Visual exploratory activity in elite women's soccer: An analysis of the UEFA Women's European Championships 2022

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Recent research has developed understanding of the technical and tactical determinants of success in elite women's soccer, however a lack of research exists on analysing how elite female players visually explore their environment to support skilled soccer performance. This study aimed to describe the visual exploratory activity (VEA) of elite female central midfield players and understand the relationships between VEA, performance with the ball and specific contextual factors. Thirty female central midfield players (*M* age = 26.7 years, *SD* = 3.8) from the eight teams who competed in the knock-out stages of UEFA Women's EURO 2022 were analysed. Television broadcast and UEFA tactical footage were combined to analyse players across the seven knock-out stage matches, totalling 1,038 individual ball possessions. The mean scan frequency in the 10 seconds before receiving the ball was 0.35 (scans/s), which can be compared with elite youth (0.42 scans/s) and professional (0.44 scans/s) male soccer respectively (Aksum et al., 2021; Jordet et al., 2020). Results showed pitch location when receiving the ball as the main predictor of scan frequency, with scan frequency also related to action result ($p < 0.003$). Therefore, pitch location appears an important variable when understanding VEA in elite women's soccer.