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## A Statistical and Technical-Tactical Study of the Dribbles Conducted by Three Midfielders in Three 1<sup>st</sup> League matches, in the 2011-2012 Competitive Year

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### Abstract

Technical preparation implies training increasingly skilled players, with an ever-improving capacity of performing, in order to succeed and cope with the demands of contemporary football. In order to achieve this objective, a continuous increase of quality and efficiency when selecting the players is needed; furthermore, the optimization of the process of preparation and discovery of the most efficient methods in the training process are also necessities to be dealt with. By observing the various technical executions made by the players on the football field, one can obtain practical demonstrations and optimal solutions of how to improve the technical-tactical way of playing of the entire team and can foreground the problematic areas and the less skilled executions of each player and of the entire team.

**Key words:** *dribble, offensive midfielder, ball control, deceptive moves.*

### Rezumat

Pregătirea tehnică presupune formarea de jucători din ce în ce mai bine pregătiți, cu o capacitate de performanță mereu îmbunătățită pentru a face față și a se impune în fotbalul actual. În vederea realizării acestui obiectiv, este necesară o creștere continuă a calității și eficienței selecției și instruirii, și, de asemenea, o optimizare a procesului de pregătire și de descoperire a celor mai eficiente metode și mijloace în procesul de antrenament. Urmărirea diferitelor execuții tehnice ale jucătorilor pe terenul de fotbal poate să ofere modele practice și soluții optime de îmbunătățire a jocului tehnico-tactic al întregii echipe și poate marca zonele deficitare și execuțiile mai puțin reușite ale fiecărui jucător și a întregii echipe.

**Cuvinte cheie:** *dribling, mijlocaș ofensiv, conducerea mingii, mișcări înșelătoare*

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## Introduction

In the entire activity of a football coach, regardless of his qualification or the team that he is training, the most important element is the harmonious blend between practical and theoretical work, as one completes the other and both contribute to raising the level of individual performances as a coach and, implicitly, of the performances of the team and the players [1].

When promoting football as a super competition, technical training is of utmost importance; it has increasingly felt the infiltrations of logic and reason, because every match is approached using different tactical patterns, an aspect which requires adequate technical means and scientific training. The process of forming a technique cannot be based solely on learning certain moves, but must also take into account the conditions that the match implies. In this sense, the internal logic of the match has shown that pressing exercises conducted at a higher tempo, in small spaces and that offer more complicated solutions of playing are to be favoured. Despite all this, technical training does not make the player; this is why the technical training must always be conducted in relation to individual tactics [2].

The demands posed by training and competitions are increasingly more evident through increased physical and psychological participation. All these elements have implications on the behaviours posed by the players' training pattern, on the methodology of teaching the technique, through the increase of rate, intensity and complexity of training.

Thus, given the current view on football coaching, the technical-tactical training is an integral part of the system of preparing for professional football. In this context, the quantity, but especially the quality of the training process represent decisive factors for ensuring a superior capacity of performing in football, at the level of the demands posed by the

current level of the game and taking into account the perspective of its evolution [3].

Departing from these premises, the necessity of elaborating a statistical and technical-tactical study of the dribbles conducted by three 1<sup>st</sup> League offensive midfielders presents itself. The achievement of this objective is conditioned by the study of the teams from the 1<sup>st</sup> League, first and foremost, in order to find the midfielders that fit into the given data.

A special contribution to solving these problems has been brought by scientific research, both the fundamental type, which studies the mass base of professional football in all its complexity, conceptually, essentially, as well as in the applied type, which approaches more limitative, but concrete aspects; these aspects are specific to the practice and methodology of football, as practiced at this level. Moreover, numerous studies of an applied nature have been conducted on a worldwide level, to which numerous experts have made contributions in the form of studies and items of research in recent years.

The choice of this topic is based on the fact that, within football, handling dribbles effectively is a quality that significantly increases the value of a given player. Through this study on a number of important offensive midfielders, one can emphasize this technical element and its manifestations within 1<sup>st</sup> League matches.

On a theoretical level, this study seeks to complement the pallet of scientific research of an applied nature, making some clarifications regarding the technical-tactical capacities of 1<sup>st</sup> League players acting as offensive midfielders. It is considered that they should possess the technical abilities required and apply them in official matches, within diverse playing conditions.

**The objectives** of this study are:

- To identify the three offensive midfielders who are to be studied taking into consideration the dribbles they have conducted;
- To evaluate the technical abilities of handling the ball by each of the studied players;
- To elaborate observation sheets of the technical abilities which are the object of this study;
- To establish the hypothesis and create the adequate conditions for conducting the study.

**The purpose** of this paper is to professionally perfect coaches, in order to train players capable of performance and to perfect their technical-tactical skills. This performance will not be possible in the coming years without a complex process of training, in which the technical factor (the 'tacticization' of the technique) must occupy an important role even at the level of training children and junior players.

The studies and research conducted by specialists in football are permanently looking for new ways and means to improve and increase the technical effectiveness of technical training at the child and junior levels and, implicitly, of the models of learning and perfecting the technique, which have a substantial influence on the quality of the game, as well as on increasing the technical-tactical mastery of the players [4].

#### **Research hypothesis:**

By elaborating a statistical and technical-tactical study on the dribbles conducted by three offensive midfielders, data will be obtained which will determine, with a certain degree of probability, an increase of the rates of incidence of this technical element in the training and competitive process.

#### **Material and methods**

The statistical and technical-tactical study involves the observation of three offensive midfielders

during three matches from the 2011-2012 football league championship. The object of the study is composed by counting the dribbles these players have conducted and establishing the purpose which drives their ball handling in their respective situations imposed by the match.

Thus, we have considered that the players who fit the requirements of this study are the following:

1. L.S. offensive midfielder, FC Vaslui
2. C.M., offensive midfielder, FC Dinamo București
3. O.H., offensive midfielder, Rapid București

The 1<sup>st</sup> League matches during which these players have been studied are the following:

#### **L.S.**

1. F.C. Vaslui - F.C. Dinamo, round 6 match
2. Petrolul Ploiești- F.C. Vaslui, round 19 match
3. F.C. Vaslui – Gaz Metan Mediaș, round 30 match

#### **C.M.**

1. F.C. Vaslui - F.C. Dinamo, round 6 match
2. Pandurii Târgu-Jiu - F.C. Dinamo, round 20 match
3. F.C. Dinamo – Sportul Studentesc, round 21 match

#### **O.H.**

1. Rapid Rucurești - C.S. Mioveni, round 10 match
2. CFR 1907 Cluj – Rapid București, round 25 match
3. F.C. Dinamo – F.C. Steaua București, round 28 match

In order to conduct this study, we have established, as a work method, the compiling of protocol sheets which include the technical elements and procedures linked to ball handling; this is done in order to compose a technical and statistical study of the concrete modality of achieving contact with the ball and, implicitly, losing control over it during the match.

After elaborating the protocol sheets, the individual assessment of each player was conducted. All the data have been recorded for each individual player; then, the analysis and interpretation of this data commenced, taking into account the percentages and the specific procedures used to conduct the dribbles.

To finalize the study, various parameters of the central tendency have been calculated; the data has been recorded in graph form, for a better visualization of the results obtained. Thus, a comparison between the players has also been attempted, even though these players play on different positions, in the sense that two of them mainly play in the central part of the field: C.M. and O.H., while L.S. plays on the left side of the field.

An important observation must be made: the dribble in itself can be conducted in various ways, which involve ball handling, protecting it from opponents and, evidently, the concrete tackle with the opponent.

The observation sheets have been conceived so that the following elements can be highlighted:

- Ball handling
- Ball protection
- Deceiving moves
- Overtaking the opponents

We have followed these technical procedures during the three aforementioned matches, for each of the three players mentioned, divided for each of two halves of the match and, totally, for the entire match. Thus, we present a systematization for a better exemplification of the studied elements.

## Results

### L.S. - F.C. Vaslui

In the first match, F.C. Vaslui - F.C. Dinamo (3-1), from round 6 of the championship, we have recorded the following executions in the case of the studied

player: Handling the ball with interior lacing – 6 executions; Handling the ball with exterior lacing – 18 executions; Handling the ball with lacing – 16 executions; Handling the ball with the sole – 1 execution; Overtakes through dribbles - 6 successful executions; Deceiving moves with the ball – 5 executions; Deceiving moves without the ball – 7 executions. (Table I)

**Table I.** LS's execution record in the first match

L.S.	Technical procedures executed by the subject			
	1 <sup>st</sup> Half	2 <sup>nd</sup> Half	Total	
Ball handling	With the flat side	-	-	-
	With interior lacing	4	2	5
	With lacing	9	6	16
	With exterior lacing	7	11	18
	With the tip of the foot	-	-	-
	With the sole	1	-	1
	Deceiving moves	With the ball	1	-
Without the ball		4	1	5
Overtaking the adversary (dribble)	4	3	7	

In the second match, Petrolul Ploiesti - F.C. Vaslui (2-1), from round 6 of the championship, we have recorded the following executions in the case of the studied subject: Handling the ball with interior lacing – 7 executions; Handling the ball with exterior lacing – 9 executions; Handling the ball with lacing – 15 executions; Overtakes through dribbles - 5 successful executions; Deceiving moves with the ball – 6 executions; Deceiving moves without the ball – 5 executions. (Table II)

In the third match, **F.C. Vaslui - Gaz Metan Medias** (4-0), from round 30 of the championship, we have recorded the following executions for the studied subject: Handling the ball with interior lacing – 7 executions; Handling the ball with exterior lacing – 12 executions; Handling the ball with lacing – 13

executions; Handling the ball with the sole - 2 executions; Overtakes through dribbles - 3 successful executions; Deceiving moves with the ball - 3 executions; Deceiving moves without the ball - 2 executions. (Table III)

**Table II.** L.S.'s execution record in the second match

L.S.	Technical procedures executed by the subject			
	1 <sup>st</sup> Half	2 <sup>nd</sup> Half	Total	
Ball handling	With the flat side	-	-	-
	With interior lacing	3	4	7
	With lacing	6	9	15
	With exterior lacing	3	6	9
	With the tip of the foot	-	-	-
	With the sole	1	-	1
Deceiving moves	With the ball	2	4	6
	Without the ball	1	4	5
Overtaking the adversary (dribble)	1	4	5	

**Table III** L.S.'s execution record in the third match

L.S.	Technical procedures executed by the subject			
	1 <sup>st</sup> Half	2 <sup>nd</sup> Half	Total	
Ball handling	With the flat side	-	-	-
	With interior lacing	2	5	7
	With lacing	6	7	13
	With exterior lacing	4	8	12
	With the tip of the foot	-	-	-
	With the sole	2	-	2
Deceiving moves	With the ball	2	1	3
	Without the ball	-	2	2
Overtaking the adversary (dribble)	-	3	3	

### C.M. - F.C. Dinamo Bucuresti

In the first match, **F.C. Vaslui - F.C. Dinamo Bucuresti** (3-1), from round 6 of the championship, we have recorded the following executions in the case of the studied player: Handling the ball with interior lacing - 8 executions; Handling the ball with exterior lacing

- 11 executions; Handling the ball with lacing - 8 executions; Handling the ball with the sole - 4 executions; Handling the ball with the tip of the foot - 3 executions; Overtakes through dribbles - 3 successful executions; Deceiving moves with the ball - 3 executions; Deceiving moves without the ball - 3 executions.

**Table IV.** C.M.'s execution record in the first match

C.M.	Technical procedures executed by the subject			
	1 <sup>st</sup> Half	2 <sup>nd</sup> Half	Total	
Ball handling	With the flat side	-	-	-
	With interior lacing	3	5	8
	With lacing	4	4	8
	With exterior lacing	4	7	11
	With the tip of the foot	3	1	4
	With the sole	2	2	4
Deceiving moves	With the ball	2	1	3
	Without the ball	1	2	3
Overtaking the adversary (dribble)	1	2	3	

In the second match, **Pandurii Targu Jiu - F.C. Dinamo Bucuresti** (2-2), from round 20 of the championship, we have recorded the following executions for the studied subject: Handling the ball with interior lacing - 7 executions; Handling the ball with exterior lacing - 17 executions; Handling the ball with lacing - 14 executions; Handling the ball with the sole - 5 executions; Handling the ball with the tip of the foot - 5 executions; Overtakes through dribbles - 2 successful executions; Deceiving moves with the ball - 3 executions; Deceiving moves without the ball - 7 executions.

**Table V.** C.M.'s execution record in the second match

C.M.		Technical procedures executed by the subject		
		1 <sup>st</sup> Half	2 <sup>nd</sup> Half	Total
Ball handling	With the flat side	-	-	-
	With interior lacing	5	2	7
	With lacing	7	7	14
	With exterior lacing	9	8	17
	With the tip of the foot	2	3	5
	With the sole	2	3	5
	Deceiving moves			
	With the ball	1	2	3
	Without the ball	5	2	7
Overtaking the adversary (dribble)		-	2	2

In the third match, **F.C. Dinamo București - Sportul Studentesc** (3-1), from round 21 of the championship, we have recorded the following executions for the studied subject: Deceiving moves without the ball - 2 executions; Handling the ball with interior lacing - 5 executions; Handling the ball with exterior lacing - 9 executions; Handling the ball with lacing - 11 executions; Handling the ball with the sole - 1 execution; Handling the ball with the tip of the foot - 5 executions; Overtakes through dribbles - 5 successful executions; Deceiving moves with the ball - 2 executions; Deceiving moves without the ball - 9 executions.

#### O.H. - Rapid București

In the first match, **Rapid București - C.S. Mioveni** (4-0), from round 10 of the championship, we have recorded the following executions for the studied subject: Handling the ball with interior lacing - 5 executions; Handling the ball with exterior lacing - 8 executions; Handling the ball with lacing - 8 executions; Handling the ball with the sole - 3 executions; Overtakes through dribbles - 4 successful executions; Deceiving moves with the ball - 8 executions; Deceiving moves without the ball -

11 executions.

**Table VI.** C.M.'s execution record in the third match

C.M.		Technical procedures executed by the subject		
		1 <sup>st</sup> Half	2 <sup>nd</sup> Half	Total
Ball handling	With the flat side	-	-	-
	With interior lacing	3	2	5
	With lacing	6	5	11
	With exterior lacing	4	5	9
	With the tip of the foot	-	2	2
	With the sole	-	1	1
	Deceiving moves			
	With the ball	2	-	2
	Without the ball	6	3	9
Overtaking the adversary (dribble)		3	2	5

**Table VII.** O.H.'s execution record in the first match

O.H.		Technical procedures executed by the subject		
		1 <sup>st</sup> Half	2 <sup>nd</sup> Half	Total
Ball handling	With the flat side	-	-	-
	With interior lacing	3	2	5
	With lacing	5	3	8
	With exterior lacing	5	3	8
	With the tip of the foot	2	3	5
	With the sole	2	1	3
	Deceiving moves			
	With the ball	6	2	8
	Without the ball	4	7	11
Overtaking the adversary (dribble)		4	1	4

In the second match, **C.F.R. 1907 Cluj - Rapid Bucuresti** (5-0), from round 25 of the championship, we have recorded the following executions for the studied subject: Handling the ball with interior lacing - 12 executions; Handling the ball with exterior lacing - 15 executions; Handling the ball with lacing - 13 executions; Handling the ball with the sole - 3 executions; Handling the ball with the tip of the foot - 3 executions; Overtakes through dribbles - 8

successful executions; Deceiving moves with the ball – 8 executions; Deceiving moves without the ball – 7 executions

**Table VIII.** O.H.'s execution record in the second match

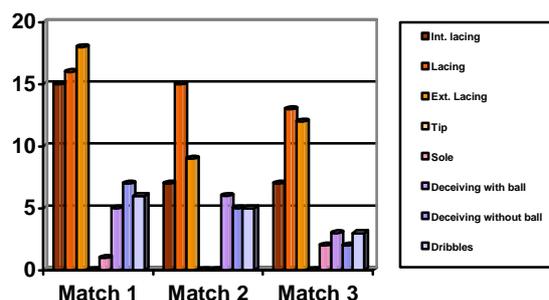
O.H.		Technical procedures executed by the subject		
		1 <sup>st</sup> Half	2 <sup>nd</sup> Half	Total
Ball handling	With the flat side	-	-	-
	With interior lacing	6	6	12
	With lacing	5	8	13
	With exterior lacing	6	9	15
	With the tip of the foot	2	3	5
	With the sole	1	2	3
	Deceiving moves	With the ball	4	4
	Without the ball	4	3	7
Overtaking the adversary (dribble)		4	4	8

**Table IX.** O.H.'s execution record in the third match

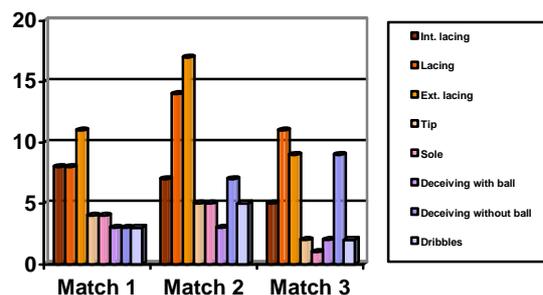
O.H.		Technical procedures executed by the subject		
		1 <sup>st</sup> Half	2 <sup>nd</sup> Half	Total
Ball handling	With the flat side	-	-	-
	With interior lacing	2	2	4
	With lacing	2	5	7
	With exterior lacing	3	5	8
	With the tip of the foot	-	1	1
	With the sole	1	1	2
	Deceiving moves	With the ball	4	2
	Without the ball	2	2	4
Overtaking the adversary (dribble)		-	2	2

In the third match, **Rapid Bucuresti - Steaua Bucuresti** (1-1), from round 25 of the championship, we have recorded the following executions for the studied subject: Handling the ball with interior lacing – 4 executions; Handling the ball with exterior lacing

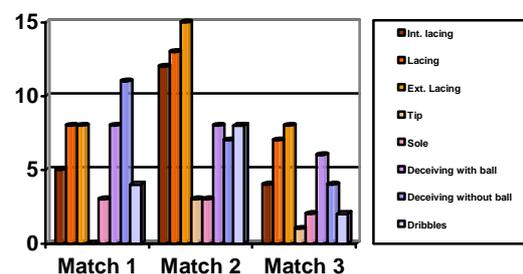
– 8 executions; Handling the ball with lacing – 7 executions; Handling the ball with the sole – 2 executions; Handling the ball with the tip of the foot – 1 execution; Overtakes through dribbles - 2 successful executions; Deceiving moves with the ball – 6 executions; Deceiving moves without the ball – 4 executions



**Figure 1.** Graphical representation of L.S.'s executions



**Figure 2.** Graphical representation of C.M.'s executions



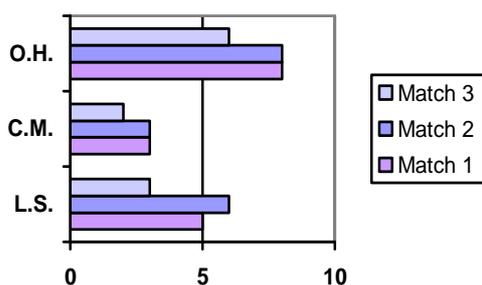
**Figure 3.** Graphical representation of O.H.'s executions

Taking into account the topic of this present paper, out of the executions conducted by the offensive midfielders one must emphasize the handling of the ball that resulted in overtaking the opponent by the

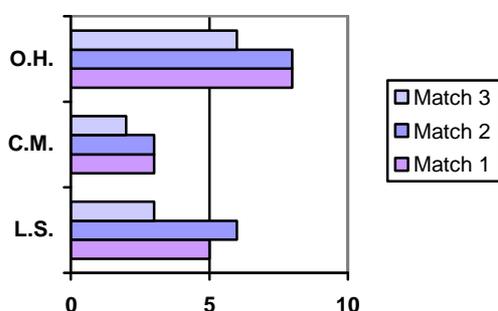
subjects in real time. Thus, the deceiving moves with the ball and dribble itself have these traits. The comparison between the three offensive midfielders is depicted in the following table.

**Table X.** Comparison between the offensive midfielders in 3 matches

Technical procedures executed	L.S.			C.M.			O.H.		
	Match 1	Match 2	Match 3	Match 1	Match 2	Match 3	Match 1	Match 2	Match 3
Deceiving moves with the ball	5	6	3	3	3	2	8	8	6
Overtaking the opponent through dribbles	6	5	3	3	5	2	4	8	2



**Figure 4.** The graphical contrastive representation of deceiving moves with the ball conducted by the three offensive midfielders



**Figure 5.** The graphical representation of the dribbles conducted by the three midfielders

By processing and interpreting the data, the comparative analysis and the graphical representation, one can draw the following conclusions:

The three subjects tracked during the research, were studied initially in terms of management and ball handling; the data obtained in some way expresses the reality of our strongest championship. To conclude if the actions by which the three subjects achieved to overcome the opponent have a proper share in the match, we can say that it is important that once huge action, to overcome the opponent is started, it is important that it be completed successfully. The comparison between the three midfielders, namely the results obtained by them are heavily dependent on their tactical and technical characteristics and the specificity of each team and the game studied in itself.

The comparative reading of the results regarding the techniques for handling the ball has revealed those that support the action to overcome the opponent by dribbling, are:

**L.S.**

In the three matches studied, he has conducted:

- 19 executions of the ball with interior lacing
- 44 executions of the ball with lacing
- 39 executions of the ball with exterior lacing
- 3 executions with the sole
- 14 deceiving moves with the ball
- 14 deceiving moves without the ball
- **14 overtakes of the opponent through dribbles**

**C.M.**

In the three matches studied, he has conducted:

- 20 executions of the ball with interior lacing
- 33 executions of the ball with lacing
- 37 executions of the ball with exterior lacing
- 11 executions with the tip

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- 10 executions with the sole
- 8 deceiving moves with the ball
- 19 deceiving moves without the ball
- **10 overtakes of the opponent through dribbles**

#### O.H.

In the three matches studied, he has conducted:

- 21 executions of the ball with interior lacing
- 28 executions of the ball with lacing
- 31 executions of the ball with exterior lacing
- 4 executions with the tip
- 8 executions with the sole
- 22 deceiving moves with the ball
- 22 deceiving moves without the ball
- **14 overtakes of the opponent through dribbles**

#### Conclusions

It appears that the three midfielders have a rich tactical and technical baggage in that the manifestation of the technical elements, by which they control the ball with the purpose of overcoming the opponent.

Looking strictly at the dribbles conducted, the differences are minor – only 4 executions – and can be ‘blamed’ on the match itself and not on the impossibility of conducting them. We must mention that the midfielders studied have proven that they possess both the specific technical abilities with the ball, but especially the technical capacities, these being those which ensure success within the match itself.

We can state that the research hypothesis has been confirmed by the data we have obtained, these being the ones which ensure a real feedback regarding the training of the players and their preparation for the official competition.

We recommend the study of a variety of high level matches as regards this technical procedure, in a

relation of adversity, in order to act more efficiently in the technical and tactical training.

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