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Goal analysis of Lionel Messi's 474 goals in LaLiga

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Abstract--The purpose of this study is to analyze the goal-scoring pattern of Lionel Messi's 474 goals in the LaLiga competitions. The research is delimited to Messi's 474 goals in 520 appearances for FC Barcelona from the 2004 to 2021 seasons. The findings showed that Messi scored all of his 474 goals with a scoring rate of 0.91 goals per game. Among his 474 goals in LaLiga club competitions, 394 goals were scored from his left foot another 63 goals from the right foot and 17 goals from the headers. Messi scored different types of scoring in his 474 goals; he scored 373 goals in open play, 61goals from penalties and 40 goals from direct free-kicks. Among his 474 goals, 386 goals were scored from the penalty area i.e. inside goal area (63 goals) and outside goal area (323 goals) and the remaining 88 goals were scored from outside the penalty area. The studies conclude that among all of his 474 goals, Messi used his left foot as a dominant foot as compared to his right foot for goal scoring. The types of goals he scores are mostly in open play rather than penalties and direct free-kicks. Among his 474 goals, most of his goals were scored inside the penalty area but he scores very less goals from outside the penalty area.

Keywords--LaLiga, Football, Goal Analysis, Open Play, Direct Free Kick, Penalty.

Introduction

The main objective of the football game is to win the match by scoring at least one goal more than the particular opponent schedule to play. This is why the identification of goal scoring patterns is one of the most pertinent issues in football match analysis. Scoring a goal is the most exciting part of a football match. Football game is very dynamic in nature; any player can score from different angles or distances at any time. Goals analysis is essential to ascertain

the dynamic nature of goal scoring pattern of a particular footballer. Goals analysis is very important to track the forward player's performance, at the same time, it very crucial for the opponent players to read the striker's ability of scoring, etc. Football club buys or recruits their striker after thorough examination of the player goals scoring statistics, consistency and adaptability of the desired candidate. Beside team work, goal scoring is the performance indicator which determines team success in soccer football game. This motivates current trends in football match analysis to disclose a growing interest area in the scoring of goal analysis (Collet, 2013, Tenga et al., 2010; Wright et al., 2011). The knowledge of individual and team performance indicators associated with goal-scoring analysis has increased to a great extent in recent years, due to technological developments (Carling, Reilly & Williams, 2009), which provide coaches and players with information about appropriate strategic and tactical decisions according to specific game context (Collet, 2013; Kempe et al., 2014). LaLiga is the men's top professional football league in Spain which was founded in 1929. The competition is played in a double round-robin format, in which 20 teams are competing for the trophy. According to UEFA's league coefficient ranking at the end of the 2020-21 seasons, LaLiga ranked second with English Premier League at the top of the table. Lionel Messi an Argentine professional footballer is the all-time top goal scorer of LaLiga with 474 goals in 520 appearances. In the 2011-2012 seasons, Messi holds the record for most goals scored in a single season with 50 goals. So far he won 7 Ballon d'Or awards and is often considered the best player in the world and widely regarded as one of the Greatest of All Time (GOAT). He is a prolific goal scorer, creative playmaker, with diminutive playing style and left-footed dribbler; due to his short height, his centre of gravity is low, which gives him advantages for greater agility making him change direction more quickly. Messi took over 17 years (season 2005 to 2021) in order to become the all-time top scorer in LaLiga competition. He scored his first goal on 1st May 2005 against Albacete assisted by Ronaldinho and his last was scored on 16th May 2021 against Celta de Vigo.

Objective

To examines the goal analysis of Lionel Messi's 474 goals in the LaLiga competitions.

Methodology

In order to carry out this research, a systemic review of relevant studies on goal-scoring pattern was conducted. The researcher delimited the study to Messi's 474 goals in 520 appearances for FC Barcelona from the 2004 to 2021 seasons in the LaLiga club competitions. The data was collected online through electronic databases; the official LaLiga YouTube channel, Newspaper, the club's official website, video clips, journal, open access sources, etc all the season from 2004 to 2021. The researcher focused on the goal-scoring pattern of Messi's goals on different types of goals, how he scored and from where he scored those goals.

Results and analysis

Table-1: Messi's 474 Goals Scoring Rate

Seasons	Goals	Appearances	Goals Scoring Rate Per Game
2004-2021	474	520	0.91

Table-1: shows that Messi scored all his 474 goals in 520 appearances with a goal scoring rate of 0.91 goals per game for FC Barcelona 2004-2021 seasons in LaLiga club competitions.

Table-2: Goal Analysis of Messi's 474 goals in 520 appearances in LaLiga

All Season 2004- 2021	How Messi Scored			Types of Scored			Scored From			Season Total Goals
	Right Foot	Left Foot	Head er	Open Play	Dire ct Free Kick	Penal ty	Penalty Area		Outsi de Penalt y Area	
							Inside Goal Area	Outside Goal Area		
2004- 2005	1	-	-	1	-	1	-	1	-	1
2005- 2006	5	1	-	6	-	1	3	3	-	6
2006- 2007	11	2	1	14	-	1	2	11	1	14
2007- 2008	10	-	-	6	-	4	1	8	1	10
2008- 2009	18	4	1	19	1	3	3	16	4	23
2009- 2010	23	8	3	32	1	1	3	25	6	34
2010- 2011	26	4	1	26	1	4	6	20	5	31
2011- 2012	44	5	1	37	3	10	11	36	3	50
2012- 2013	40	6	-	39	3	4	4	35	7	46
2013- 2014	22	5	1	20	2	6	3	18	7	28
2014- 2015	26	12	5	36	2	5	7	32	4	43
2015- 2016	23	2	1	19	4	3	3	17	6	26
2016- 2017	31	5	1	29	2	6	4	24	9	37
2017- 2018	32	2	-	25	6	3	4	21	8	34
2018- 2019	32	4	-	26	6	4	3	23	10	36
2019- 2020	23	2	-	14	6	5	1	15	9	25

2020-2021	27	1	2	24	3	3	5	17	8	30
Total	394	63	17	373	40	61	63	323	88	474
	474			474			474			474

Table-2: shows that Messi scored all his 474 goals in 520 appearances for FC Barcelona season 2004-2021 in LaLiga club competitions. Total season 474 goals; the following seasons 2004-05 is 1, 2005-06 is 10 goals, 2006-07 is 14, 2007-08 is 10, 2008-09 is 23, 2009-10 is 34, 2010-11 is 31, 2011-12 is 50, 2012-13 is 46, 2013-14 is 28, 2014-2015 is 43, 2015-16 is 26, 2016-17 is 37, 2017-18 is 34, 2018-19 is 36, 2019-20 is 25 and 2020-21 is 30 respectively. How Messi scored 474 goals, from the left foot are 394 goals, 63 goals with the right foot and 17 goals from headers. A type of scored, open play is 373 goals, direct free-kick is 40 goals and penalties are 61 goals. From where he scored 474 goals, from the penalty areas are 386 goals (63 from the inside goal area and 323 from the outside goal area) and 88 goals from the outside penalty area.

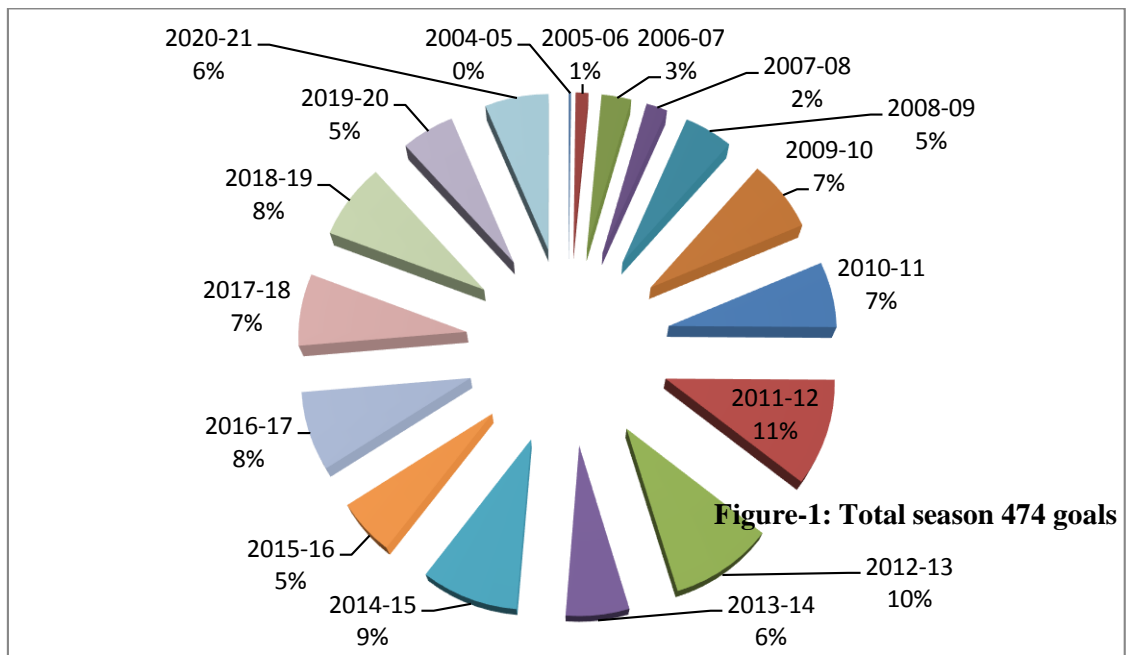


Figure-1; shows that Messi scored his highest goals in the 2011-12 season 11% of the whole season with 50 goals followed by the season 2012-13 season 10% with 46 goals and the lowest score in the 2004-05 season with only 1 goal.

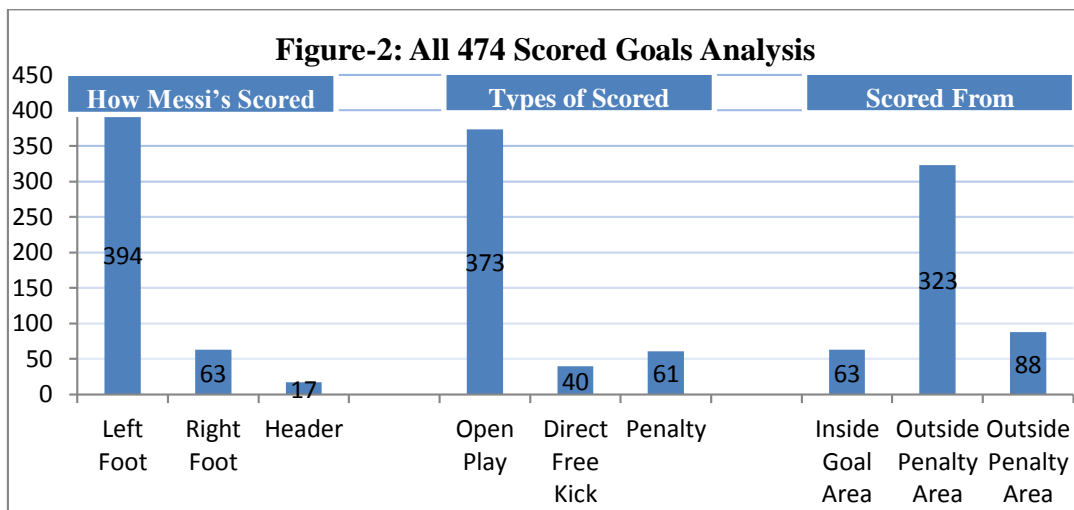


Figure-2: shows that among 474 goals, he scored 394, 63, and 17 goals with his left foot, right foot and headers respectively. In types of score, he scores 373 goals in open play, 40 goals from direct free-kick and 61 in penalties. From the inside goal area, he scores 63, the outside goal area 323 and the outside penalty area 88 goals.

Discussion of the findings

From the above findings, it is revealed that Messi's goals scoring rate was 0.91 goals per game in all 474 goals in 520 appearances. He scores his first-ever goal in the 2004-05 season for FC Barcelona in LaLiga club competitions. As per the data, his peak performance was the 2011-12 season in which he scored the highest 50 goals in a single season and followed by consecutive next season 2012-13 with 46 goals. A drastic decline in his performance was seen in the 2013-14 season with only 28 goals partially owing to his injury. But in 2014-15 seasons he retains back his performance by scoring 43 goals.

Most of Messi's goals were scored from his left foot only; out of 474 goals, he scores 394 goals from his left foot, which proves his dominant scoring foot is his left foot. And very few goals were scored from his right foot and header, which prove he is very weak with his right foot as compared to his left. A very few goals were scored from his header may be the reason is his height (1.69m) is very short as compared to other players. In open play, he scores 373 goals, 61 penalties and 40 direct free kicks, which prove he is a good dribbler with the ball in open play. The highest percentage of goals is being scored from open play, the importance of the preparation and planning of players' actions in set plays (Wright et al., 2011). Messi is a prolific goal-scorer; it seems he is very destructive to his opponent in the penalty area; because of his diminutive playing style, creative playmaking, and gifted dribbling ability. Due to his short height (1.69m), his centre of gravity is also low, which makes him advantages for greater agility making him change direction more quickly in the penalty area. He scored 386 goals in the penalty area or 16.5m box and 88 goals were scored from outside the penalty area. A study found that the majority of goals (about 81-83%) were scored from the

penalty area or 16.5 m box (Jankovic et al., 2011; Wright et al., 2011). This is not astonishing to score from the penalty area because the penalty area is closest to the goal post and the possibility of scoring from the penalty area is much easier when compared with further positions from outside the penalty area.

Conclusion

The following conclusions were drawn based on the above results and discussions of the studies. The finding reveals that among all the seasons from 2004-21, the season 2011-12 was best for his performance, in which he scores 50 goals the highest number of goals ever in a single season and the lowest goals in 2004-2005. The finding of the above studies also reveals that the majority of goals are scored with his left foot as a dominant scoring foot as compared to his right foot. The types of goals he scores are mostly in open play than penalties and direct free-kick. The result also reveals that more goals were scored from the inside penalty area as compared to the outside penalty area. The above findings highlight the importance of practicing in set plays for more decisive force on the match outcome or goal-scoring, since most of the goals and opportunities were in open play.

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