes into account the dynamic of player's position, which means that when a defending player collaborate in a team offensive phase, he contributes to the computation of the midfielder or offensive line. The same is true when a midfielder backs on the pitch to collaborate with defending functions. That player will contribute to the computation of the defensive line. With these options, the platform ensure that the team tactical system is respected, although the players, being defenders or attackers, contribute to different lines over time.

#### 3.4.2 Correlation between Lines

Correlation is a statistical linear technique to measure how well two sets of data are related. In this case, it was used, the Pearson Coefficient of Correlation. The values of this correlation will be between -1 and 1. When the correlation value approaches to zero, there is a greater variability of the set of data around the line of best fit (Benesty et al., 2009). Correlation values can be classified as such:

- Strong correlation: 0.5 to 1.0 or -0.5 to -1.0

- Moderate correlation: 0.3 to 0.5 or -0.3 to 0.5
- Weak correlation: 0.1 to 0.3 or -0.1 to -0.3

$$r = \frac{N \sum xy - (\sum x) \cdot (\sum y)}{[N \sum x^2 - (\sum x)^2] \cdot [N \sum y^2 - (\sum y)^2]} \quad (1)$$

In this case, the Pearson coefficient of correlation was used to relate the distances between lines (e.g., defensive line with the midfielder line; midfielder line with the offensive line). Examining how this relationship between lines varies throughout the game, may provide information regarding the players collective behavior before critical moments (e.g., shots on goal).

## 4 RESULTS and DISCUSSIONS

To test the utility of the platform and implemented metrics we will analyze a critical situation more specifically the moments before the goal in a football match of the Dutch League that occurred after the minute 39:40. The move that preceded the goal of the away team (i.e., white team) begins with loss of ball possession of the home team (i.e., red team) at minute 39:31. Below it was provided exemplar data of the movements of the lines of both teams analyzed for an intrateam perspective and for an interteam perspective, in the moments before goal scoring.

### 4.1 Intra Team Analysis

Figure 7 and Figure 8 display the distance between lines of each team. The lost of ball possession occurs at time 39:31, and the away team goal was scored at minute 39:40.

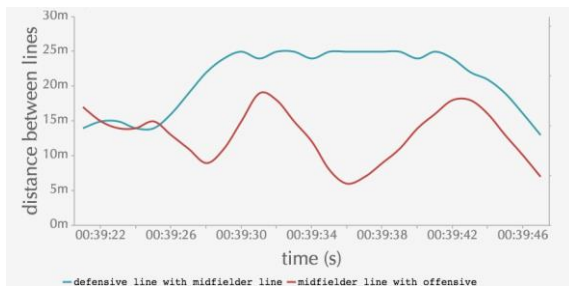


Figure 7: Home chart metrics

For the home team the distance between the defensive line and the midfielder line (blue line on Figure 7) increases being characterized by values included in 20m to 25m interval until the opposition team scored its goal. Despite a moderate correlation between these two team sectors this data captures a possible less efficient relationship between sectors. We may suggest that it was this gap size between midfield and defensive lines on the home team, affords the away team an opportunity to score a goal.

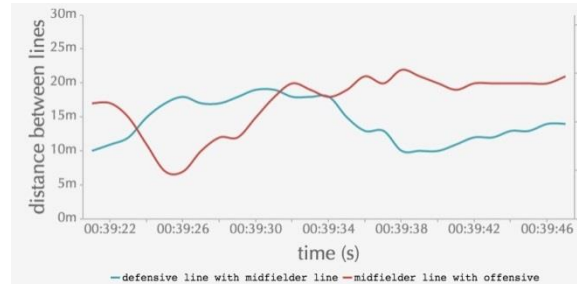


Figure 8: Away Chart

### 4.2 Inter Team Analysis

As it can be observed in Figure 9, the distances between the home team defensive line and the away team offensive line achieved the shortest values in the time interval defined by the following moments: ball possession moment (39:31) and goal scored moment (39:40). So, we may suggest that this distance between lines has a relevant influence on goal scoring of the away team.

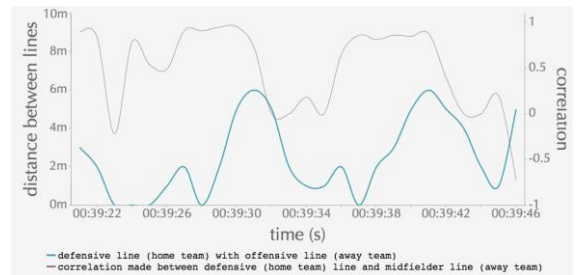


Figure 9: The evolution of distance and correlation during the critical moment

The calculated correlation value reinforces our previous suggestion regarding the influence of the distance between lines on goal scoring. It is worth noting that soon after regain ball possession (away team) a decrease on the correlation achieved values close to 0 (zero) (between minute 39:32 and 39:36). This might suggest that for brief moments the defensive line of the home team and the offensive line of the away team were unrelated (i.e., not moving in the same direction or at the same speed) which provides the offensive line of the away team getting closer the defensive line of the home team, which seems to be a suitable position to score a goal...

## 5 CONCLUSIONS

In this article, we propose a football analysis platform designed and implemented to support coaches and match analyzers decision making. Functionalities such as virtual representation of the uploaded data using an applet, and game analysis as part of extended game analysis were implemented. The game analysis functionalities are associated with appropriate GUI. Additionally data management, data storage and data exporting functionalities were implemented and tested. The data provided by this platform allow an intrateam and an interteam game analysis of the dynamics of the different sectors of each team for moments previously identified as critical, for instance loss of ball possessions and goals scored.

## 6 FUTURE WORK

For further analysis it will be possible to add new metrics to this platform. The main idea is to develop this version to a fully customize platform where coaches and game analysts can choose the metrics which more accurately describe team and individual performance. Other important point would be to use data from other sources, i.e., from other devices. This platform was built to accept football player's positional data, upload on any part of the world. Now we just need to test it [www.footalysis.eu](http://www.footalysis.eu).

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