

# TECHNICAL & STATISTICAL COMPARISON REPORT

European Championship 2016  
Hyundai A-League 2015-16  
Socceroos

**Professional  
Footballers  
Australia**

Supporting the Players, Building the Game



## About this Report

This report serves to analyse and compare the recent UEFA European Championship in France with the Australian national team and the domestic A-League competition.

By identifying key benchmarks in team profiles, tactical trends and refereeing, we can better understand and measure how our local game is tracking next to the elite echelons of football.

Broadly, its findings suggest stark differences between the styles of play witnessed in France and in Australia, with the A-League providing more open and attacking football.

The PFA believes a better informed game leads to more impactful football education, analysis and decision-making.

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Data courtesy of:

**opta**

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Images: Chad Gibson / Local FC



UEFA  
EURO2016  
FRANCE



## Euro 2016 Overview

The tournament was contested by 24 teams for the first time, expanded from 16. The new format allowed for the four best third-placed teams from the six groups to progress to the Round of 16.

The new format perhaps contributed to what was considered a largely cagey tournament, low on entertainment or outstanding performances.

This is supported by this being the lowest-scoring group stage since 1992, and the fact that no team won all three of its group matches for the first time since 1996.

Tactically, there were few innovations, but the tournament has been cited as a potential bookend of the recent possession-based dominance of Spain and latterly Germany. Instead reactive, counter-attacking football saw minnows surprise and a new champion emerge.

Portugal won the first major trophy in its history. Despite failing to win any of their group games, they edged through to the knockout stages as a third-placed qualifier and won just one of their seven matches in normal time.

Some new laws of the game debuted, notably the backwards kick-off and the fourth substitute available in extra time.

The match officials were widely praised for their performances, with few major decisions incorrect and matches generally being allowed to flow, as the statistics later in this report attest.



## Squad Profiles

	Average age	Average caps
<b>Euro 2016</b>	27.3	32.7
<b>Euro 2016 QFs</b>	27	32.9
<b>Socceroos</b>	26	21

To compare the age and experience of the Australian national team with those at Euro 2016, we used the most recent 23-man squad for the June friendlies v Greece and added the four most experienced regular Socceroos absent from that squad (McKay, Spiranovic, Oar and Troisi).

Even with these inclusions, Australia would have had the least experienced and third youngest squad at Euro 2016.

### 2018 World Cup projection

Ange Postecoglou's regenerated Socceroos squad has the chance to develop towards the 2018 World Cup with little attrition, given only two current regular players (Cahill and McKay) are over 31.

With two years and 15-20 fixtures before Russia, the squad's profile is on track to 'peak' or closely reflect the Euro averages at that time.

Domestic league players in squad



### Domestic representation

Three of Australia's 23-man squad for the Greece fixtures played in the A-League.

This would put us among the highest exporters of talent among Euro teams while England and Russia had the most home-based squads.



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Euro 2016

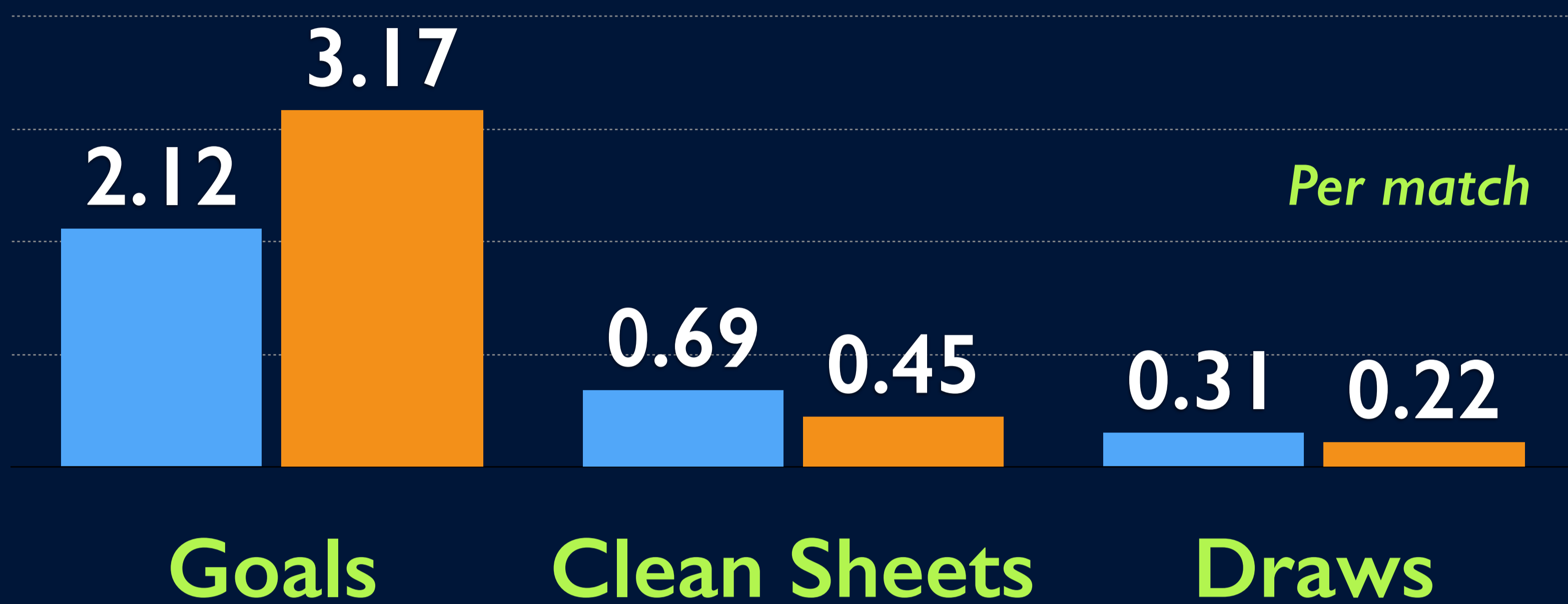


A-League 15-16

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## Goal-Scoring



If fans come to see goals, the recent A-League season blew Euro 2016 away in the entertainment stakes.

European supporters were much more likely to see a clean sheet or a draw, and Australian fans were treated to just over one extra goal per match.

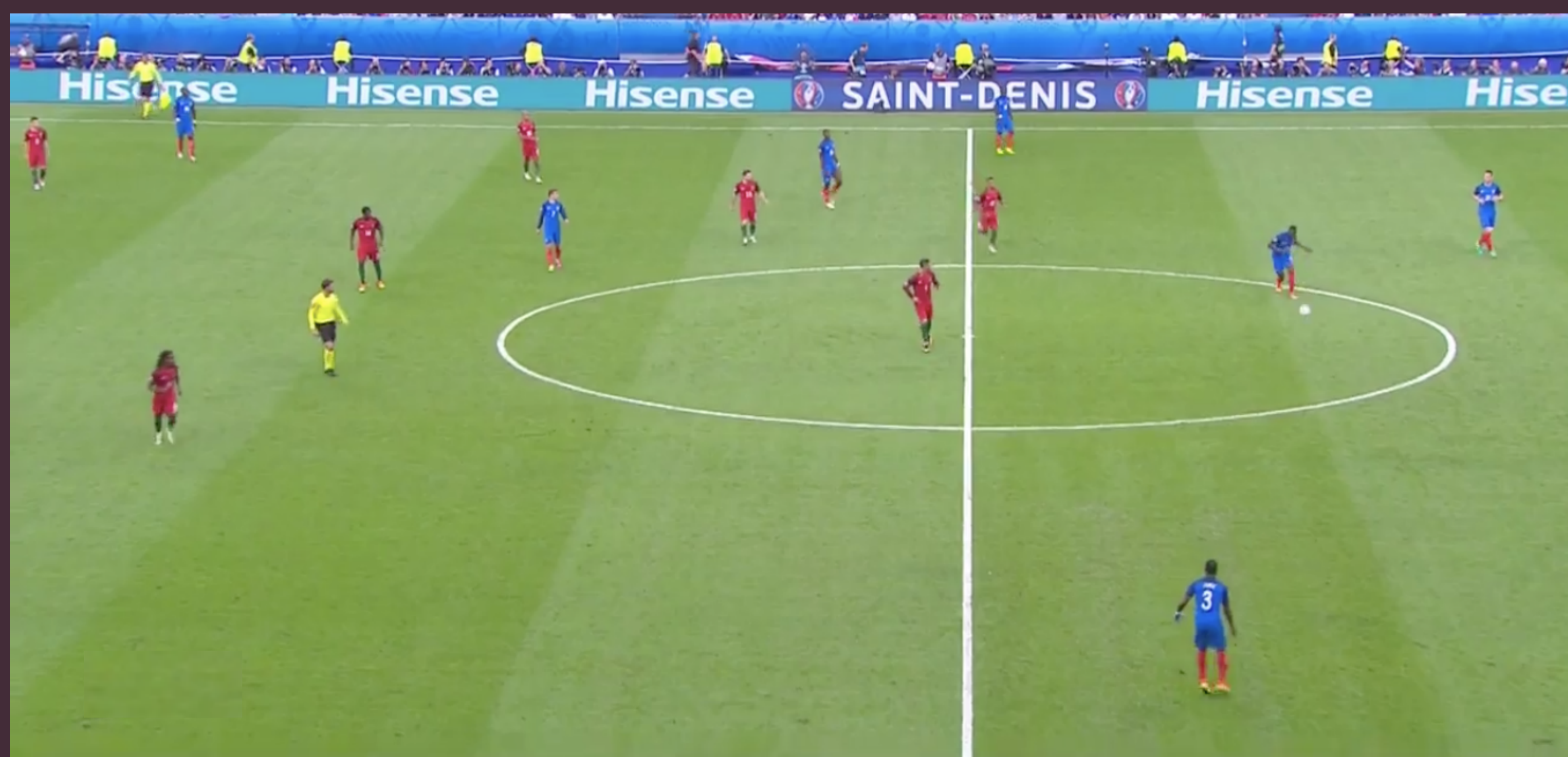


### Contrasting game styles

The A-League's lack of relegation, married with the Australian public's desire for attacking football, could be two factors in its more open, end-to-end play.

Euro 2016, on the other hand, was defined by reactive football, with highly organised teams sitting deep and compact, happiest without the ball.

The question is raised as to whether these Euro trends are about to arrive on our shores, or that the A-League has developed its own unique style, a product of its environment.



Portugal's defensive set up was evident early in the final

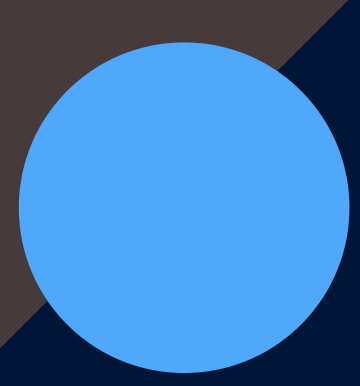


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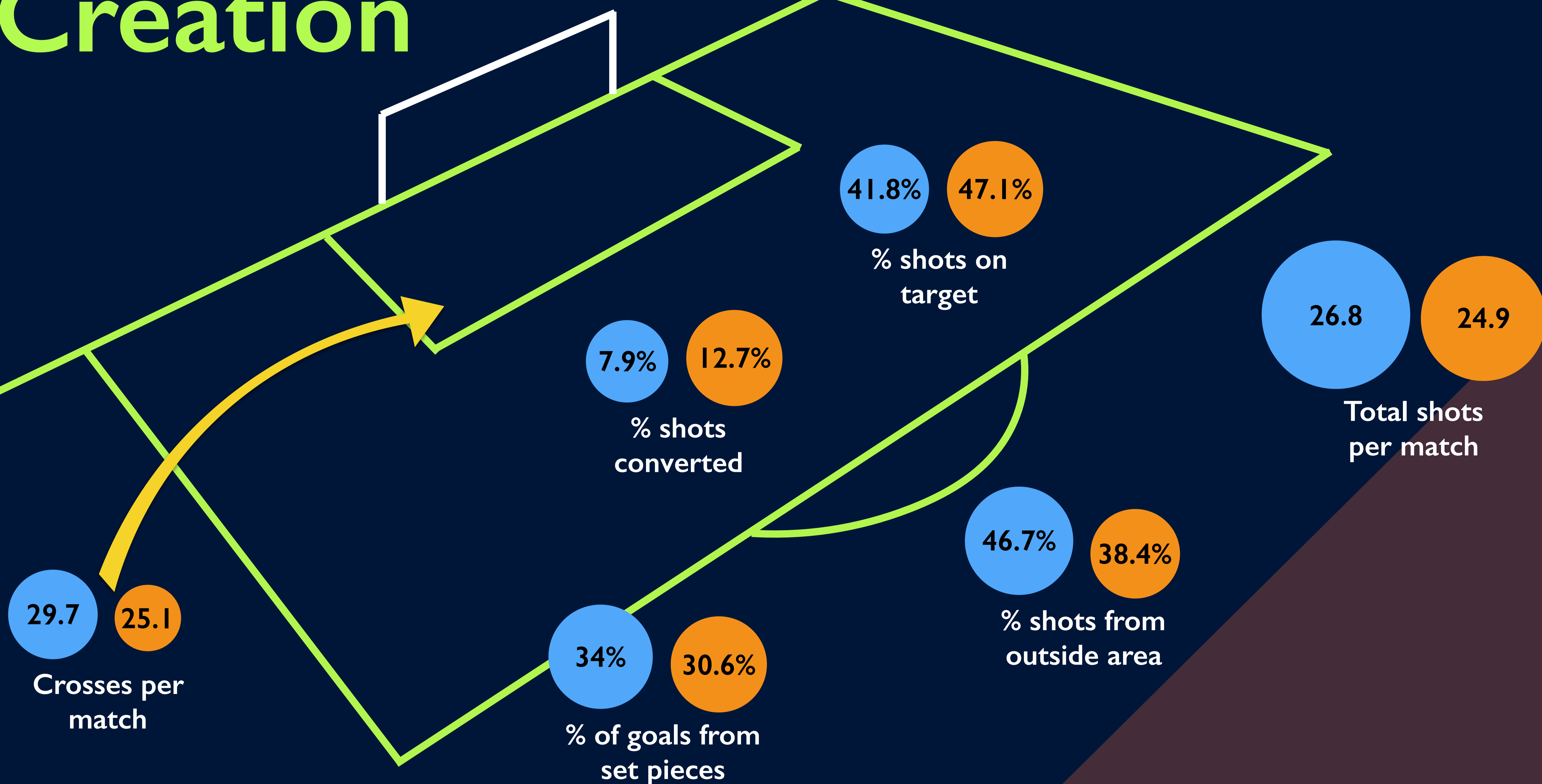


Euro 2016



A-League 15-16

## Creation



Euro 2016 teams shot more frequently but from further away, leading to lower accuracy and significantly lower conversion rates.

This reflected the tactical trends described already, with defensive teams preventing opponents from creating high quality chances. Attackers shot from distance or swung crosses into packed penalty areas.

Not only did the reactive teams stifle their opponents, they themselves often committed few players forward (low risk) and therefore relied on set pieces or long-range shooting.

In the A-League there were, perhaps surprisingly, fewer shots per match, but these were generally taken closer to goal and with less pressure on the shooter. Strikers had more space and time due to the transitional nature of play here.

Taking the quarter-finals onwards, the Euro last eight bucked many tournament trends. They took fewer shots, converted more of them and relied less on set pieces to score, suggesting that even for reactive teams, success depended on a coordinated counter-attack and elite strikers on top of a resolute defence.



England shoot from long range against an organised Iceland



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## Possession



High-possession football is in vogue in Australia.

The A-League's top three sides all dominated the ball, more so than six of the eight Euro quarter-finalists.

Even one of the more successful proponents of counter-attacking football, Tony Popovic, has recrafted his Western Sydney side into a Spanish-infused proactive passing machine.

Taking the Soccerroos' fixtures from the past 12 months, their 626.6 passes per game was the only team here to come close to Germany's 678.8 in France.

Unlike in the A-League, possession did not correlate with success in France.

Half of the teams to reach the quarter-finals averaged less than 50% possession, and Portugal too would have dipped below 50% if they hadn't faced the ball-averse Icelandic side in the group stage.

A wide variety of approaches were validated so long as teams played to their strengths, with a clear plan, and making best use of the players available.

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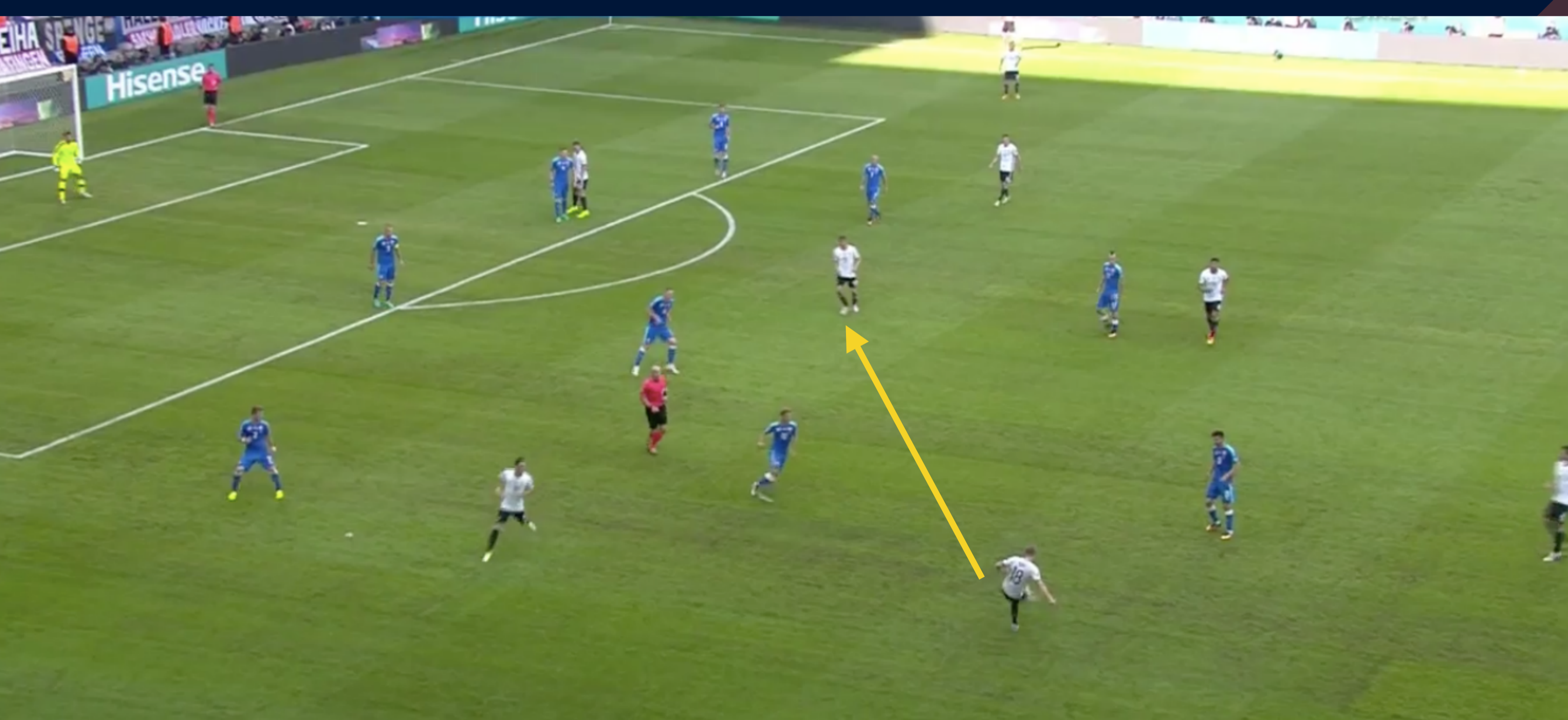
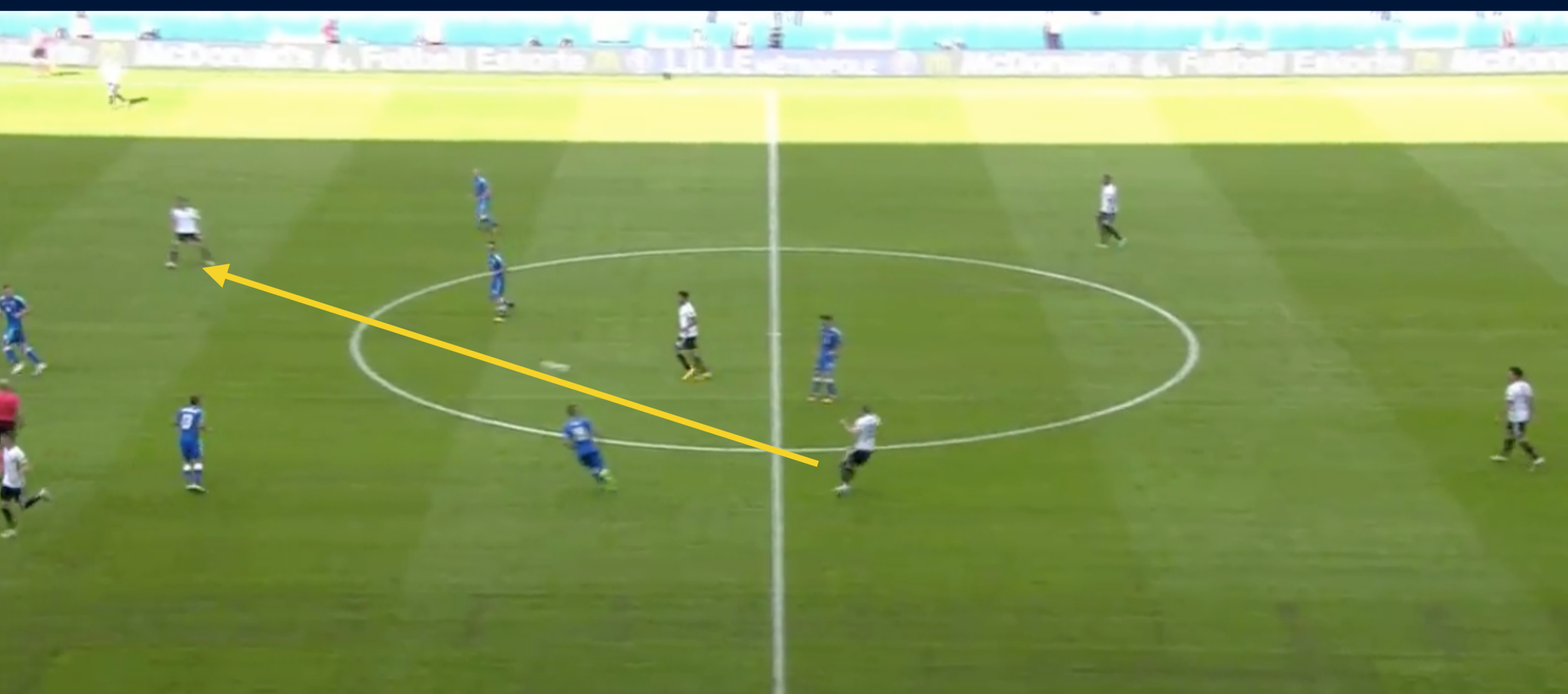
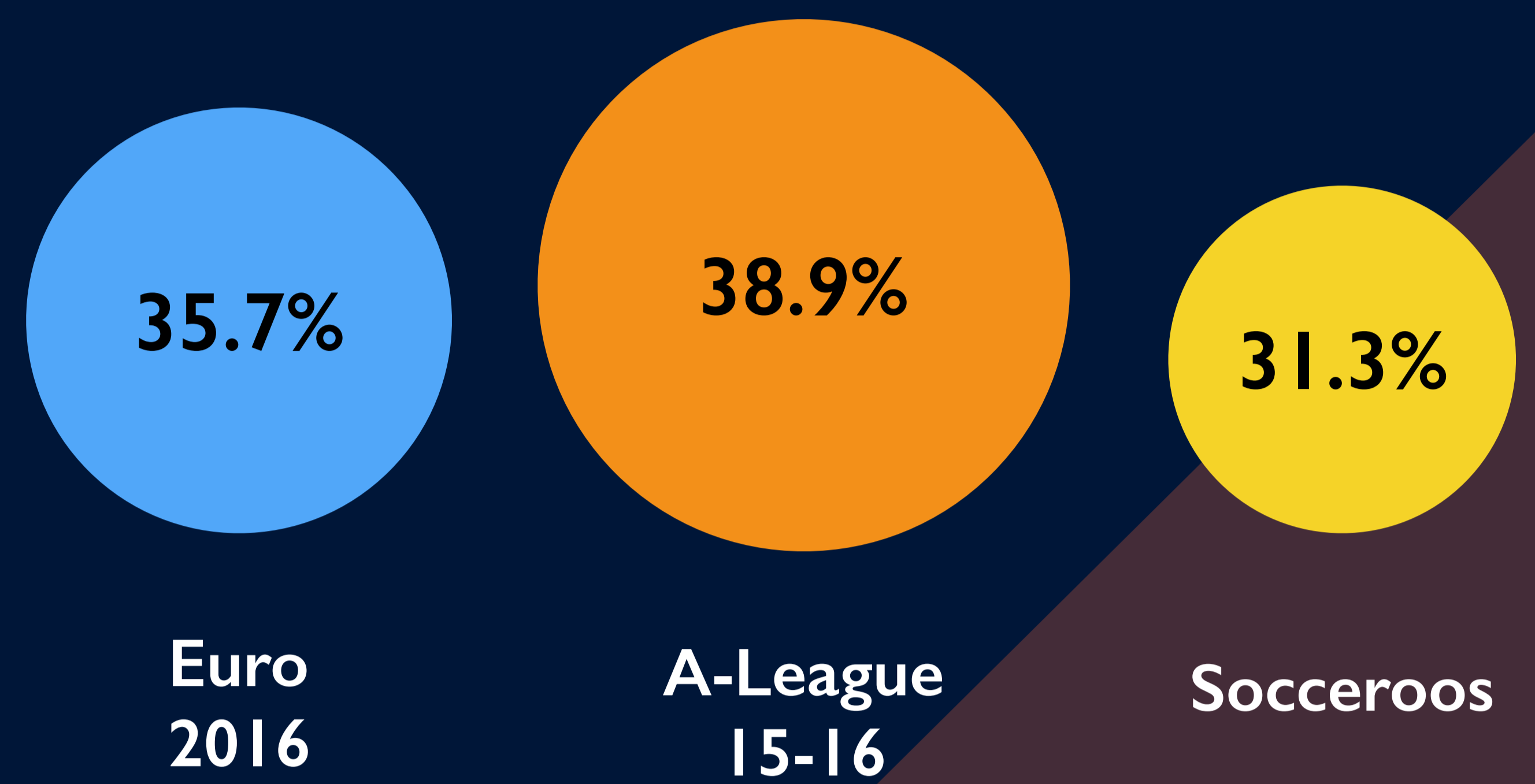
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## Passing

In their past ten matches, usually against much weaker opposition in Asia, the Socceroos have been extremely patient with their passing (31.3% passes played forwards), circulating the ball backwards and sideways to probe for openings.

The A-League is much further away from this extreme than Euro 2016, suggesting that Australia's domestic competition has relatively fewer imbalanced matches and/or more open and direct end-to-end football.

### Percentage of passes forward



### The Kroos role

The tactical trends in France highlighted the increasing value of a certain type of midfielder. With teams defending deep and compact, there was not just a need for creative technicians in the final third, but for players who could consistently and effectively deliver the ball into those areas.

A common sight was deep-lying midfielders dropping between or either side of their centre backs to start the play with passes to team-mates between the lines.

Germany's Toni Kroos was the outstanding example of this, registering 136 deliveries into the attacking third, 53 more than the next highest player and more than double any other\*. He made only one assist and didn't score, but was still selected in the team of the tournament by UEFA's technical panel.

\* source - uefa.com

A new analytics metric called 'Packing', created by German footballers Stefan Reinartz and Jens Hegeler, measures actions by the rate at which they 'eliminate' opponents, or move the ball closer to goal than them by passing, receiving or dribbling.

This metric ranked Kroos as Europe's best in the 15-16 season with 85 opponents bypassed per match.







Euro  
2016

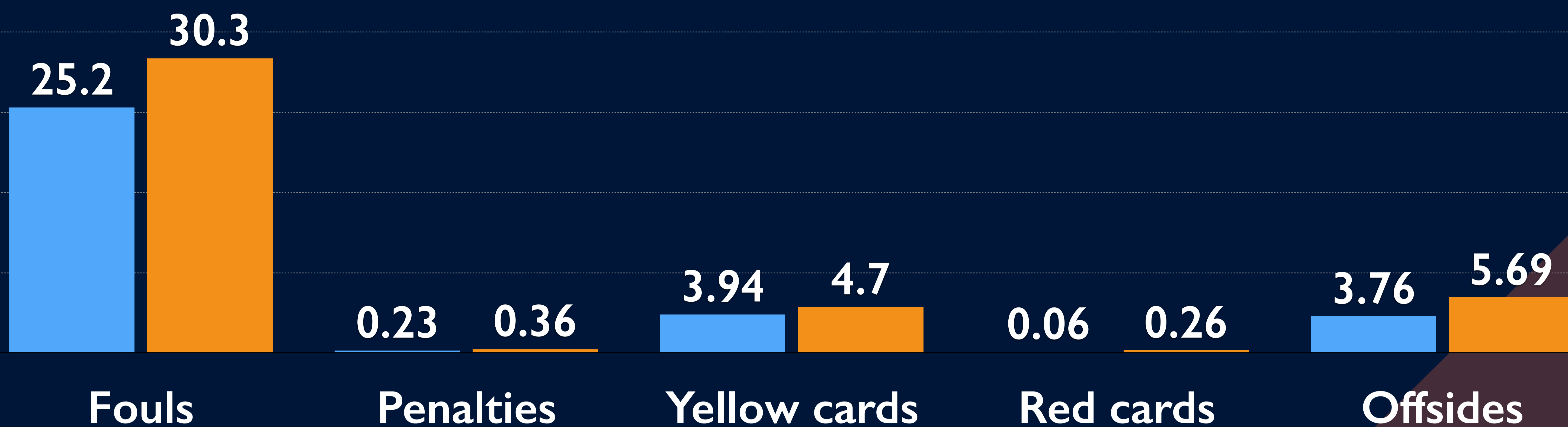


A-League  
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## Refereeing



A-League referees were more active across all metrics but differences in game style will have had a large influence on the number of incidents to adjudicate on.

That considered, the European referees were widely praised not only for their decision-making in key moments, but for their ability to control matches and allow play to flow.

### Pre-match analysis

UEFA's chief refereeing officer Pierluigi Collina implemented a tournament-wide pre-match analysis program on the back of the positive experience he had with the technique during his own storied career.

A team of coaches would analyse the two teams and prepare a package for the officials highlighting team tactics and individual habits.

Collina said: "We are always trying to improve the standard of their performances and we thought that this is possible if the referee knows more about the match they are going to referee."

"I am convinced that if you are one step ahead, if you know before what can happen, you are ready. If you are ready, it is very possible you are correct. If you don't know what is going to happen and if you are surprised by something, it is very probable that you will be wrong."



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## Commercial

### TV viewership samples

A-League 15-16	Viewers (1000s)
<b>Final</b> (Fox + SBS)	506
<b>Semi Final 2</b> (Fox + SBS)	263
<b>Semi Final 1</b> (Fox + SBS)	158
<b>Elim Final 2</b> (Fox + SBS)	108
<b>Elim Final 1</b> (Fox + SBS)	181

Australia NTs	Viewers (1000s)
<b>Socceroos v Greece</b> (Fox)	156
<b>Socceroos v Jordan</b> (Fox + SBS)	505
<b>Matildas v NZ</b> (ABC)	263

Euro 2016	Viewers (1000s)
<b>Final</b> (beIN + SBS)	175
<b>Semi Final 2</b> (beIN)	57
<b>Semi Final 1</b> (beIN)	31
<b>Quarter Final 4</b> (beIN)	69
<b>Quarter Final 3</b> (beIN)	38
<b>Quarter Final 2</b> (beIN)	45
<b>Quarter Final 1</b> (beIN)	88

source - Mediaweek

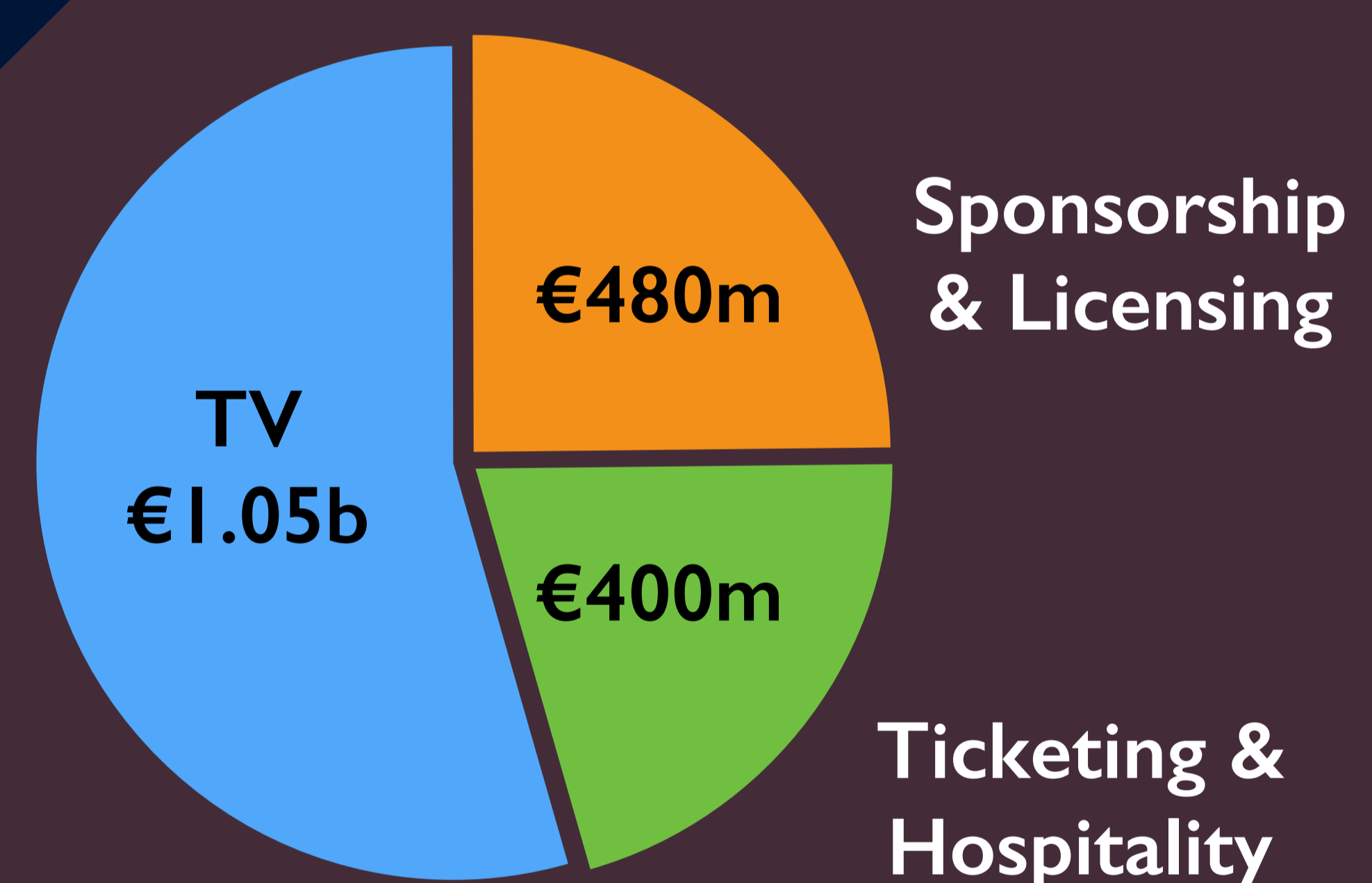
### Euro 2016 highlights

- €1.93 billion in revenue
- €830m profit
- 2.4 million attendance
- 2 billion TV audience
- 300 million visits to euro2016.com and official apps
- 15 million followers on official social channels

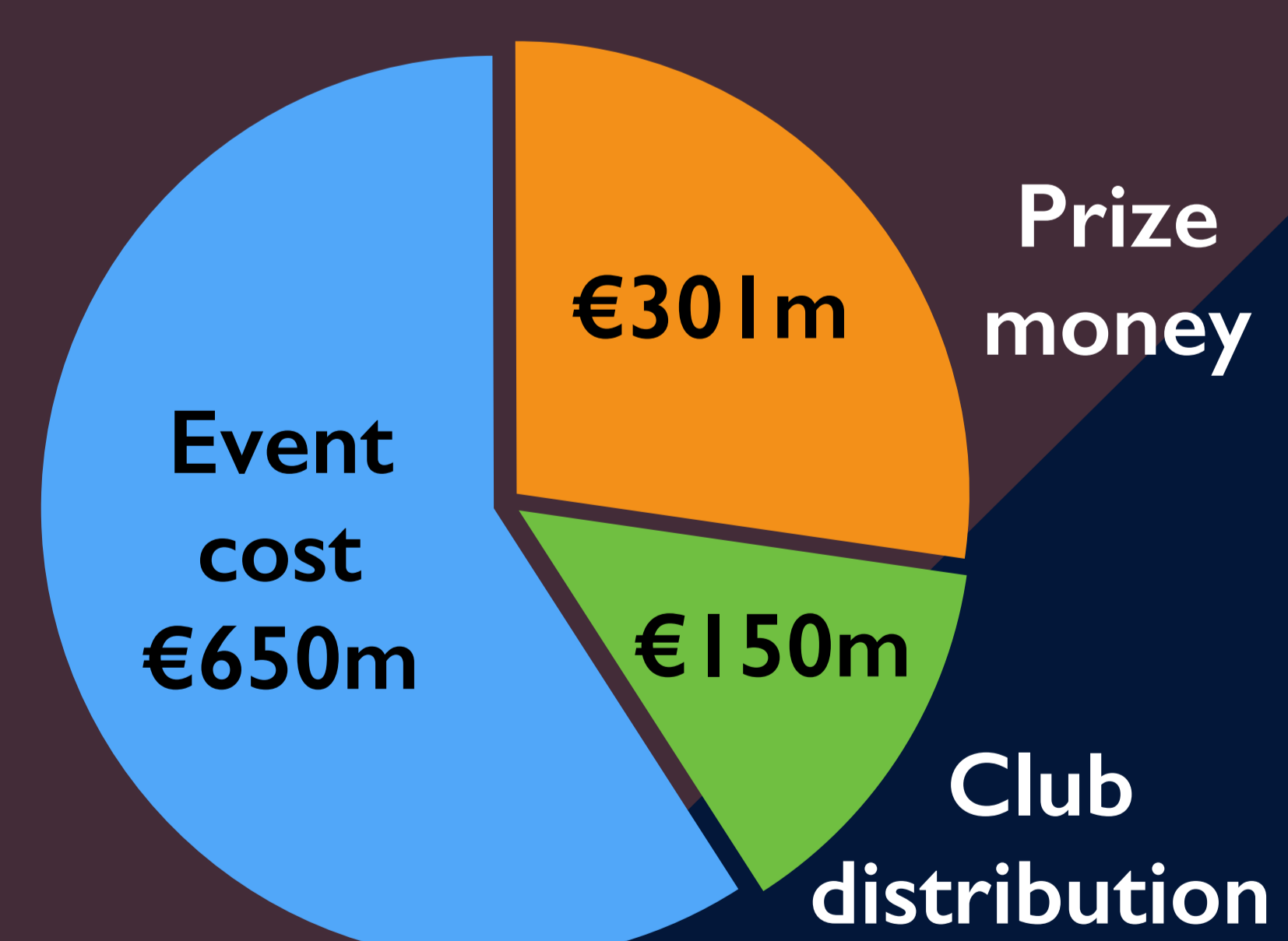
Expansion reaped big rewards for UEFA. The jump from 16 teams in 2012 to 24 for the first time saw revenues leap 34%, creating €830m profit.

€600m is distributed among member federations for the 2016-2020 period while UEFA keeps the difference for its own operations.

#### Revenue



#### Costs



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