Twitter Thread by Maram

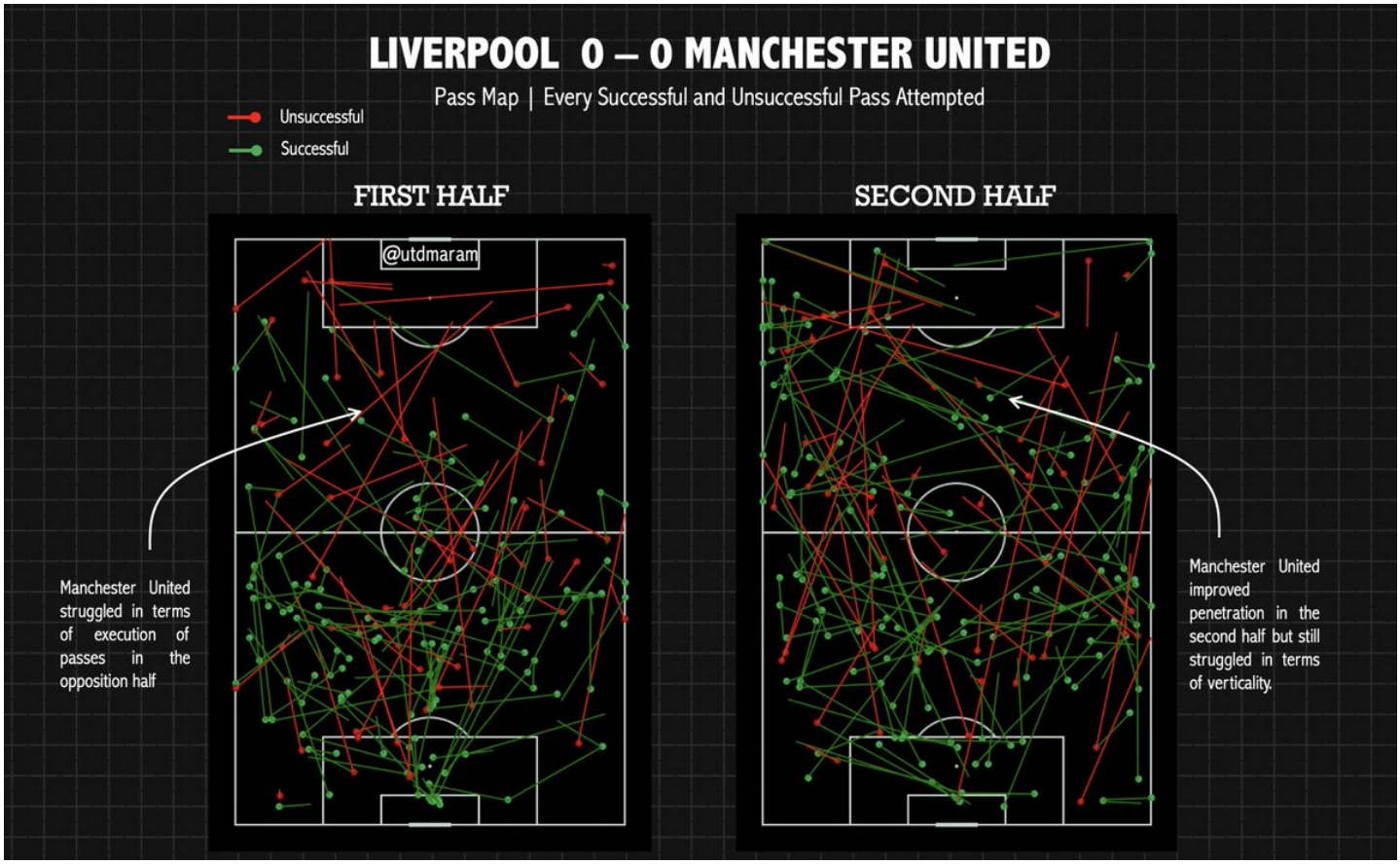
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Analyzing Manchester United's stalemate draw over Liverpool in the Premier League through data and tactical analysis: a thread.



MUFC's plan was to bypass Liverpool's high press through vertical *quick* passes and long balls to exploit their lack of senior CB's but — execution was lacking.

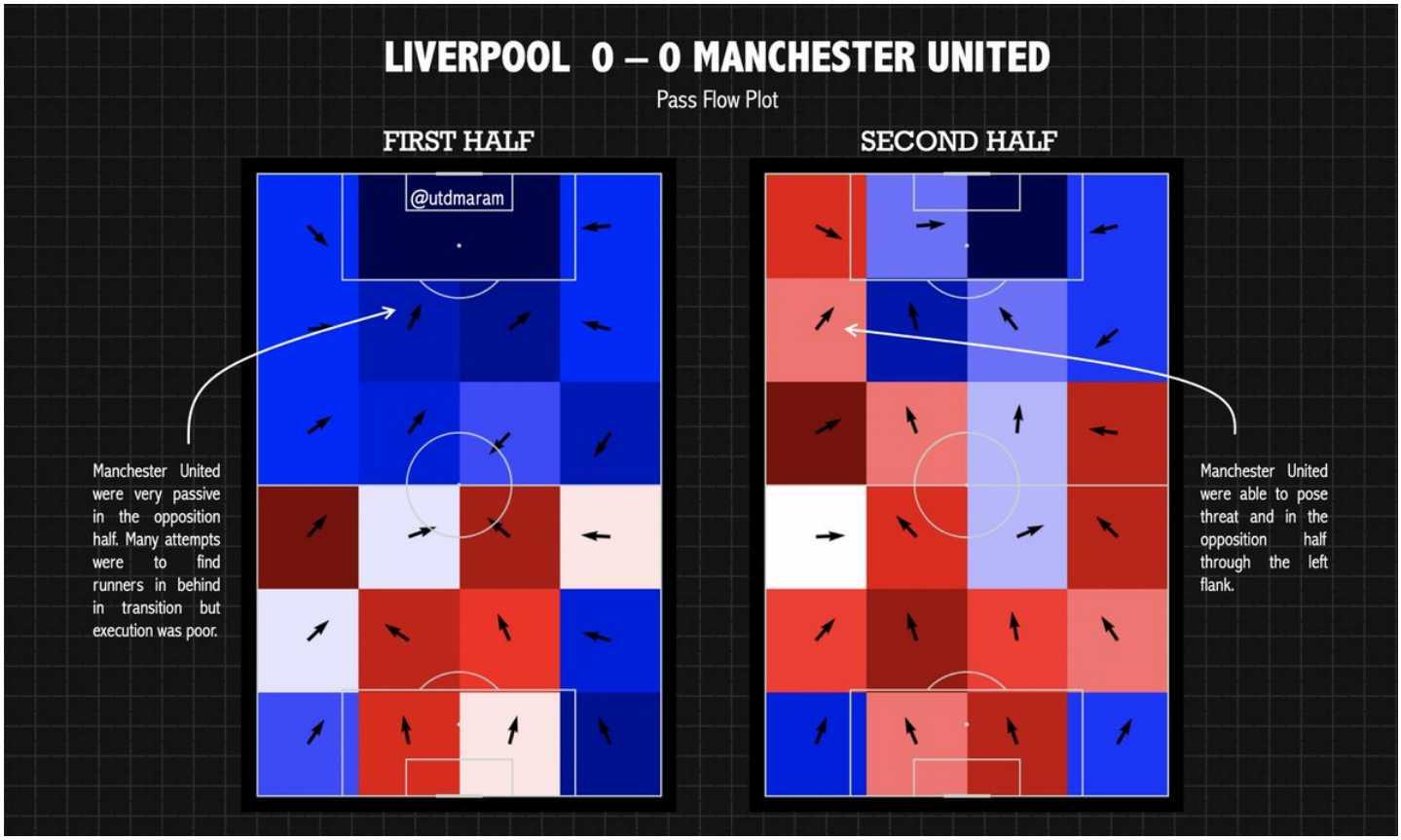
An improvement in presence came came from progressing the ball wide but the final ball was still poor.



Taking a look at the flow of passes:

➢ Manchester United had a higher concentration of passes in their own half and posed little to no threat — but built out the back well under pressure.

➢ Improvement: they were able to exploit Liverpool wide through overlaps and cutbacks.



EXAMPLE: #MUFC build out the back in a series of quick forward passes.

This came from Martial dropping deep to carry — essential. Bruno's trademark backwards flick that takes Fabinho out of the backline and Rashford's blindside run here was excellent.

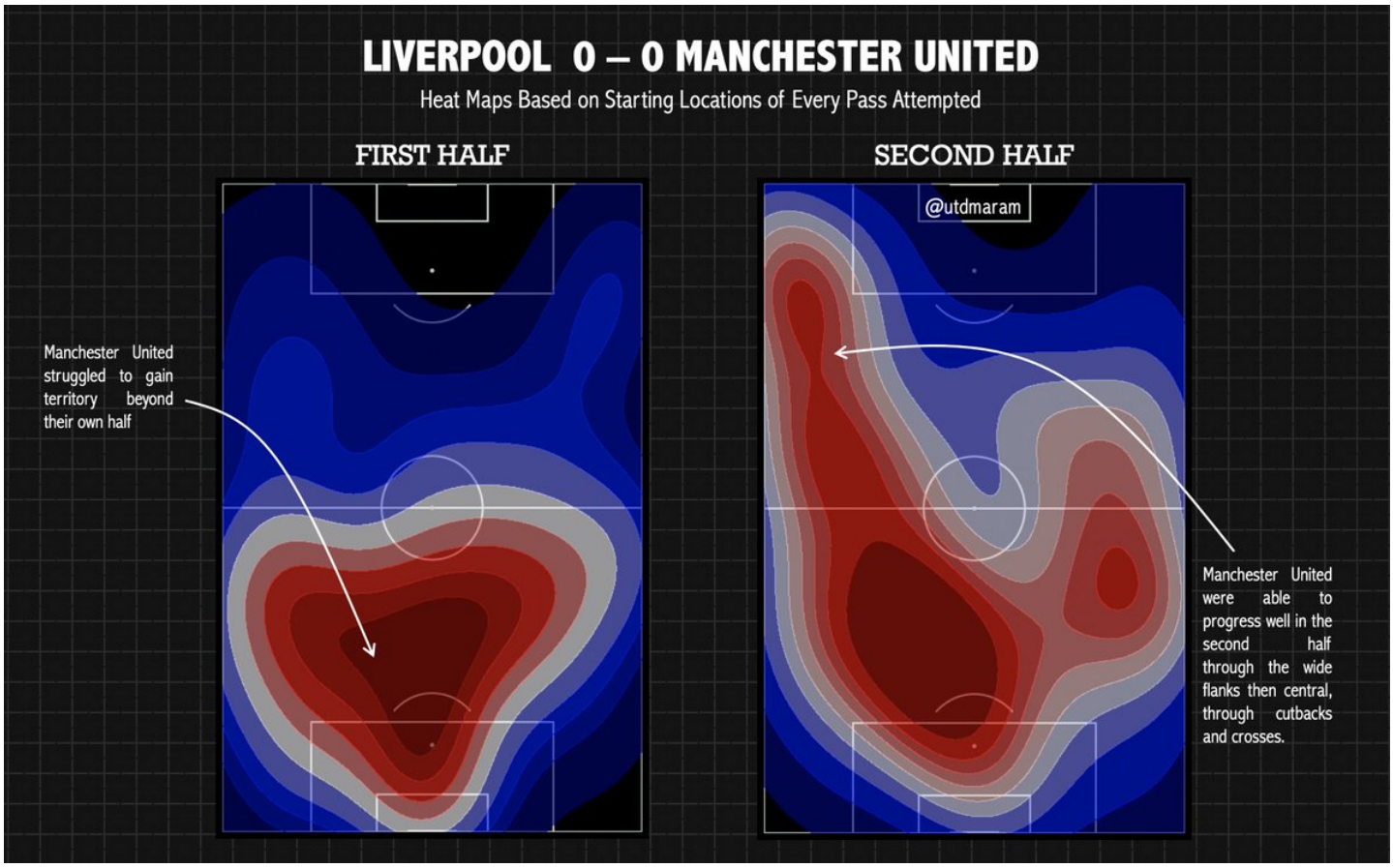
Poor final ball.



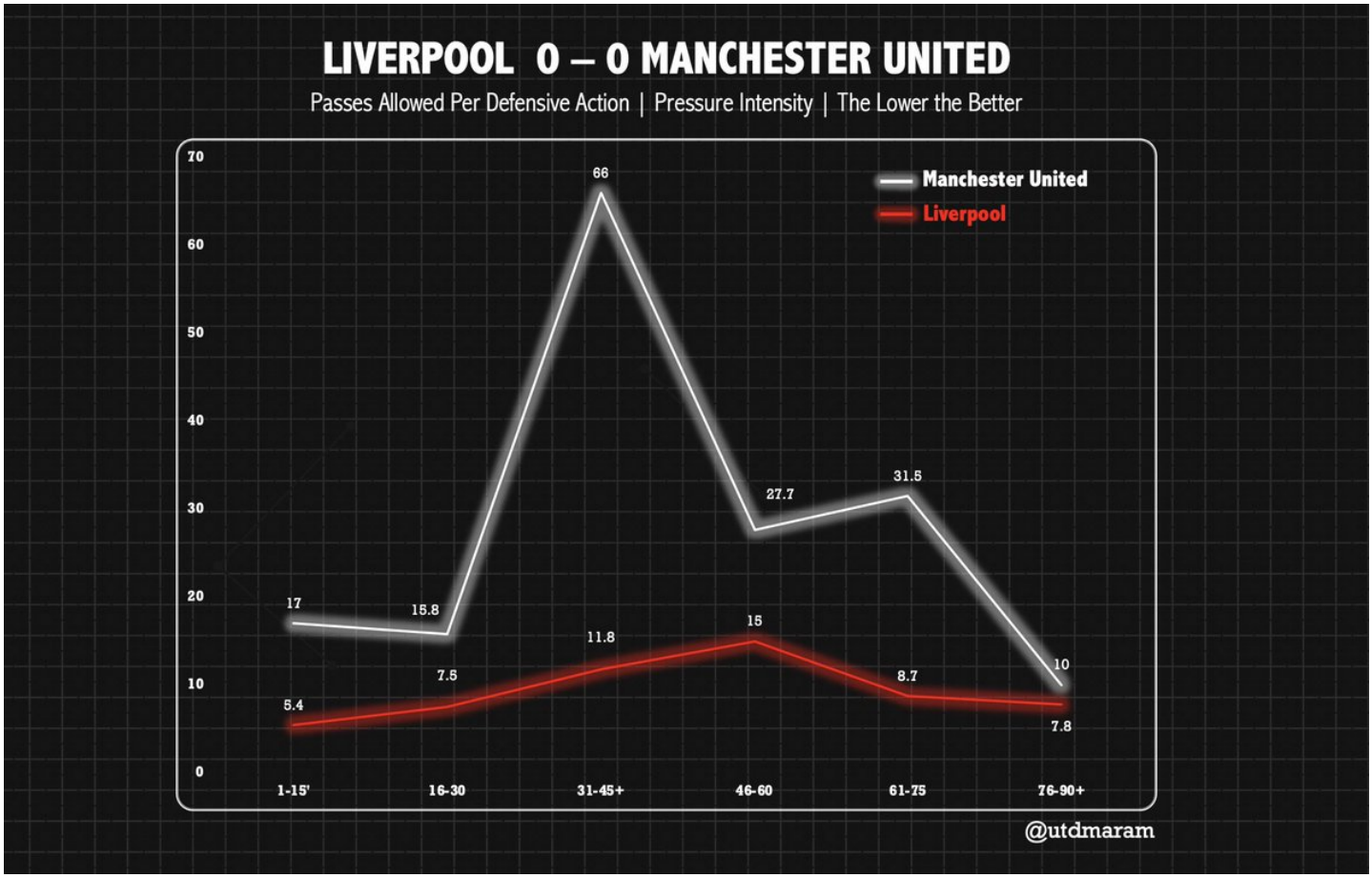
Let’s take a closer look at the lack of territorial dominance — issues:

(A) While #MUFC were able to improve their suppression — the right flank was very poor with Pogba tucking into the half-spaces.

(B) #MUFC had poor central penetration — more difficult to score.

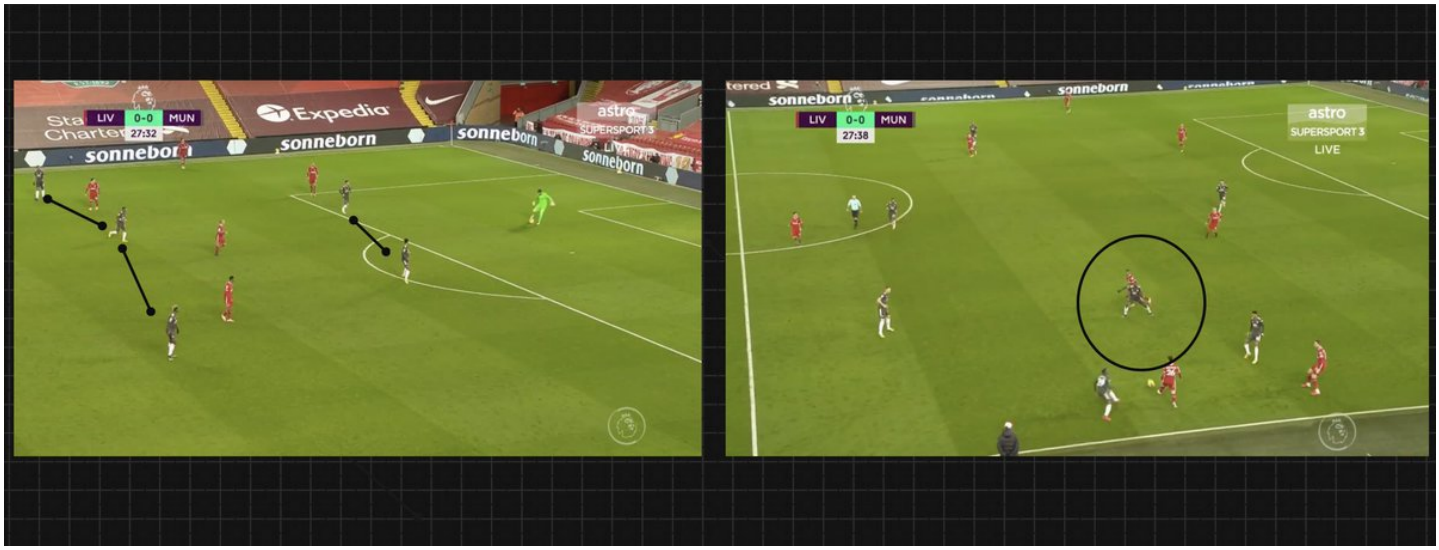


Manchester United’s numbers in terms of pressure intensity is low — but that is not bad — instead #MUFC set up in a 4-4-2 mid-block and looked to force Liverpool wide where they would then close them down and regain possession.



EXAMPLE: #MUFC do not heavy pressurize Liverpool and instead give them time and space on the ball when central — forcing them wide.

Then, they close them down and clog the passing lanes, winning back possession. Pogba here was able to intercept, but quickly fouled.

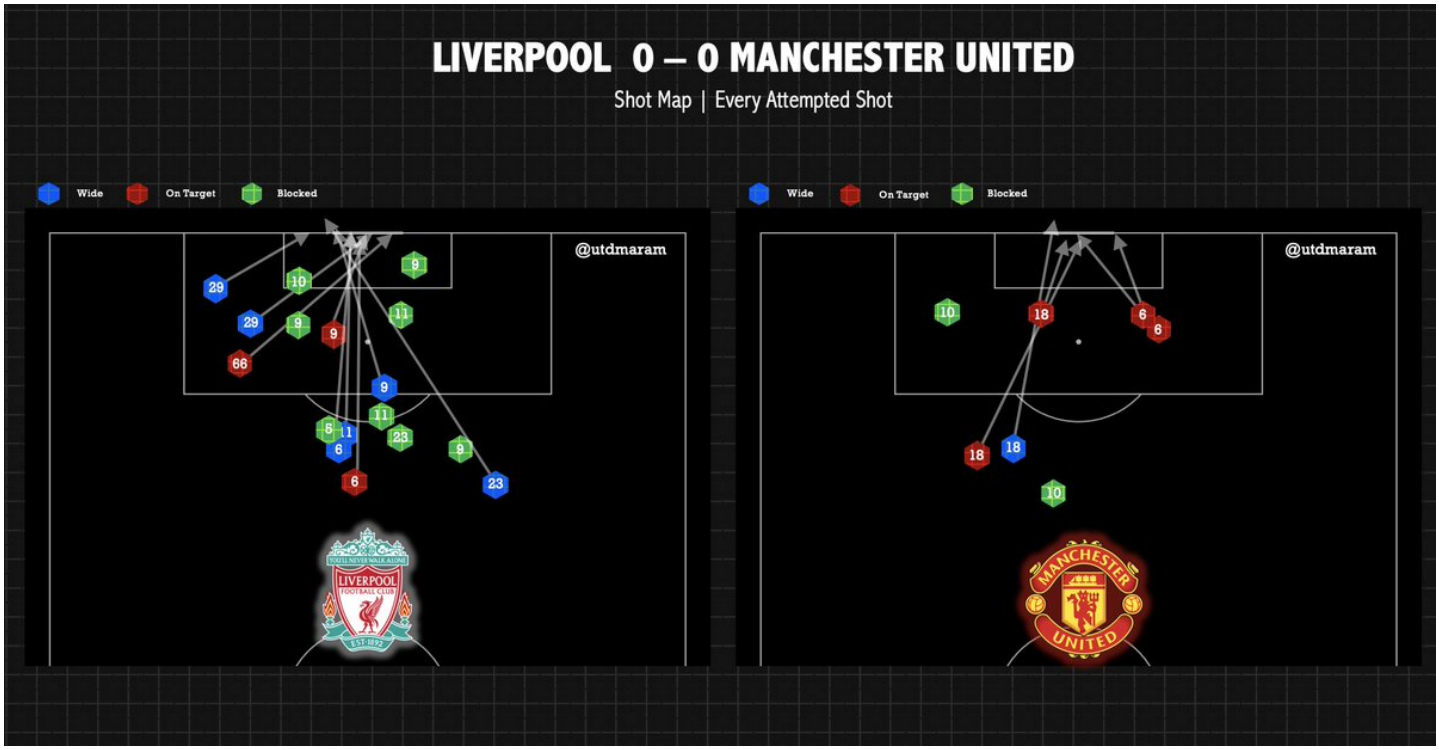


#MUFC did well creating a hindrance, allowing #LIV only 3 shots on target.

This came from an excellent positional sense & anticipation of danger.

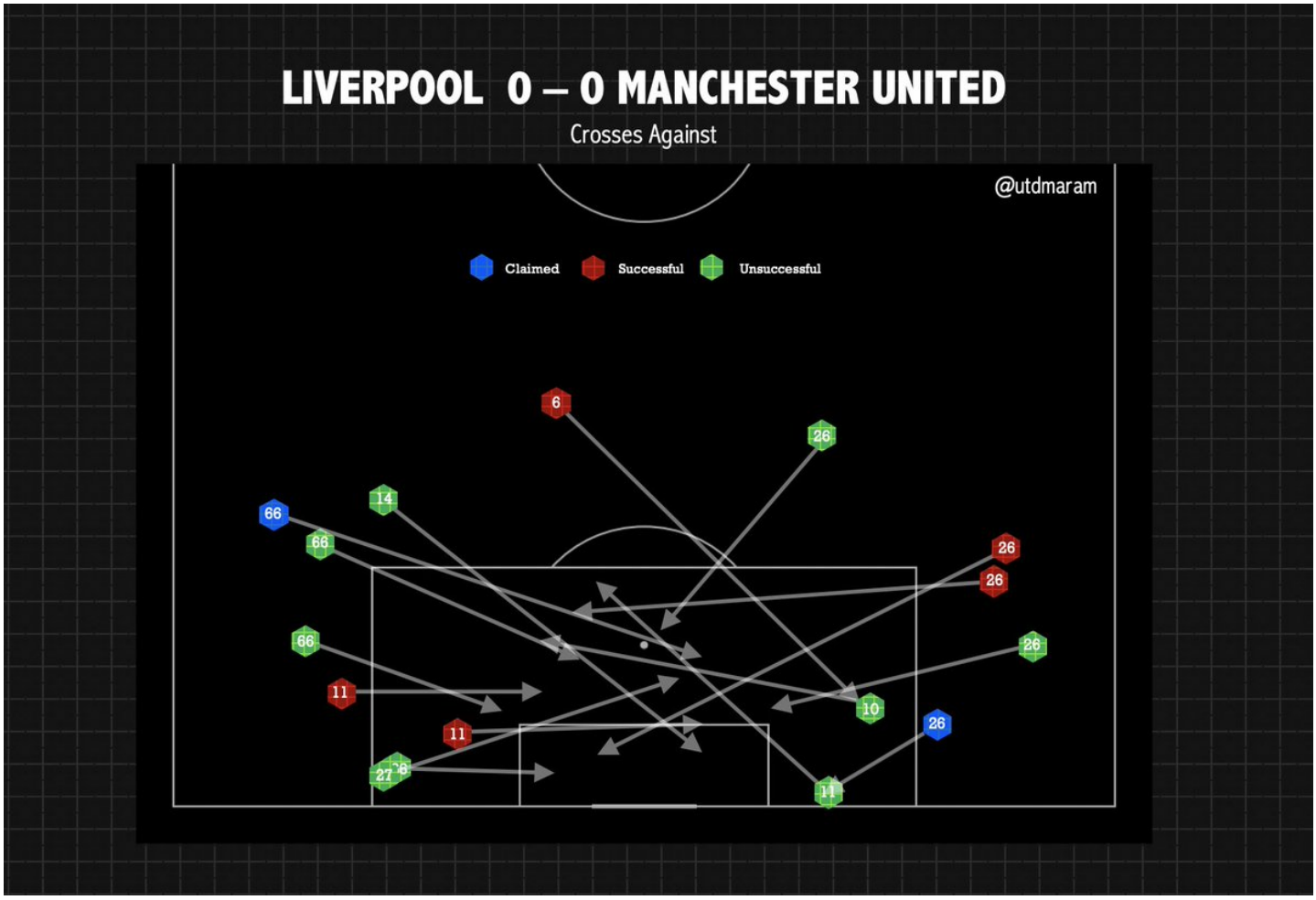
MUFC however had low attempted shots because many opportunities were not capitalized/continued well i.e poor

decisions/final ball.

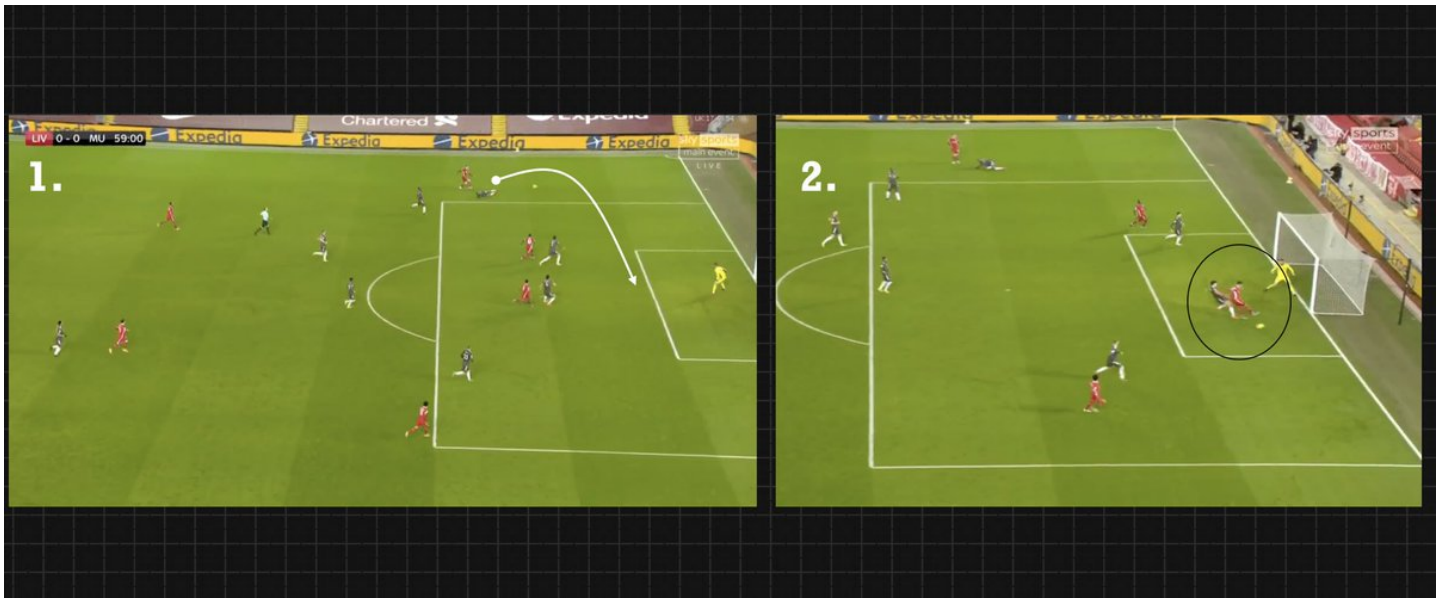


Speaking of the backline, Manchester United struggle defending crosses — but not against Liverpool.

Out of 16 crosses, only 5 were successful. A compact block forced Liverpool to rush to go long at times. MUFC's tracked their runners and defended space very very well.



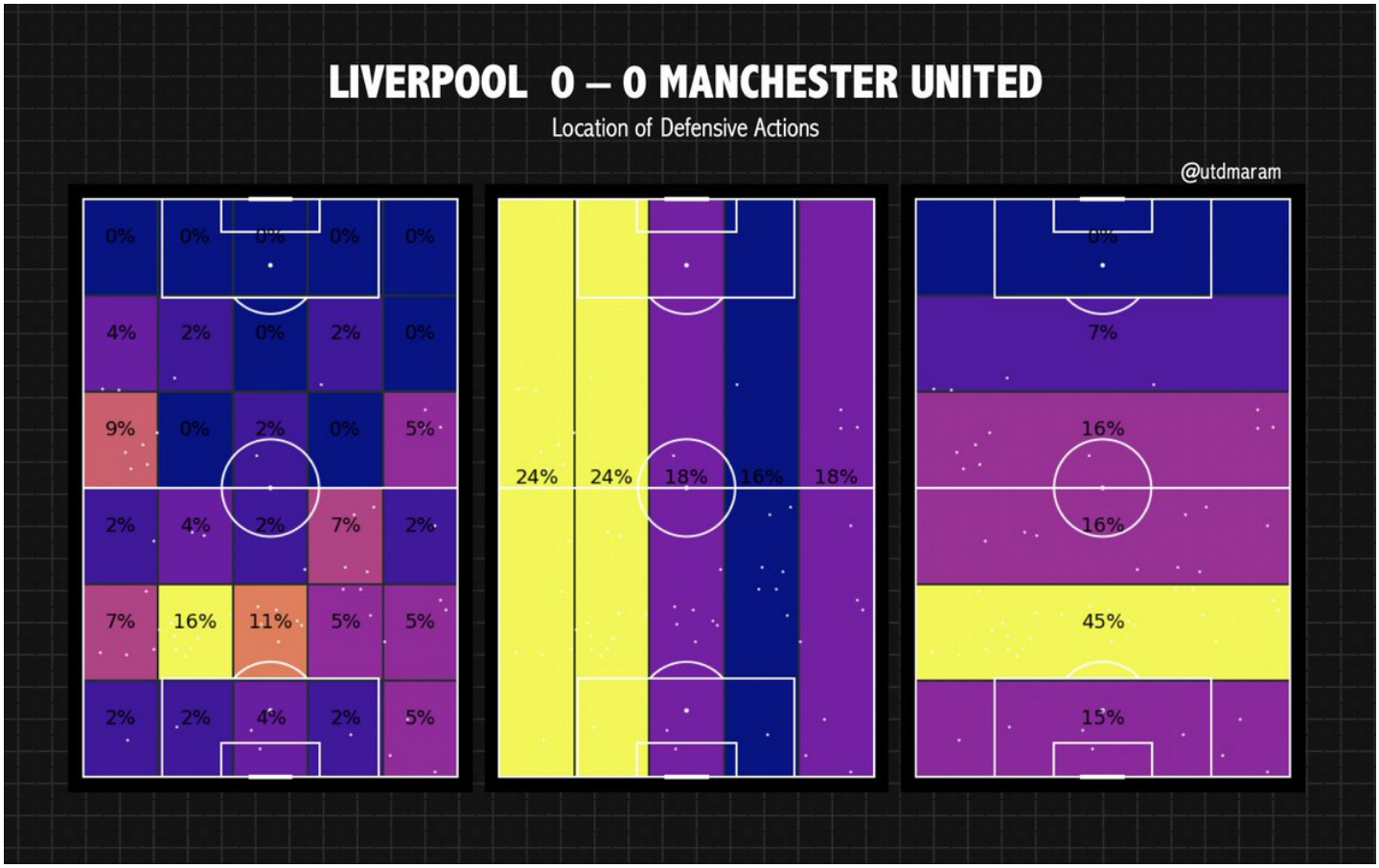
EXAMPLE: This was a vital block from Maguire that came from anticipating the cross and tracking Firmino's run — preventing even a shot on target.



(A) Manchester United had a poor presence in the midfield i.e drawn to individual duels and failing to win.

(B) MUFC could not sustain the pressure of their attacks.

(C) Pushing Pogba/AWB forward allowed #LIV to penetrate through the right flank unchallenged at times.

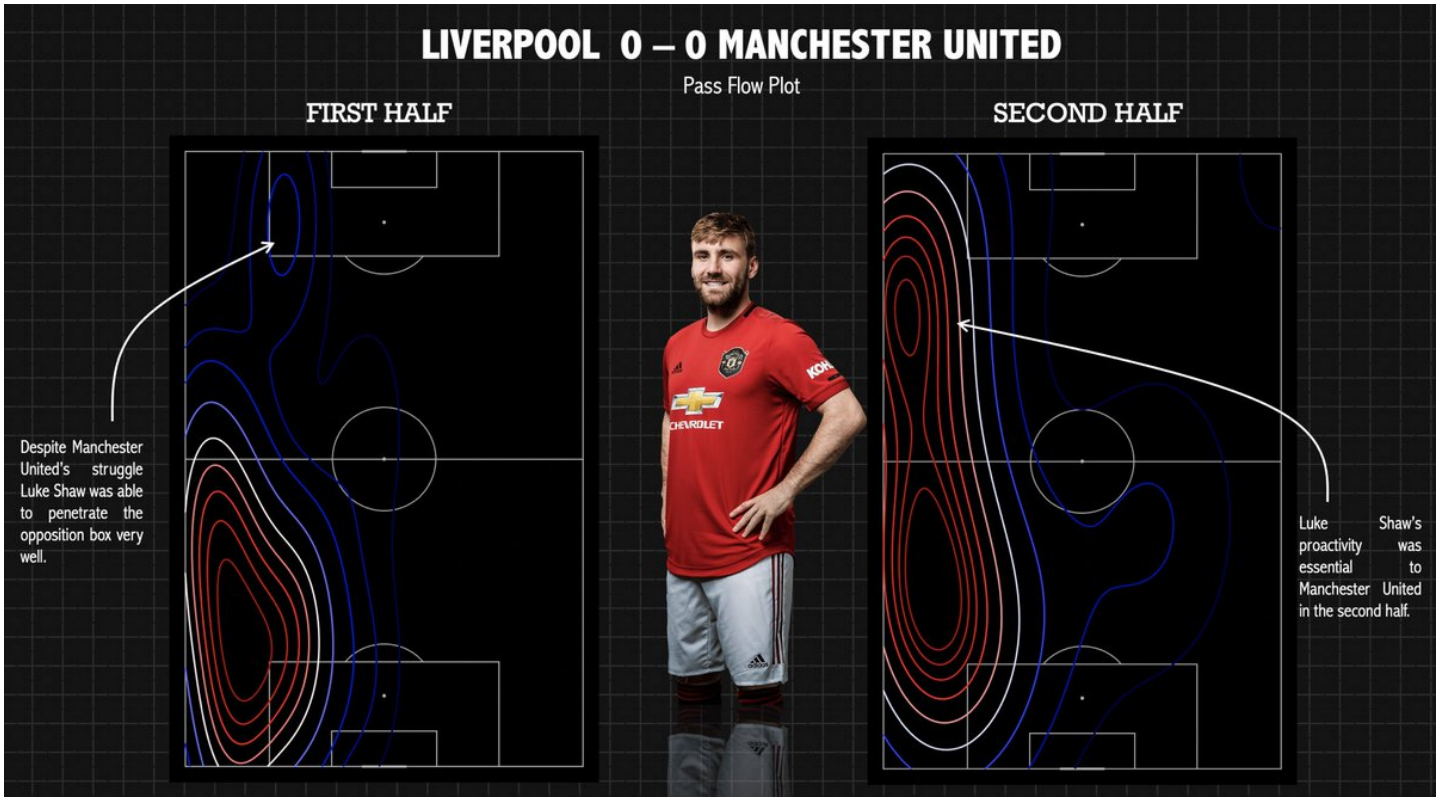


EXAMPLE: In #MUFC's attempt in closing down LIV by pushing AWB/Pogba forwards — they were bypassed and allowed Salah acres of space to run into *unchallenged*

This led to a shot on target by Firmino.



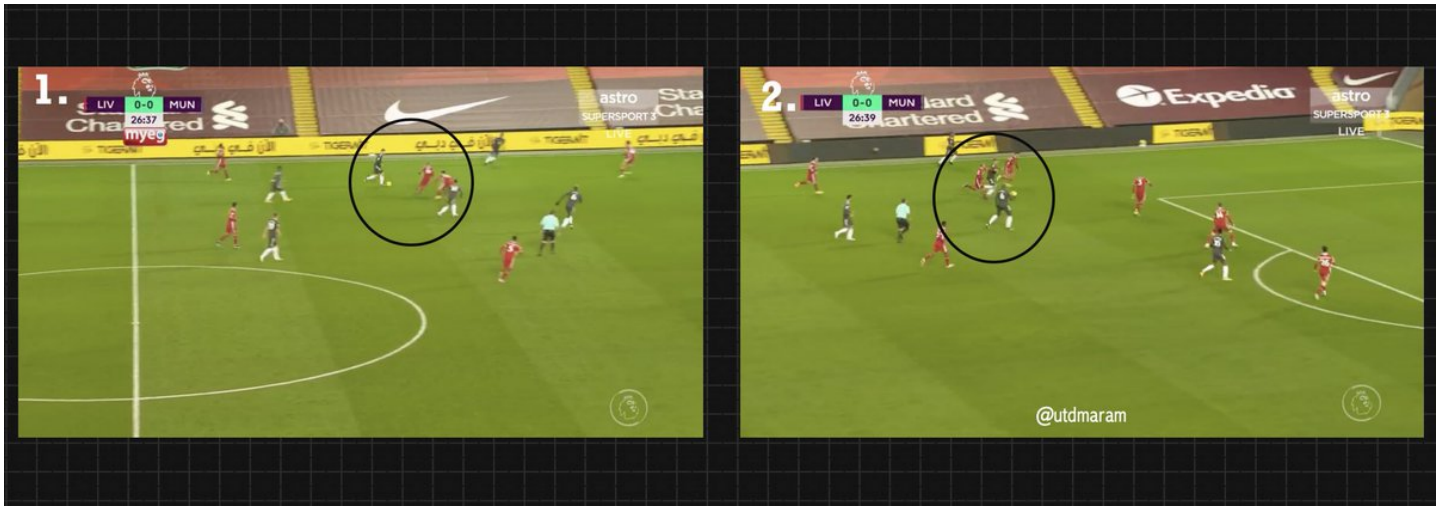
Let's take a look at Manchester United's best performer both offensively and defensively — Luke Shaw not only occupied the left flank well but his carries/dribbles inwards, overlaps and crosses allowed MUFC to transition well.



EXAMPLE:

Luke Shaw carries the ball here — attracting two #LIV players and bypassing them.

This disrupted Liverpool's organization and allowed #MUFC to penetrate the opposition box.



This was an excellent defensive performance from #MUFC — *but* a very poor offensive one in many aspects i.e runs and decision making.

While many would be disappointed with just a draw, this is huge progress to where MUFC were exactly a year ago at Anfield.

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