

# Competition Technical Analysis and Insights 2024



Concacaf





WHAT'S INSIDE?

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AN INTRODUCTION

# Foreword







**"At Concacaf, we understand how performance metrics, player development trends, and strategic analytics can improve the game at every level."**

**- VICTOR MONTAGLIANI**

"In 2024, we saw once again why football is the world's most beloved sport. The passion, the creativity, the sheer dedication of our players, fans, and teams are what make our game so special. But in today's dynamic sporting world, success requires more than heart; it demands leveraging insights we glean from data and analysis.

At Concacaf, we understand how performance metrics, player development trends, and strategic analytics can improve the game at every level. Football data empowers coaches to refine tactics, helps players reach their full potential, and allows federations to create impactful growth strategies. Crucially, it also helps us break down barriers, ensure inclusivity, and design programs that nurture talent across our diverse confederation.

By embracing football data, we're not only shaping on-field strategies, but also building a foundation for fair play, informed decision-making, and a brighter future for football across Concacaf—ensuring our game thrives for generations to come."

**Victor Montagliani**  
Concacaf President and  
FIFA Vice President







2024 CONCACAF

# Under-20 Championship

2



# Mexico – Route to the Final



Mexico smartly utilised their wing backs with great effectiveness throughout the tournament

## **THEME 1: WIDE PROGRESSION AND DIRECT SWITCHES**

In order to progress up the field and create chances, it's important to have a clear strategy in the build and creation phases and Mexico showed this throughout the tournament.

Mexico showed that if you can vary the way you play, it's very difficult for the opposition to adapt during the match. Here we will discuss how Mexico were able to break the pass and find the free man in order to progress up the pitch.

Mexico set up predominantly in a 3-4-3 formation, with three centre backs and two attacking wing

backs maintaining the width of the side. Further forward, Mexico had two box to box central midfielders, two wingers with licence to drift inside and one central striker. When the two wingers inverted inside, the formation morphed into a 3-4-2-1, a slight variation of the more rigid 3-4-3 formation.

With two wingers who had the freedom to move around the frontline and occupy the central channels, opposition teams tried to limit the passing lanes into them by creating a narrow and compact block across the pitch. Mexico smartly utilised their wing backs with great effectiveness throughout the tournament, all the way into the final helping them lift the trophy.



CLIP 1

As seen in clip one, Mexico had a clear strategy during the build up phase to maintain width through their wing backs in order to exploit the lack of width from the opponents. As the goalkeeper, E. Ochoa plays the ball short, it's evident that the space is with the left wing back D. Sánchez and Mexico take full advantage of this. As the opposition jump to press and become spaced out, Mexico's central midfielder, E. Montiel becomes free to receive and drive forward. This was a common theme during the group stages and all the way until the final, with Mexico averaging 65.5% possession, the highest possession of any team during the competition. Mexico also only averaged 10.6 losses of possession per 90mins in their lower third, a tournament low. This again highlights their ability to maintain possession during the build up phase in their own half.



CLIP 2

Clip two and three highlight another solution to the narrow opposition mid-block shape. Clip two shows the opposition set up in a 4-2-4 formation in a mid-block shape. Similar to clip one, the space is available in the wide areas for the wing backs, and rather than play around the press with a number of passes, Mexico

decide to play a long diagonal switch which creates a 1v1 for the wing back and leads to a danger cross. Mexico played an average of 38.9 long passes per 90mins in the tournament, showing that if they couldn't find their central midfielders or wingers centrally, they were happy to play the ball more direct in order to get their free players on the ball.



# Building with Width

PROGRESSION AND SWITCHES

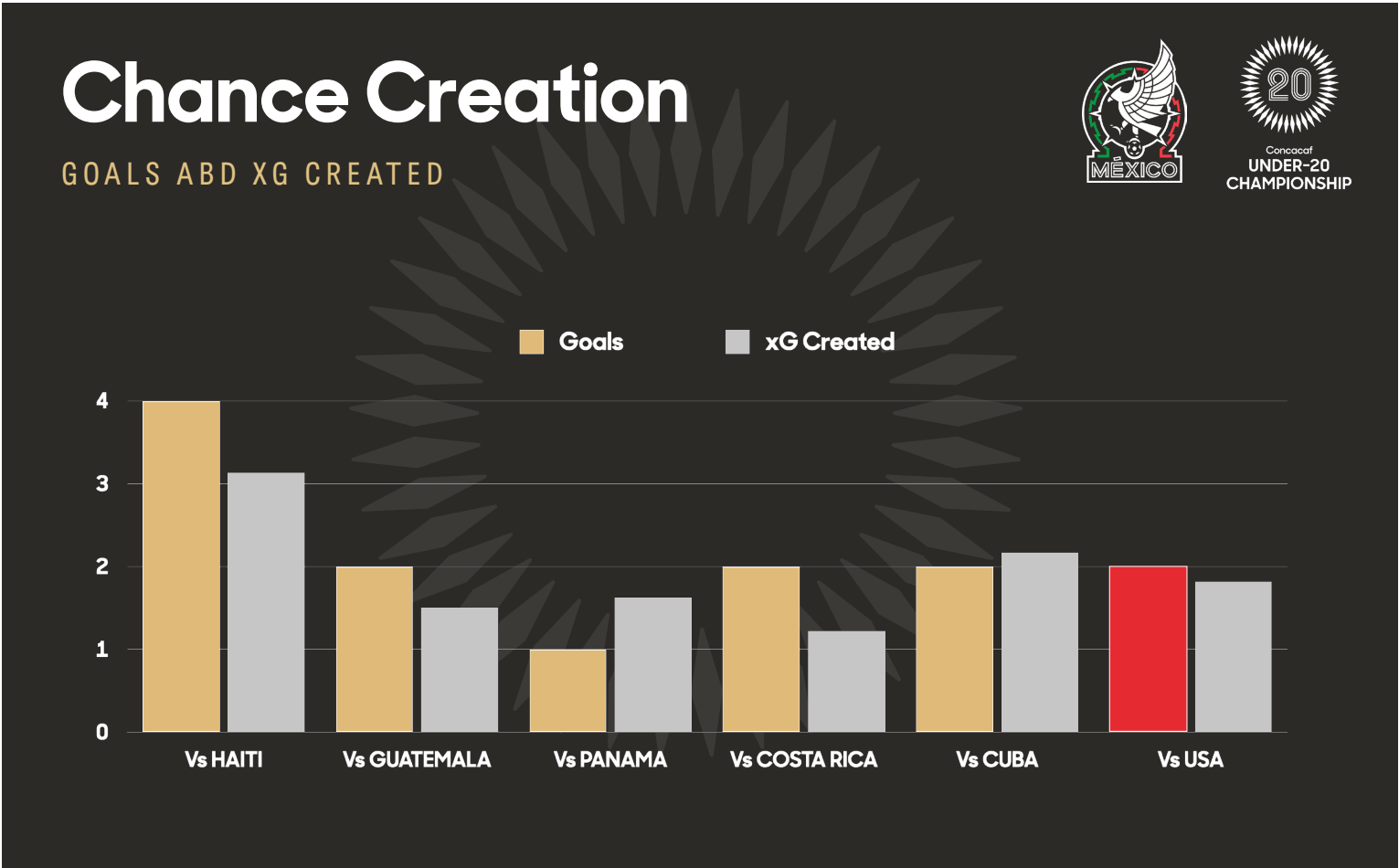
CLIP 3

The role of a wing back in modern football is one of the toughest positions physically to perform, with constant high speed running up and down the field for 90 minutes being very demanding to execute. Mexico's wing backs showed throughout the tournament they were physically capable to not just

support the defence, but also the attack. As seen in clip three, their right wing back receives the ball under pressure and successfully progresses the ball forwards, leading to the opposition's press being broken. As soon as it's evident they've broken the press, the alternate wing back sprints to provide a passing option and receives the ball in a good

shooting opportunity. This ability to identify how to beat the press or break a compact opposition, especially at such a young age, is testament to the competition winners and shows the tactical understanding of players in the modern era.





**THEME 2: 1V1 THREAT AND CROSSES**

When you dominate possession, as Mexico did during the competition, it's vital that you have a clear identity and ability to create chances when you reach the final third. Mexico showed both on a team and individual basis how effective they were when they reached the final third and punished teams.

Mexico sat second in terms of xG created per 90 minutes and third for goals scored per 90 minutes. In order to create these goal-scoring opportunities, Mexico used their skill and ability in 1v1 duels.

**CLIP 1**  
Mexico won on average 35.1 offensive duels per 90 minutes in the tournament, the 2nd highest only behind El Salvador with 35.3



won per 90 minutes. As seen in clips one and two, Mexico had a number of players capable of beating their man in a 1v1 situation. With the opposition narrow and compact, this left H. Jurado free to receive the ball and drive at his opponent. As Jurado's team mates recognised his ability in the 1v1 duel, they move away from him, leaving the space behind the opposition full back to

be attacked. Once Jurado dribbles beyond his man, he executes his cross, which is almost connected with by an audacious overhead kick.

**CLIP 2**  
This theme continues in clips two and three, highlighting Mexico's speed and power in the final third, something other teams couldn't counteract during the opening

rounds of the competition. In clip two, from just outside their own penalty box, Mexico are able to get their technical wing back A. Morales driving at the isolated Cuban defender within just three passes. Once Morales beats his man, four of his team mates have broken into the box and look to receive the cross, which M. Levy connects with and scores the opening goal of the match. A. Morales led the assist chart with four during the tournament and assisted the tournament winning goal in extra time.

**CLIP 3**  
Alongside A. Morales' assist tally, Mexico also topped the average crosses statistic with 18.9 crosses per 90 minutes, over ten more than the other finalist, the USA.



THEME 3: CORNERS AND SET PIECE DANGER

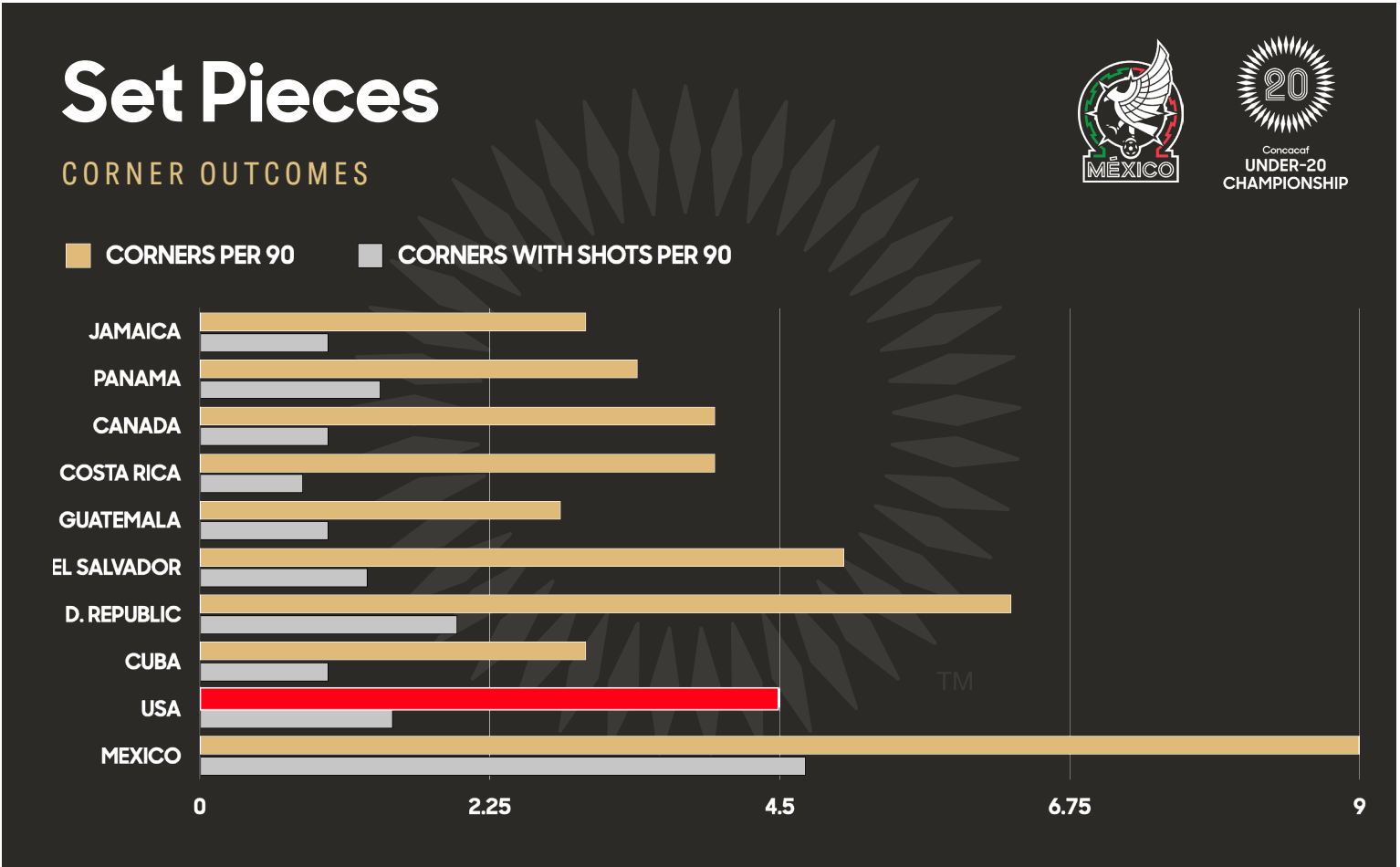
Mexico weren't just a formidable team from open play, but also showed effectiveness in set piece situations. Averaging 7.7 corners per game, over half of these corners resulted in a shot, (52%). In their first three games of the group stage, they averaged a shot 71.9% of the time from corners, a statistic no other team in the competition could compete with.



CLIP 1

Mexico were so effective from corners due to a number of factors, as seen in the video clips. Setting up with two potential takers on the corner kick, provided an in-swinging and out-swinging option, creating confusion for the opponent in regard to what delivery type was going to be used. Outside one player who starts close to the front post, the

rest of the attackers for Mexico set up on the edge of the penalty box, leaving space to be attacked as the delivery is travelling. They also use blockers, as seen in clip one, to provide a free run for the targeted attacker, F. Mendez. Mendez connects well with the ball and after hitting the post, the ball bounces nicely off the keeper and into the back of the net.



CLIP 2

Clips two and three visualise the importance of recovering the second balls from set plays, something Mexico thrived at during the tournament. Clip two shows a similar set up to the opening video, but this time the shot comes in the second phase as the ball is knocked down by the first contactor. The shot narrowly misses the back of the net,

something we can't say for clip three.

CLIP 3

Although we will revel at the strike by D. Sánchez, (included in the best goals of the tournament) it's also important to focus on his starting position and his value in the second phase of the set piece. Mexico's rest defence set up behind the play consistently

meant they were able to recover the ball during the second phase and pinned the opposition in. This goal by D. Sánchez got Mexico back to 1-1 against Costa Rica in the quarter finals, a game they eventually won 2-1 and reached the semi-finals.



# USA – Route to the Final

If we compare how Mexico played during the tournament compared to the USA, it becomes apparent how both these teams played with different styles and formations, but still had success to reach the final. In this section, we will discuss how the USA gained success to reach the final through three key themes.





THEME 1: LINKING PLAY THROUGH THE CENTRAL PLAYERS

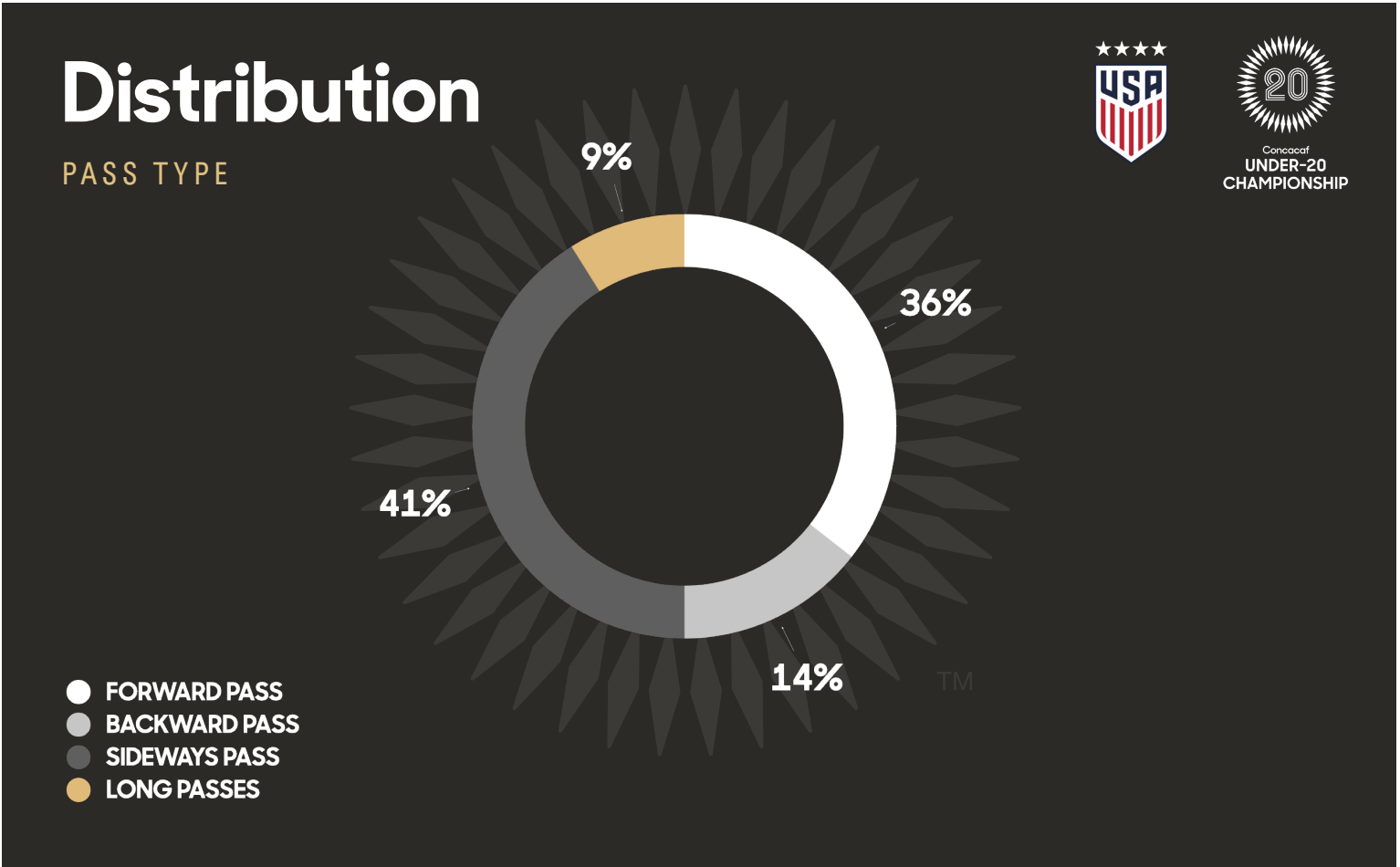
Mexico utilised their width to great effectiveness, as seen in Mexico's themes one and two above, but here we will see how the USA had success through central players during the build and creation phases. The USA topped the average pass completion statistics with 85% and this helped them control possession in games, averaging 55%. To control games, the USA opted for a more traditional 4-4-2 or 4-2-3-1 formation, with their two strikers or striker and central attacking midfielder playing very close together.

By playing both strikers or the central attacking midfielder close to one another, their relationship in the build up phase was key to the USA's success in progressing up the field.



**CLIP 1**  
As seen in clip one, the USA left their wide players on the touchline, stretching the opposition and creating passing lanes through central channels. As the left centre back receives the ball, Costa Rica's midfielder moves to block the passing lane into K. Figueroa, the USA's central attacking

midfielder. This small movement by the Costa Rican midfielder opens up the passing lane to play directly into the USA's striker R. Ramos, who with one touch, links the play to Figueroa who can switch the ball, moving the team into the opposition half with control.



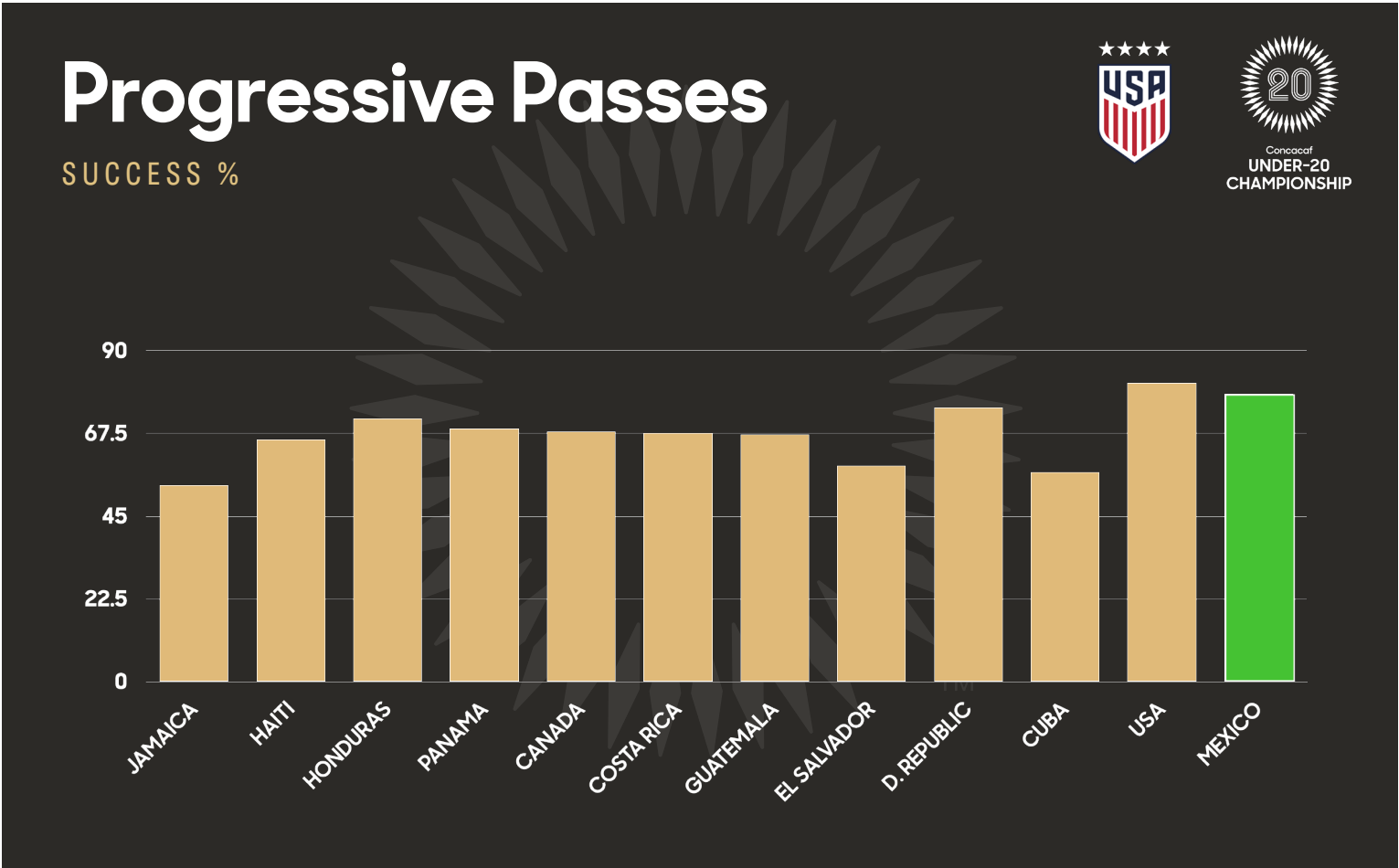
**CLIP 2**  
Clip two shows the USA playing against a 4-1-4-1 formation in the quarter finals vs Guatemala. With a single central defensive midfielder for Guatemala, the USA exploited this by pushing a central midfielder higher to create a 2v1 in the central channels. After an excellent penetrative pass by

LCB N. Norris, the USA are able to combine through their central midfielders and progress.

**CLIP 3**  
Finally, clip three shows how quick combinations through central channels unlocked compact low blocks during the tournament. With sharp passing and

movement off the ball, the USA are able to create an excellent crossing opportunity. Through this method, the USA were able to reach the final third consistently, averaging 31.4 successful passes into the final third per 90 minutes.





**THEME 2: POSITIONAL ROTATIONS FOR PROGRESSION**

As mentioned briefly in theme one, it was evident that playing against compact defensive blocks meant the USA must move the ball quickly, but also move their positioning in order to be found by penetrative passes. To do this, the USA players persistently rotated their positions to move defenders and create space for team mates.

**CLIP 1**

Clip one displays an excellent third man run from midfielder S. Oregel to create a passing option in behind Guatemala’s defence. As his team mate receives the ball, his direct movement behind the left back provides a passing lane to receive the ball and clip it into the box to R. Ramos. We once again see a short, sharp and vital overlapping run by number fourteen, T. Habroune, as R. Ramos



controls the cross. This short run causes a big problem for the Guatemala right back, who can’t press Ramos as Habroune will be open for a simple pass to go 1v1 against the goalkeeper. This split second decision the right back must make gives Ramos enough time to set himself up and whip the ball elegantly into the top corner to give the USA the win.

**CLIP 2**

From a dead ball situation, the USA set up with a 4–3–3 formation and used player rotations to break the press and win a set piece in the final third. As the ball is recycled from left to right, the USA’s central defensive midfielder T. Habroune moves higher, N. Tsakiris rotates deeper to pick up the ball and play an intricate flick between two opponents. With the press beaten, Habroune is free in the centre

to receive and drive forwards. With constant rotations providing clear passing options, the USA were able to complete 81% of their progressive passes, the best completion rate of the twelve sides competing for the trophy.

**CLIP 3**

N. Tsakiris won player of the tournament with two goals and two assists, but as seen in clip three, it wasn’t just his attacking output in the final third which caught the eye. His ability to combine with team mates and recognise movement patterns to support was key to the USA’s success in reaching the final. After starting centrally, Tsakiris drifts out wide, recognising the limited space for him centrally to occupy. As soon as the ball is played wide, his reaction is to dart back inside the opposition shape and look to receive the first time pass. Once on the ball, he glides past two defenders and plays a dangerous outside of the foot cross into the box.



THEME 3: HIGH PRESSURE +  
TRANSITION SPEED

Both the USA and Mexico were able to dominate possession all the way until the final, which has seen a lot of in-possession themes discussed. However, it's important to recognise the quality also shown off the ball. The USA only conceded three goals during the whole tournament, one in the semi final vs Panama and two in the final against Mexico, an amazing statistic for tournament football. In order to do this, the USA employed a high pressing tactic and looked to transition quickly when they recovered possession.

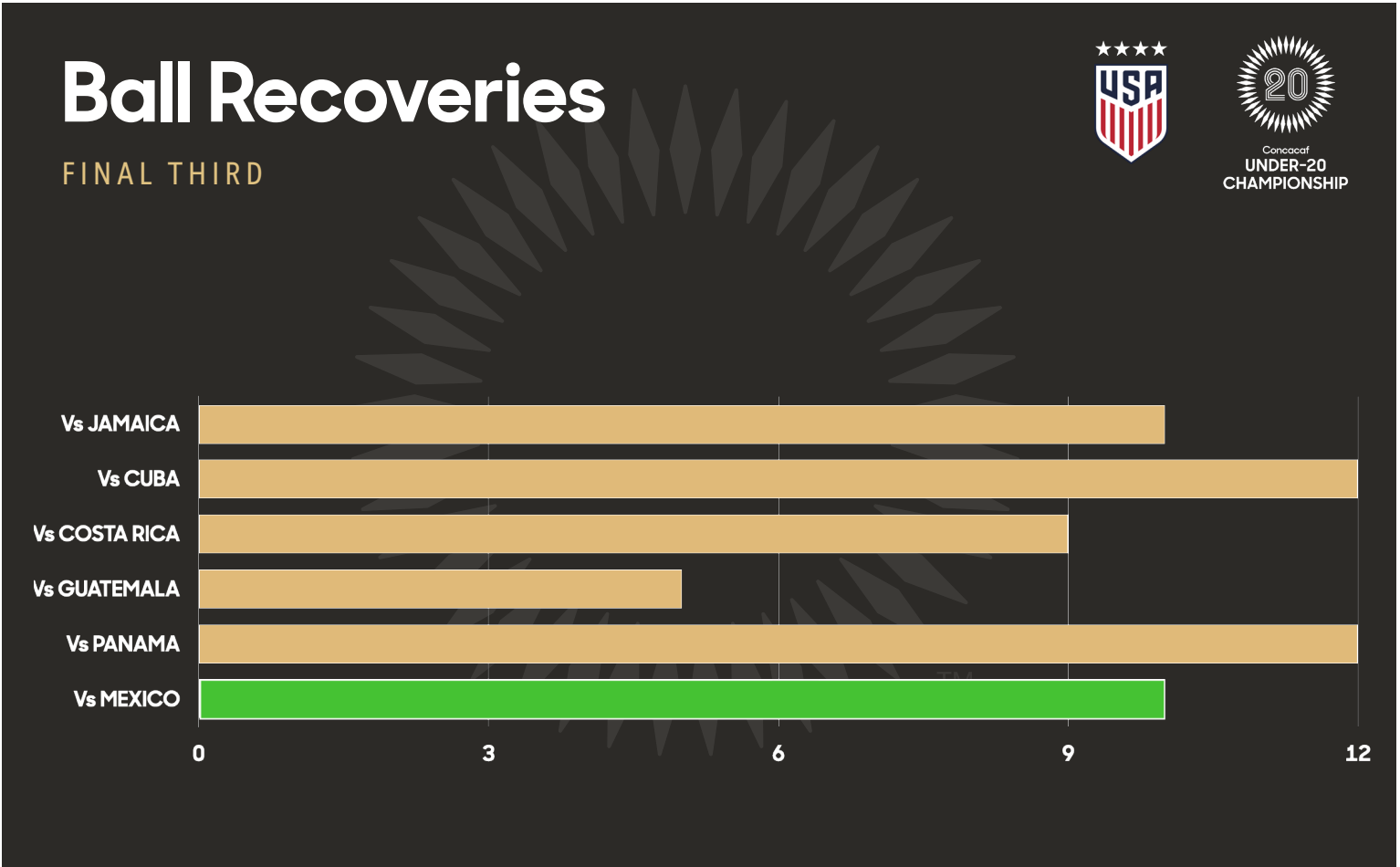
**CLIP 1**  
Whether it was from open play or dead ball situations for the opposition, the United States looked to press high as a team and recover possession. A PPDA (passes per defensive action) average of 7.71 was the fourth in the tournament rankings, reinforcing what we can see



during the matches, a committed aim to not give the opposition time on the ball. We see from kick off this intent from the USA, who press aggressively in order to force a mistake from Jamaica. After an initial press, the USA immediately press again, with D. Vasquez on the right wing conducting the team press. Once he presses Jamaica's left back, the whole team steps up and closes each player down,

suffocating the space and forcing the turnover. In less than four seconds after intercepting the ball, D. Vasquez smashes home the second goal of the game and gave the USA a dominating scoreline after just three minutes.

**CLIP 2**  
The second clip focuses on the USA's ability to transition quickly and create chances from



their lower third. Sometimes, possession-based sides are more successful when maintaining the ball after a turnover, rather than risking the transition and losing possession after just recovering it, but the USA drew exception to this. After recuperating possession, their thought was not to slow the game down and regain control, but to attack the space and exploit the out-of-position opponents.

USA's rest attack shape meant that they had three passing options as soon as they recover possession, with N. Tsakiris the receiver on this occasion. After a skilful dribble past the opponent's central defensive midfielder, the USA are in a 4v3 situation and cross the ball into the box, with only an excellent interception from the defender stopping a well-worked goal. From the moment the USA

regain possession just outside their own penalty box, they reach the opponent's penalty box in under 12 seconds, displaying a decisive counter attack.



# The Final

Going into the match at the Estadio Miguel Alemán Valdés stadium, it was clear that statistically the two best performing sides reached the final. Both teams had scored an abundance of goals (USA 17, Mexico 11), and conceded very few (USA 1, Mexico 3), whilst also dominating a number of other performance metrics. This would lead to a very tight final with both teams nullifying each other for the majority of the match and into extra time.

Both teams attempted to instil their tactics and way of playing on the game from minute one, with Mexico edging the possession stats in the opening half. As seen in the clip 1 on the next page, they had some success using the width to play over and around the USA's high press which led to some dangerous moments, but they couldn't find the final pass, cross or shot to take the lead.





CLIP 1

The USA suffered even more at creating crossing opportunities and connecting with any crosses that were made. In 120 minutes, they only crossed the ball four times, zero found a team mate. Outside a few half chances for both sides, the first half ended as a stalemate.

As the match progressed into the second half, the USA scored a brilliant strike in the 52nd minute, coming from their tricky winger N. Berchimas, but Mexico started controlling the game as the USA started sitting further back and holding onto their lead. It took until the 7th minute of injury time in the second half, but Mexico were finally able to get the goal to take the match to extra time.

We discussed earlier in the article the threat Mexico posed from crossing situations and this was how they got back into the final.

Including extra time, Mexico accumulated 43 crosses in the game, on which the USA were able to make the first contact 27 times.

Unfortunately for them, they weren't able to meet the two crosses which won Mexico the trophy.



CLIP 2

As Mexico recover the loose ball and drive down the wing, the overlapping run from H. Jurado provides J. Padilla a two vs one situation, and more importantly some freedom to cross the ball into the box under limited pressure. Without the overlapping run from Jurado, the defender could get tighter and limit the space to cross the ball into the box and find M. Levy with a well placed header into the bottom corner of A. Beaudry's goal.



CLIP 3

Even more amazingly, the match winner also came in extra time, of extra time! The goal encapsulates everything Mexico had done well in the tournament.

Initially, the direct switch of play to exploit the space in the wide areas, followed by the whipped cross we saw so often in the previous rounds, finished off by D. Ochoa, Mexico's star centre back and match winner.

When focusing on the statistics of the final, Mexico edged the match with 63% possession, more shots (27 to 5), more crosses (43 to 4), and more ball recoveries (93 to 83). However, it took two special crosses in extra time of normal time and extra time to break down a well organised and compact USA outfit.





## Tactical Battle: Columbus' Solid Play Versus Pachuca's Overwhelming Strategy

Pachuca produced a brilliant display to beat Columbus Crew 3-0 in the 2024 Concacaf Champions Cup final, securing their sixth title and their first for seven years.

In this article, we take an in-depth look at the key tactical themes that shaped and determined the match.

# 2024 CONCACAF Champions Cup

# 3



# Confident Crew Building From the Back

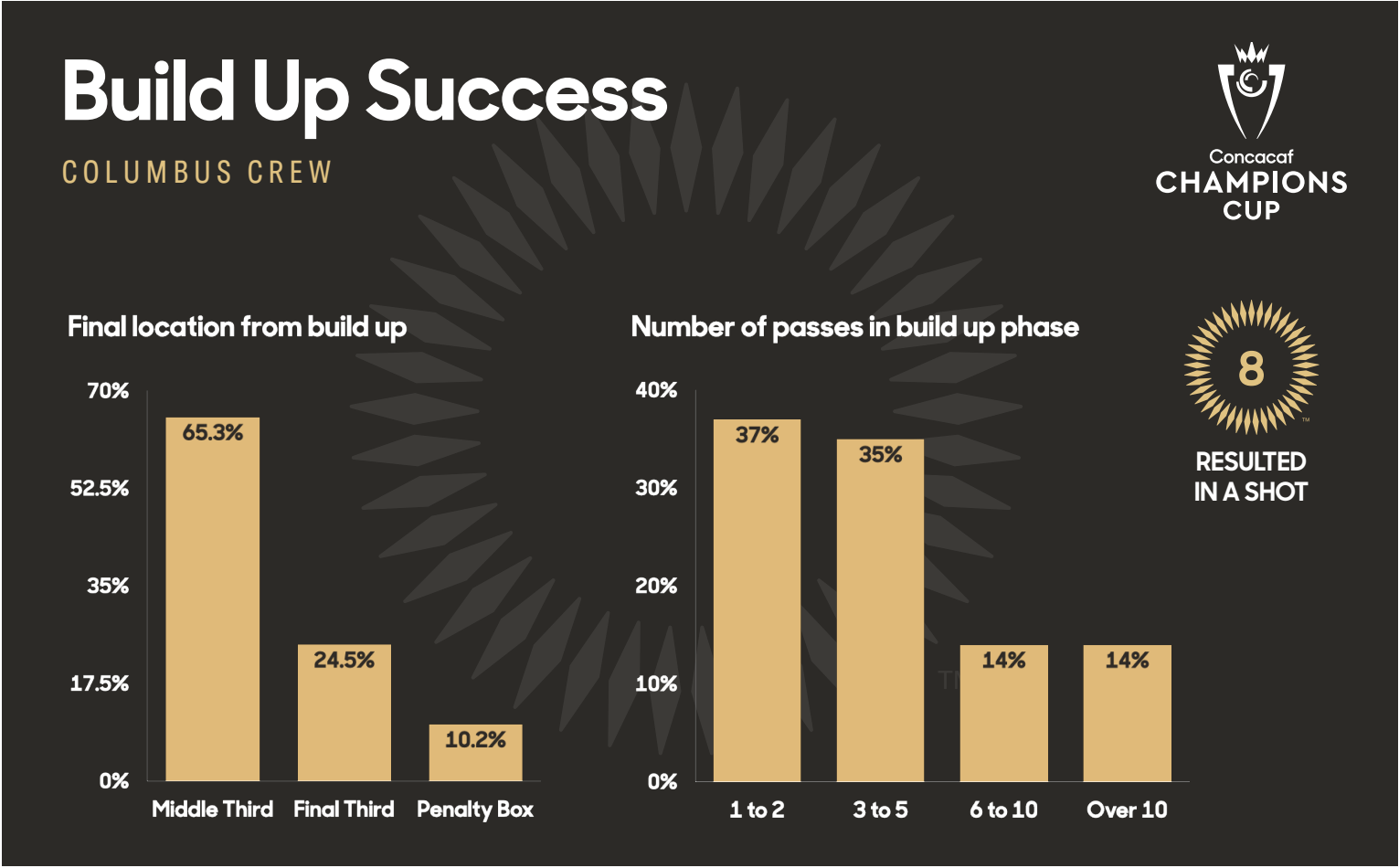
Columbus Crew are a team with a clearly defined style, based on possession and building from the back. They boast the highest average possession per game (57.2%) in MLS and took this mantra to the Concacaf Champions Cup too, looking to assert their dominance no matter the opponent—and even in the face of a ferocious press.

From the first whistle, the Crew got their foot on the ball and moved it around the back line, building from a 3-2 shape (three central defenders, two central midfielders) and often inviting Pachuca to press them high up. The intention was to then work the ball around their aggressors and find a free man in midfield via a quick two- or three-pass combination.



**CLIP 1**  
The first instance shows a good example of how Columbus crew created one of their early chances by playing short and searching for the free man in the central zones. After being patient, they identify Nagbe as the free player who can turn and play forwards, creating a 3v2 scenario.

**CLIP 2**  
Here we see another excellent example of Columbus Crew successfully playing through the aggressive pressing structure of Pachuca. Through quick combination play they are able to play past the five man press of Pachuca and again play forwards into the front line. On this occasion they can produce a shot, coming from a cross, wing back to wing back.



**CLIP 3**  
Here we see Columbus Crew play over the Pachuca press, taking six Pachuca players out of the game from one ball. By pushing one of their wing backs higher, Crew were able to narrow their front attacking three players and overload the midfield area. Pachuca pressed with both central midfielders high, so a quick thinking throw from Schulte allowed Columbus to play over

them and cause a dilemma, to press high or drop back, potentially allowing an easier route out from the back.

More often than not, it worked: They successfully moved the ball from the defensive third to the middle third an impressive 32 times (65.3% of their possessions) and 12 of those (24.5%) went on to reach the final third. The problem became what came next, as only

4 of these possessions resulted in shots on goal—whereas the ball was lost 17 times.



# Pachuca's High Risk-High Reward Press

Unfortunately for the Crew, Pachuca's press grew in effectiveness as they settled into the game—so much so that it actually laid the foundations for Los Tuzos' victory. They pressed from a 4-2-4 shape, pushing high up the pitch and shutting off as many passing options as possible.

They were happy to let goalkeeper Patrick Schulte play the first pass to a centre-back, but then blocked his access to the midfield two and tried to encourage a sideways pass across the backline, which was the trigger to press hard. When those sideways passes occurred—particularly to the left side—Pachuca's players sprinted

forward to engage, with the full-back and winger combining to try and trap the ball. Of the 35 times they pressed, 13 of them involved 2-3 players and 11 of them included 4 or more, symbolic of a truly orchestrated team effort.

It was a particular feature in the earlier stages of the match, where between minutes 16 and 30, Pachuca pressed a whopping 12 times and established an energetic rhythm. It's no coincidence that their first two goals—which effectively settled the tie—came just before (12th min) and after (32nd min) this period.

## CLIP 1

The opening few seconds of this instance highlights the system Pachuca used to press throughout the match. A visible 4-2-4 formation, with the central attacking midfielder lining up next to the striker to screen passes into the midfield two of Columbus. They were even happy, as shown in this instance to be overloaded in the defensive line, confident their defenders would win their battles and the two midfielder would pick up any loose 2nd balls.

## CLIP 2

Pachuca consistently pressed with intent and aggression, often causing errors from a Crew's player. This was one of the best examples where this occurred in a dangerous position on the pitch. As soon as the pass from centre back to centre back is played, Pachuca's Rodriguez (RW) releases from the 4-2-4 formation and aggressively presses Cherberko (LCB), forcing a poor touch and ball recovery in the opposition penalty box.

## CLIP 3

Even after scoring their third goal, Pachuca's out of possession intent to win the ball back didn't change. As soon as the pass is made, Rodriguez (RW) presses aggressively and wins the ball back, creating a 2v1 situation. It's important to note, though, that this strategy was high risk-high reward.

Pachuca pressed 35 times and won the ball back on 13 occasions

(just 37.1% of the time); when they didn't win it back, they left big spaces for the Crew to play into who, as discussed above, were able to move the ball forward well. Aggressive pressing such as this is always a high-wire act.





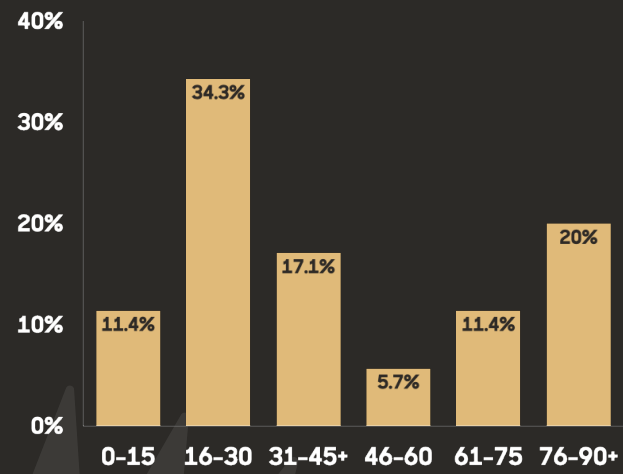
# High Pressing

C.F. PACHUCA

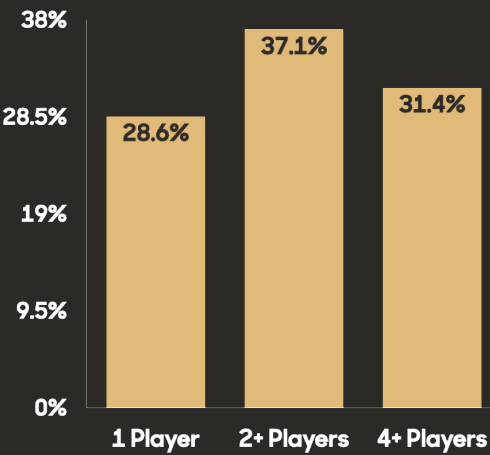


TOTAL  
INSTANCES  
OF TEAM  
HIGH PRESS

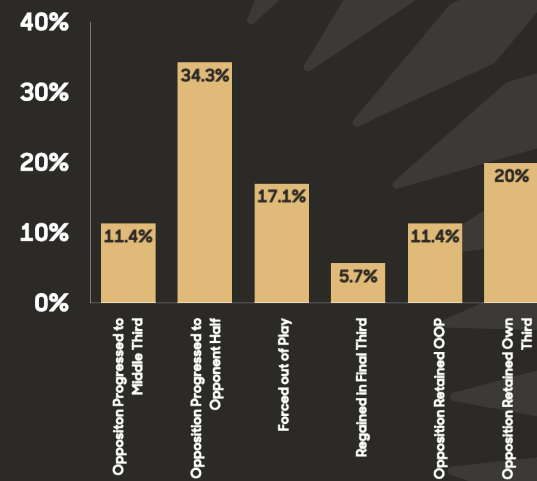
Volume (%) of pressing per 15 mins



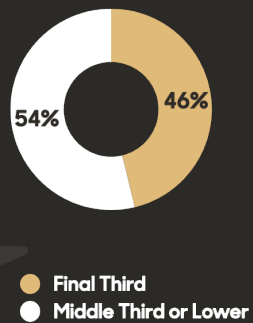
Number of Players Pressing



Pressing Outcome



Regain End Location



Pressing Positive Outcome





# Pachuca's Penetrating Switches

Pachuca were just as much of a threat in possession as they were out of it thanks to a clear focus on switching play, which continually caused Columbus Crew a headache.

Knowing they would face up against a 3-4-3 formation in which the attackers and midfielders played very narrowly, Pachuca ensured they had a winger on each side staying high and wide to stretch the pitch, offer an outlet and present the Crew's wing-backs with a difficult decision: Do I step out and engage, or stay narrow and keep the shape?

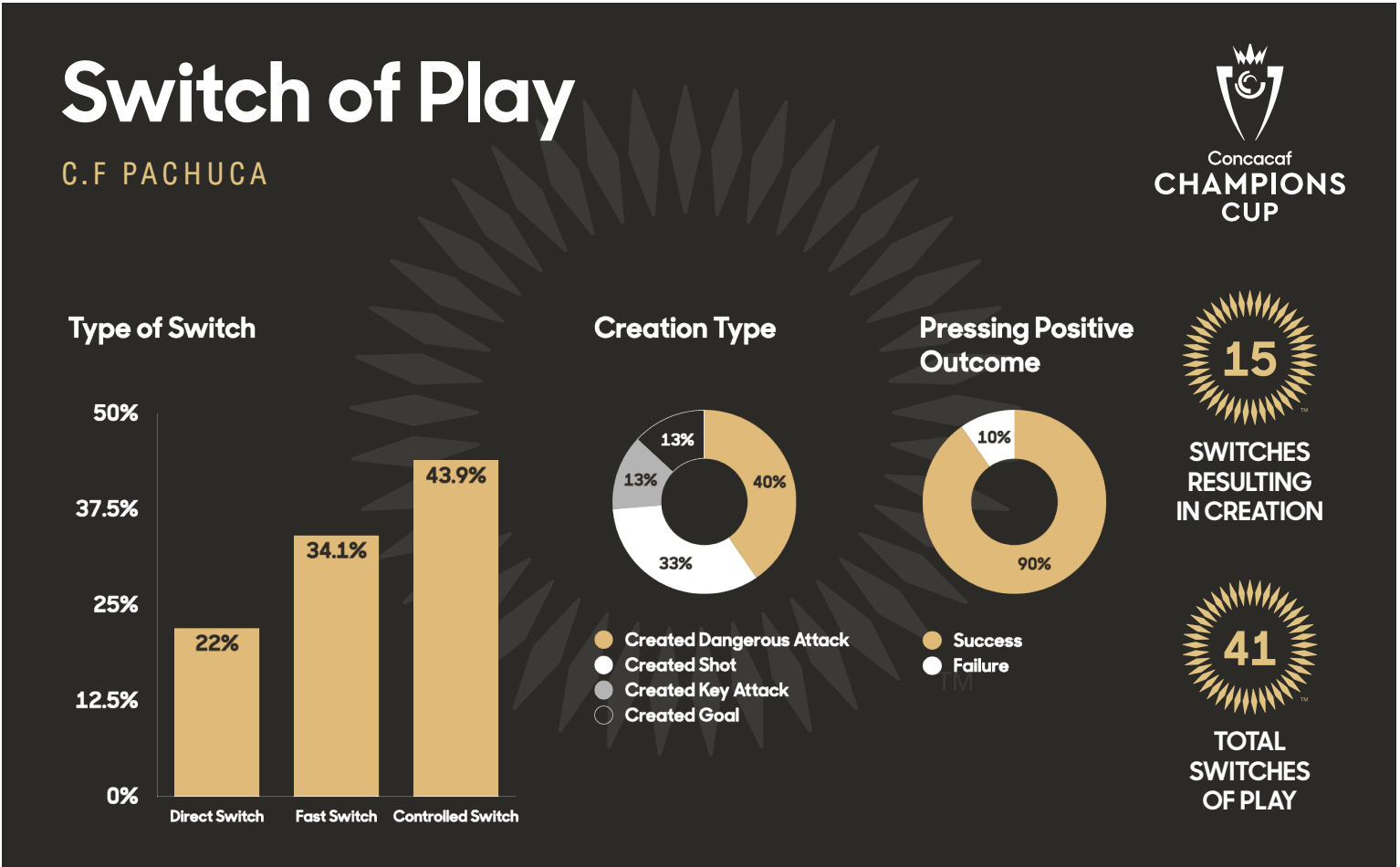


**CLIP 1**  
Pachuca's strategy in possession was clear, isolate Crew's wing back's and create a dilemma for them. Jump out and press Pachuca's full back or hold their position and allow unopposed possession.

In this example, you see Yeboah (LWB) jump and release to press Rodriguez (RB) for Pachuca. By Yeboah (LWB) releasing, the

defensive line for Crew need to shuffle across to close the space vacated, but this results in a large amount of space on the opposite side of the pitch for Pachuca to exploit.

**CLIP 2**  
The second instance includes two examples of Pachuca looking for the switch of play. Straight away, we see Crew's narrow shape allowing Rodriguez (RB)



space to receive a direct ball from the switch. The switch of play consistently created 2v1's and overloads in the wide areas, forcing the LCB of Crew to release to even the numbers. We then see a similar image

**CLIP 3**  
Sanchez (CAM) was also effective in creating the space for a switch of play to occur. Here we see him show for the throw in, drawing

three Crew players towards him and creating space for the switch to happen. Once it does, Pachuca find themselves in a great position 2v1 in the wide areas and 3v3 inside the penalty box for the cross.

In total, Los Tuzos switched the ball 41 times, 37 of which were successful, good for a 90.2% success rate. They created 15 opportunities directly from

these switches, 6 of which were considered dangerous, and 2 of which resulted in goals. Salomón Rondón iced the game with a penalty box strike that followed some really patient play to engineer the switch from right to left.



# Salomón Rondón's Star Showing

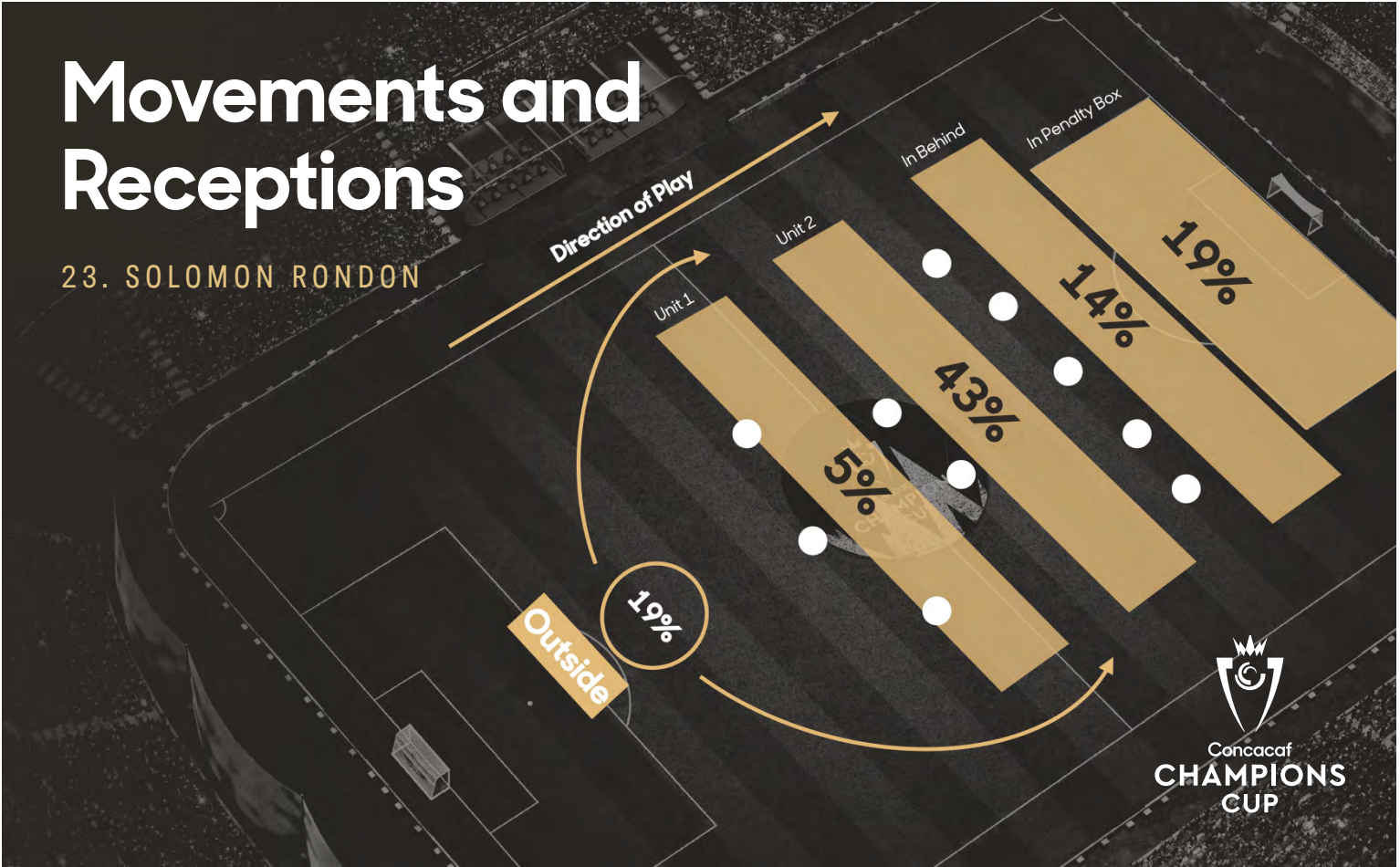
Speaking of Rondón, he was the match winner. He produced a brilliant, allround forward's display, scoring twice and playing a big part in creating another.

The Venezuelan mixed up his movements superbly: He made a total of 20 runs in behind, 5 of which were found by through passes; he also received 16 passes between the Crew's defensive and midfield lines, allowing them to go direct but still retain possession.

His first goal comes from a run in behind, which he crowns with a glorious, chipped finish, while Pachuca's second comes from him receiving between the lines, pinning his centre-back, turning and releasing a runner to spark a 3v2.



**CLIP 1**  
Rondón continually made smart offers and movements to create space for himself or his teammates. In this instance, we see three times Rondón make an offer and movement in behind the Crew defence, eventually on the third movement receiving the ball and scoring the opening goal of the game.



**CLIP 2**  
This example highlights again how dangerous Rondón's movement was against the Crew's defensive line. Whilst receiving the ball more often between the units, Rondón's constant movement in behind still allowed his team mates to find him five times behind the back line, almost assisting a goal in this example.

**CLIP 3**  
Finally, Rondón used his strength to hold off the defender and bring his teammates into the game for the second goal of the match. His ability to pin the defender allowed his teammates time to break beyond him and create a 3v2 scenario, in which the winger Rodriguez took the opportunity well.

This dual threat meant the Crew's defenders never truly got a handle on how to contain him, as he was physical, fast and unpredictable.





# 2024 CONCACAF W Gold Cup

## The Route to the Final

In March 2024, the United States won the inaugural Concacaf W Gold Cup by beating Brazil 1-0 in the final. It felt fitting that both should meet in the showpiece event, as throughout the tournament they'd marked themselves out as two of the very best.

Here, we analyse the hallmarks of their play during the runs to the final, in addition to what changed when the two met in San Diego...

# 4



# USA – Route to the Final

A big part of the United States' success in this tournament came from using the ball smartly and efficiently



## Building

THROUGH CENTRAL OVERLOADS

### THEME 1: CENTRAL PROGRESSION AND DOMINANCE

For top teams, possession is important—but using that possession well is even more so. A big part of the United States' success in this tournament came from using the ball smartly and efficiently, which we'll analyse here.

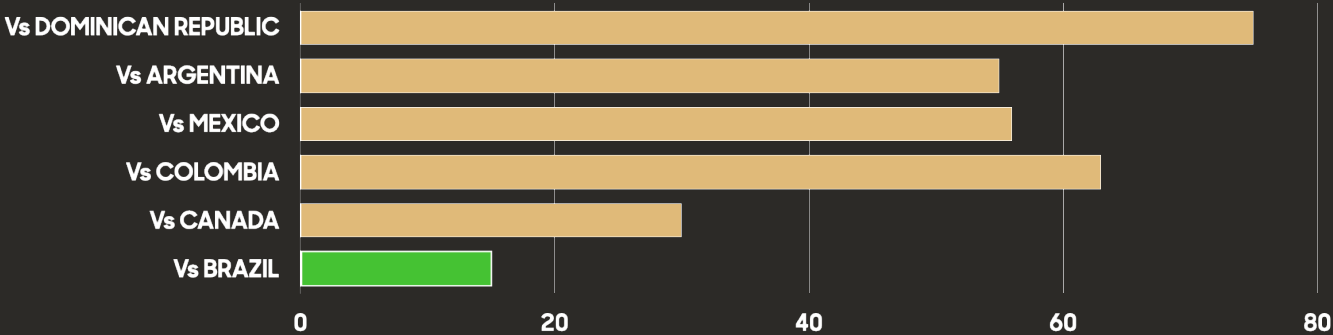
The USA's typical formation was often marked down as a 4-2-3-1, but when in possession they morphed into something different. The shape on show was a 1-3-2-2-3: There was a clear back three; four players in central midfield staggered into two lines of two (creating a "box" shape); and a front three that provided the width for the team.





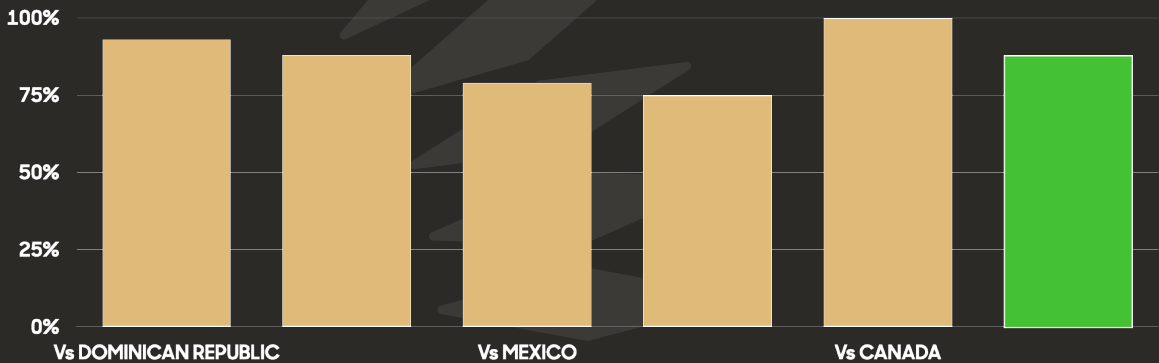
# Movement to Receive

IN BETWEEN



# Line Breaking Passes

INSIDE SUCCESS %



This shape allowed the USA to overload the centre of the pitch and penetrate through their opponents to create chances. Line-breaking passes, moving from unit to unit quickly and decisively. Over the course of the tournament, they averaged 16.7 inside opposition shape line-breaking passes per match with an impressive 87.2% success rate. Specifically against Canada in the semi-final, they didn't miss a single one, finishing the game with an astonishing 100% completion rate.

### CLIP 1

The first clip shows goalkeeper Alyssa Naeher roll the ball out short to one of the outside centre-backs, [Tierna Davidson] who steps in with the ball into space. There's a small but critical between unit movement from the central midfielder to create some space and she hits it fast, which poses Colombia's marking structure a problem: The midfielder isn't sure whether to jump out of her defensive line and close [Davidson] down, or drop off to block the passing lane. In the end, she hesitates and the pass is succesful.

### CLIP 2

This opens up a line-breaking passing lane to a midfielder, who swivels brilliantly, drives past two defenders and into more space. Another line-breaking pass finds



the next line of midfield, resulting in a foul and a dangerous free-kick 18 yards out. This is just one of many examples of the USA moving from back to front sharply.

In order to unlock these line-breaking passes, the USA made lots of movements to receive the ball between the lines. In each of their first four games, 55 or more specific movements of this type were made, with attacking midfielder Lindsey Horan—who was named in the Team of the Tournament—frequently topping her teammates in this category.

### CLIP 3

Also key to these central overloads were the dropping movements of the striker. Rather than run in behind, she continually dropped towards the ball in order to receive to feet, then turn and either run or pass, as shown in the second and third clips. This added yet another body to the USA's central overload of the pitch and, where possible, took advantage of Alex Morgan's exceptional close control, spatial awareness and link play in tight spots.

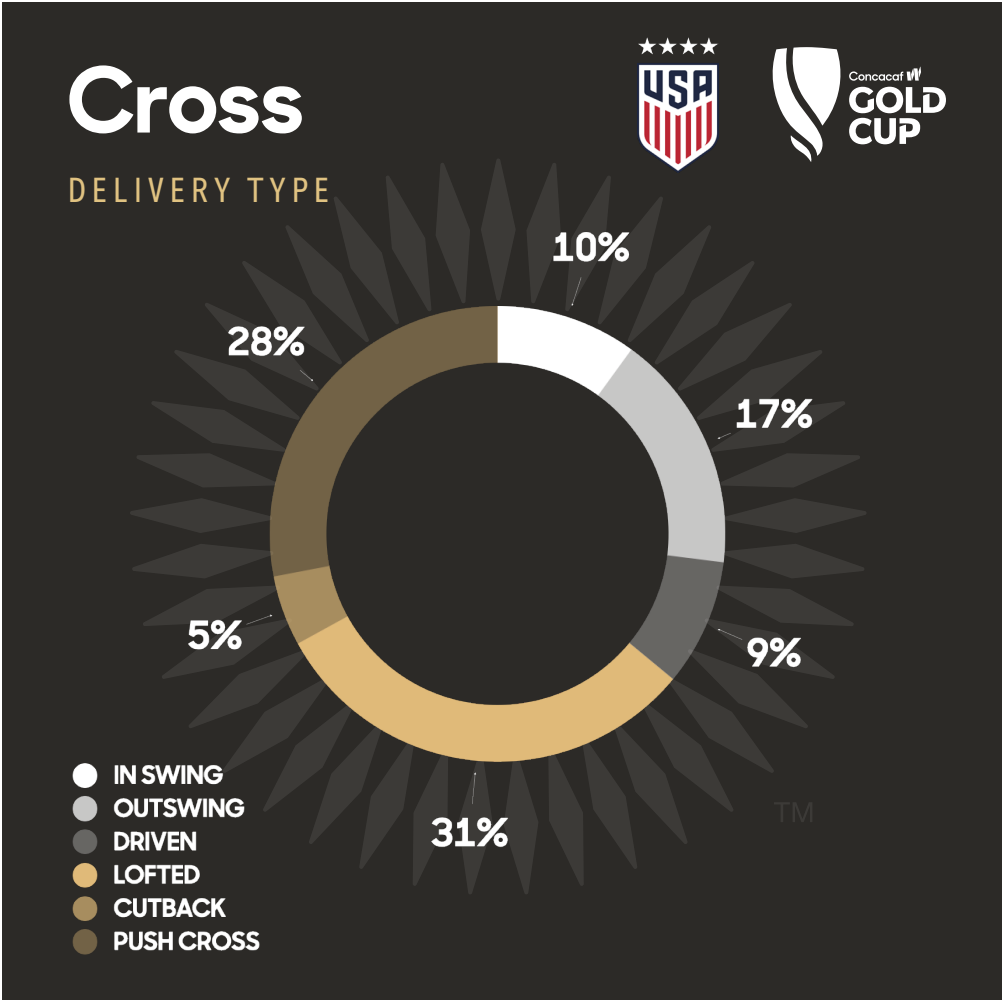
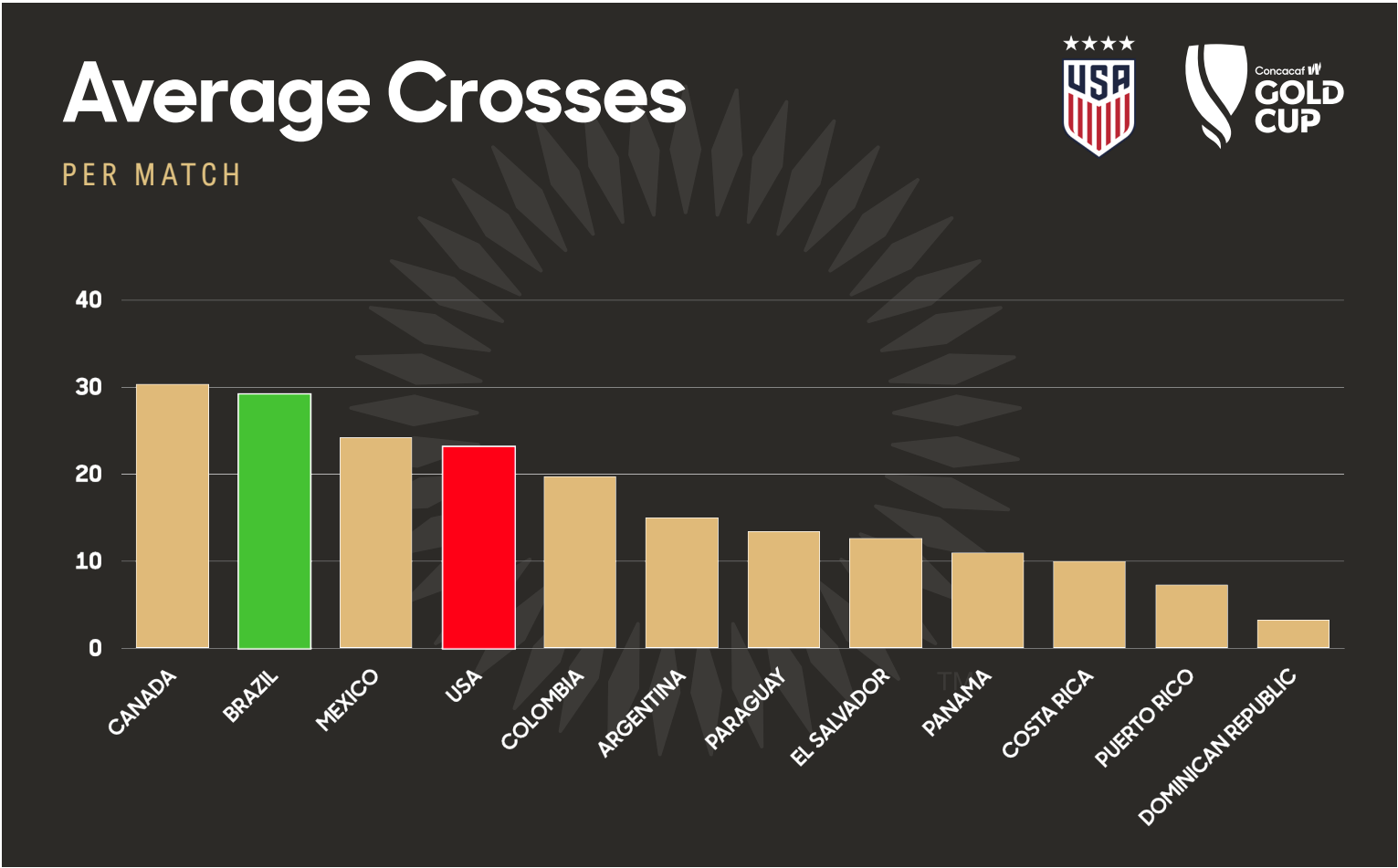


THEME 2: VARIATION OF CROSSES

A common theme of modern dominant attacking play is the use of cut-backs and low crosses from high value areas of the pitch. The United States utilised these heavily early on during the tournament as they sought to pull and stretch their more defensive-minded opponents apart.

In the USA's first two games, against the Dominican Republic

and Argentina , they attempted 27 and crosses crosses and completed 37 and 36.7%, respectively. In the 2023 Women's World Cup there was an average of 12 crosses per team per game, so compared to typical crossing numbers and completion percentages, these figures are extremely high. A big factor in this success rate is the heavy usage of low crosses and cut-backs, which tend to be more precise and are more likely to find a teammate.



The starting point for this strategy was to leave their wingers high and wide at all times. That gave the shape good natural width and a constant out-ball to the flank. Opponents struggled to cover that threat off, as they had to commit so many players to the central zone to fight against the USA's box midfield.

**CLIP 1**  
In the first clip, we see a low cross goal in its simplest form: After recycling the ball across midfield, the USA switch it to right winger Midge Purce, who is stationed high and wide, and get her running at her marker one-on-one. She beats her to the outside, hits the byline and feeds a low cross into the six-yard box to be tapped home.

**CLIP 2**  
We see a different variation in the second clip, where striker Morgan is the one to cut the ball back into the box. She initially drops between the lines to receive the ball to feet in the buildup, then sneaks in behind the defensive line a little later to latch onto a through-ball and create a great chance.

**CLIP 3**  
The third clip shows wonderful close interplay in a tight spot in the corner, resulting in a runner breaking free to the byline and delivering a cut-back to the penalty spot area, which is planted into the far corner.





THEME 3: EFFECTIVE PRESSING AND COUNTER-PRESSING

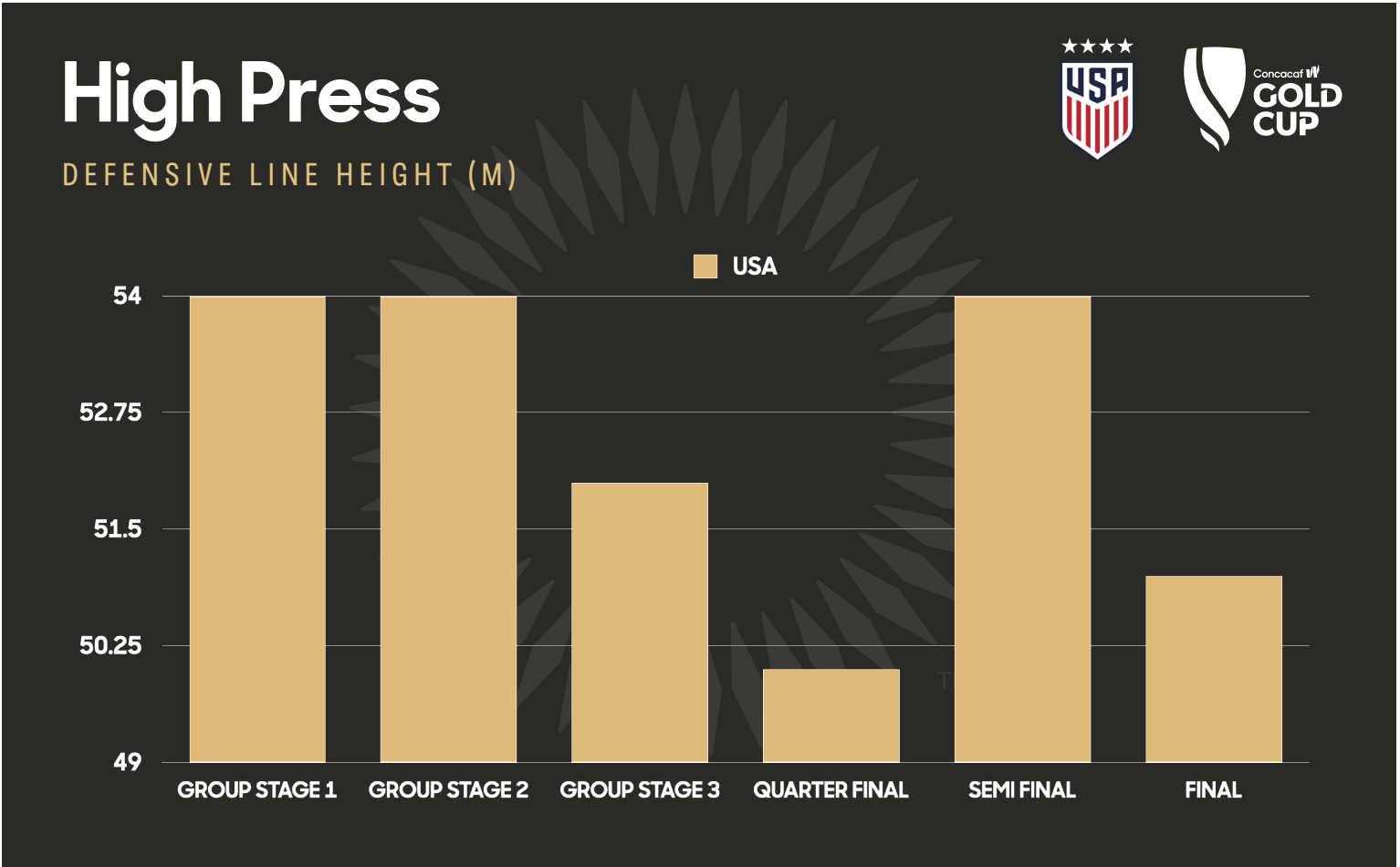
The United States kept four clean sheets from a possible six during the tournament, including one in the final against Brazil, marking them out as exceptional off the ball as well as on it. They showcased strong pressing and counter-pressing and brought great aggression and energy to their defensive play.

Their off-the-ball shape regularly settled into a 4-4-2, which was especially visible from opponents' goal kick situations. The first and second clips highlight how effective they were at winning the ball back from these situations, along with a number of other things.

CLIP 1

It begins with the defensive line pushing aggressively onto the halfway line, squeezing play into the opponent's half of the pitch. The average height of the line during high pressing was 52.8m, while they also made sure they were +1 at the back (carrying a numerical advantage by always having one more defender than there were attackers), leaving a centre-back free to attack the ball or cover flick-ons.

From there, the forwards can push high up and pick their moments to apply pressure, using triggers.



CLIP 2

Clip 1 shows patience, clip 2 shows pure aggression; the common theme between them is that the USA look to pounce on sideways passes across the back line. Applying pressure forced poor or panicked passing, resulting in throw-ins or punts upfield that can be easily recovered and recycled.

CLIP 3

The third clip showcases their combativeness in the middle and the effectiveness of their

counter-pressing. If the USA did lose the ball in midfield, they'd immediately seek to regain it and apply real pressure to do so.

The effectiveness of this bears out in the statistics: on average, they took just 7.3 seconds to recover the ball, and they applied 159.4 defensive pressures per game.

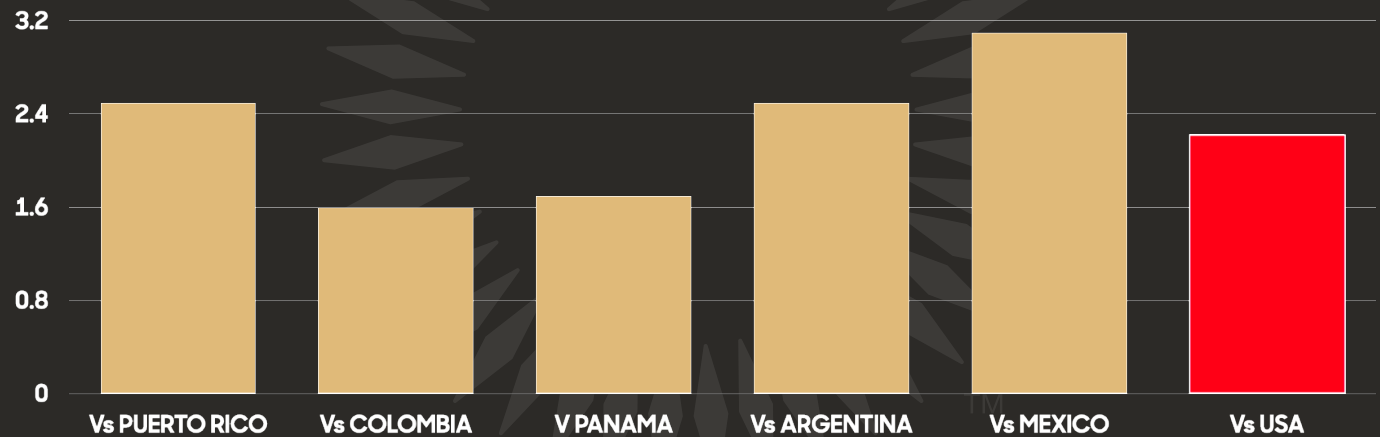


# Brazil – Route to the Final

Brazil's commitment to pressing high and hard bears out in the statistics

## Opposition Pass

PER DEF. PRESSURE



### THEME 1: AGGRESSIVE PLAYER-FOR-PLAYER PRESSING

Brazil also made their way to the final thanks in part to a strong defensive record, keeping four clean sheets in five games en route, before falling 1-0 in the showpiece event. Like the USA, they pressed aggressively and committed to winning the ball high up the pitch—but did so in a different way.

Brazil's commitment to pressing high and hard bears out in the statistics. Starting simply with intent, the Seleção rarely allowed their opponents to string more than 3 passes together before applying pressure; the only game that average crept above 3 was the semi-final against Mexico.



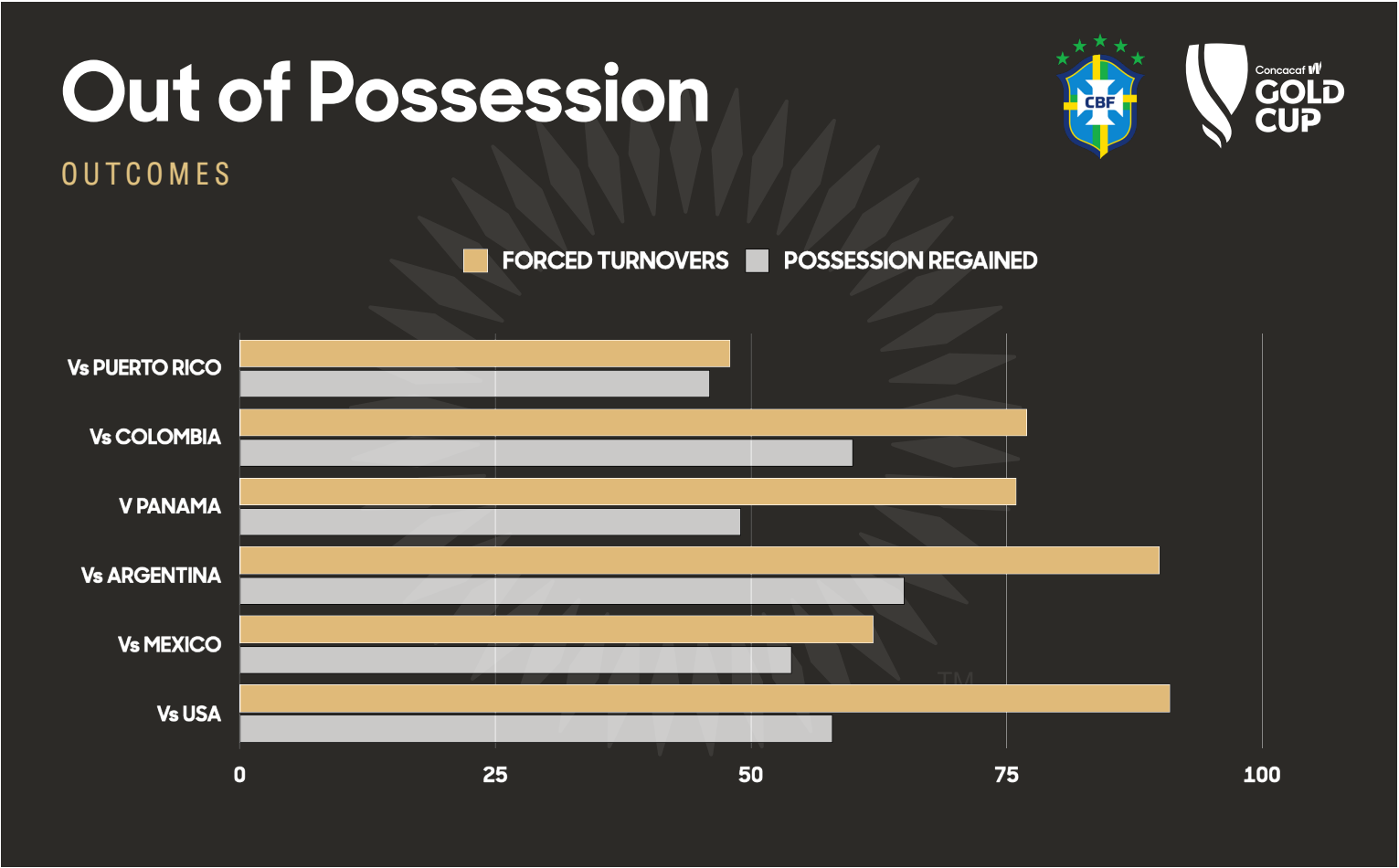
It's bold, it's brave, but it was no doubt effective: It took Brazil just 6.3 seconds to recover the ball on average; they applied 127.5 defensive pressures per match and regained possession 54.8 times per game; and the typical defensive line height while pressing was 51 metres, which mopped up second balls and recycled them into possession easily.

The first two clips show opponents trying and failing to play through the Seleção's press. Their starting positions are extremely high and they go player-for-player in the centre, as opposed to the United States' zonal approach.



**CLIP 1**  
In Clip 1, [Colombia goalkeeper Natalia Giraldo] chips the ball over the first line and tries to find a midfielder, but she loses her duel and possession changes over.

**CLIP 2**  
In Clip 2, Argentina try to go around the press, but Brazil wing-back Yasmim reads the cue and sprints aggressively to close down the ball. That leads to a dangerous pass into the middle that's soon converted into a goal. In both situations, Brazil use the first pass from the goalkeeper as their trigger to press.



The team shape starts narrow in order to protect the centre of the pitch, but the wide players are ready to jump out and close down the ball if needed.

**CLIP 3**  
The final clip shows [Giraldo] search for more than 10 seconds for a safe pass out from the back, only to punt it long in the end.

There's space behind Brazil's high defensive line, which is situated just short of halfway, but goalkeeper [Luciana]'s high starting positioning allows her to sweep the ball up.



THEME 2: OPPOSITE MOVEMENTS  
CREATE CHANCES

The Seleção effectively played with a 3-2-5 on-ball shape, pushing 5 players into the attacking line, one for each channel of the pitch. That left two in central midfield and a back three in support, ready to win the ball back should it spring loose.



CLIP 1

The first clip shows the left attacking midfielder dropping in and the defender following her, providing the left central midfielder with the cue to run into the space created behind.

Suddenly, Brazil have a crossing opportunity and a 3v3 in the penalty box to exploit.

CLIP 2

The second clip has two opposite movements, this time on the right side. The right attacking midfielder drops to allow the striker to find space, then the central midfielder springs in behind her a little later in the move.



CLIP 3

Clip three is more direct and does not involve a central midfielder, just an attacking midfielder and striker working in tandem to find space.

These clever movements and runs were a major feature of Brazil's play in their run to the final: 41.5% of their movements were in

behind, while 27.8% and 22.7% of their movements were in between and in front, respectively. You can see all three of these types of movements in these clips, often used in conjunction with one another in order to get a player running in behind.



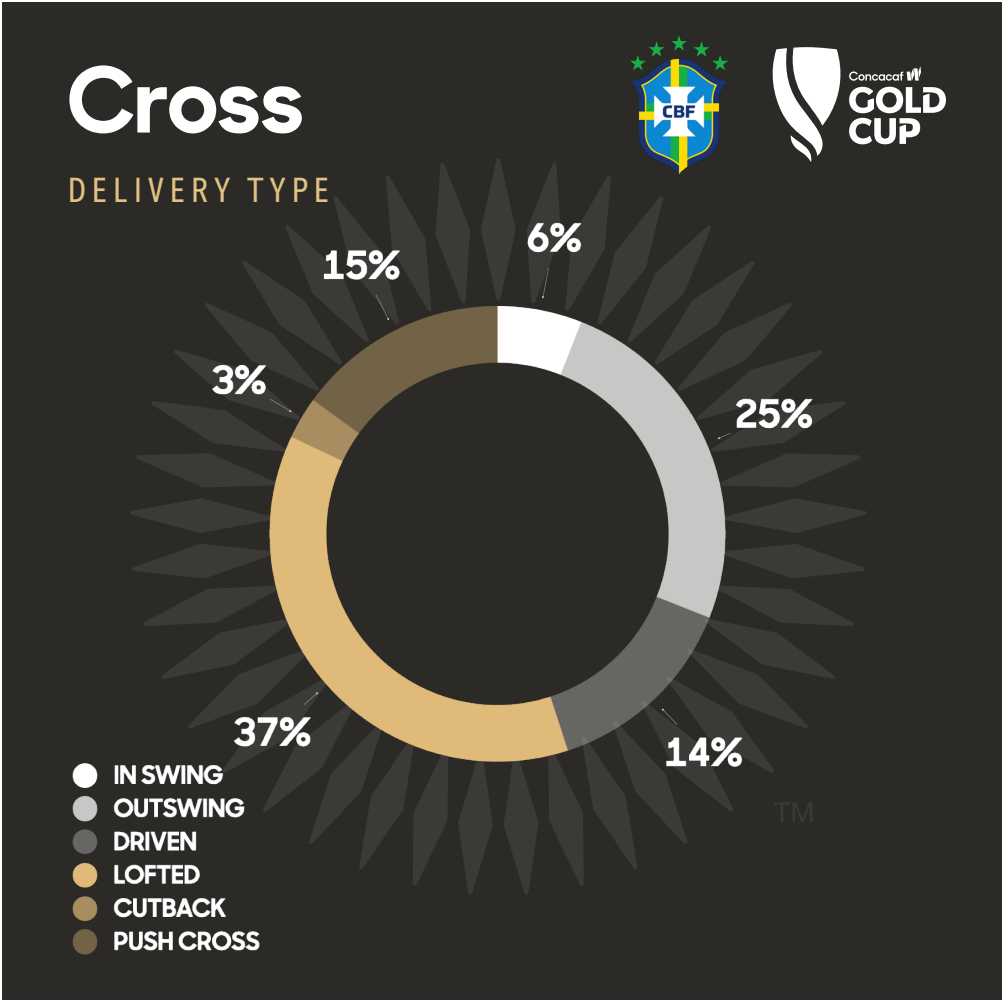
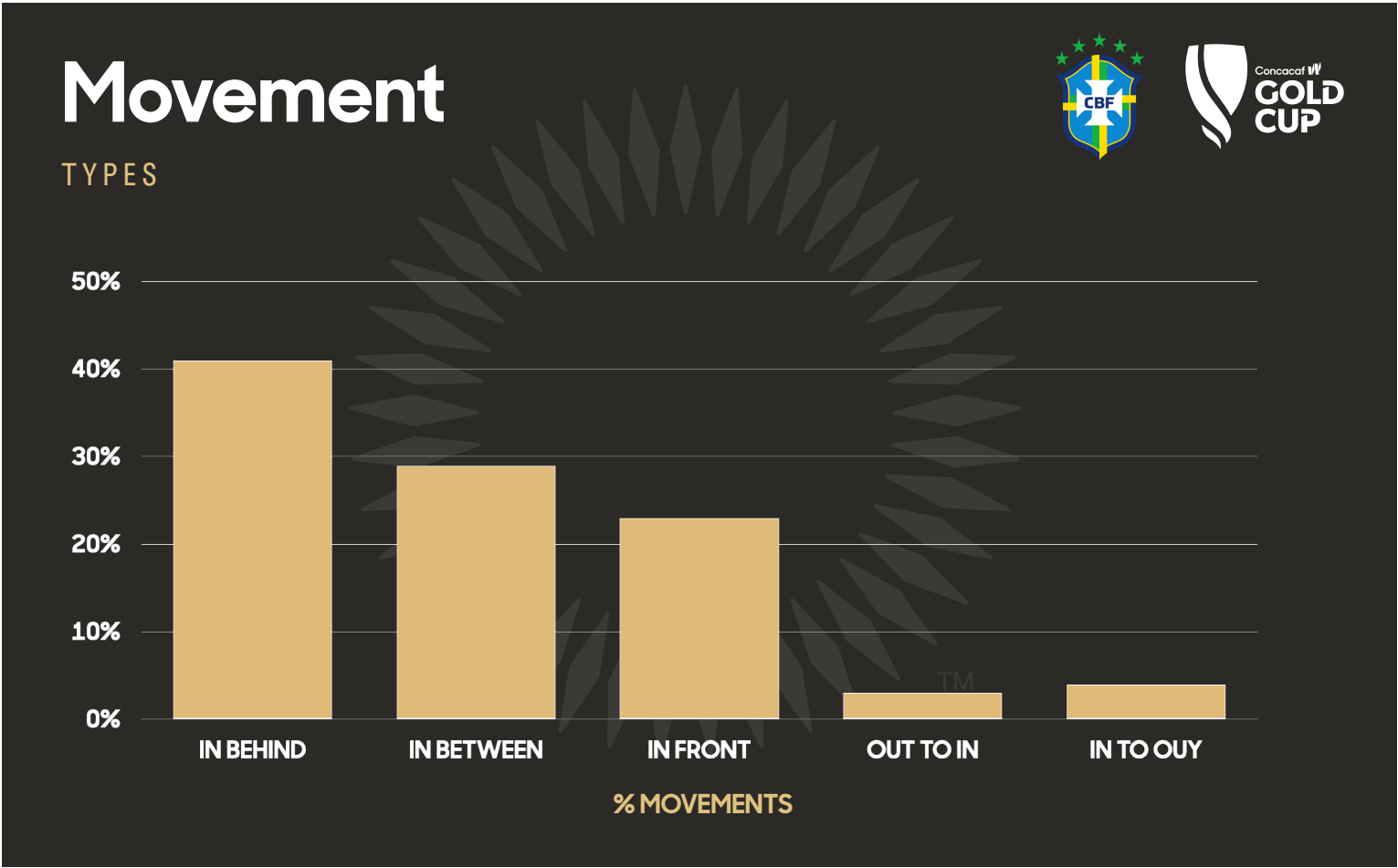
THEME 3: CROSSING TO THE BACK POST

Brazil heavily utilised crossing as a way to create chances—their average of 29.2 per match was the second-highest in the tournament, the majority of which (21.3) came from open play, with 5.4 completed per game.

Once they'd got a runner in behind using those opposite movements, the next action was typically a cross

into the box, where the Seleção often had at least three players ready to attack the ball, which included the opposite wing-back making a run to the back post.

Those wing-backs had the advantage of arriving into the box late, often delaying their runs and hiding in the blind spot of the defenders as they headed back towards their own goal. It made tracking them and stopping them very difficult.



The clips showcase how successful this method was, and how difficult opponents found it to not only stop the supply, but also to cope with Brazil's overloading of the back post. It was no surprise that the Seleção's most common cross type was a lofted cross, often aimed to the other side of the box; they averaged 8.8 of those per match.

Lower crosses—still aimed largely at the back post—also brought success for Brazil, and in total four of their 16 tournament goals (25%) came as a result of crosses.







CONCACAF WOMEN'S GOLD CUP

**Both teams met their match, and both were successful in nullifying their opponent**

## The Final

As is often the case, the final was a cagey affair. Such a clash of quality meant that both teams met their match, and both were successful in nullifying their opponent.

Brazil continued to press player-for-player in aggressive fashion; as mentioned above, they averaged 2.23 passes per pressure and took just 8.85 seconds to recover the ball. The USA's approach was even more intense, allowing just 1.9 passes before applying pressure and needing just 6.11 seconds to recover the ball. This accurately paints the picture of a disjointed final where both teams struggled to put their stamp on the game.

Both teams also continued to commit to squeezing up the pitch and limit space to build, which can be seen in the teams' average defensive line height while pressing: both were at 51 metres.



That's pretty much where the similarities between both teams' performances leading up to the final, and then in the final, stopped. They disrupted each other so effectively that the vast majority of their on-ball statistics look completely different to the group stage equivalents.

For example, Brazil's pressing made the USA's strategy to play passes that break the lines in central channels difficult; they attempted just 29 line breaks in the match, a tournament low for the USA, and at times reverted to chipping the ball forward instead.

They also managed just 8 crosses, their lowest tally of the competition. Only one of those was a push cross (a low delivery across the box), a stark reduction on their tournament average of 4.7 per game.

That caused the US to switch things up, and in the final clip we see an outswinging, lofted cross to the back post that's headed home. That's the goal that clinched the trophy and the sixth cross converted during the tournament, meaning 40% of their goals originated

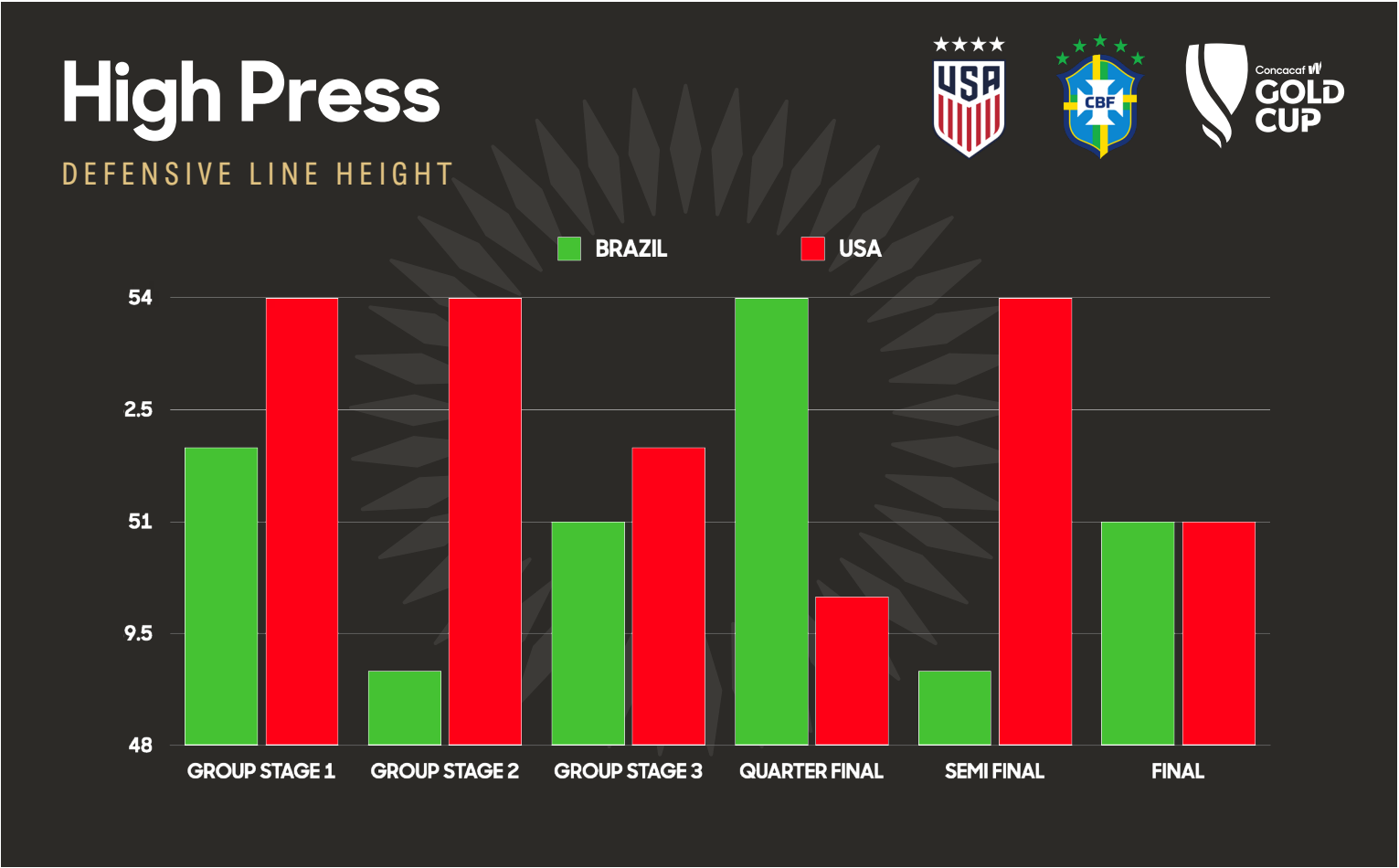


directly from crosses. This one was different to the others, though; there was no 1v1 takeon of the full-back, no push cross or cut-back; it was far less precise than usual.

Brazil experienced similar issues in their own crossing game: They completed just 1 cross in the final, a distinctly lower number than their tournament average of 4.7.

For comparison, in earlier games against Puerto Rico and Panama, they completed 7 crosses in each. That's a credit to the USA's pressing game and ability to win first contacts in the box.

There was also a massive drop-off in the Seleção's ability to run in behind the defensive line; they did so just 56 times in the final, which pales in comparison to their tournament average of 88. Limiting that threat was undoubtedly key to the United States keeping a clean sheet and edging a close, hard fought final.





# Closing Remarks

As we conclude another remarkable year of Concacaf competitions, it's clear that passion and creativity remain the beating heart of our beautiful game. However, this year has also shown us the transformative power of data and analytics in shaping the future of football. By leveraging performance metrics, player development trends, and strategic insights, we've not only deepened our understanding of the game but have also taken steps toward making football more inclusive, equitable, and innovative.

This season has been a testament to the unyielding spirit of the

teams, players, and fans who have made every moment unforgettable. Yet, this is just the beginning. By embracing the full potential of football data, we can unlock new opportunities, drive more informed decision-making, and ensure the sport continues to thrive and inspire across all levels. Together, we are shaping a future where football in the Concacaf region sets new standards of excellence and continues to unite communities in celebration of the game we all love.

Thank you for being part of this journey, and here's to an even brighter future for football.'

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