

Kevin Dodelande: AI and football team manager, a winning combination

The Triumph of artificial intelligence is also having an impact on the sports industry. New technologies could even change the role of professional club staff.

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Determine if a player is out of breath and has nothing else to give on the pitch? Predict whether a striker is likely to score a goal? Or better yet, is it possible to determine the trajectory of a penalty kick based on a player's position? In any case, this is one of the many possibilities that [AI](#) is about to offer. And the biggest clubs on the

European scene are keen to capitalise on the huge opportunities presented by the advent of AI.



Kevin Dodelande, expert in data management and analysis

[Kevin Dodelande](#): Liverpool FC on top

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AI can help predict future injury risk by analyzing data collected on the athlete”

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In the summer of 2021, English club Liverpool FC are teaming up with Deepmind, the Alphabet subsidiary known for its AI capabilities. Goal: to create an intelligent virtual assistant to help the team manager, Jürgen Klopp. The Reds are pioneers in this field of AI. Back in 2019, Liverpool used technology from French start-up SkillCorner to analyze the actions of its players and competitors in real

time.

As part of its partnership with Deepmind, Liverpool have shared data from all their games from 2017-2019. AI then processed this data and identified recurring elements that a human team manager would not necessarily recognise. For example, AI will be able to predict how players will react in a given situation. It then creates a "phantom trajectory" that varies depending on each player's tactic and technique. These alternative trajectories overlap with what actually happened.

Kevin Dodelande: Personalized Performance Analysis

AI also offers another feature: analyzing a player's performance, such as power or physical condition. All this information is invaluable to [team managers](#), who can refine their tactics or compose their team based on each player's fitness and injury risk. Injury prevention is essential for footballers, as an injury can be costly in terms of time and money. A star player bought for several millions of euros can become a real man-made disaster for a football club. AI is revolutionizing the way athletes protect themselves by helping to identify risk factors for injury. AI can help predict future injury risk by analyzing data collected on the athlete, such as injury history, as well as biomechanical and physiological information about the body. This data can be used to recommend preventive actions, such as stretching exercises or muscle failure prevention programs.

Kevin Dodelande: the goal is not to replace team managers

But won't all this result in the team manager's decision-making powers decreasing or even disappearing? According to Deepmind researcher Karl Tuyls, no. In an interview with the French daily "Le Figaro" in May 2021, he explained that the ultimate goal was not to replace team managers. "We're not trying to build robots, we're trying to improve human football. The game is very interesting because many actors are involved and there are also concepts of competition and collaboration."

For Deepmind, the choice of Liverpool was obvious. Karl Tuyls previously worked at the city's university, and the British company founder Demis Hassabis is a fervent fan of the team.

Kevin Dodelande: over 12,000 penalties scanned

Deepmind analyzed over 12,000 penalty kicks during the last Champions League and Europa League. Players were then categorized according to their style of play. Conclusions were drawn: strikers aim more at the bottom left corner of the goal than midfielders. Eventually, Deepmind aims to make post-match work easier. The intelligent assistant could analyze the first half of the match and advise on what should be changed during the second half.

Kevin Dodelande: better use of video analysis

Thanks to AI, the many team managers who use video have seen a marked improvement in their sessions, which used to bore the players to tears. The use of AI has produced some very interesting results in video analysis. This is made possible by increasing AI's data processing capabilities, as well as machine learning algorithms that enable AI to learn from data and make decisions. Thanks to AI, video analysis reaches a level of precision and speed rarely achieved by traditional methods.

Kevin Dodelande: high skills

However, implementing such solutions requires specialized skills and an understanding of the technical complexities associated with AI. It is therefore essential for companies interested in AI video analysis to work with experts. In the summer of 2000, the French club Toulouse appointed a data manager for the successful implementation of such projects. Julien Demeaux, a former Airbus engineer, is now a pioneer and benchmark of the French Ligue 1. And this is just the beginning...

Kevin Dodelande, 31 years old, is the founder of iMi (International Market Insights) in France

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