

ATTACKING AT SPEED

A LOOK AT LIVERPOOL'S FAST PACED ATTACKING TACTICS



by Luca Bertolini

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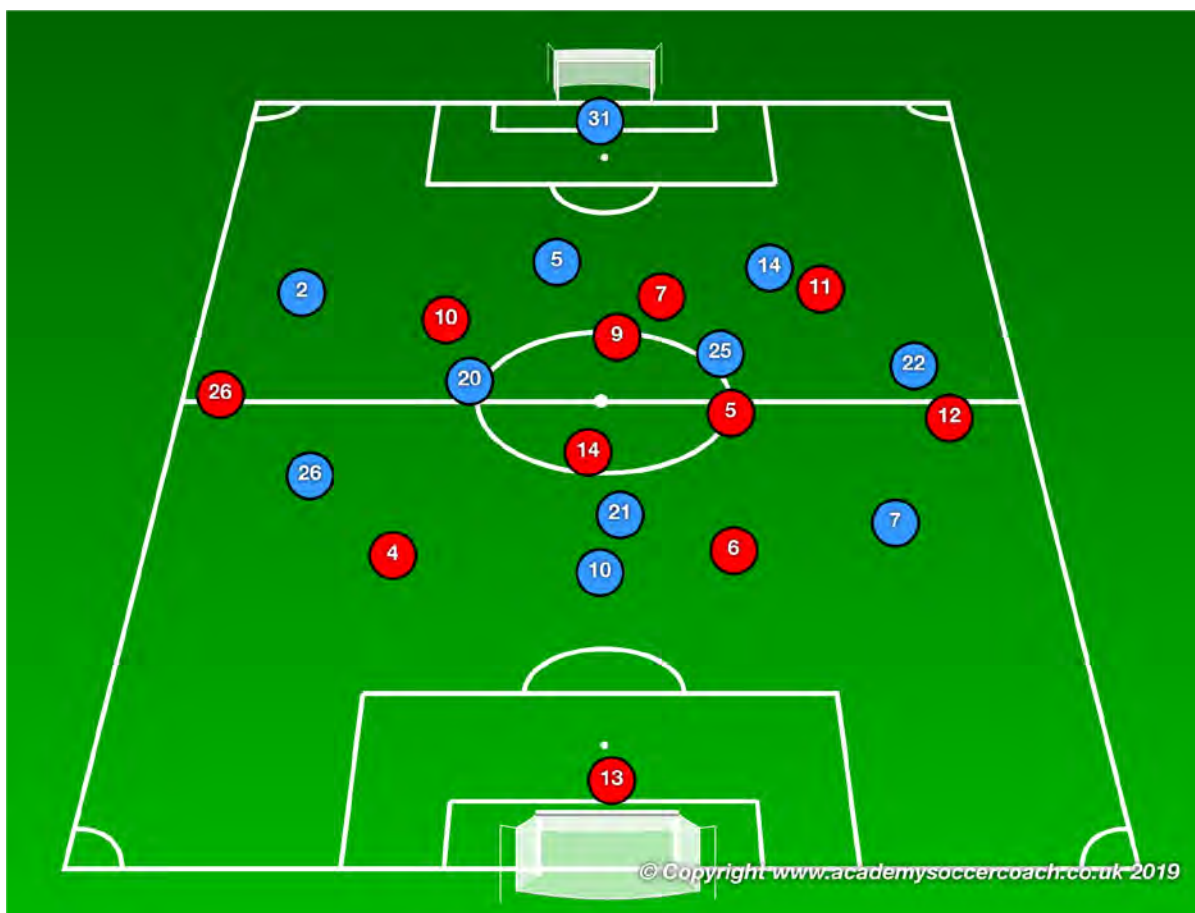
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1st leg possession and attacking data

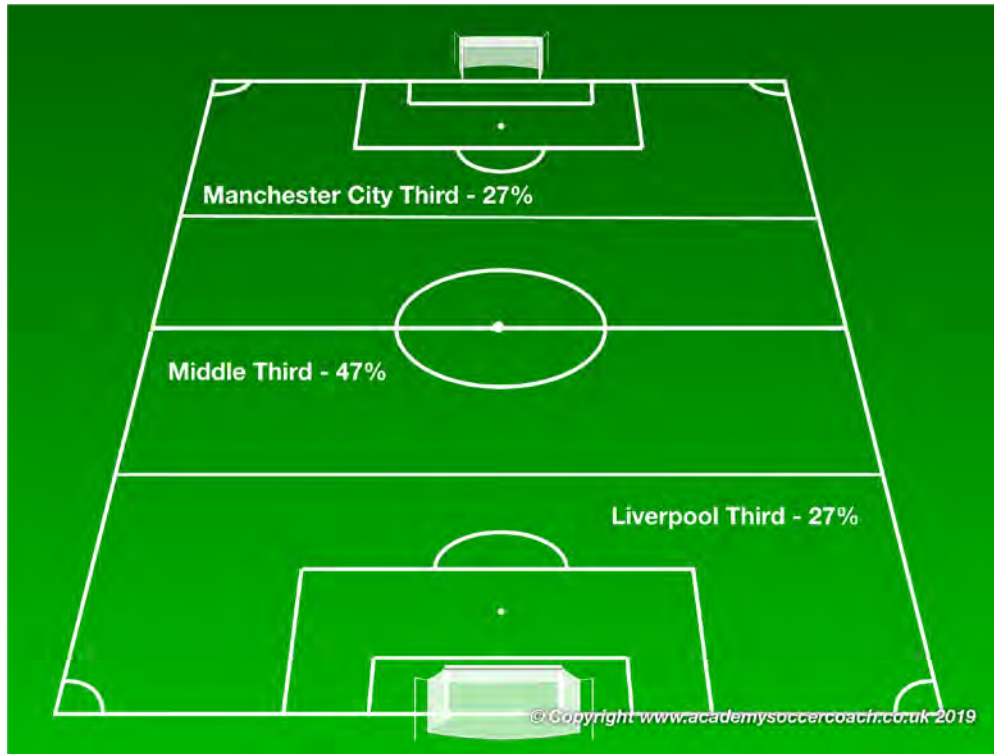
Liverpool and Manchester City players' positions.

Liverpool's 1-4-3-3 was positioned with blocked center backs (Van Dijke - 4 and Lovren - 6), the fullbacks constantly pushing forward (Robertson - 26 and Gomez - 12), two alternate balance midfielders (Henderson - 14 and Wijnaldum - 5), one advanced midfielder because with pressure tasks (Milner - 7) and three close forwards (Manè - 10, Salah - 11 and Firimino - 9), who was used to drop back into the midfield zone) to leave space on the flanks for the fullbacks inside the final third.

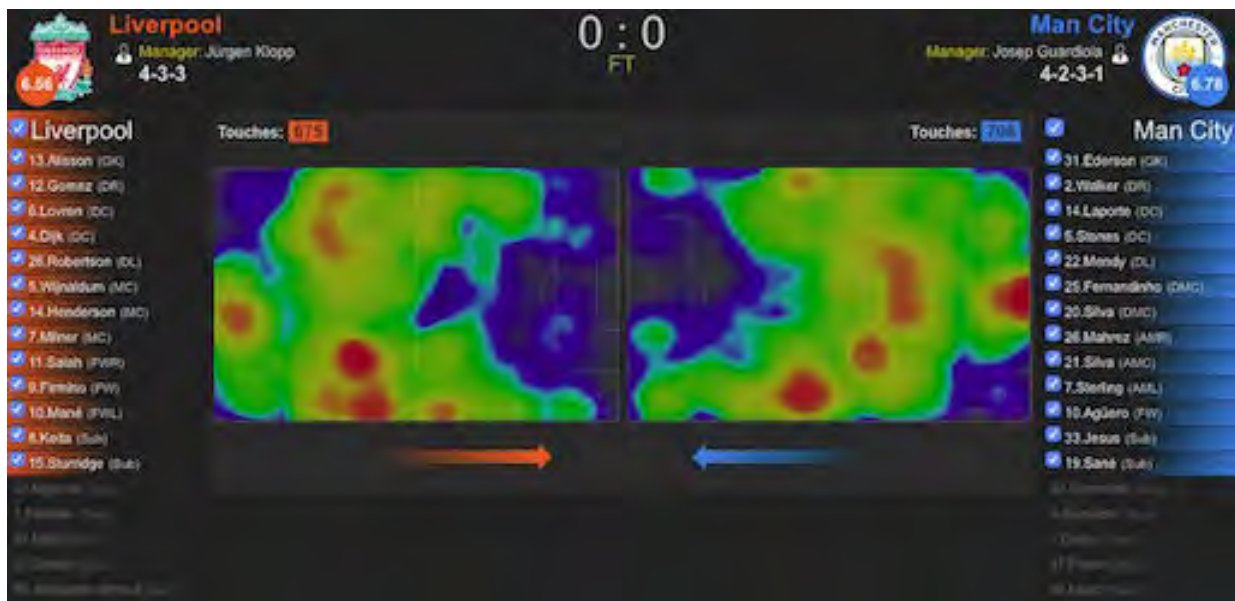
Manchester City 1-4-2-3-1 turned to a 1-4-4-1-1 without possession, as the inverted wingers (26 - Mahrez and 7 - Sterling) dropped back to cover the flanks and David Silva (21) was usually placed behind the only center forward Aguero (10). Mendy (22) was often placed high to support the attacking move, leaving a line of three at the back (Danilo - 2, Stones - 5 and Laporte - 14). Fernandinho (25) played as balance players, as usual, and Bernardo Silva (20) was left free to move and to receive throughout the middle third.



Actions zones: the average of playing zones on the field shows the substantial balance of the match, with many transition phases inside the middle third and the same percentage of attacks in the final thirds.



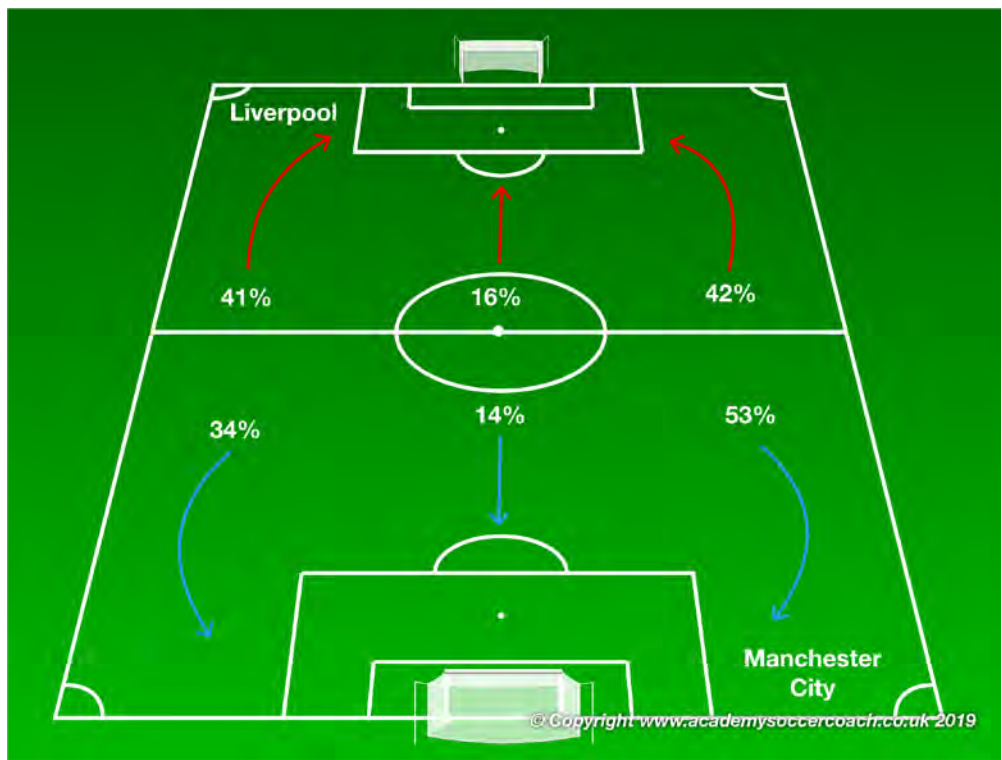
Liverpool and Manchester City heat map: Liverpool tended to build up on the right side of the middle third, developing the possession phase and to dribble up directly on the left thanks to Robertson basic speed and physical resistance. On the right side of the attack, Liverpool was used to arrive near the borderline before combining or crossing into the box. The heat map of City shows the typical building up from the goalkeeper phase, possession phase inside the center area of the middle third and a preference for attacking along the left side.



Match statistics: looking at the general statistics, the balance is again very clear, but one main difference can be noticed about the areal duel success. It looks evident how Liverpool played with long balls, trying to free its attackers in behind the opposition defense line. The number of total passes shows how Liverpool developed skills for more reasoned possession phase, when the direct play is not possible (the number of passes is very close to Manchester City).

Team Match Statistics		
Liverpool		Man City
49%	Possession	51%
515	Total Passes	528
430	Accurate Passes	439
6	Key Passes	4
84%	Pass Success	82%
23	Lost Balls	19
4	Dribbles won	7
26% (6)	Areal Duel Success	74% (17)
17	Tackles	16
18	Clearances	25
7	Shots	6
2	On target	2

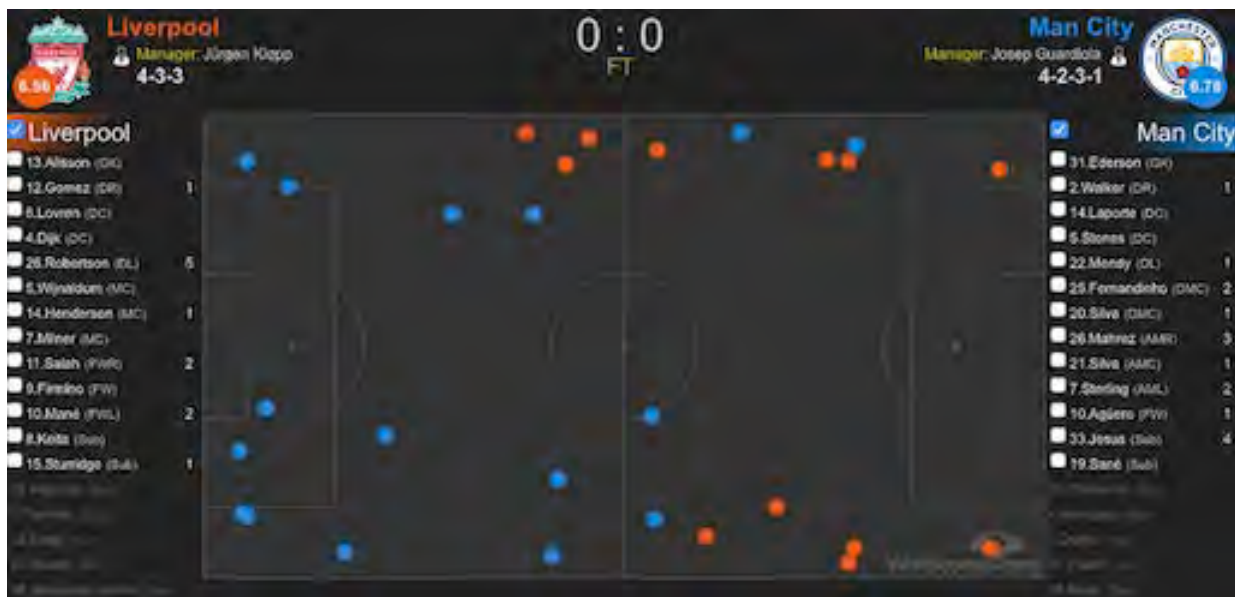
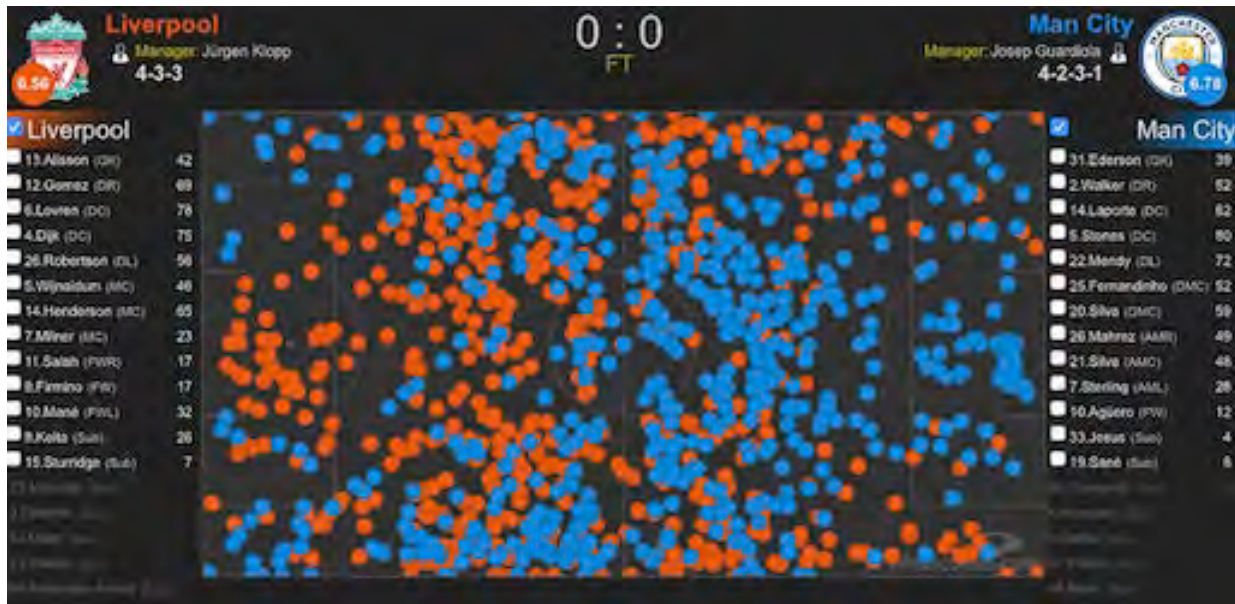
Attacking Sides: as we already saw before in the heat map, Liverpool build up on the right side, but the attacking moves were substantially distributed among the flanks and the center space of the final third. Manchester City was more comfortable in finishing along the left flank.



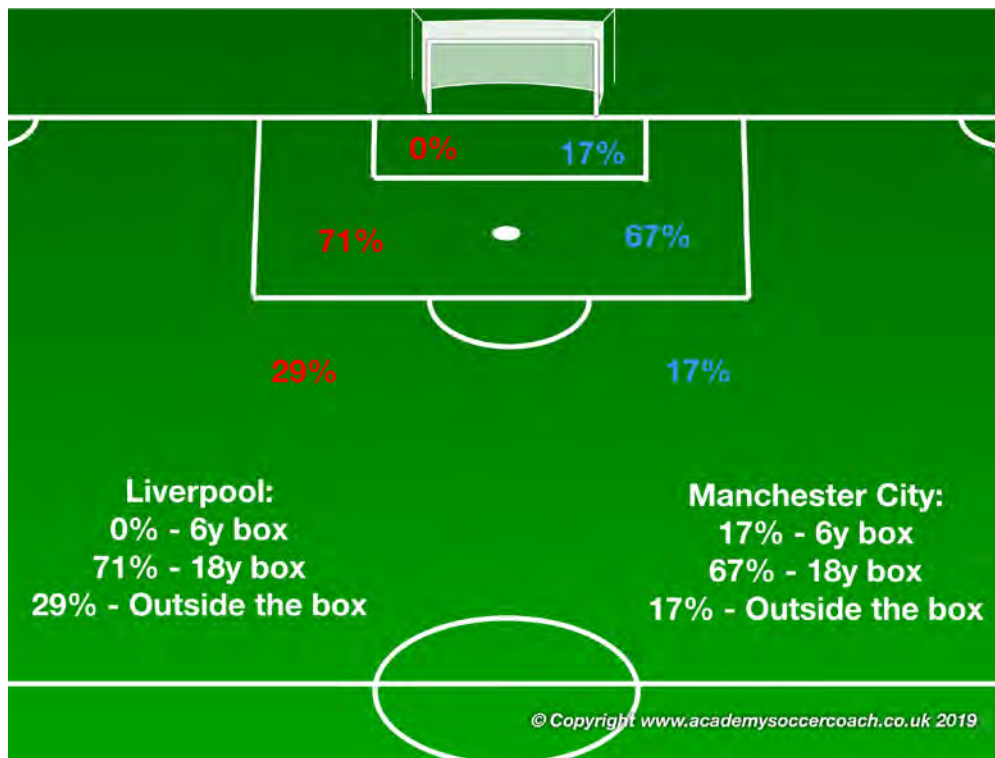
Looking at the data of the passes, it's again possible to understand as Klopp's team is more possession oriented than the last seasons; rhythm and speed of play are always very high, but the style of play is less direct. The team tries to unbalance the opposition defense line before playing vertical through passes for the forwards; Firmino often acts as an added midfielder.

Passes Types		
Liverpool		Man City
Direction		
352	Forward	347
198	Backward	215
283	Left	270
269	Right	291
1	Through	1
Target Zone		
157	First Third	131
264	Middle Third	305
132	Final Third	129
Length		
483	Short	517
70	Long	51
Height		
487	Ground	514
66	Areal	48
18	Crosses	12

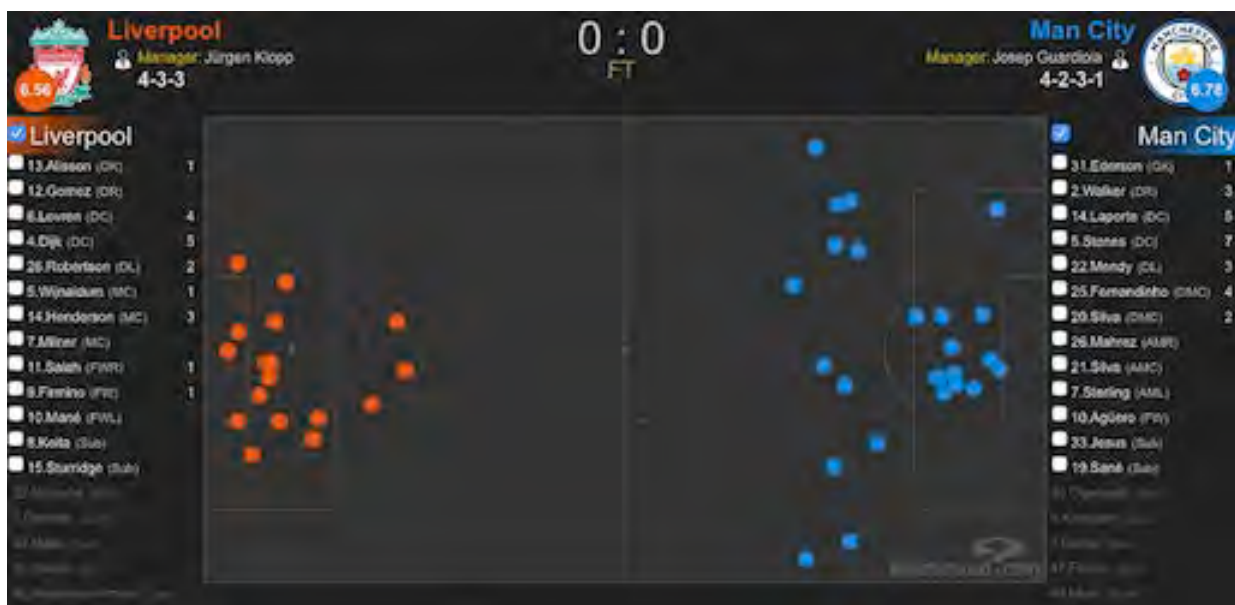
It's possible to notice, considering the chalkboard of the passes distribution, how the match was played inside the middle third and again how 18/19 version of Liverpool is a more possession team than ever, even building up from the goalkeeper, exploiting the Brazilian technique of the new goalkeeper Alisson Becker. The attacks were distributed along the flanks to overcome the pressure phase of Manchester City, thanks to quick combination patterns of play or fullbacks dribbles.



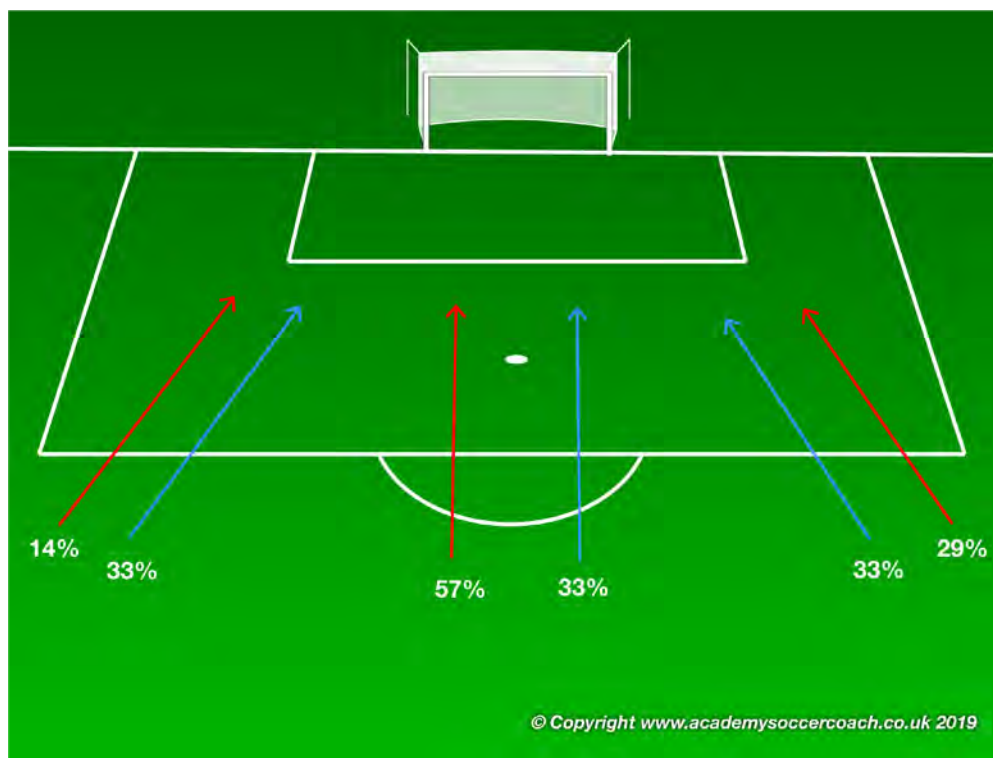
Finishing Zones: Liverpool tried to finish inside the 18y box, but as the forwards tended to drop back, it wasn't possible to finish the near the goal, inside the 6y box. Manchester City finishing options were created inside and outside the box.



Clearances map confirms that Liverpool had to save the goal space or the 18y box more than Manchester City. Citizens defense was placed further back than usual to save the final third and to avoid passes in behind the back four line; this is the reason why a relevant number of clearances can be notice out of the box.



Shot Directions: Liverpool looked for through balls in behind the center backs in the final third. Manchester City distributed the finishing actions through the whole final third, exploiting the inverted wingers (Mahrez and Sterling).



1st leg general key factors

In Liverpool line up, Dejan Lovren was included for the first time in this Premier League season, Joe Gomez played in his original right fullback role and Jordan Henderson was tasked with a balance role as Fernandinho usually does for Manchester City. The rest of the starting 11 was the usual formation of Jürgen Klopp's team 2018/2019 season.



The basic familiar 1-4-3-3 was shaped on the field; Milner had a key role, as he supported the pressure phase of the advanced trio and then he covered the sides of the midfield line if Manchester City was able to play out from the first third. The formation wasn't switched during the match despite the substitutions; high (during the first 25' of the first half) and low pressure phases (especially in the second half) were alternated.



Guardiola decided to play with Aymeric Laporte and John Stones on the defense line even if they hadn't often played together prior to this game and Benjamin Mendy was included as left fullback. Bernardo Silva was tasked with deeper playmaker role, supporting Fernandinho; Riyad Mahrez and Raheem Sterling played as inverted wingers of the advanced trio.



Although Guardiola placed a 1-4-3-3 structure, a 1-4-4-1-1 (4-4-2) system was then shaped on the pitch, with David Silva playing behind Sergio Aguero, or sometimes vice versa, when City was without the ball. Bernardo Silva and Fernandinho were coupled in the middle third and Mahrez and Sterling were asked to drop back covering the flanks.



Liverpool pressure phase

Liverpool possession and attacking phases depended on the pressure actions, as always for Jürgen Klopp teams. As Manchester built up from the goalkeeper, creating a 3-2 shape (goalkeeper, 1 fullback, 1 center back on the same line, the second center back and Fernandinho just out of the penalty area) Liverpool pressed very high with the front three (Sadio Manè, Roberto Firmino and Mo Salah), ready to counter an outside pass or the center opponents.



As instance, Ederson passed the ball toward Americ Laporte, in this situation; Salah was ready to press him, Firmino and Manè were turned toward the direction of play and they were ready to counter Fernandinho and Stones, if they would have received the ball.



This is another example, of the 3-2 building up shape of Manchester City, where the center backs were placed closer to Ederson and the midfielders (Fernandinho and Bernardo Silva) were farther from the penalty area than in the prior situation. The front 3 were closing the forward passing lanes. Mendy may have received on the left, but Wijnaldum could press him easily.



James Milner supported his team's high press, if Bernardo Silva dropped deep to create a double pivot midfield and a three players "rondo" situation (together with Stone and Fernandinho), reducing his chances to turn and play out of the pressure zone.



Bernardo Silva was forced to play backward by Milner (or he could have passed to right fullback Walker); all the receivers could be pressed by the three forwards and Bernardo Silva could have been double marked easily by Milner and Firmino.



This press actions blocked passes between the center backs and they made difficult to play forward to the midfielders, who were always pressed by two of the three Liverpool's midfielders (Keita replaced Milner during the first half); Kyle Walker was forced to drop deep to be an additional passing option.

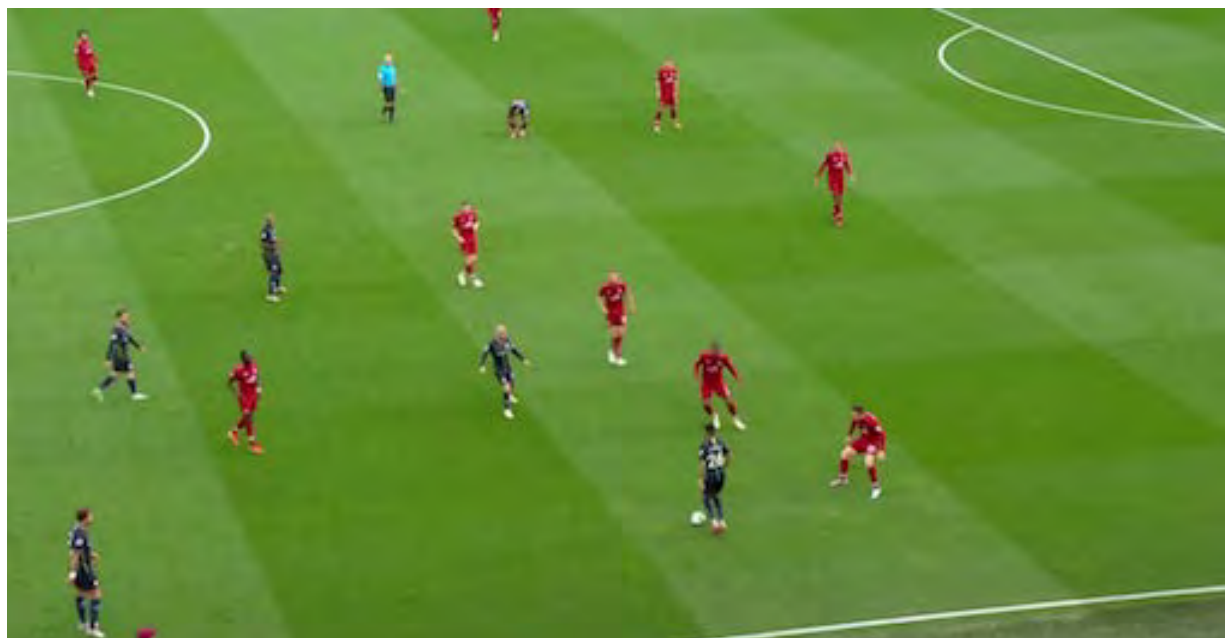


City played much more defensively than usual and we will see how this new tactical attitude caused issues for Liverpool's possession phase.

Liverpool's pressure phase was intense inside the middle third too, creating numerical advantage on the ball (6 v 5 in this picture) and strong side all around it (9 players were placed inside the quarter of the field, where the ball was being played).



Here again 3 v 2 on the ball (Henderson, Wijnaldum and Robertson countering Mahrez and David Silva) and a 5 v 2 duel along the strong side; the only solution for Mahrez seemed to be a backward pass to Walker, Bernardo Silva or Fernandinho, who could have been pressed easily.



In this situation it's very clear how Liverpool tried to close down the sides for the opponents in possession, preventing them from exploiting their open play skills and from playing toward the center from flank, as Manchester City played with inverted wingers.

Sterling was forced to play backward into by a 2 v 1 duel while receiving, preventing him from passing forward to Aguero. Again, a very strong side (6 v 3) can be noticed.



The high pressure of the three forwards and in the middle third created chances for quick transitions to attack inside Man City half field. In this example, Salah and Manè were facing the opposition goalkeeper and center backs, being able to counter them, Firmino could close the passing lanes toward Fernandinho and Bernardo Silva (or to counter them also) and Milner were ready to press Walker on the left side. Only a long ball could have solved the building up issues of this situation for Manchester City.



The strong pressure coupled with the natural trend of Manchester City to overload the flanks (the left one moreover) created transitions to attack opportunities for Liverpool.



The pressure that Firmino added in dropping into midfield also helped the Reds to regain the ball quickly also, as Bernardo Silva and David Silva struggled in midfield against at least four pressing players, as we already talked about.



The risks for Liverpool defense came from the wrong timing of pressure that allowed the Silvas to play forward and in behind the defense line for Sterling and Aguero and creating chances, mostly during the second half.



Liverpool targeted Benjamin Mendy as a source of possession by countering him...



as Man City left fullback frequently lost the ball...



...while passing to Fernandinho and David Silva.



Mendy high positioning as pushing left side fullback and his trend to lose the ball when under pressure...



...could be exploited by the speed and directness of Salah on the right.



This situation is another example: Mendy lost the ball trying to pass toward Silva and Salah was ready to receive an in behind pass overcoming Laporte, who often ran out to cover the teammate.



The performance of Aymeric Laporte, who often came out to play 1 v 1 with Salah, prevent the Reds from creating more threats on the counter break attacks.



In this example Laporte ran out to double the mark and covering the center space, avoiding him to dribble toward the center on his left foot to finish.



Liverpool possession and attacking phase

Jürgen Klopp asked his forwards to play deep and very close along the center channels when in possession to create space for the fullbacks; Manè and Firmino and Salah were usually placed along the half spaces and between the center backs.



The forwards occupied the box to allow the fullbacks to send cross passes or to combine along the flanks; Robertson had the possession in this situation and he played directly inside the box, but he could have combine with Milner along the left side. The compact and close lines of Manchester City made difficult to send cross passes from the sides' depth.



Klopp's players also favored building from the goalkeeper, and they continued with this in the second half. A classic triangle shape was created with Allison and the center backs on the corners of the box, the fullbacks provided width on the flanks and Henderson, more than the other midfielders dropped back to receive.



The goal of Manchester City pressure phase was to force the possession out, closing the fullbacks down the side and backward, closing the center passing lanes.



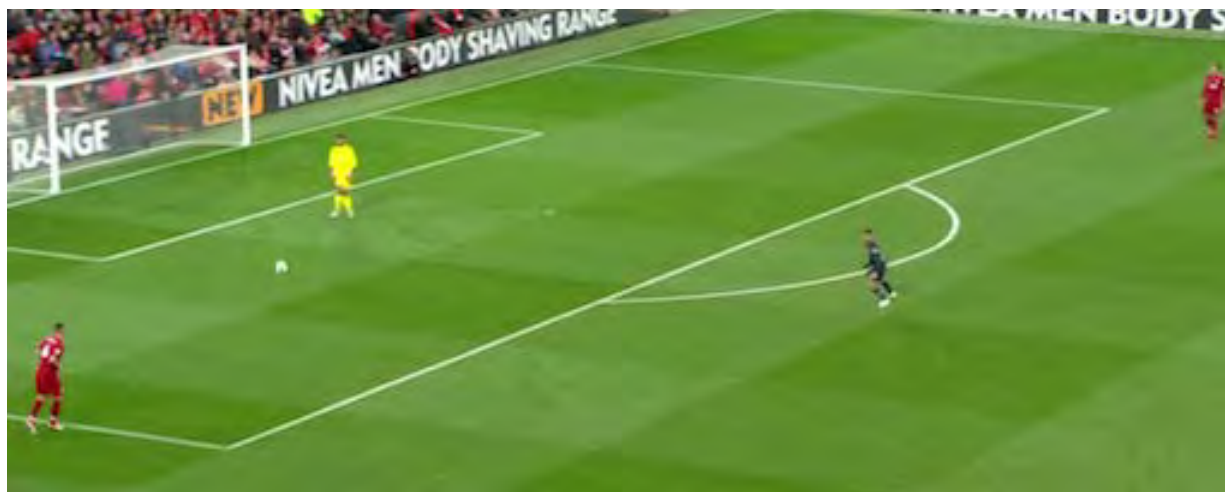
Sergio Aguero and David Silva formed a front two structure in City's out of possession phase, to force the opposition possession sideward; Van Dijke was obliged to play toward the left side line, in this situation.



Once the building up phase rhythm was slowed down, Liverpool had to face duels with equal number of players inside their half field (a 6 v 6 duel was shaped in this situation); each Liverpool player could have been pressed through 1 v 1 duels.



Here again, Liverpool started to build up through the goalkeeper and the center backs, in the second half...



...but Man City's immediate pressure forced the direction of play sideways and then counter the possession player with 1 v 1 duels.



Despite the well timed pressure on the receivers...



...Manchester City struggled to effectively pressurize their opponents when one of the front three was able to drop back and to combine with midfielders; Manè dropped back, equalizing the number of players in this 3 v 3 duel, Walkers was forced out of position and Bernardo Silva was out of time to press Keità while receiving. Robertson had forward space to exploit on the left and behind the pressure zone.



Salah and Manè, when he didn't drop back, were then forced to receive ground or aerial long balls behind City defense line and but they were often marked or forced sideways...



...when the opposition lines could cover the depth.



Long balls in behind, after Liverpool recovery of possession, were the most dangerous situations for City's defense line, when Salah could face the opposition goal. The 4-4-2 defense lines of Man City were compact in this situation, but Firmino was placed on the right half space and Salah could attack Mendy at the back and toward the goal.



This is a quick transition to attack situation in the first half, Walker was out of position and Salah was placed between the left fullback and the left center back facing the goal and creating danger because of his speed skills. This was what Man City tried to avoid through compact defense lines and pressure on Liverpool building up; only transition phase was a real risk Liverpool was able to create.



This is another example in the second half; the pressure on the left was not well timed and Roberston had the chance to play a long ball behind the defense line...



...and Salah could receive facing the opposition goal; Laporte had to cover him by a 1 v 1 duel; the other two defenders were clearly on late.



As Gomez and Andy Robertson looked to move outside of the midfield block and pushed forward, Wijnaldum, Milner and Keita (Milner's first-half replacement) and even Henderson moved into a false fullbacks role, covering the space; Milner on the left side of the defense line here...



...and Henderson on the right side, in this picture.



The offensive reason behind these movements was to help to progress the ball forward, pairing and combining with the fullbacks.

Keita and Robertson on the left side...



...Wijnaldum and Gomez along the right side.



Pairing the players on the flanks was a tactical solution to an issue we are going to analyze in the next pages, as to progress the ball forward was very hard for Liverpool, but through transitions to attack, Klopp tried to move the ball forward through outer combination on the right and on the left.



The defense structure of Man City in these pictures anticipate the issue Liverpool had to face in these situations too; when the advanced fullbacks received the passes, they often didn't enough time to control and play effective passes, because of the compactness of the opposition structure.



Gomez's well-timed forward runs from right back became a common solution to try to solve this problem...



...but he was often isolated on the flank, like in these two examples, where Fernandinho first and Sanè then prevented him from passing toward the middle, or the box.



Direct passing from Jordan Henderson and Wijnaldum to Gomez out wide enabled Salah to move inside earlier, where he found more space to receive and combine with the dropping Firmino, when the right fullback could receive freely and raise his head up.



But here again, despite quick passing combination with Liverpool's three players near the ball...



...the ball couldn't be moved forward because of the compactness of Man City back and midfield lines



Liverpool tactical issues

It was progressing the ball into the next line that Liverpool found difficult.



All the forward passing solution were often closed; Salah was in possession here, but any suitable forward passing chances could be exploited and the center backs of the opposition had to no attackers to mark on. To play forward this way was very difficult then.



And the recovery of the ball, without initial pressure in the first third was quite easy for Manchester City.



As we already analyzed, Liverpool looked dangerous only when they had regained possession high through pressing, like in this example, when Salah could face the goal and his usual direct opponent (Laporte) could be overcome.



Again, the compactness of Man City defense often allowed the center backs to counter him before finishing, doubling the mark.



Mane and Firmino regularly dropped towards the ball from a high starting position, receiving between the lines after a switch of play, trying to force the defense line out of position. But this attacking trap didn't work well, as they were pressurized by the midfielder while retreating and not by the defenders while running up; they covered the depth against Salah, in this example.



Thus a tactical issue was born when Firmino and Manè dropped too much back, during possession phases inside the final third, leaving Man City defenders without pressure. In the following picture, Firmino is placed on the midfield line and Manè was marked by Bernardo Silva. Laporte and Stones were without pressure and the opposition box could not be attacked properly. Salah could be double marked.



When Liverpool tried to play directly toward the advanced fullbacks, like in this situation, where Walker had to run out of position to cover Robertson and a space between the opposition right fullback and the center back was created,



Man City did leave gaps to play through when shifting across,



but again the compactness between the sectors and was solid, affording Liverpool minimal time and space on the ball to progress further.



Even when it was possible to play near the opposition goal, the pressure made hard to play passes to create clear scoring chances.



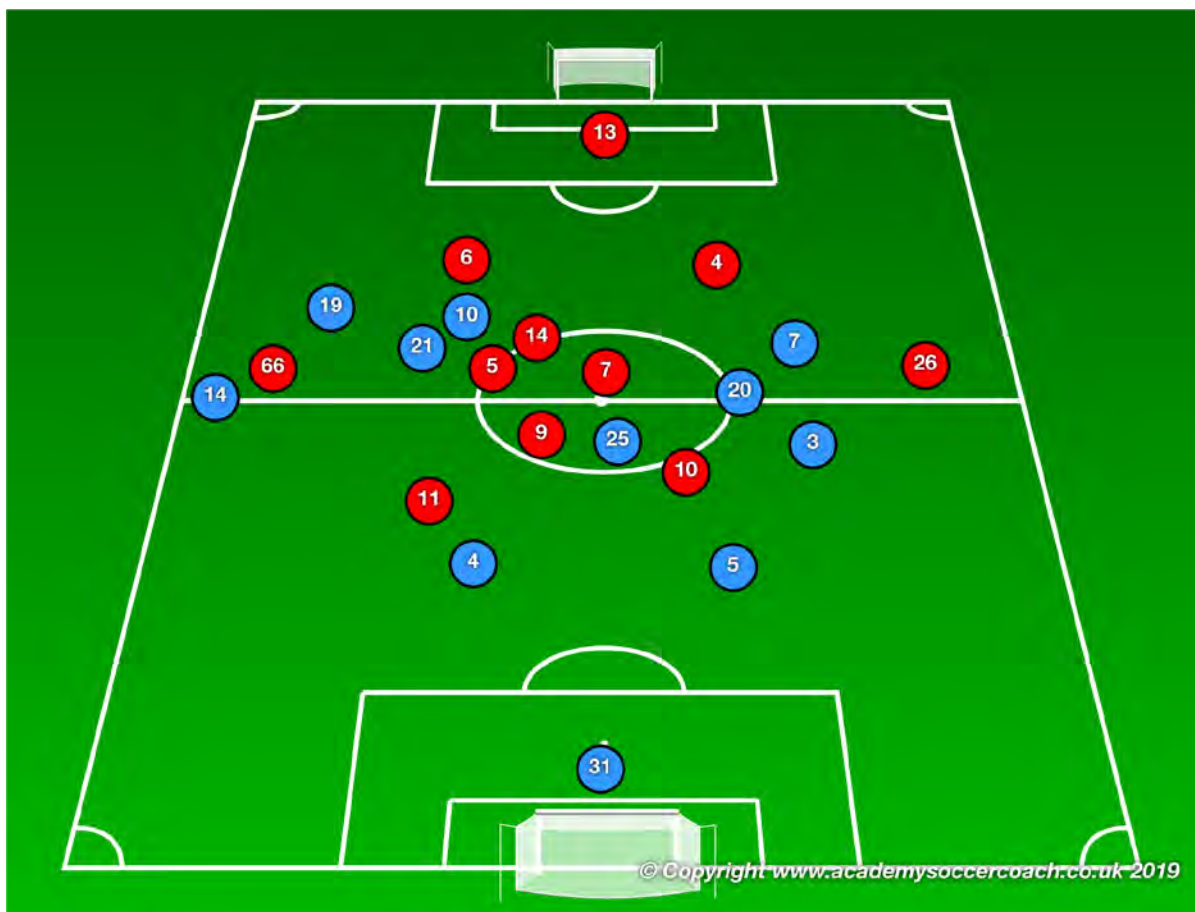
2nd leg possession and attacking data

The second Premier League match between Liverpool and Manchester City was not rich of tactical factors as the first one, but being an open play game, beside the final result, it became one of the most exciting matches of the last seasons; speed of play, players' energy and continuous transitions phases made these 90 minutes full of 1 v 1 duels and of pathos and emotions.

Liverpool and Manchester City players' positions.

Liverpool's 1-4-3-3 was positioned with blocked center backs (Van Dijke - 4 and Lovren - 6), the fullbacks constantly pushing forward (Robertson - 26 and Trent Alexander Arnolds - 66), three close and flat midfielders (Henderson - 14, Wijnaldum - 5 and Milner - 7) and three close forwards (Manè - 10, Salah - 11 and Firimino - 9), overloading the center to leave space on the flanks for the fullbacks.

Manchester City 1-4-3-3-1 was very liquid as usual for Guardiola's teams. The center backs were blocked but placed high on the field (4 - Stones and 5 - Kompany), Danilo (3) completed the back three when in possession and Laporte (14) on the left side who played as pushing fullback and helping to overload the left side. Fernandinho (25) played as balance player; Bernardo Silva (20) and David Silva (21) were free to play when in possession. Sanè (19) and Sterling (7) had to provide width on the left and on the right sides, with Aguero as only center forward (10).

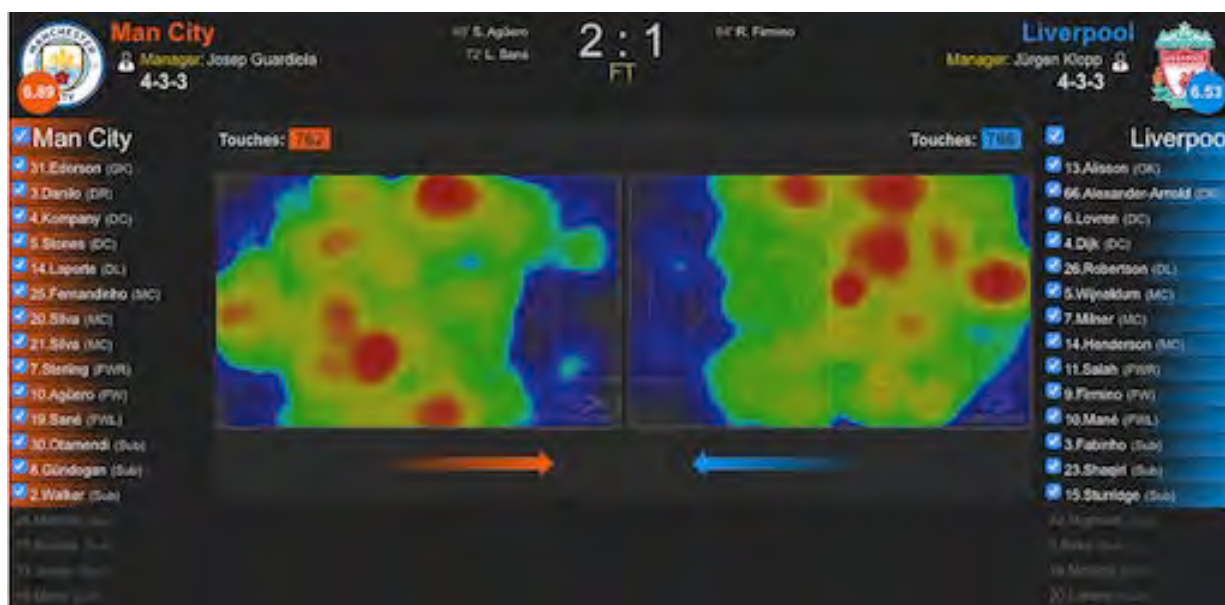


Actions zones:

The constant pressure created many changes in possession, frustrating both team's creative ability due to several mistakes on the ball, or just losing the ball under pressure. Most of the game developed close to the middle of the field without clear goal scoring chances.



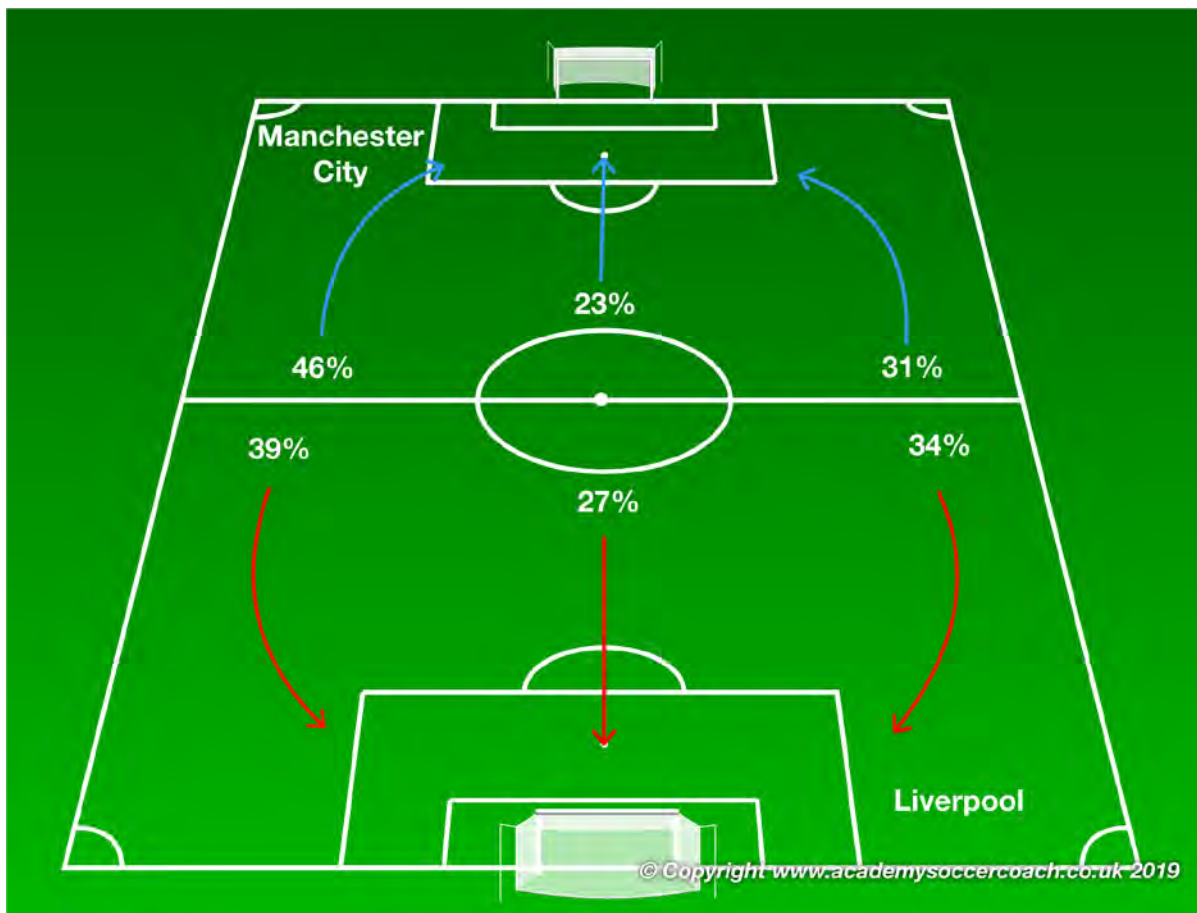
The hit map shows as Liverpool tended to play along the right side while building up and how then tried to exploit the whole width of the attacking third, switching sides to move the opposition defense. Manchester City overloaded the flanks before trying to finish from the left and right sided of 18y box.



Match Statistics: looking at the general statistics, again general balance is very clear. By the way, the number of passes and moreover the key passes (that were totally absent in the first leg), and the quantity of lost balls show as the second leg was a freer from tactics, with open play and both the teams trying to win. Aerial duels were again a key factor, as Liverpool used them because of the opposition pressure and as tactical attacking choice to switch the sides of play.

Team Match Statistics		
Liverpool		Man City
50%	Possession	50%
578	Total Passes	583
461	Accurate Passes	468
4	Key Passes	6
78%	Pass Success	81%
22	Lost Balls	23
11	Dribbles won	8
32% (9)	Areal Duel Success	68% (19)
18	Tackles	14
18	Clearances	25
7	Shots	9
5	On target	4

Attacking Sides: as we already saw before in the heat map, Liverpool build up on the right side, but the attacking moves were substantially distributed among the flanks (with a preference for the right side) and the center space of the final third. Manchester City was more comfortable in finishing along the left flank due to the overload of that field zone, exploiting the skills of Sanè and Silva in finding spaces through quick combination play.



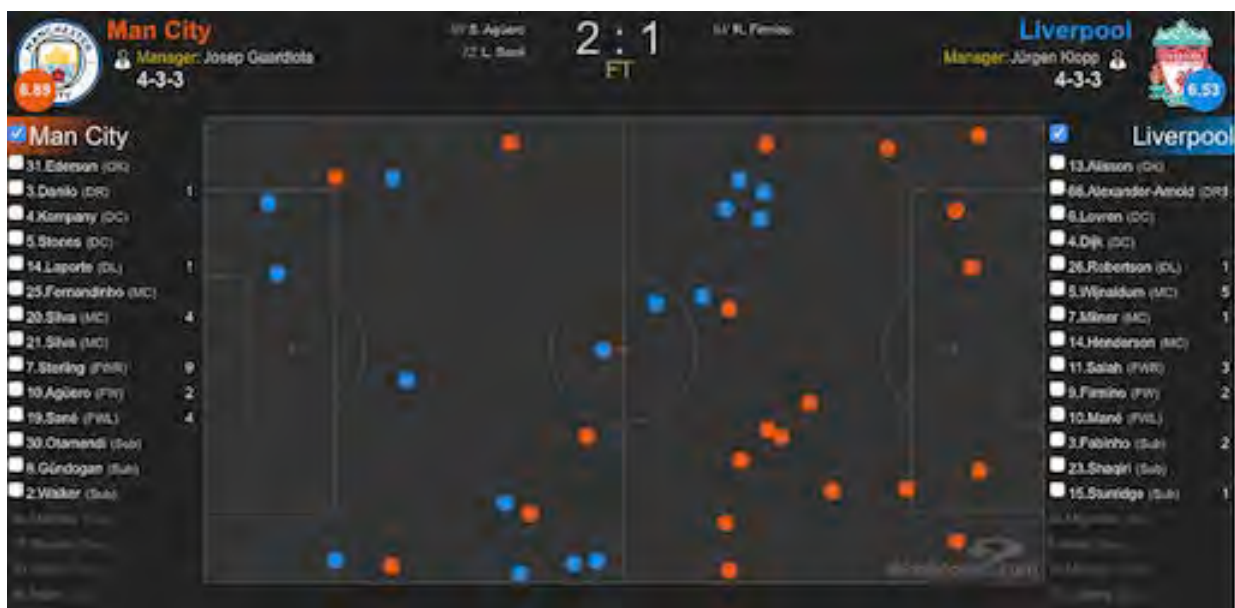
The increased number of forward passes, if it's compared with the first leg, confirms that the second match was played through more open spaces, created by the high rhythm of possession and the continuous transitions to attack and to defend.

Passes Types		
Liverpool		Man City
Direction		
392	Forward	367
233	Backward	247
324	Left	320
302	Right	292
3	Through	2
Target Zone		
183	First Third	148
308	Middle Third	328
139	Final Third	139
Length		
560	Short	550
70	Long	65
Height		
538	Ground	553
92	Areal	62
13	Crosses	11

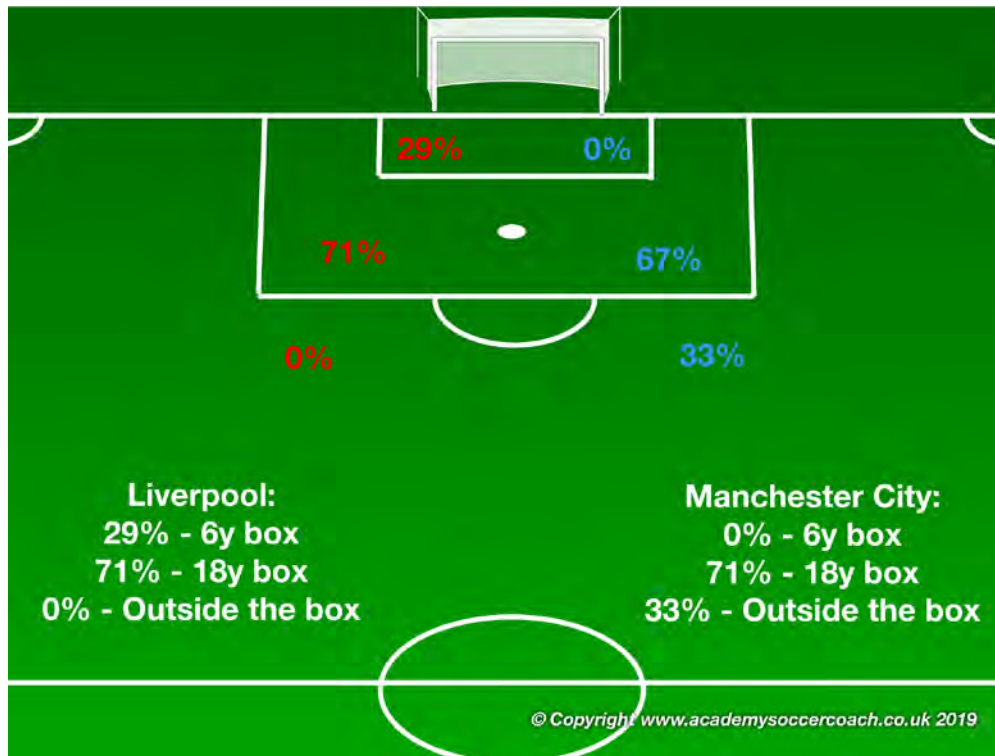
Looking at the chalkboard of the passes distribution, it's possible to notice how the match was played on the flanks (right one more than the left) to build up and overloading the center in the final third by Liverpool, and building up throughout the center of the middle third and overloading the left flank to finish by Manchester City.



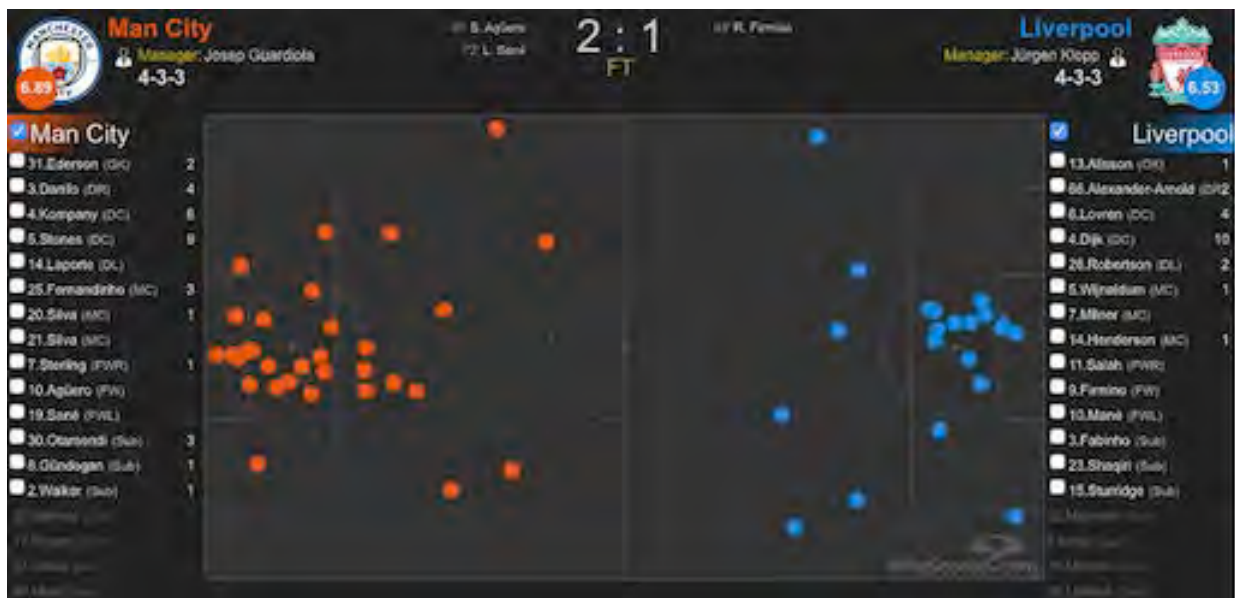
The heat map of dribbles actions confirms as Liverpool built up on the right side and tried to finish from the left one, overloading the center of the opposition defense block. Manchester City dribbled along both the flanks, on the right one more than along the left one (Sterling was free to dribble up rather than to combine with the teammates), as the left one was used to create numerical advantage situations to finish.



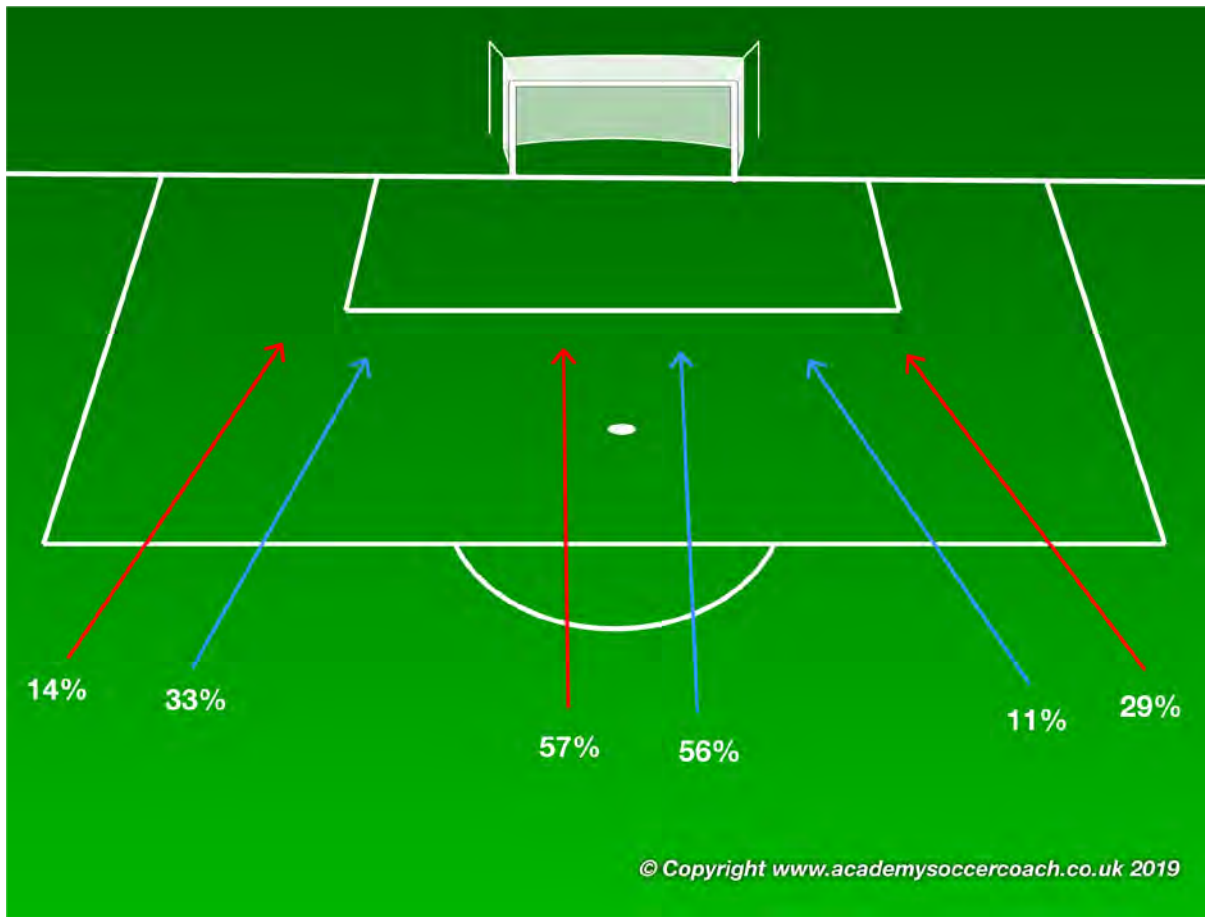
Finishing Zones: Liverpool tried to finish nearer the opposition goal than in the first leg through diagonal passes toward the box or through key passes in behind, when the opposition pressure could be avoided. The overload of the center in the final third is again confirmed. Manchester City finishing options were created inside the 18y box and outside the box to exploit the advanced midfielders and wingers support.



The clearances heat map shows how Liverpool tried to finish inside the box and near the opposition more than in the first leg. Manchester City tended to finish inside the box, but they tried also from outside the box, not using their well-known zone 14 to shot.

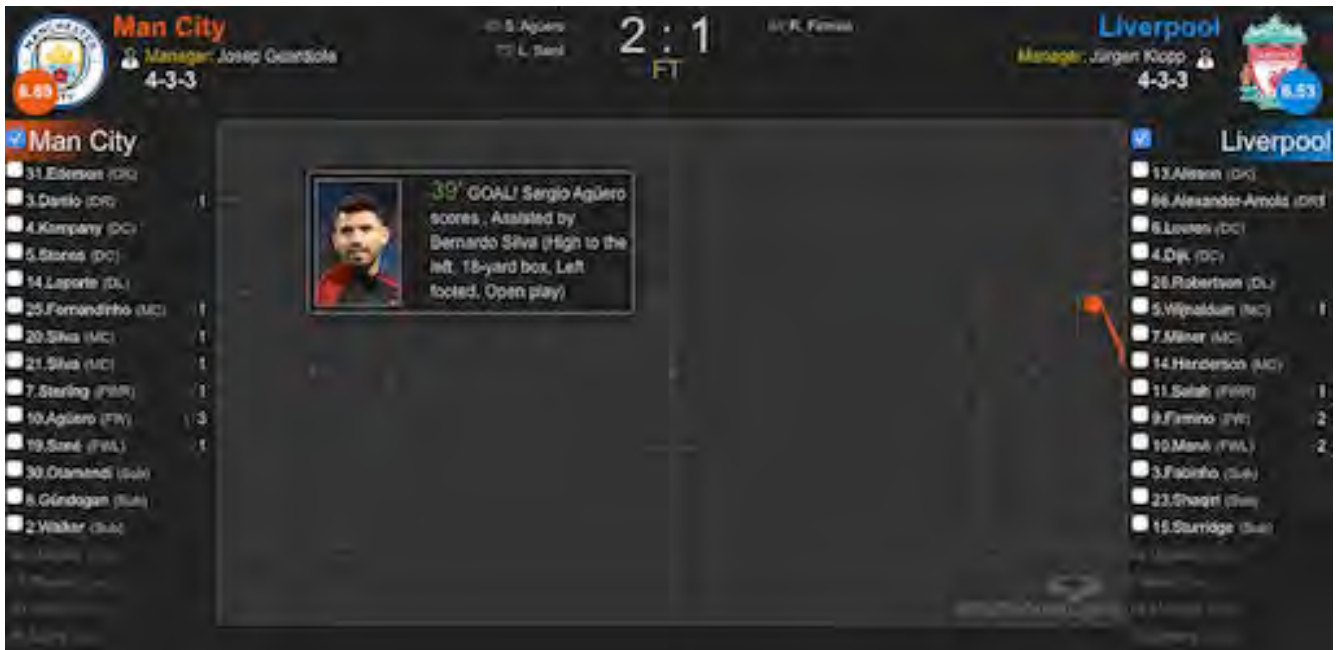


Shots Direction: Liverpool tended to finish along the center-right sides of the final third as the left fullback is skilled to play cross passes rather than to finish. The poor right side finishing of Manchester City confirms the intention to play and to attack through the left side.



Goal succession:

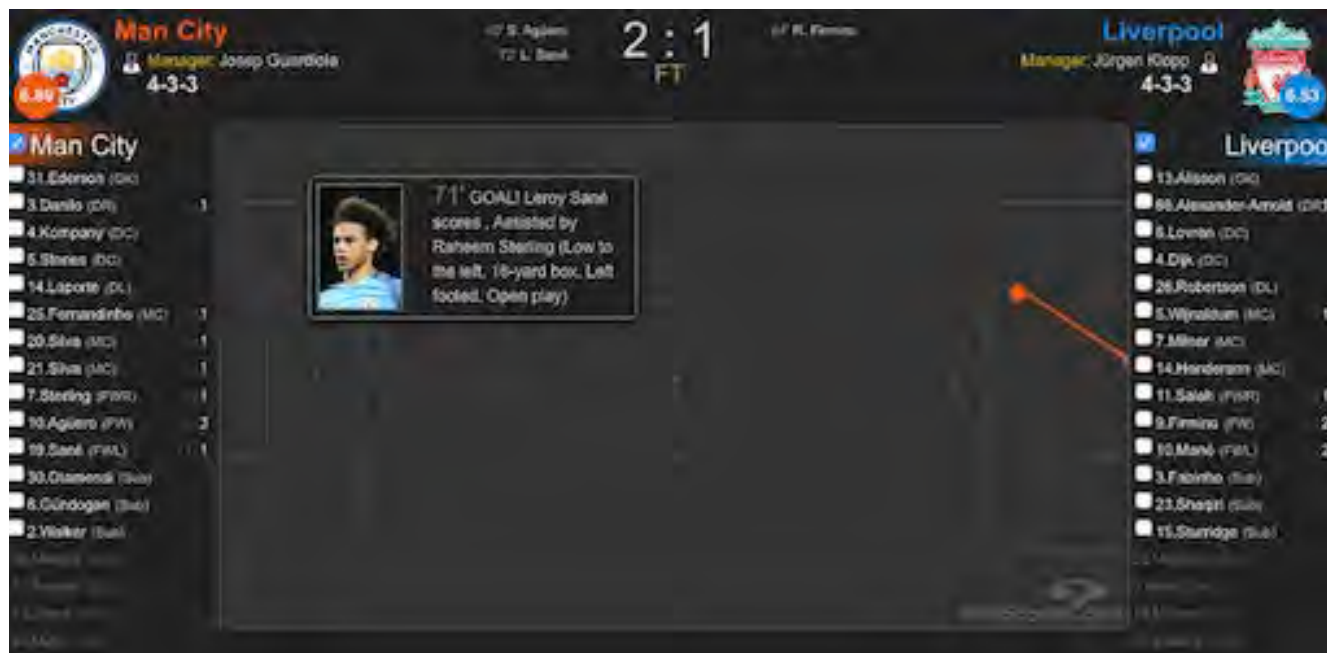
Manchester City - Liverpool: 1 - 0 (Aguero)



Manchester City - Liverpool: 1 - 1 (Firmino)



Manchester City - Liverpool: 2 - 1 (Sanè)



2nd leg general key factors

As usual, the Klopp 1-4-3-3 formation remained unchanged in possession and defensive phases. Due to the high and energetic pressure of Manchester City, they were unable to display the usual attacking rhythm, especially in the first half, having to sit deep and defend.



Liverpool defended Manchester City's back four plus Fernandinho with six players and a flat three in midfield, forcing Wijnaldum and Milner to cover the outer spaces overloads of Manchester City against Bernardo Silva and David Silva; this was the main tactics of Guardiola's team when in possession. Henderson in the middle of the midfield tried to counter the opponent holding midfielder Fernandinho.



Klopp switched the formation into a 1-4-2-3-1 during the second half, when Fabinho (3) substituted Milner in the 57th minute and before the last two substitutions (Shaqiri - 23 and Sturridge - 15). Fabinho and Henderson played as double pivots with Wijnaldrum going to the left side. The change allowed Liverpool to defend the Manchester City back four and Fernandinho with four players and they avoided Man City attackers from getting deeper and between the lines.



Pep Guardiola lined up as a 1-4-3-3, which is the usual structure of Manchester City. Fernandinho in the middle of midfield and David and Bernardo Silva were free to play around the pitch and to occupy the half spaces between the centre backs and fullbacks of the opposing team. Aymeric Laporte played as left fullback.



City was lined up as a 1-4-1-4-1 defense in the middle third and a 3-4-3 inside the first third, with Danilo pushing up and Laporte dropping in with Stones and Kompany. This compact shape allowed Guardiola's team to deal with Salah, Mane, and Firmino.



Laporte has the possession here, but the ball was just won back running up from the back three.



Liverpool pressure phase

Klopp's team applied medium pressure in this match, in contrast to the first one, when the high pressure was continued during the main part of the first half; Man City had the opportunity to build up from the back easily.



Liverpool's forwards (Manè, Firmino and Salah) only tried to close the passing lanes toward the middle third without countering Ederson or the players in possession through 1 v 1 duels. Milner played 1 v 1 against Bernardo Silva in the first match, until he had to be substituted; in this picture it's clear how his task was to cover the space around him rather than to press the direct opponent.



Liverpool pressed higher but not as strongly as usual, when City moves started from the goalkeeper and very close to their own goal. A 3 v 3 situation on the ball is clear, but the reds seemed not being on time to press the receiver, while controlling the ball, and they could just force the direction of play toward the fullback on the flank (Danilo 3).



Despite the huge amount of moves that were built up from the back in the first leg, the high pressure of Man City (especially during the first part of the game) forced Liverpool to play long balls; this solution was probably thought by Klopp for this match, but many of them were anyway the answer to a very strong pressure inside Liverpool's first third.

In this example, all the short passing lanes in front of Allison were closed and the potential receiver could be easily countered; the only free player was Van Dijk, but the pass was risky because of the pressure of Aguero, who could have intercepted the ball.



2nd leg Liverpool possession phase (troubles and solutions).

Liverpool faced troubles also during the finishing phase, as City defense and midfield lines were very compact inside the first third, to answer to the overload of the center final third of Liverpool and to avoid the opposition forwards from dropping deep; the only movement conceded was to drop back, as Manè was doing in this example.



Many deeper playing attempts were easily covered and the receiver was then double marked, as Salah against Stone and Fernandinho in this picture.



Liverpool caused problems to Manchester City defense by placing Salah and Manè between the center back and the fullback of each side of the back four, when the high pressure could be overcome through the obliged long balls at the back of the opposition defenders.



The opposition depth could be exploited even when the pressure of Guardiola's team was not properly connected among the sectors and players and when the defense line didn't progress up properly.



This sequence is very explicative of this matter: the pressure actions were not properly followed by Man City back four and Salah was able to receive freely after dropping back.



He was under pressure when he was already prepared to turn and dribble up; Bernardo Silva is on a bit late to counter him.



The distance between the midfield sector and the defense line allowed Salah to dribble the ball forward and Manè to attack the depth.



Manè could then receive in behind facing the opposition goal...



...and only the pole prevented Liverpool from leading 1 - 0 in the first half.



This another example of what we are talking about, but after a quick transition to attack that started into Liverpool's first third. Henderson won the ball here and he passed to Firmino; the defenders, leaving space for a transition to attack, did not follow the high pressure of City forwards and midfielders properly.



Firmino could play toward Mane and behind the two first lines of the opposition...



...and he could exploit the space between the back three and the opposition midfielders; City defenders could only cover the depth, allowing Manè create a counter attack situation. Salah was able to attack the defense line at the back of the further defender.



Here again, the pressure lines were overcome and Salah could face the opposition goal while Manè was receiving; all the City players are on late and faraway from the opponents.



The defense line wasn't compact and Firmino could play in behind Sanè on the right and Salah could stretch the line toward the goal.



Even if Man City could rebuild the defense line inside the box, the right fullback Arnolds could play a cross pass easily and a 4 v 4 duel was created inside the box.



Liverpool's three forwards are usually very close, to make the defense narrow to cover the half spaces between the center backs and the fullbacks. The main idea when in possession was to overload the center to leave spaces for the fullbacks to push up and create a line of 5 inside the final third.



The momentary draw goal that was scored by Liverpool was the result of double pivot tactics in the second half. The attacking benefit of Fabinho substitution and formation change was Liverpool's ability to get both the fullbacks up into attacking positions during the build up and possession phases. Fabinho and Henderson are sitting in the double pivot positions, allowing support.



Wijnaldum made run inside toward the center backs and this movement cleared space for Trent Alexander-Arnold to play a long diagonal pass to the opposite fullback Andrew Robertson on the left side of the attacking third.



Robertson received and quickly switches the ball through the double pivot of Fabinho and Henderson back to Alexander-Arnold, moving the whole defensive block of Manchester City.



Sanè defense mistake is evident as he didn't press the opponent while receiving and he didn't try to force the direction of play out, falling into the trap of a fake cross pass and leaving the center of the box and the goal spaces clear for Liverpool's fullback. The same kind of prior diagonal long pass could be really played at this point.



Liverpool immediately executed the prior same movement also, with Wijnaldrum making a deeper run inside the 18y box to create space for the long diagonal ball over the top from Alexander-Arnold to Robertson, overloading the center and creating space again along the left side of the attacking third.



While Robertson was receiving on the left side of the 6y box, a 4 v 4 duel can be noticed; the center overload of Liverpool forwards and Wijnaldrum deep runs stretched the defensive block of the opposition; the back line of Manchester City was divided from the midfield line and the defender were forced toward their own goal being on late and out of position.



Robertson could touch the ball for Firmino at the back of the group of players around the ball, to allow him to score easily, as no one could mark Firmino from the goal side.

