Twitter Thread by Luke



Luke
@GriffinFtbl

Thread - Why crossing is overrated, misunderstood and underutilised

Recently I've been doing work on crosses, which you can see over the next few tweets and want to talk about some of my thoughts on crossing and how people perceive them. This will also probably be my last bit of work on crossing for a while

https://t.co/30wmoKylra

> This is how I think of crossing areas, of course there's different types of crosses within this but this is how I always summarise it so thought I'd share pic.twitter.com/a8JiuzeKC9
>
> — Luke (@GriffinFtbl) December 7, 2020

.https://t.co/6fDPnvGAYm

> Crossing - comparing Liverpool to Arsenal pic.twitter.com/35YGhZPY6d
>
> — Luke (@GriffinFtbl) December 9, 2020

.https://t.co/HTQvh3UfUL

> I'm watching this young winger I like. Very athletic and explosive. He likes to knock the ball past his opponent and drive into space. I have in my notes how he gets into dangerous positions but lacks final product, could learn a lot from Reece James pic.twitter.com/dT8MFNF4IK
>
> — Luke (@GriffinFtbl) December 11, 2020

Crossing is a keystone of attacking play and one of the simplest methods to get the ball into the box. However, it is very inefficient. As Arsenal have shown recently and United used to show under Moyes, you can cross 40+ times in a game and fail to score.

Think isn't to say crossing is pointless, but in my opinion, crossing should be done with quality, not quantity. Attempting 20+ crosses in a game says one of two things
• Your plan is to cross (Liverpool)

• You can't do anything but cross (Arsenal)

Crossing is simple and it's easy to create opportunities to cross. However, I believe that it is viewed too simply. Liverpool and Arsenal cross in very different fashions, one is successful and one is not.

Liverpool's is calculated and planned for. Their players are able to cross extremely well and their 5'9 - 5'11 - 5'9 front line are able to exploit it. And if they don't then they are situated for the 2nd ball.

Arsenal on the other hand aren't tailored to crossing but are forced to. They aren't intelligently setup to score from these chances.

I then see people saying that Arsenal, and almost every other team, need a target man. But why don't Liverpool?

Headed goals from open play are completely different from set pieces. In open play, they aren't big contested headers where you go up against a big centre half, which I think is what most people picture.

Scoring from corners is about running onto the ball and intelligent movement and positioning in the box. Height and ability to head the ball is useful, but you don't need to be really physical and immobile

Screenshots of Lewandowski's last hour headed goals.
1 - positions himself well at the back post unmarked
2 - gets ahead of the defensive line to tap it in
3 - runs ahead of the defender and flicks it towards goal
4 - makes a run from deep to meet the cross unopposed

Being intelligent as the individual and the team is what matters. That's why Liverpool succeed. Having a bigger striker won't make a difference if they don't actually great good opportunities.

You need quality crossing with the correct decision making which the striker can run onto and that is ideally behind the defensive line. Wide players and forwards need to have a good understanding and strikers need to to make the right runs.

Hopefully, this wasn't too much of a ramble. But to summarise:
• Liverpool are smart
• Arsenal aren't
• more clubs should look at Liverpool
• Target man ≠ goals
• Clever movement + quality crossing = goals
• Win 2nd balls
• Attack at speed, cross behind the defensive line