

AUSTRALIAN WOMEN'S OLYMPIC FOOTBALL TEAM

Rio de Janeiro 2016
PFA Technical Report



Professional Footballers Australia

Supporting the Players, Building the Game



About this Report

This report provides a technical analysis of the Matildas' campaign at the Women's Football tournament at the Rio 2016 Olympic Games.

Through data and tactical insights we will benchmark Australia's performance against the world's best, highlights areas of strength and possible improvement, and capture trends in women's football.

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

- p3 Rio 2016 Overview
- p4 Matildas Campaign Overview
- p5 Match Summaries
- p9 Possession - Statistics
- p10 Possession - Analysis
- p12 Creation - Statistics
- p13 Creation - Analysis
- p14 Defending - Statistics
- p15 Defending - Analysis



Data courtesy of: 

Editorial: Brett Taylor

Images: Getty Images

Rio 2016 Overview

The format of the tournament remained the same as previous Olympic Games, with the only notable change being the introduction of the new fourth substitute and kick-off laws into a major women's tournament for the first time.

The schedule saw three-day breaks between all fixtures, with the exception of a four-day break between the quarter-finals and the semi-finals.

Seven venues were used; the Olympic stadium and six from the 2014 FIFA World Cup, including the Maracana.

Three-time defending champions and current World Cup holders United States failed to make the semi-finals in a major tournament for the first time, falling to Sweden in the quarter-finals.

Germany won their first gold in this event after taking bronze in 2000, 2004 and 2008.

Sweden won silver despite finishing third in their group and qualifying for the quarter-finals as the second best of the three third placed teams. Sweden won just one of their six matches (excluding penalties). Bronze-medalists Canada won five of their six.

Despite falling short of a medal, Brazil's run to the semi-finals was notable for the huge support the team received in a nation that has not traditionally embraced women's football.

Football was in the top 3 most-tweeted sports at Rio 2016 along with swimming and athletics.

“ The medal we've won is the respect of people. Brazil is paying more attention to women's soccer. ”

- Aline, Brazil goalkeeper

Medals



Germany



Sweden



Canada

Matildas Campaign Overview

Australia equalled their best result in a major tournament, matching their quarter-final appearances in the past three World Cups and the 2004 Olympics.

The campaign featured competitive displays against the hosts and eventual gold and bronze medalists. The team was shown to be not out of its depth against the world's best but falling slightly short of world class quality.

This was highly creditable given the relatively young and inexperienced profile of the Australian squad.

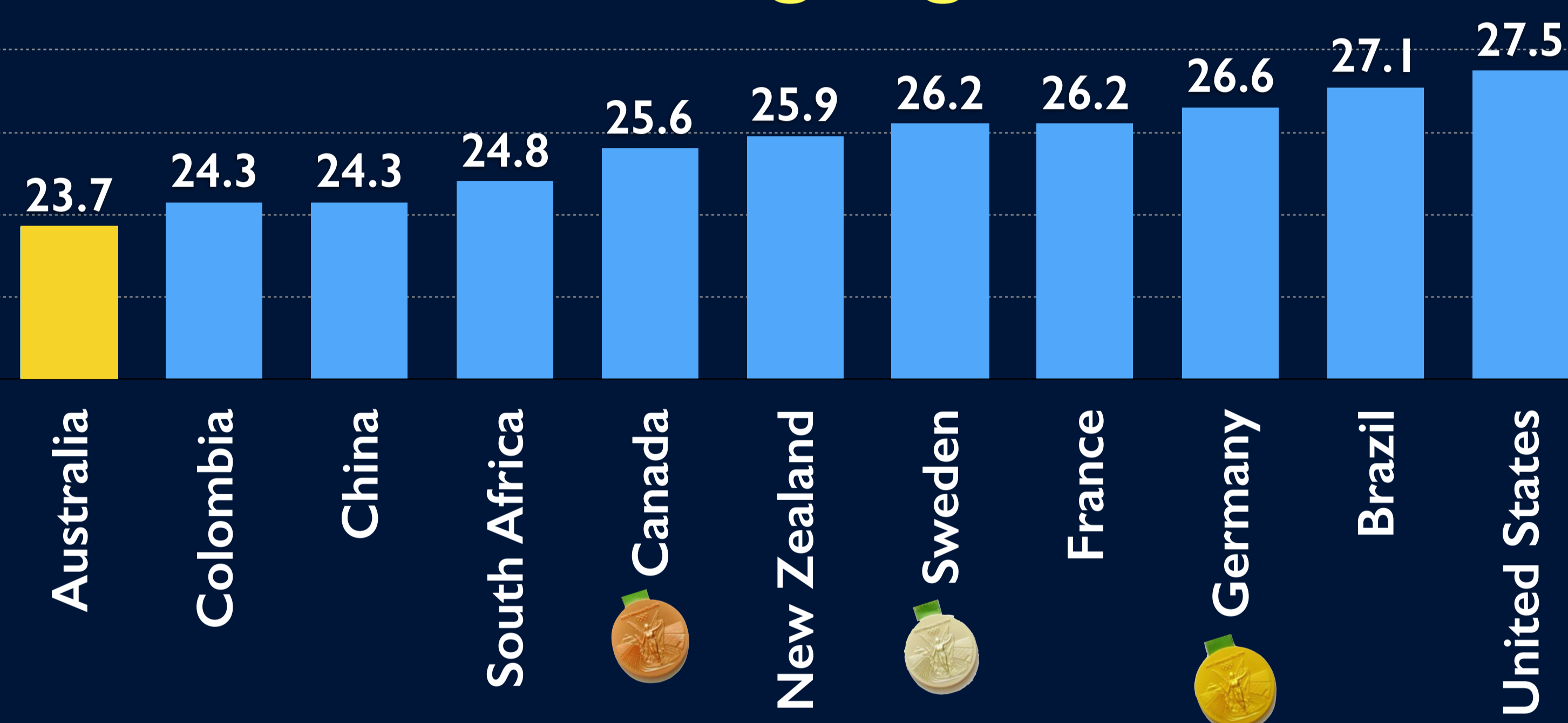
Group Stage

Australia 0-2 Canada
Australia 2-2 Germany
Australia 6-1 Zimbabwe

Quarter-final

Australia 0-0 (6-7 pens) Brazil

Average age



Average caps



Zimbabwe data unavailable

Squad depth/balance

Williams (300)	Arnold (90)
Alleway (300)	Kennedy (390)
Polkinghorne (315)	Catley (245)
Carpenter (15)	
Kellond-Knight (390)	
Gorry (352)	van Egmond (300)
	Butt (0)
De Vanna (246)	Kerr (233)
Foord (375)	Crummer (30)
Logarzo (258)	Heyman (192)
	Simon (259)

(minutes played)

A 4-3-3 formation was used at all times. The squad was strongest in the wide attack and central midfield zones. Williams excelled in goals.

The squad was limited in the fullback areas. There was constant rotation in the central attacker role.

High versatility was demonstrated, with Foord, Logarzo, Kellond-Knight, Polkinghorne and Simon all playing multiple positions throughout the tournament.



Rio2016



Australia 0-2 Canada

Matchday 1 / Aug 03 / Arena Corinthians, São Paulo

Attacking	Australia	Canada
Total shots	16	9
Shots on target	3	6
Shots outside box	9	3
Crosses	22	9

Possession	Australia	Canada
Possession %	61.6%	38.4%
Total passes	446	283
Pass accuracy %	79.1%	61.1%
Passes forward %	31.2%	49.8%

Defending	Australia	Canada
Tackles	17	30
Interceptions	8	22
Fouls conceded	8	13

Summary

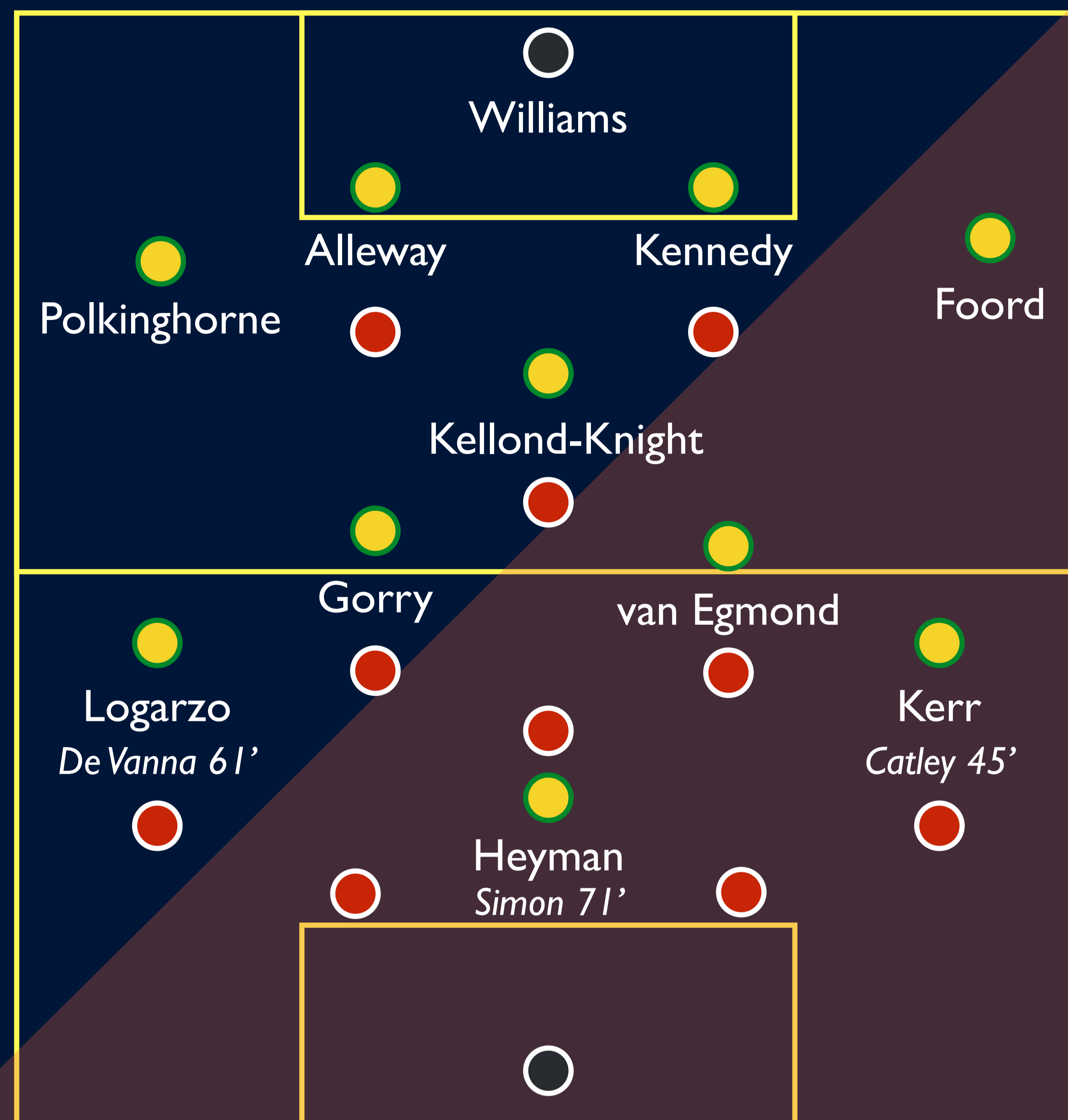
The match was defined by two early incidents: Beckie's goal in the opening 20 seconds and Zadorsky's red card on 19 minutes.

Canada opted to defend the lead with a deep, compact 4-4-1 block for the remainder of the match.

Australia dominated possession and the majority of chances thereafter with multiple shots from outside the penalty area.

An overcommitment of numbers towards the end of the match gave Canada a penalty (saved) and a late second goal on the counter-attack.

Beckie 1'
Sinclair 80'



Tactical notes

- Canada started in 4-4-2 diamond with high press, adjusted to 4-4-1 after red card
- Difficulty creating clear goal-scoring opportunities against deep and compact opponent; predominately crosses into the box and long-range shots
- Excellent pressing from the front and high transitional work rate in ball recovery
- Lost defensive balance when chasing the equalising goal; conceded chances and goal on the counter

Australia 2-2 Germany

Matchday 2 / Aug 06 / Arena Corinthians, São Paulo

Attacking	Australia	Germany
Total shots	15	26
Shots on target	4	9
Shots outside box	8	12
Crosses	8	23

Possession	Australia	Germany
Possession %	36.0%	64.0%
Total passes	221	385
Pass accuracy %	45.2%	67.5%
Passes forward %	62.4%	45.7%

Defending	Australia	Germany
Tackles	19	9
Interceptions	16	10
Fouls conceded	7	9

Summary

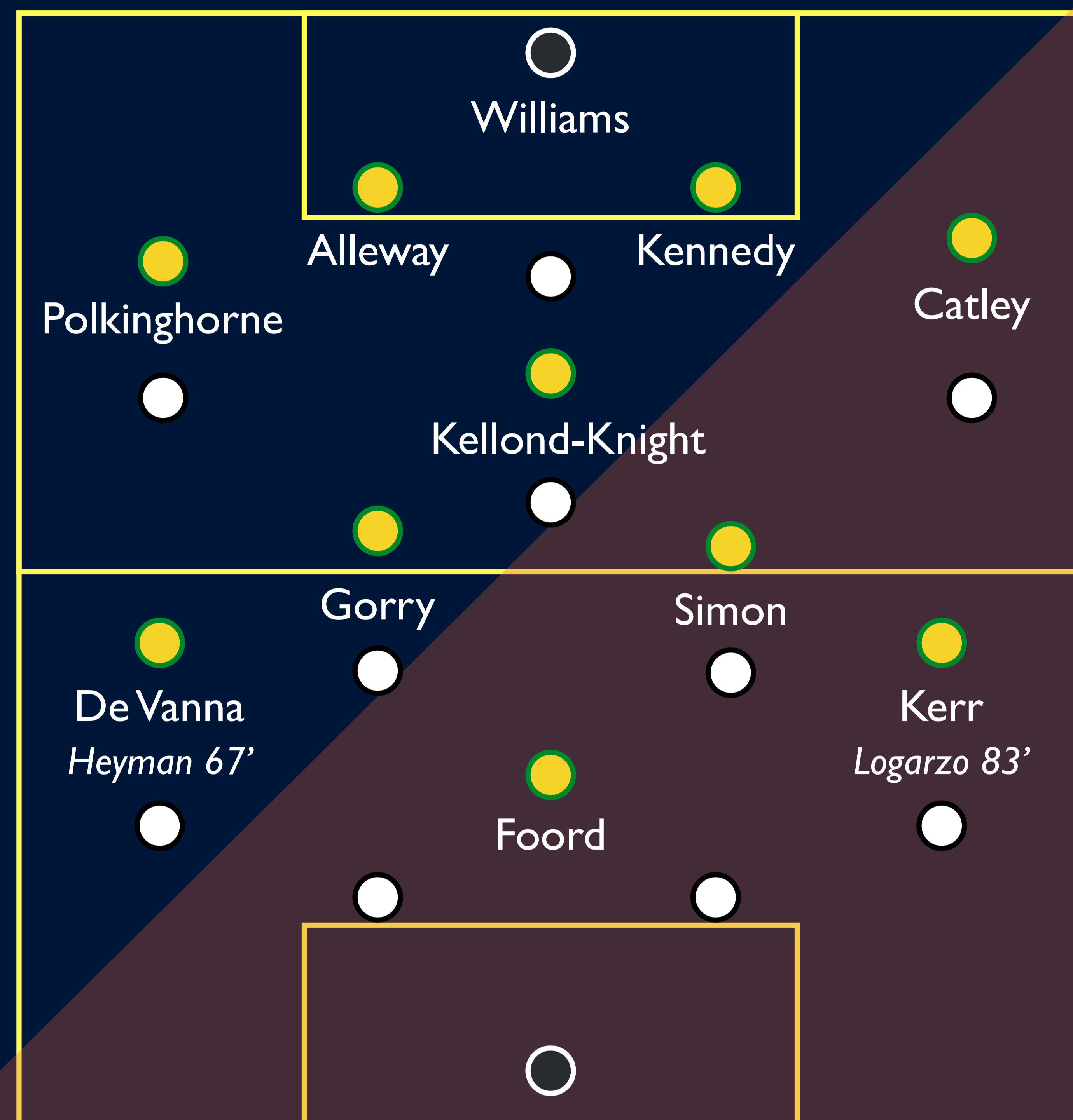
The Matildas took an early lead which challenged Germany to overcome aggressive Australian pressing and counter attack.

Germany demonstrated high quality in build up play, however Australia defended well collectively and reduced Germany primarily to crosses and long-range shots. When required, Williams was excellent throughout.

Australia's counter-attack was dangerous as Germany applied relentless pressure with the ball in an evenly balanced contest. The gold medallists escaped with a point through a set piece equaliser.

Kerr 6'
Foord 45'

Däbritz 45+2'
Bartusiak 88'



Tactical notes

- Australia's goals highlighted the key attacking strength; speed in wide areas and forward play
- Notable decision not to build up play from Williams - direct play from back
- Germany technically superior. Matildas' physical preparation and level evident
- Player-oriented defending can lead to players out of position (Däbritz goal)
- Germany forced wide attackers deep in BPO which limited Australia's BPO-BP

Australia 6-1 Zimbabwe

Matchday 3 / Aug 09 / Itaipava Arena Fonte Nova, Salvador

Attacking	Australia	Zimbabwe
Total shots	32	9
Shots on target	13	4
Shots outside box	9	7
Crosses	24	9

Possession	Australia	Zimbabwe
Possession %	57.8%	42.2%
Total passes	443	343
Pass accuracy %	74.7%	65.3%
Passes forward %	41.1%	44.0%

Defending	Australia	Zimbabwe
Tackles	12	29
Interceptions	19	23
Fouls conceded	5	7

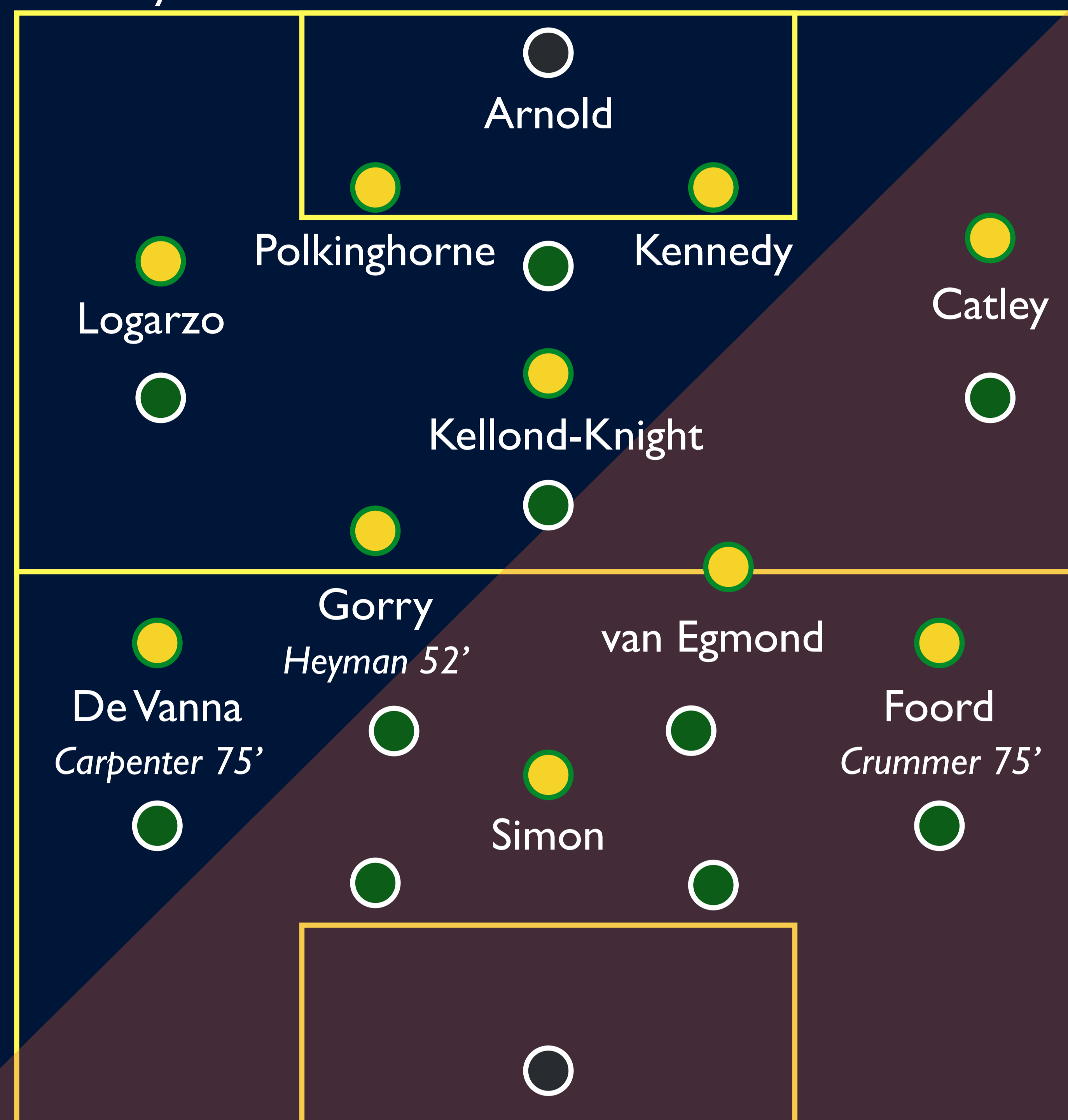
Summary

The Matildas overwhelmed the tournament's weakest side in a match requiring a high number of goals to ensure qualification to the quarter-finals. This may have denied Stajcic the opportunity to rotate players.

The Matildas' dominance reflected in all areas statistically.

Notably, three of the goals came from corners, reflecting the organisational and aerial superiority of the Matildas over Zimbabwe.

De Vanna 2' Simon 50' Msipa 90+1'
 Polkinghorne 15' Heyman 55', 66'
 Kennedy 37'



Tactical notes

- The only match in which Australia took more shots from inside the box (23) than outside (9)
- More shots from inside the box than in the other three games combined (16)
- Strong use of fullbacks (especially Catley) in advanced attacking roles
- Three goals direct from corners: Australia's only set pieces goals in Rio.

Australia 0-0 (6-7) Brazil

Quarter-final / Aug 12 / Mineirão, Belo Horizonte

Attacking	Australia	Brazil
Total shots	9	26
Shots on target	2	7
Shots outside box	7	11
Crosses	9	23

Possession	Australia	Brazil
Possession %	43.6%	56.4%
Total passes	378	458
Pass accuracy %	62.4%	71.4%
Passes forward %	46.0%	44.5%

Defending	Australia	Brazil
Tackles	35	22
Interceptions	20	19
Fouls conceded	16	16



Summary

The teams had contrasting strengths and weaknesses which led to spells of dominance for each, usually towards the end of each half for Australia. Still, Brazil edged the contest.

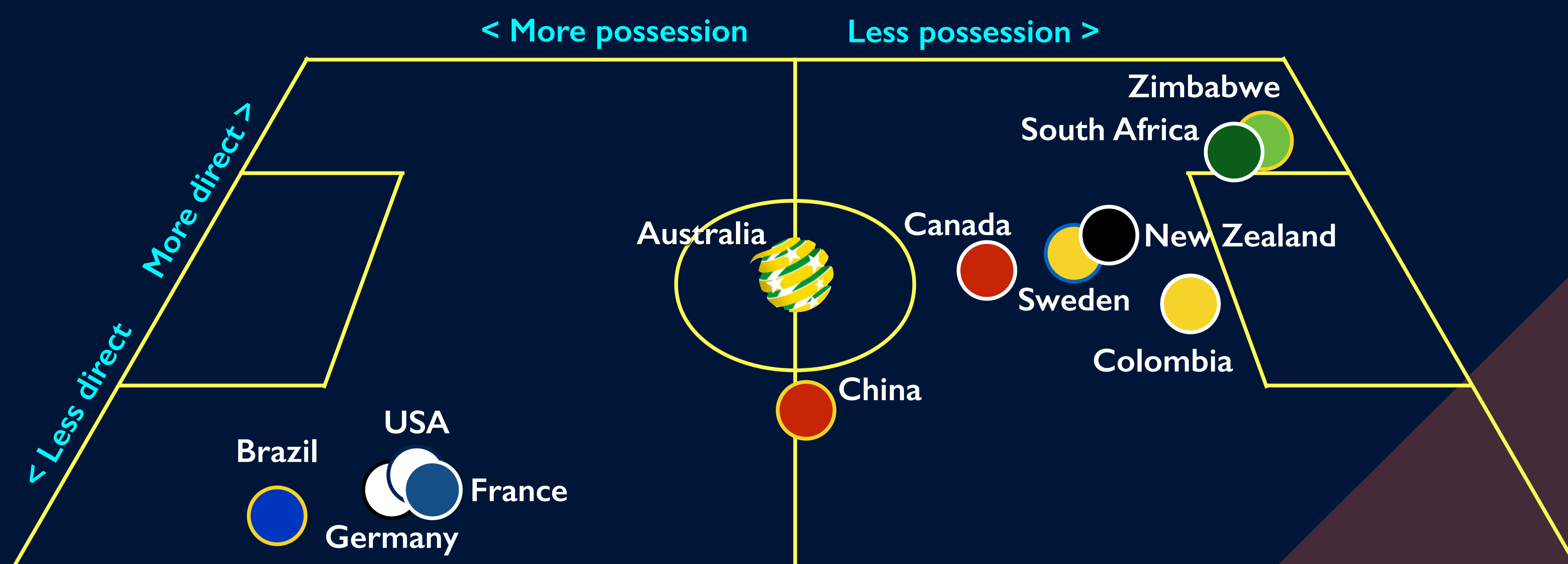
The Matildas appeared fitter, harder working and more resolute while Brazil were technically superior and played more as individuals. Brazil's 4-2-4 was less compact than Canada or Germany.

Brazil's players became frustrated by the Matildas in front of 52,660 fans, leading to an at times spiteful match. Brazil avoided contentious red card and penalty late in normal time before claiming victory in the penalty shootout.

Tactical notes

- Australia's 4-3-3 provided an extra player in midfield, an advantage exploited in Simon's 20th minute chance but not often thereafter
- Kellond-Knight's move to fullback on 20' demonstrated lack of depth in position and weakened Australia's possession game
- Brazil relied on aerial passes into their front four to overcome Australia's press
- Australia's decision not to build from defence was notable with Williams playing many direct passes centrally

Possession - Statistics



The axes measure the average possession (horizontal) and % of passes played forward (vertical). Most teams were either proactive and patient, or reactive and direct.

Australia had a variable game style. They dominated the ball against Zimbabwe and 10-man Canada, and were forced to play on the break by Germany and Brazil.

Player	Passes p90	Accuracy	Forward	Long
Kennedy	53.8	77%	37%	10%
Alleway	43.5	74%	39%	11%
Polkinghorne	41.1	69%	41%	5%
Catley	25.0	62%	38%	11%
van Egmond	46.5	79%	29%	11%
Kellond-Knight	35.3	64%	45%	17%
Gorry	27.4	80%	36%	10%
Simon	24.3	57%	38%	6%
Kerr	22.8	49%	43%	8%
Logarzo	22.3	48%	45%	12%
Foord	20.4	66%	28%	8%
De Vanna	16.1	68%	26%	6%
Heyman	15.9	50%	36%	0%

Passing profile

Australia had the fourth lowest passing accuracy at the Olympics (68.6%) after Zimbabwe, South Africa and New Zealand.

The midfielders had distinct roles with Kellond-Knight tasked with penetrating but risky forward passing (and set pieces), while van Egmond and Gorry circulated possession safely.

The attackers' numbers reflect Australia's direct and impatient approach in the final third.

Possession - Analysis

Playing out

Australia varied build up play from short passing to direct play depending on the opponent.

Pressing and fast transitions (BPO-BP and BP-BPO) were a constant feature. Against Germany and Brazil, a direct approach was preferred from the goalkeeper.

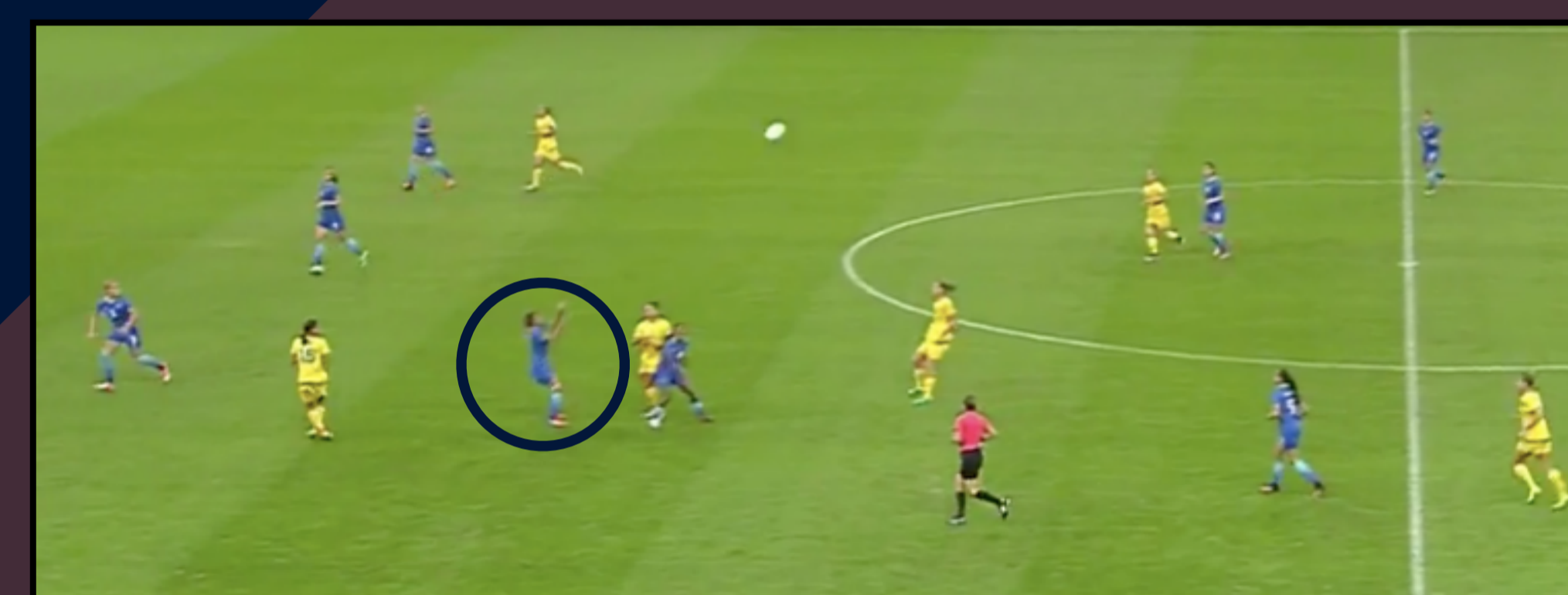
Mistakes in Australia's build up led to Canada's opening goal.

Australia lacked a point of reference to hold up the ball or compete aerially when forced long.

In the pictured example from the 10th minute, Williams rejects the short options and waves her team-mates upfield. Brazil win an uncontested header, then the second ball, and immediately earn a free kick in Australia's half.



Goal conceded v Canada
Central defenders close distance and pass opponent-side



Kicking long
Lack of intention for short build up and lack of aerial target

Player	Team	Pass Acc %	Long Pass %	Long Pass Acc %
Barbara	Brazil	94%	15%	68%
Schult	Germany	81%	41%	60%
Dringirai	Zimbabwe	79%	25%	36%
Bouhaddi	France	72%	41%	44%
Solo	USA	66%	49%	39%
Williams	Australia	60%	54%	30%
Nayler	NZ	59%	53%	32%
Lindahl	Sweden	59%	57%	29%
Sepúlveda	Colombia	58%	48%	19%
Barker	S Africa	58%	63%	36%
Labbé	Canada	56%	65%	37%
Zhao	China	53%	59%	22%
Magwede	Zimbabwe	30%	86%	22%

Goalkeepers with 50+ passes

Goalkeeper passing

Of 13 goalkeepers who attempted more than 50 passes, Williams ranked 6th in passing accuracy and 8th in % of passes played long (if fewer is considered better).

Only 30% of her long passes found their mark, 9th best among these players, reflecting a combination of inaccurate kicking and a lack of an aerial target.

Possession - Analysis

Rotations and build up

When opponents sat off, Australia attempted to build from the back with short passing, mixed with the occasional early diagonal pass in behind the opposition fullbacks, which was usually played by a midfielder dropping deep to collect the ball from the centre backs.

Australia often allowed the #6 to position between or either side of the centre backs to assist in build up.

This was effective in enabling Australia's best passer Kellond-Knight to direct the play, and in the top pictured example, the left fullback Catley into a high starting position.

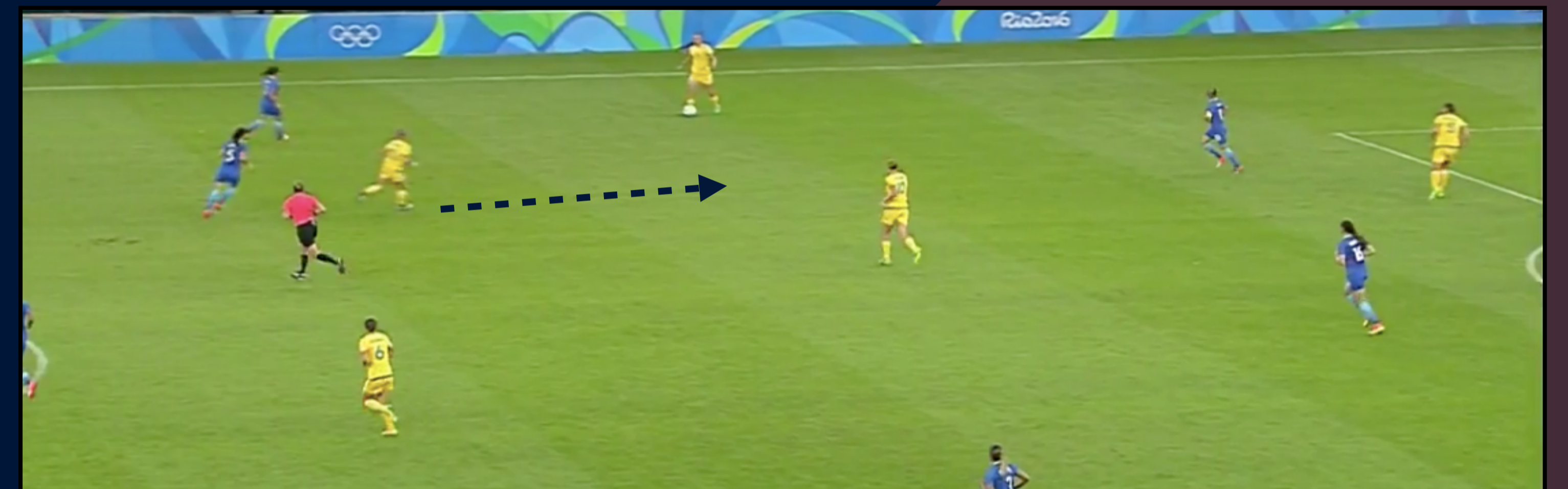
It was rare however for Australia to build up through the lines centrally.

The midfielders lacked the positional awareness and decision-making of the best midfielders from Germany and Brazil.

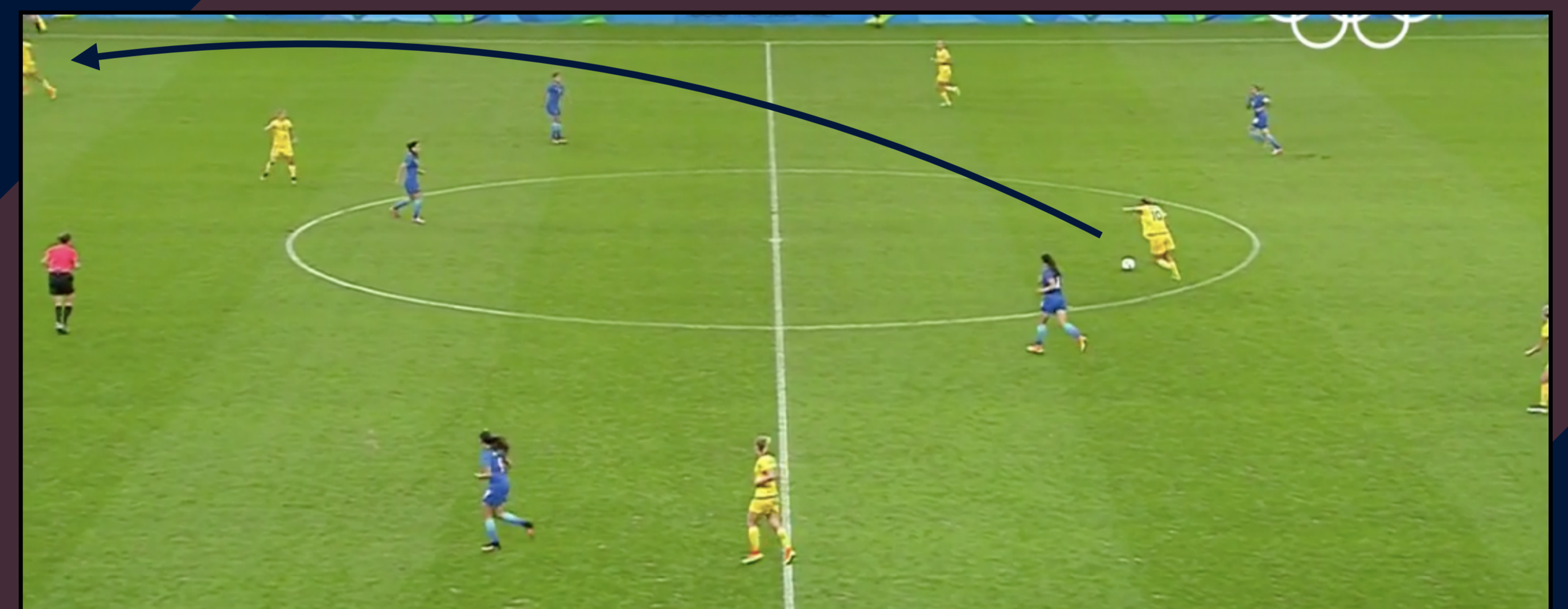
In the pictured examples we see Australia's midfielders making decisions that limited their ability to play through Brazil despite generous space afforded and a 3v2 numerical advantage in Australia's favour.



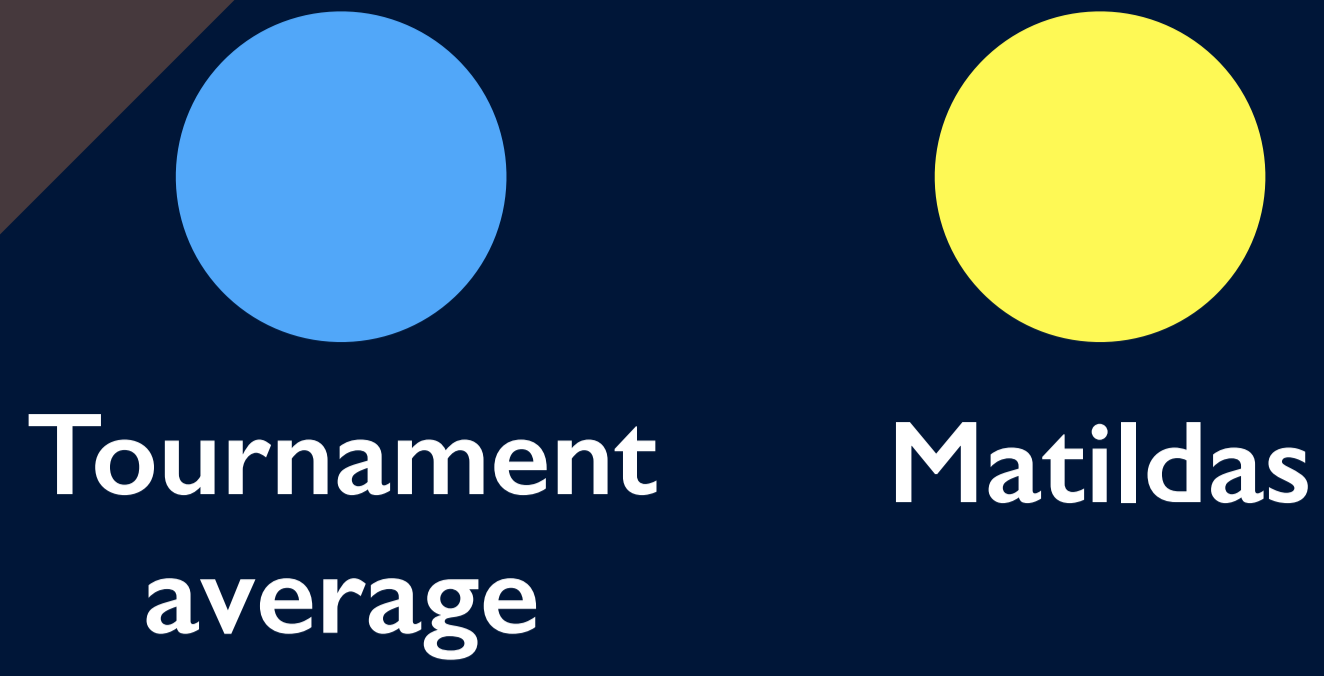
Build up rotation
#6 plays in left fullback after winger goes inside



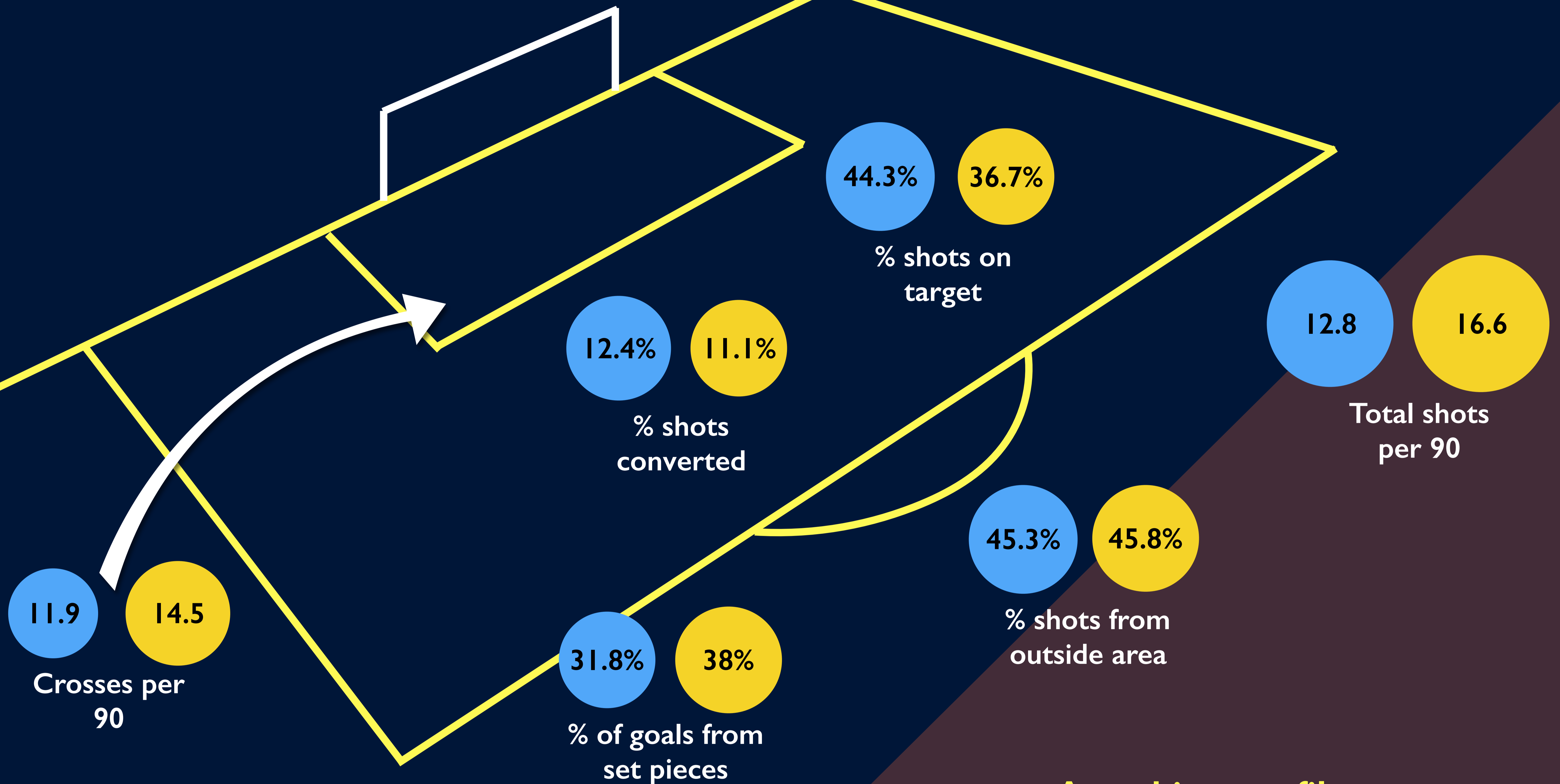
Midfielders positioning
#10 drags opponent into line of pass to #6



Decision-making
Opting for long pass when there is space to advance



Creation - Statistics



Attacking profile

Australia had a relatively neutral attacking profile compared to group rivals Germany (24.2 shots per 90) and Canada (17.9% conversion), who topped the charts in dominance and deadliness respectively.

Kellond-Knight was the main creator through set pieces and early through balls on the attacking transition. The Matildas also displayed a high incidence of crosses and long-range shooting.

Australia found creation of high-quality chances inside the box difficult. The first-choice attacking midfielders, Gorry and van Egmond, created only four chances between them; three of these assists against Zimbabwe.

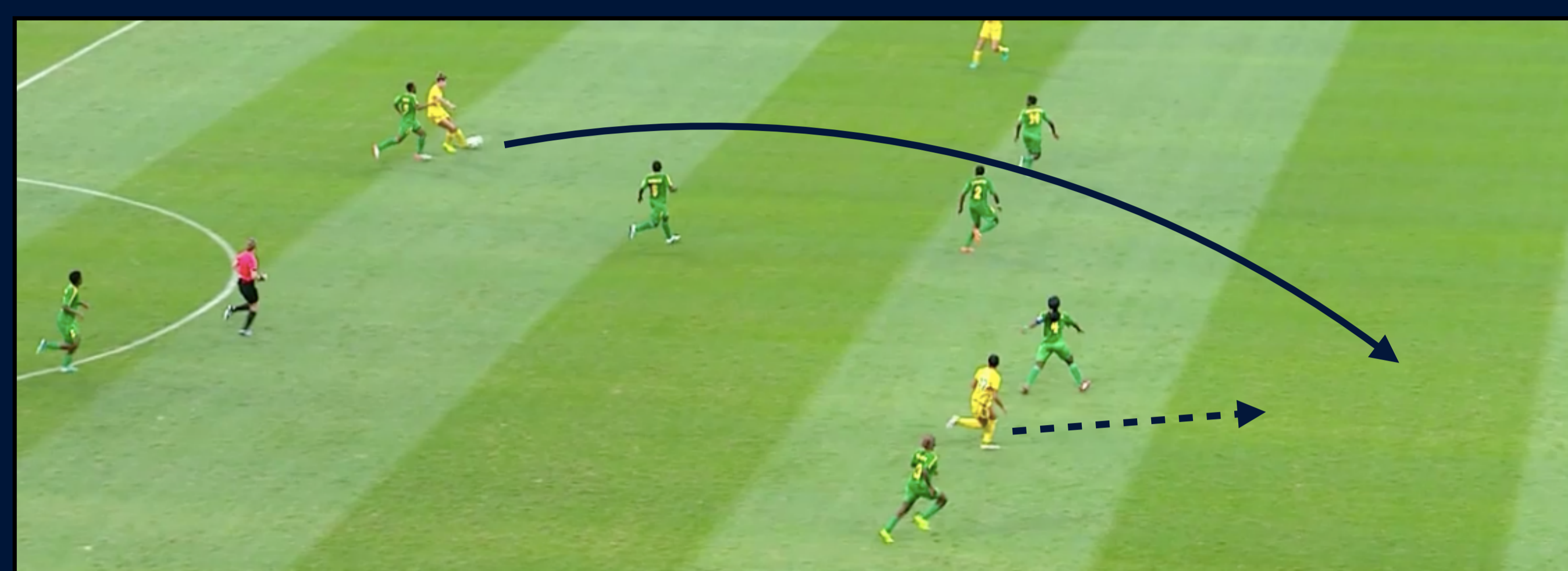
Player	Goals	Shots	Assists	Key passes
Heyman	2	8	0	3
Foord	1	8	1	6
De Vanna	1	6	1	5
Simon	1	6	0	4
Kerr	1	5	0	3
Kennedy	1	5	0	2
Polkinghorne	1	3	0	2
Kellond-Knight	0	6	2	14
van Egmond	0	6	2	2
Catley	0	1	1	5
Gorry	0	13	1	2
Logarzo	0	4	0	3

Creation - Analysis

Attacking strength: speed in depth

Australia demonstrated a consistent threat when attacking space behind the opposition defence, particularly in transitions with a highly mobile attack.

A very high proportion of the Matildas' key attacking moments exhibited this quality. The red card forced against Canada and the second goal against Germany both featured early passes in depth from the defensive half, while the three open-play goals against Zimbabwe all involved penetrating passes.

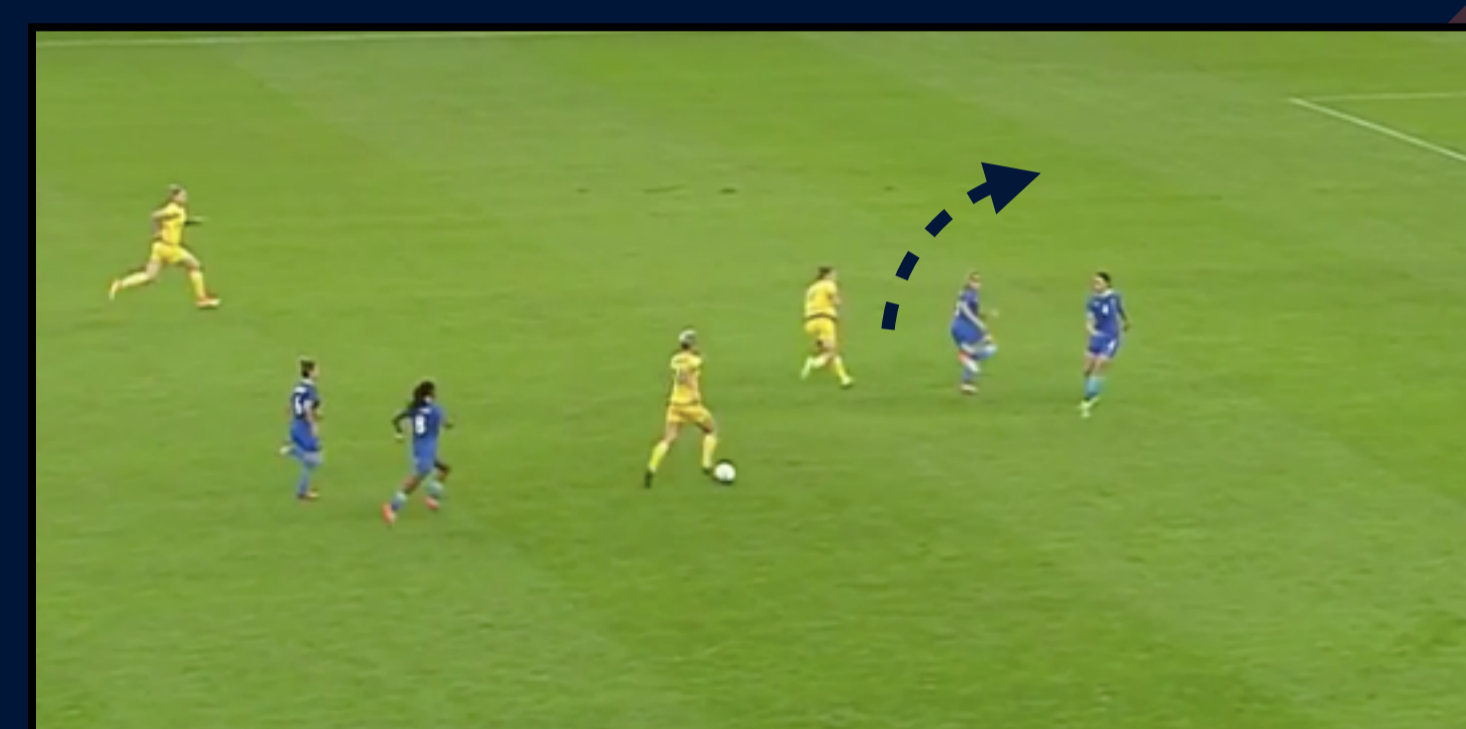


Simon goal v Zimbabwe
Early through ball for striker running behind

Decision-making in transition

Better decision-making in transition moments will strengthen the Matildas' opportunities and chance creation.

In the pictured examples, elections to shoot or angles and direction of attacking runs can be further improved



Counter-attacking runs
Foord's run to the left collides with Crummer's

Lack of creativity

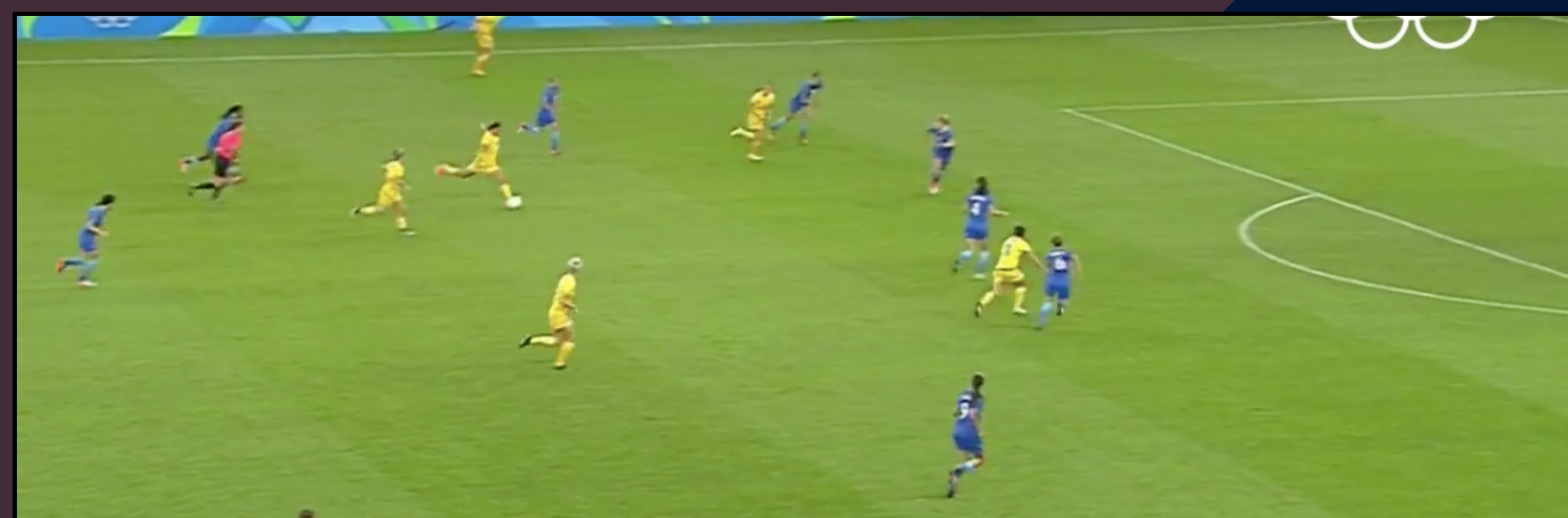
When facing deep blocks, the Matildas struggled to maintain possession in the final third and penetrate.

There was a high incidence of shots from distance, however 32 shots outside the penalty area returned no goals.

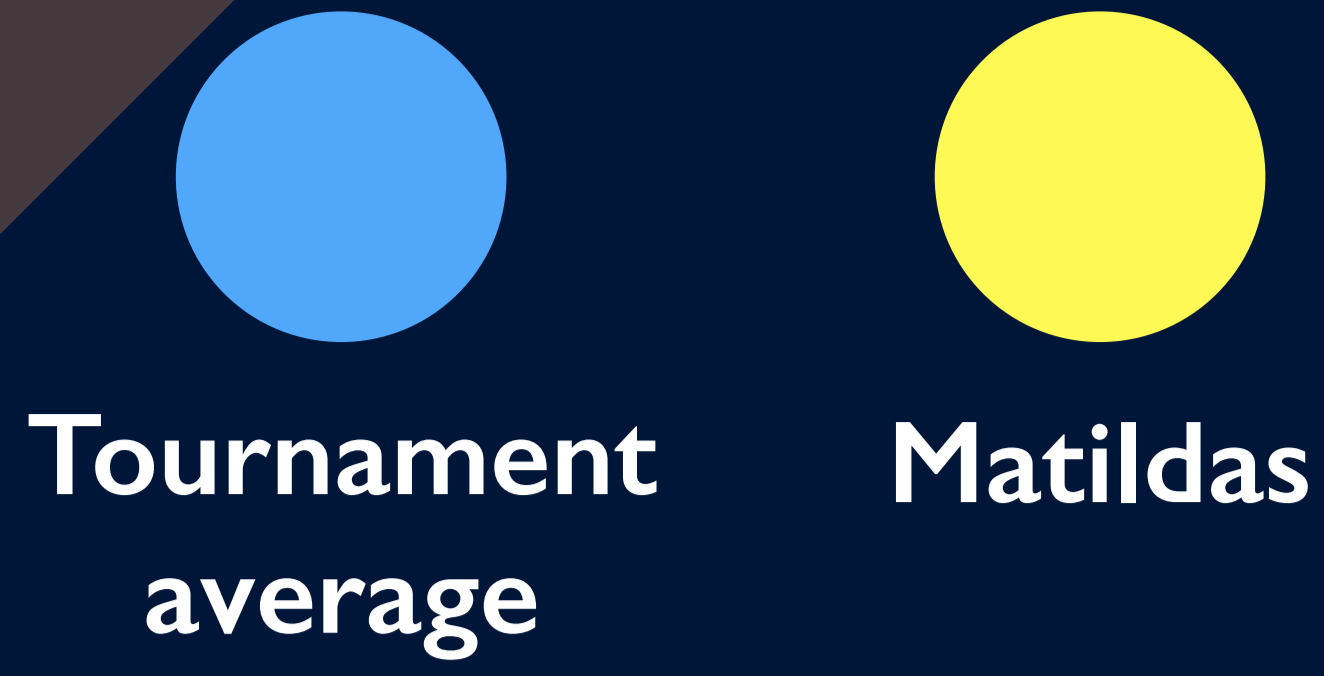
There was little link between midfield and attack. An outstanding exception was Gorry's run to create De Vanna's goal against Zimbabwe.



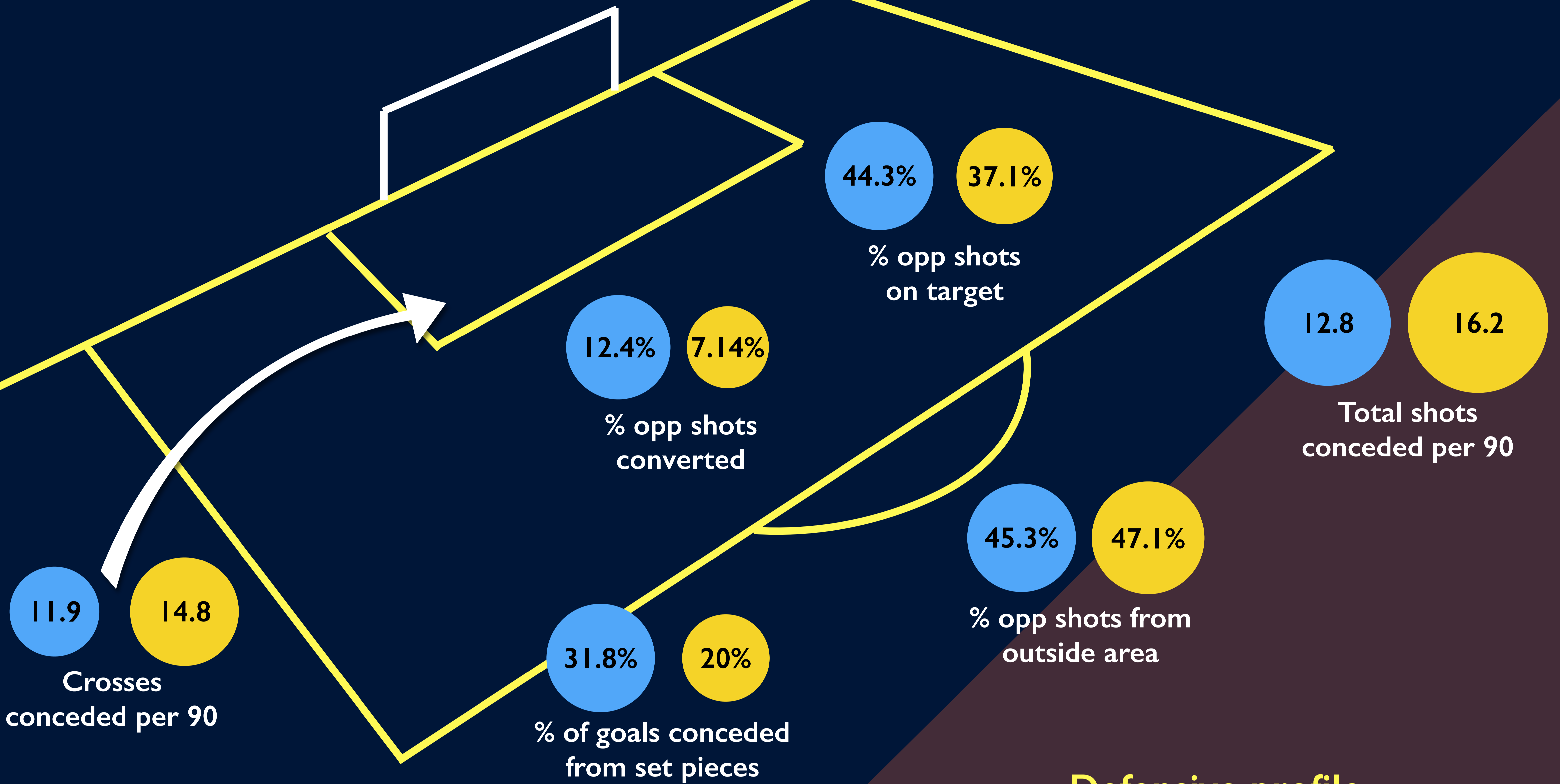
Decision-making
Kerr takes a low-percentage shot, wasting a 2v1



Long-range shooting
After out-playing Brazil's midfield, a shot from 40 yards



Defending - Statistics



Defensive profile

Australia's outstanding defensive transitions and collective work rate (BP-BPO) are reflected in the attackers being among the highest contributors of defensive actions (Foord, de Vanna, Kerr).

Australia conceded a high volume of shots - only Sweden, South Africa and Zimbabwe allowed more - but of relatively low quality; predominantly from outside the area, off-target or off balance headers from crosses.

The Matildas were well organised in the periods when they were forced to defend in BPO in their defensive zone.

Player	Tackles	Tackle success %	Interceptions	Fouls conceded
Gorry	12	75%	6	3
Foord	9	67%	8	5
De Vanna	9	78%	3	3
Polkinghorne	8	63%	9	2
Logarzo	8	50%	5	3
Kerr	7	86%	8	1
van Egmond	7	43%	1	1
Alleway	6	83%	3	2
Kennedy	5	80%	7	2
Catley	5	60%	2	2
Kellond-Knight	3	67%	9	4
Heyman	2	100%	0	3
Simon	1	100%	0	4

Defending - Analysis

Pressing from the front

The front three were quick and alert at every opposition goal kick and restart, immediately launching a coordinated and aggressive press on the first pass.

There were a few occasions when this caused immediate danger, especially in the first half against Germany, and often forced teams to kick long.

The ability to contest and win the first and second ball was not a strength. The Matildas won 47.8% of aerial duels and 49.7% of duels overall.

Player-oriented defending

In the middle and back thirds, Australia adopted a clear man-marking strategy. The midfielders would track direct opponents tightly and the fullbacks would follow their wingers when they roamed deep or inside, leaving the Australian wingers to track their opposing fullbacks all down the flank.

Once beaten, the wingers and midfielders would track back and double team against opponents.

The benefits of this strategy were simplicity and clarity, while the cons were the required work rate and the constant disruption to team shape.

Notably, the need for the Matildas wingers to defend all the way back in the fullback position limited their ability to break forward on the counter, which, as discussed, was a key weapon in their ability to create chances and get up the pitch.

Germany's first goal was a clear example of the downside to this strategy, as Polkinghorne was dragged out of position tracking her opponent and Däbritz burst past Kellond-Knight and through the vacant fullback space.



Pressing from the front
Turnovers from Germany's goal kicks created danger



Wingers positioning
Above: De Vanna defending in the fullback position
Below: Higher defensive position enables counter-attack for 2nd goal



Player-oriented defending
Däbritz scores using the space vacated by Polkinghorne

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