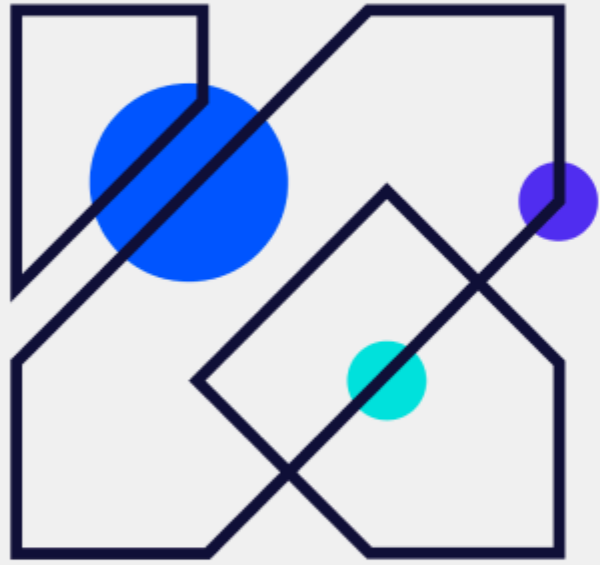


Tactical Insights Report

2025 - 26



Kognia

SPORTS INTELLIGENCE



WELCOME TO THE 25/26 KOGNIA INSIGHTS REPORT

Welcome to the Kognia 2026 European Tactical Insights Report.

When I co-founded Kognia in 2019, we had a vision to collect tactical data that brought coaching insight alongside the fundamentals from ecological physics, the subject in which I earned my PhD. This approach is different to what we have seen historically. We are moving from single, isolated moments to capturing behaviours – with and without the ball – in a more dynamic way that furthers our understanding of a player's impact on the pitch.

Earlier this year, we made the decision to expand our coverage to enable recruitment departments to benefit from this dynamic tactical data – providing insights that speak directly to coaches & technical directors, using concepts that they consider crucial when it comes to interpreting the game.

This development at Kognia extends our work with clubs, where we have already developed strong relationships in academies, providing data alongside video to inform and enhance strategies across player development, benchmarking and pathways. This past year has seen us collect tactical data on over 940 matches from U12 through to U23 level.

This first Kognia Insights Report covers three key areas:

- How defenders mark inside the box. What is their relationship between the distance to their opponent and their recovery rate?
- The support midfielders are offering to their teammates. Which players excel at drawing in pressure before progressing the ball? (this aspect of our data can be particularly insightful)
- Which strikers are best at finding space inside the box? Are these same players the ones who take the most shots?

I hope you enjoy the read, and more importantly – find the information presented in this report insightful.



Maurici A. López-Felip

CEO and Co-Founder
Kognia Sports Intelligence

TACTICAL DATA TO ENHANCE ANALYSIS, RECRUITMENT AND PLAYER DEVELOPMENT

Earlier this year, we expanded our data coverage to ensure we can provide first teams with scouting data, building on our existing work that provides academies with performance analysis tools and insights.

This inaugural Kognia Tactical Insights Report applies data from selected European competitions, and provides a breakdown of key areas across defence, midfield and attack.

Defence

We focus on distances when it comes to marking inside the box. Looking at full backs and centre halves, we identify the players who excel when it comes to recoveries from these situations, and assess their approaches and how tight they like to get to their opponent.

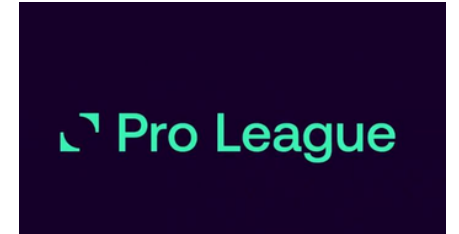
Midfield

Kognia's support metrics focus on a player's contribution in the context of supporting teammates, relieving pressure and being available to receive the ball.

Attack

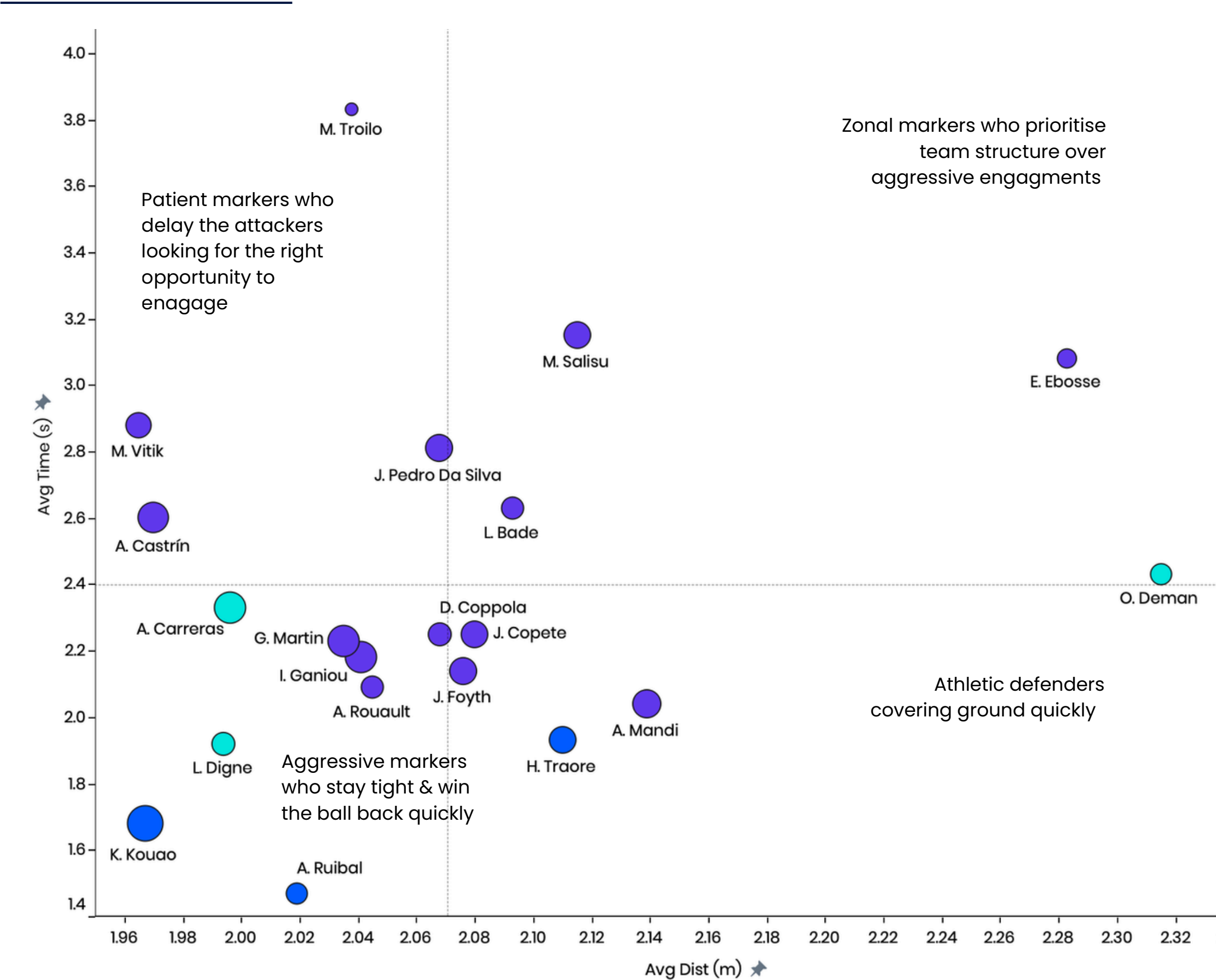
We explore how often an attacker finds space inside the penalty box, and whether they're able to generate shots from these moments.

Kognia European data coverage



MARKING INSIDE THE BOX

WHICH PLAYERS PERFORM MOST EFFECTIVELY WHEN MARKING TIGHTLY INSIDE THE BOX?



Kognia collects marking distances inside the penalty box, capturing information across three different ranges (tight: 0-1.49m, standard: 1.5-2.99m and loose: 3m+).

Here we showcase the top 20 defenders across all ranges, ranked by overall recovery rate, which refers to when the defender touches the ball in these scenarios.

Within this tactical metric, we capture the player's distance, time spent in these situations, and the outcome.

Within this list of players, only Andrés Castrín and Jose Pedro Da Silva are in this collective top 20, and in the top 20 for two different marking distance categories, demonstrating their ability and versatility in these situations.

- Right backs
- Left backs
- Centre halves

Dot size represents recovery percentage (ball contact)

MARKING INSIDE THE BOX

WHICH PLAYERS PERFORM MOST EFFECTIVELY WHEN MARKING TIGHTLY INSIDE THE BOX?

Which players have the highest recovery rates across different marking distances? Does our defender have more success getting tight, or are they more effective when they keep a little more distance, where their anticipation and acceleration allows them to make an impact on that passage of play?

From the table on this page, we can see that the recovery rates are higher for those in the final category, however only a handful of these events actually occur at the longer distance.

Focusing on the mid-range (1.5m–3m), we can see that we do not get the higher recovery rates that we see in the other two categories, but it is by some length the most common scenario.

Martin Vitik of Bologna is notable for his inclusion in this category. The 23-year-old centre back was an active defender last season, ranking in the 90th percentile or higher for clearances, defensive aerial duels and tackles won.

<1.5m Distance				
Rank	Player Name	Team name	Total events	Recovery %
1	Jose Angel Carmona	Sevilla FC	46	15.22
2	Sadibou Sané	Metz	65	13.85
3	Joël Schmied	1. FC Koln	51	13.73
4	Ola Aina	Nottingham Forest	44	13.64
5	Hamari Traore	Paris FC	25	12
1.5m–3m				
1	Koffi Kouao	Metz	146	10.27
2	Martin Vitik	Bologna	142	9.86
3	Gerard Martin	FC Barcelona	177	9.6
4	Diego Coppola	Paris FC	143	9.09
5	Anthony Rouault	Stade Rennais	239	8.79
3m+				
1	Ezri Konsa	Aston Villa	24	25
2	Rasmus Nicolaisen	Toulouse FC	22	18.18
3	Yerson Mosquera	Wolverhampton Wanderers	25	16
4	Albian Hajdari	Hoffenheim	20	15
5	Lloyd Kelly	Juventus	22	13.64

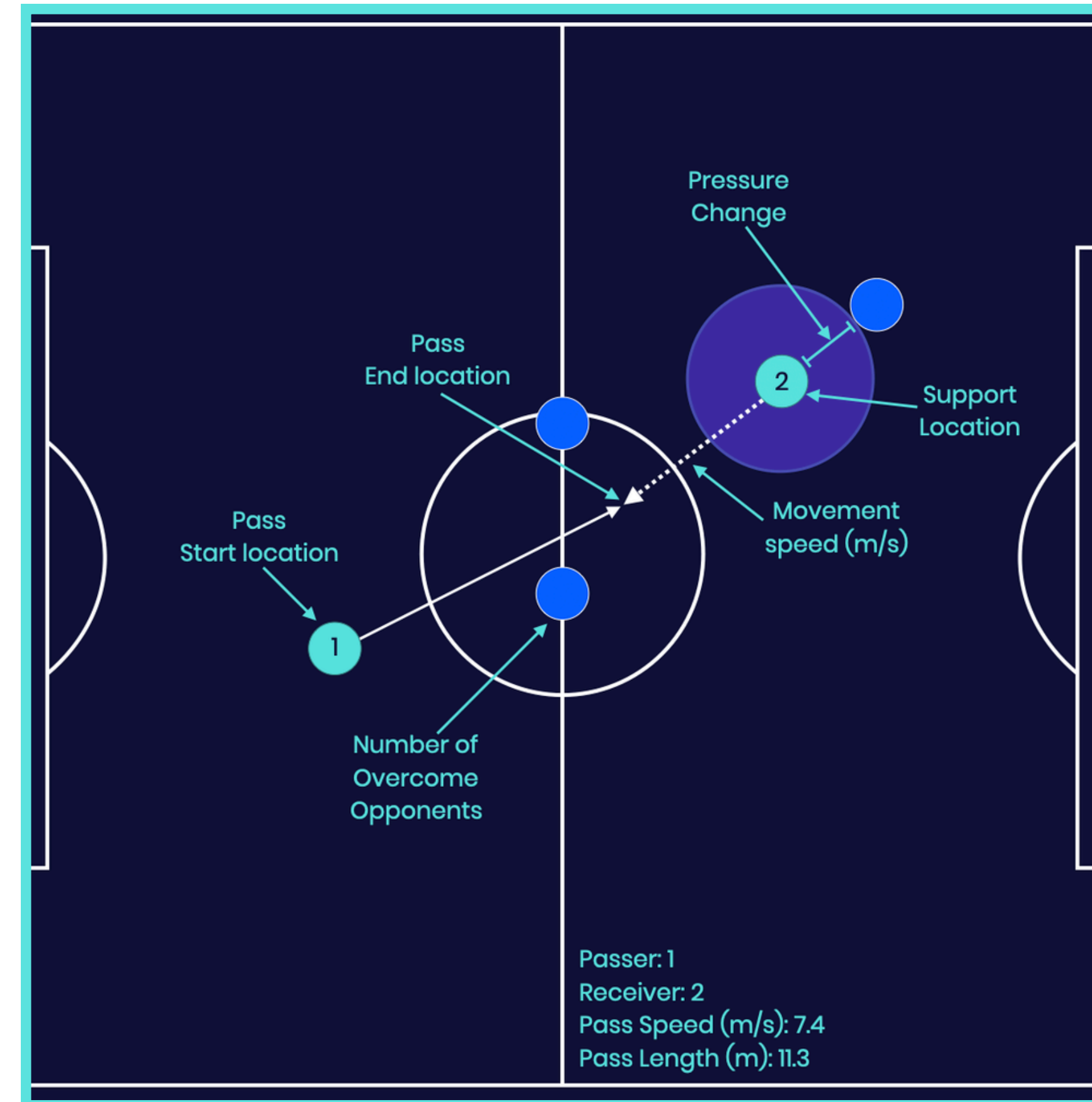
MIDFIELD SUPPORT AND PRESSURE RELIEF

Kognia support metrics give a new level of insight and analysis when it comes to assessing midfielders.

While we already have a good understanding of passing data, our focus with support metrics is different. We apply tactical insights to better understand what these players are doing for their teammates when it comes to being available to receive the ball.

Are they relieving pressure? How are they getting into positions to take the ball? How frequently are they an outlet for their teammates?

This section's '*Kognia Support Index*' captures the top 25 players from the 2025/26 season.



THE KOGNIA INDEX:

IDENTIFYING PLAYERS WHO FREQUENTLY OFFER SUPPORT TO TEAMMATES

Rank	Player Name	Team Name	Competition Name	Kognia Support Index
1	Rodri	Manchester City	Premier League	114.8
2	Joshua Kimmich	Bayern Munich	Bundesliga	112.7
3	Aleksandar Pavlovic	Bayern Munich	Bundesliga	106.9
4	Marc Casado	FC Barcelona	LaLiga	104.8
5	Fabian Ruiz	Paris Saint Germain	Ligue 1	103.7
6	Tom Bischof	Bayern Munich	Bundesliga	101
7	Aleix Garcia	Bayer Leverkusen	Bundesliga	100.7
8	Pedri	FC Barcelona	LaLiga	99.6
9	Joey Veerman	PSV Eindhoven	Eredivisie	98.2
10	João Moutinho	Braga	Primeira Liga	96.3
11	Exequiel Palacios	Bayer Leverkusen	Bundesliga	96.2
12	Vitinha	Paris Saint Germain	Ligue 1	96
13	David Turnbull	Cardiff City	EFL League One	94.2
14	Jonathan Viera	UD Las Palmas	LaLiga 2	94
15	Hakan Calhanoglu	Inter Milan	Serie A	92.9

The Kognia Support Index combines Kognia’s ‘support’ tactical metrics, providing an overall ranking for how players:

- Become an outlet for teammates under pressure
- Move into spaces away from a marker to be able to receive the ball
- Are involved in short, intricate passing moves, be it in triangles or through a one-two

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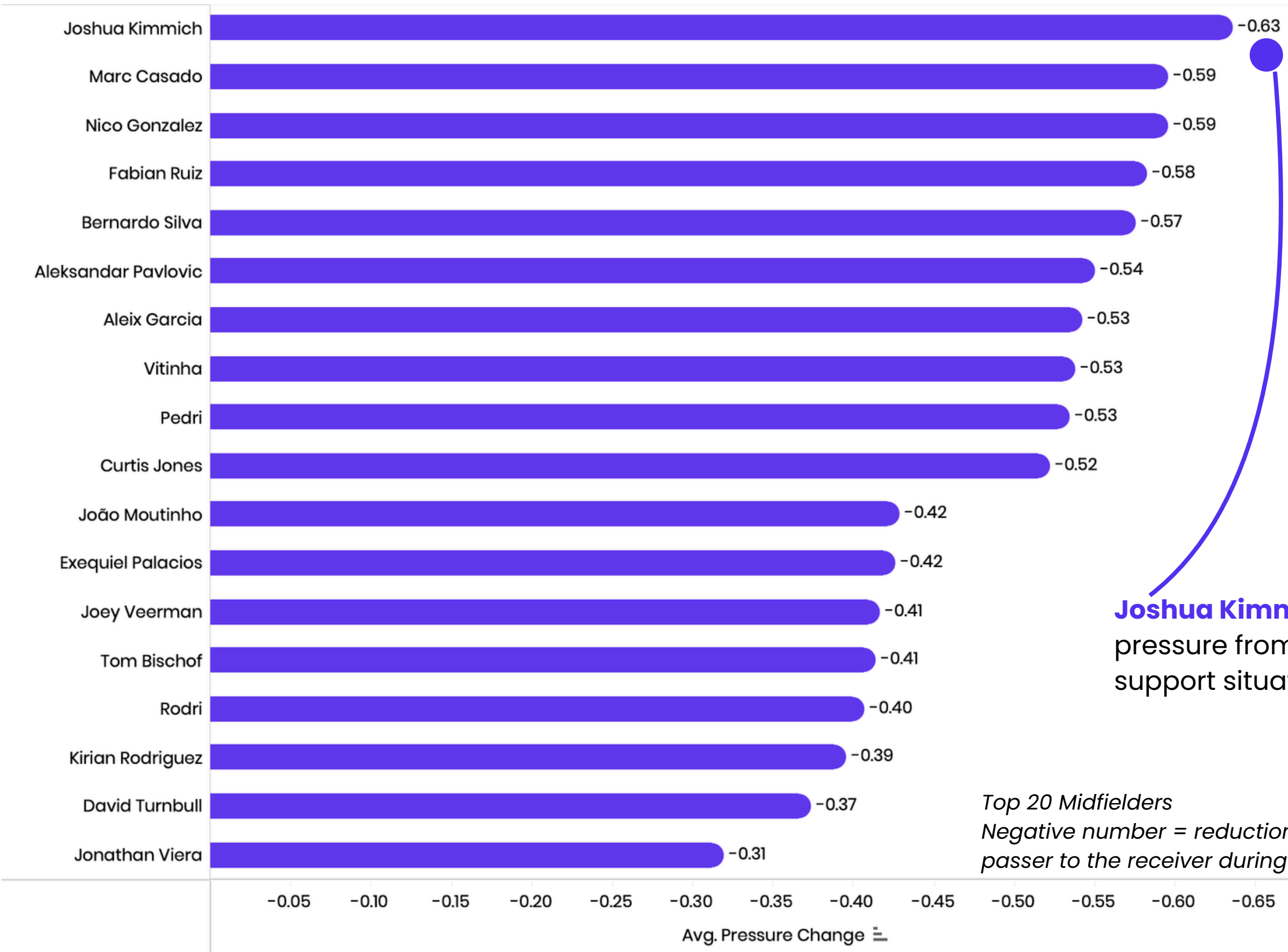
Vitinha is particularly notable here – and his overall place in the middle of the pack is the result of two extremes, which we focus on in further in this section.

We are able to quantify not only his frequency when it comes to taking the ball in tight spaces, but also we can outline how well he does in these situations through additional data.

”

Dylan Jones, Analyst, Kognia

EMERGENCY SUPPORT: WHICH MIDFIELDERS ARE FREQUENTLY AN “OUTLET” FOR THEIR TEAMMATES?



Emergency Support
A Kognia tactic which identifies the moment a player becomes an “outlet” for their team, whereby they receive the ball in space from a teammate who is under pressure from an opponent.

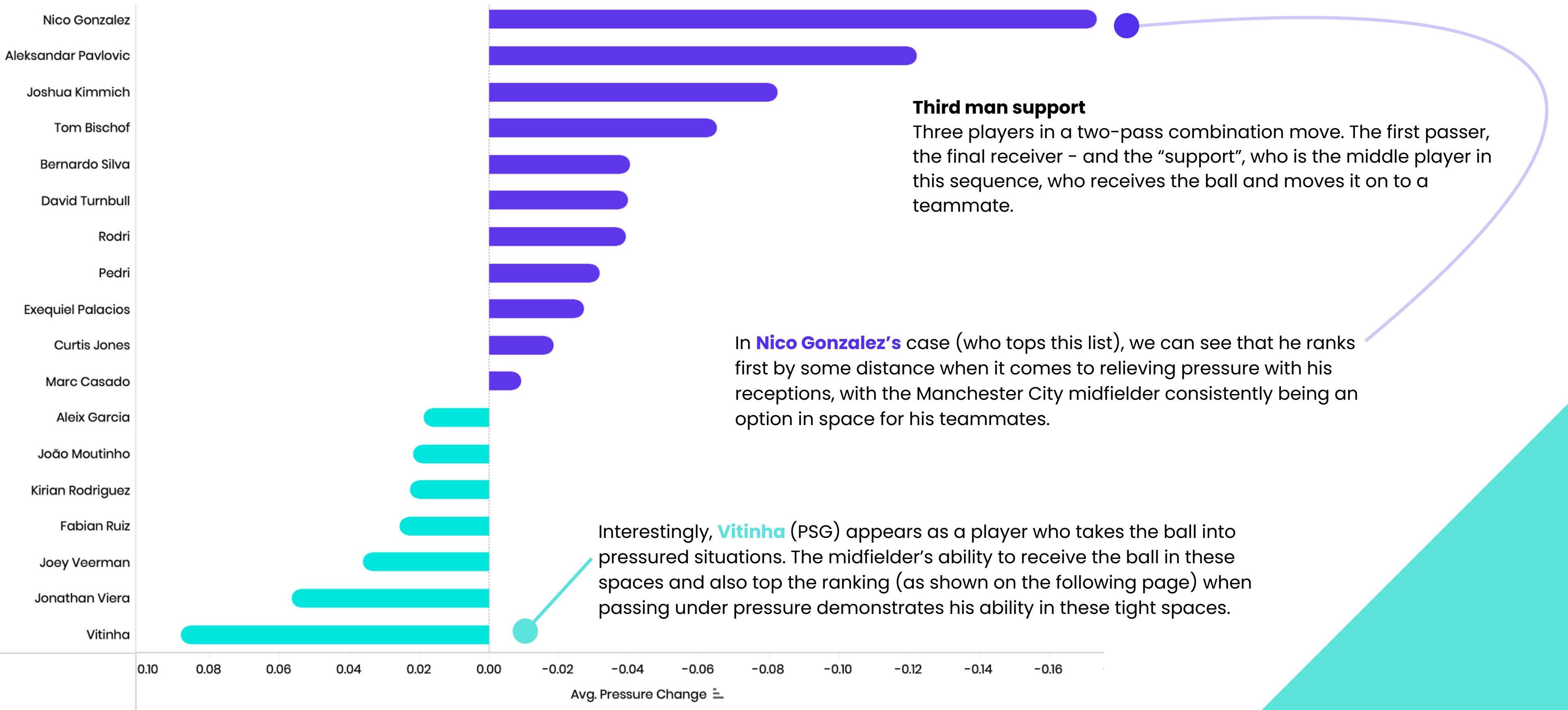
Pressure change
Which players put teammates under less pressure when they receive the ball, or do the passes to them “increase” pressure?

There is of course a trade-off, in that moving closer to the opposition goal is likely to result in more pressure.

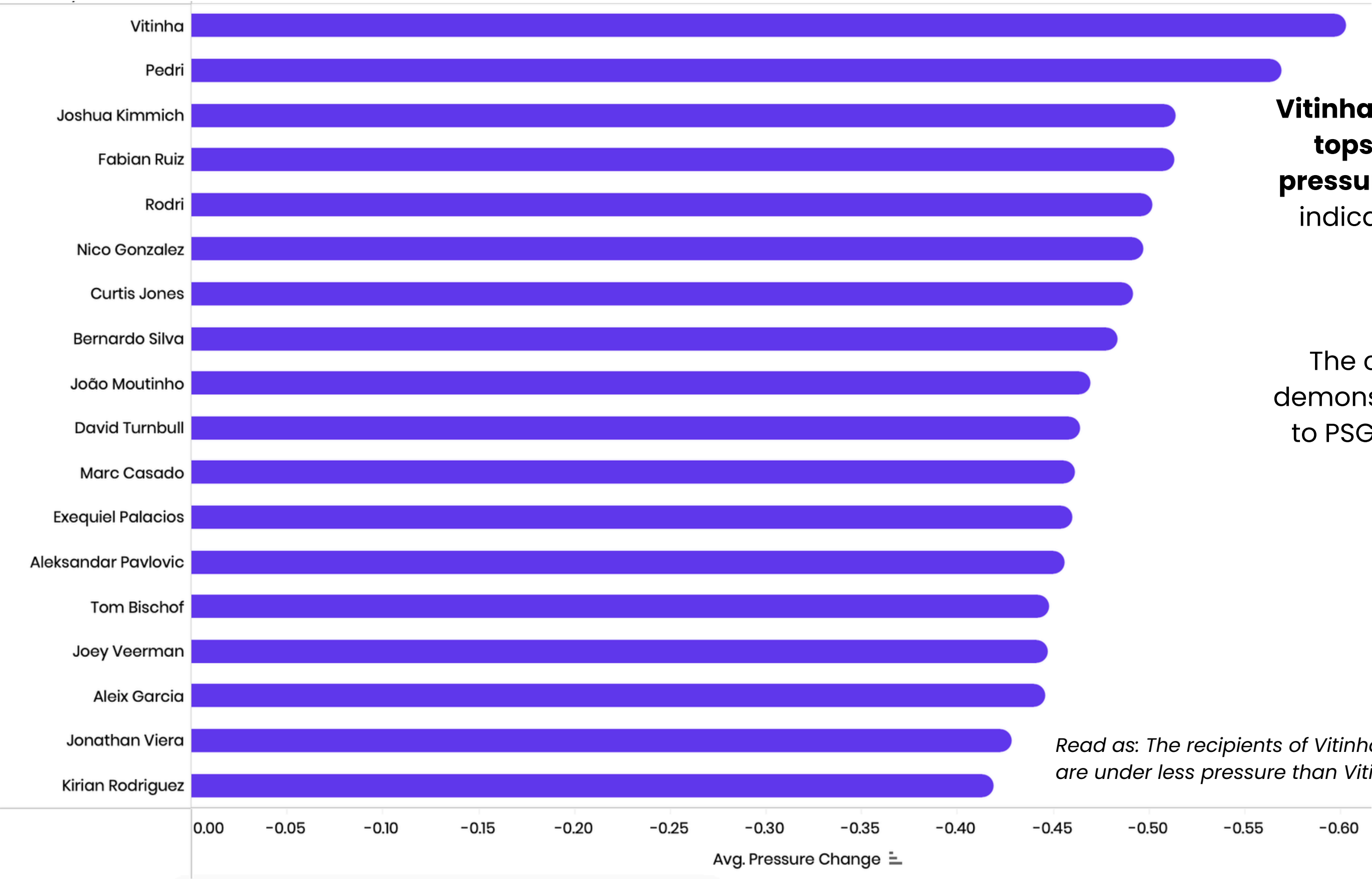
Joshua Kimmich tops the list with his ability to relieve pressure from him teammates in an emergency support situation.

*Top 20 Midfielders
Negative number = reduction in pressure from the passer to the receiver during the support movement*

THIRD MAN SUPPORT: HOW MUCH PRESSURE IS REDUCED IN THIRD MAN SUPPORT SITUATIONS?



VITINHA TOPS THE RANKING FOR PLAYING PASSES WHEN DRAWING PRESSURE FROM OPPONENTS



Vitinha receives the ball in tight spaces, and **tops the ranking for passing when under pressure to find teammates in more space**, indicating his ability to draw pressure from opponents to create more space for teammates.

The combination of these tactical insights demonstrates what makes Vitinha so crucial to PSG, and their overall playing style under Luis Enrique.

Read as: The recipients of Vitinha's passes are under less pressure than Vitinha

OCCUPYING SPACE INSIDE THE BOX

Which strikers across Europe are most able to find space inside the penalty box? Are these the same strikers who are also receiving the ball once they're in space, or are they making the right movements, but struggling to be found by team-mates?

What about what happens once they receive the ball? Can they generate a shot in these moments in tight spaces?

These are the questions this section looks to address.

We identify the forward players who are able to most frequently find space in the box when their team is in possession, and be a potential recipient of the ball.

Nicolas Jackson ranks the highest for occupying these spaces, getting into these positions approximately 28 times per match in his loan spell at Bayern Munich.

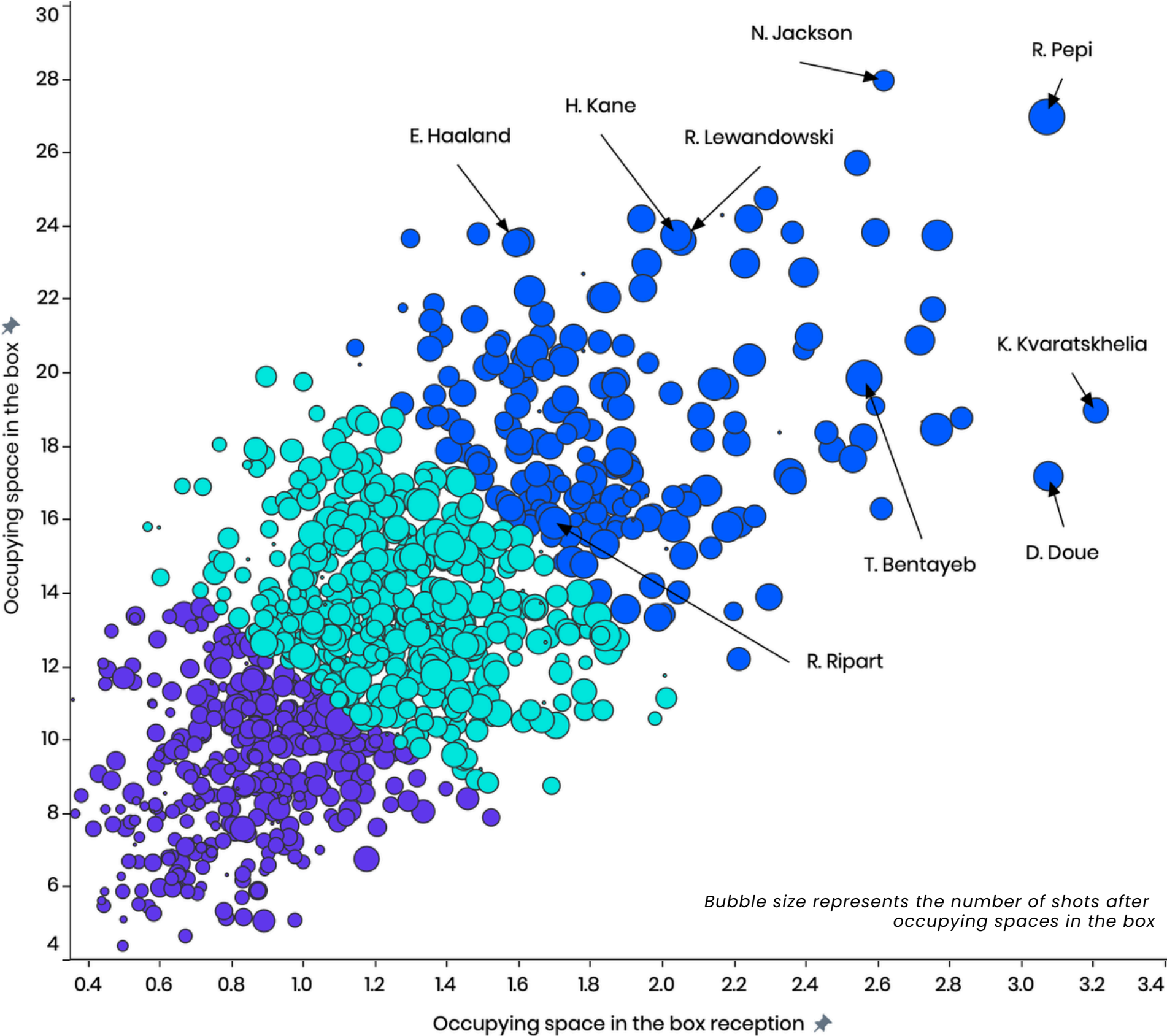
Rank	Player Name	Team name	Occupying Space inside the box P90
1	Nicolas Jackson	Bayern Munich	27.93
2	Ricardo Pepi	PSV Eindhoven	26.95
3	Jonathan David	Juventus	25.69
4	Hugo Ekitike	Liverpool	24.73
5	Nicolò Tresoldi	Club Brugge	24.3
6	Ousmane Dembele	Paris Saint-Germain	24.18
7	Vangelis Pavlidis	Benfica	24.17
8	Bradley Barcola	Paris Saint-Germain	23.82
9	Sam Lammers	FC Twente	23.8
10	David Sterlec	Middlesbrough	23.77

(All players have played a minimum of 1000 mins)

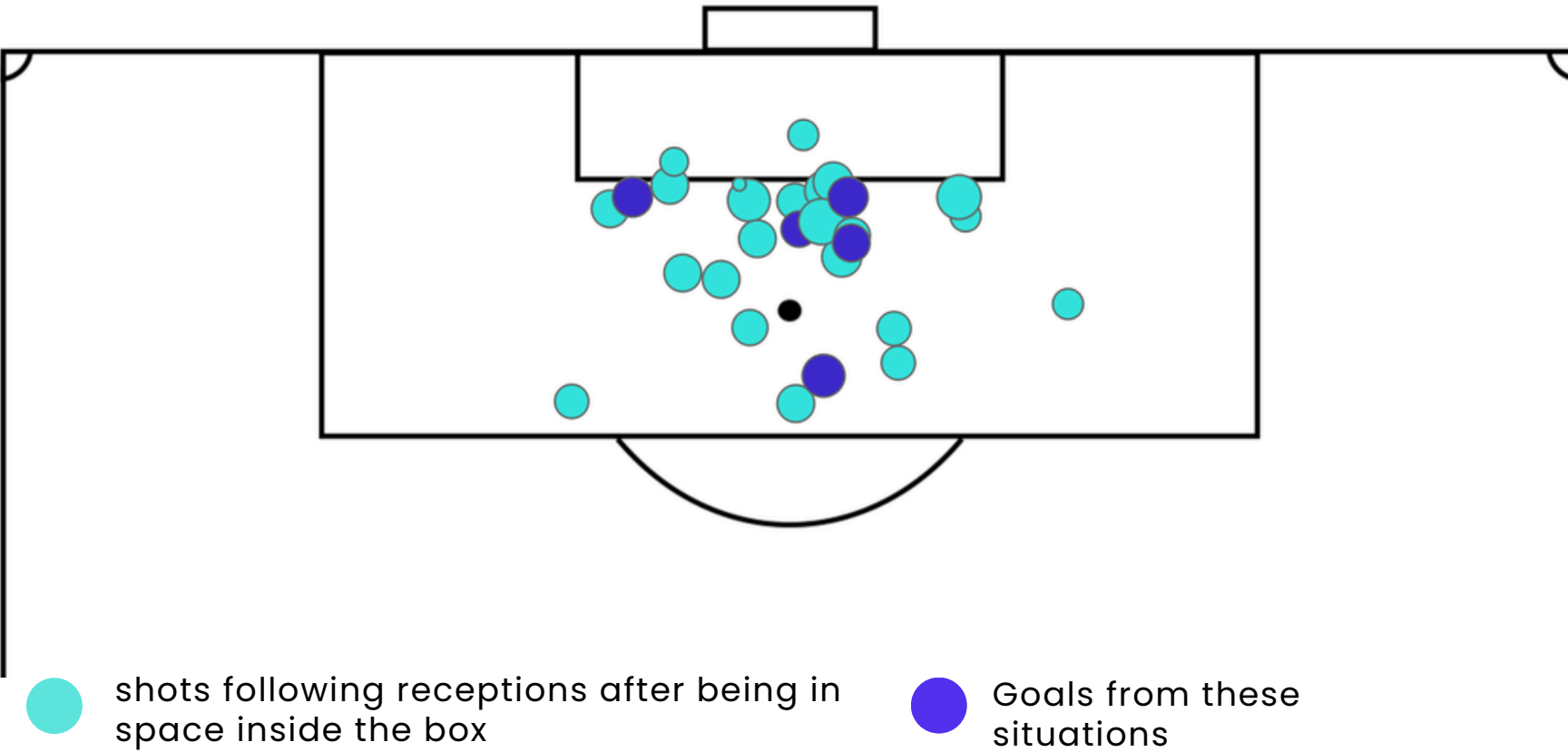
TROYES ARE THE ONLY TEAM TO FEATURE TWO STRIKERS WHO RANK IN THE TOP 10 WHEN IT COMES TO TAKING SHOTS AFTER FINDING SPACE INSIDE THE BOX

Read as: Harry Kane takes 0.952 shots p90 from positions of occupying space inside the box

Player	Team	League	Shots after occupying space inside the box
Tawfik Bentayeb	Troyes	Ligue 2	1.197
Ricardo Pepi	PSV Eindhoven	Eredivisie	1.182
Luis Suárez	Sporting Club	Primeira Liga	1.044
Renaud Ripart	Troyes	Ligue 2	1.021
Gianluca Scamacca	Atalanta	Serie A	1.007
Walid Cheddira	Lecce	Serie A	1.002
Christian Pulisic	AC Milan	Serie A	0.973
Moussa Sylla	FC Schalke 04	2. Bundesliga	0.962
Nicola Krstovic	Atalanta	Serie A	0.962
Harry Kane	Bayern Munich	Bundesliga	0.952



BENTAYEB AND RIPART ARE TWO STRIKERS WHO NOT ONLY GENERATE SPACE, BUT CAN MAKE THESE MOMENTS COUNT

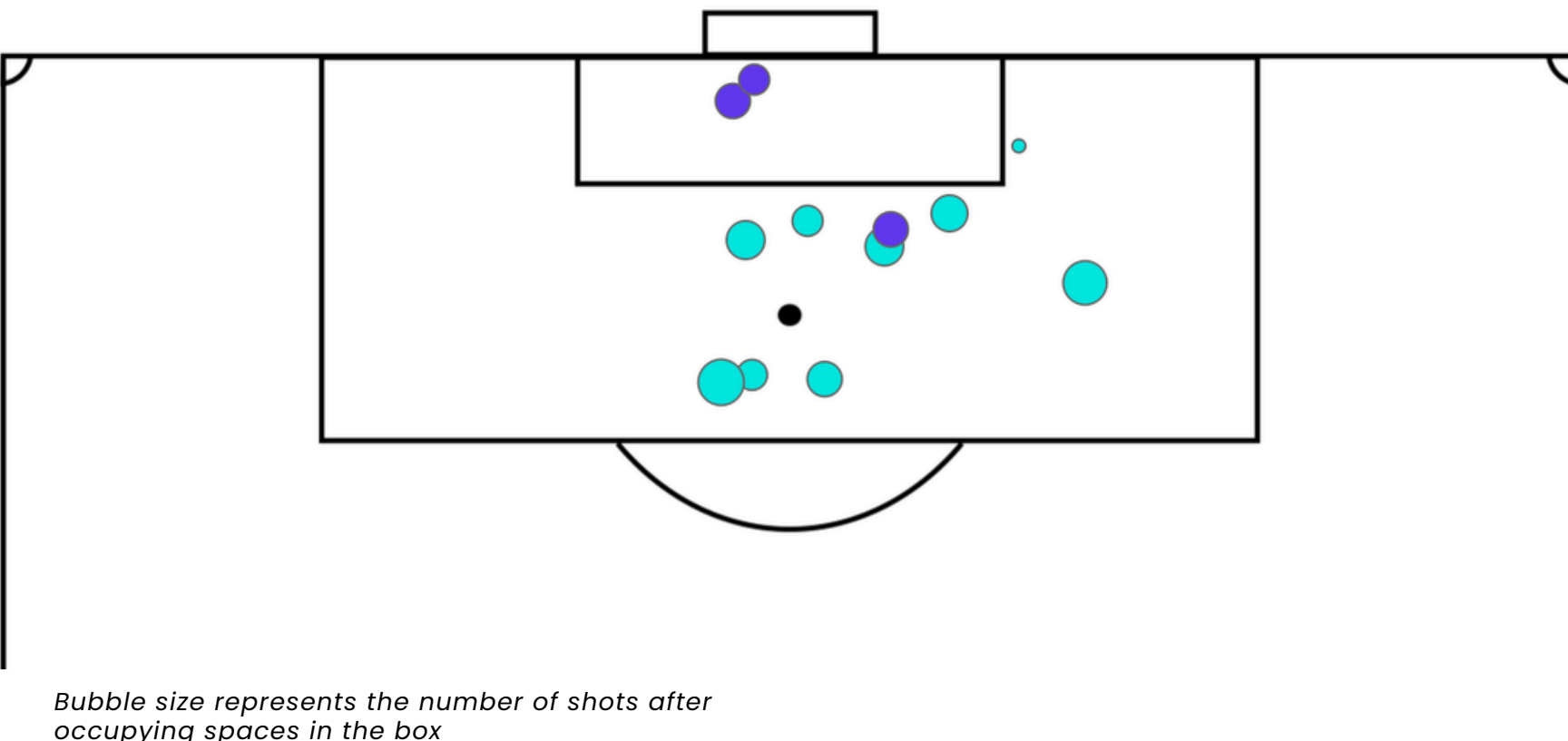


TAWFIK BENTAYEB

TOTAL GOALS: 18

GOALS FROM BEING IN SPACE INSIDE THE PENALTY BOX: 5

With 18 goals from over 2,100 minutes, Bentayeb played a huge role in Troyes' promotion campaign. His average of 3.5 shots per 90 further supports Bentayeb being a striker who does his best work close to the opposition goal, as does his 2.86 shots p90 from close range - a figure which sees him top the division.



RENAUT RIPART

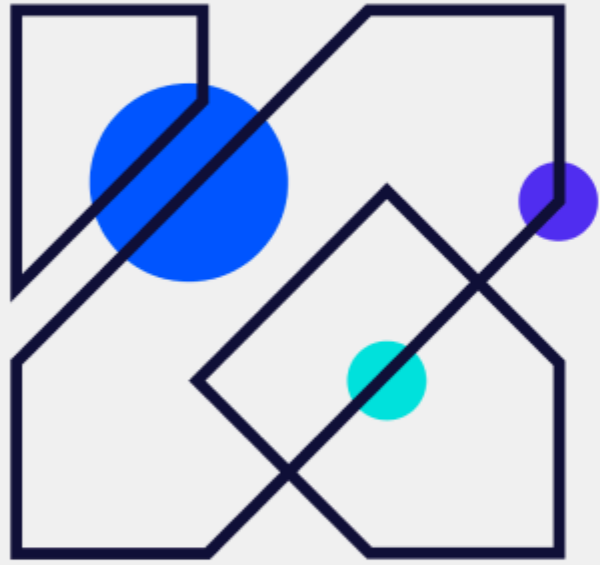
TOTAL GOALS: 5

GOALS FROM BEING IN SPACE INSIDE THE PENALTY BOX: 3

The 33-year-old veteran played approximately half the minutes of his team-mate, and has a similar profile when it comes to finding space - and getting away shots - when it comes to being inside the penalty box. Ripart ranks 4th in Ligue 2 for xG output p90, generated from 3.15 shots per game.

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