

## Comparative analysis of team and player profiles in four Latin American leagues

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### 1. Introduction

With a view to covering an increasing number of countries in its studies, the CIES Football Observatory research team proposes this second analysis on the demographic profile of players and teams of four Latin American leagues: the Brazilian, Argentinean, Mexican and Chilean top divisions. The study comprises 2,260 footballers having played domestic league minutes during the second semester of the 2020 calendar year for one of the 80 clubs from the competitions surveyed.

In the pandemic context, with a tight match schedule and the inevitable players' absences, teams from all the leagues studied used more players compared to the same period of the previous year: 28.6 footballers per club on average with respect to 25.6 (+11%). By competition, the values vary between 25.8 players fielded per team in the Mexican Liga and up to 35.5 footballers per club in the Brazilian Serie A.

The highest value at club level was recorded for Goiás EC. The Brazilians have managed the exploit of fielding a record number of 48 players in Serie A matches played during the semester studied. This is seven more than the second team having used the most: Coritiba FC. At the other end of the scale is CA Colón, with a total of 20 footballers. In Argentina, however, the league only restarted in November and CA Colón just played nine matches up until the end of the year.

Figure 1: average number of players used by club








|  | 2020 | 2019 |
|--|------|------|
|  ARG Liga Profesional | 26.6 | 24.8 |
|  BRA Serie A          | 35.5 | 31.6 |
|  CHI Primera División | 26.3 | 22.6 |
|  MEX Liga MX          | 25.8 | 23.2 |
| Total  | 28.6 | 25.6 |

Figure 2: players used, second semester 2020

|   |     |                 |    |
|---|-----|-----------------|----|
|  ARG  | max | Racing Club     | 35 |
|   | min | CA Colón        | 20 |
|  BRA | max | Goiás EC        | 48 |
|   | min | São Paulo FC    | 26 |
|  CHI | max | Colo Colo       | 32 |
|   | min | Unión La Calera | 23 |
|  MEX | max | Club Pachuca    | 32 |
|   | min | Cruz Azul       | 22 |

## 2. Age

The pandemic has led to an increase in the employment of young footballers. Indeed, the average age has fallen in three of the four leagues studied and has remained stable within the fourth, the Chilean top division. Like the previous year, the Argentinean clubs have fielded the youngest footballers (27.0 years of age on average, -0.5 less than in 2019), followed by the Brazilians (27.3, -0.7) and the Mexicans (27.7, -0.4).

Five out of the six teams having employed the youngest players are Argentinean, while the sixth is from Chile (CD Huachipato). The lowest value overall was measured for CA Lanús (24.4 years of age), a figure 0.6 years lower than that of the next youngest club, CD Godoy Cruz. At the other end of the scale, the Mexicans from CF Tigres de la UANL are the only ones who were over thirty years of age. Universidad Católica and Universidad de Chile also relied on quite experienced footballers.

No footballer born in the 2000s played such a high proportion of minutes during the semester analysed as the CA Aldosivi midfielder Joaquín Indacochea (92.5%). The Argentinian is ranked above his fellow countryman Rodrigo Villagra from Rosario Central and the Chilean Carlos Palacios from Unión Española. Two players born in 2002 are in the top ten rankings: the Mexican centre back Victor Guzmán (Club Tijuana) and the defensive midfielder David Ayala (Club Estudiantes).

Figure 3: average age on the pitch

|       | 2020 | 2019 |
|-------|------|------|
| ARG   | 27.0 | 27.5 |
| BRA   | 27.3 | 28.0 |
| CHI   | 28.2 | 28.2 |
| MEX   | 27.7 | 28.1 |
| Total | 27.5 | 27.9 |

Figure 4: average age on the pitch, second semester 2020

| Youngest teams |                            |      |
|----------------|----------------------------|------|
| 1              | CA Lanús (ARG)             | 24.4 |
| 2              | CD Godoy Cruz (ARG)        | 25.0 |
| 3              | CD Huachipato (CHI)        | 25.1 |
| 4              | CA Independiente (ARG)     | 25.2 |
| 5              | CA Unión (ARG)             | 25.2 |
| .              | Defensa y Justicia (ARG)   | 25.2 |
| Oldest teams   |                            |      |
| 1              | Tigres UANL (Mex)          | 30.0 |
| 2              | Universidad Católica (CHI) | 29.9 |
| 3              | Universidad de Chile (CHI) | 29.8 |
| 4              | Fortaleza EC (BRA)         | 29.7 |
| 5              | CD Palestino (CHI)         | 29.6 |
| .              | Curicó Unido (CHI)         | 29.6 |

Figure 5: U21s having played the highest % of minutes, second semester 2020

|    |   |      |
|----|---|------|
| 1  | [2000] Joaquín Indacochea (CA Aldosivi)   | 92.5 |
| 2  | [2001] Rodrigo Villagra (Rosario Central) | 90.5 |
| 3  | [2000] Carlos Palacios (Unión Española)   | 89.8 |
| 4  | [2002] Victor Guzmán (Club Tijuana)       | 89.1 |
| 5  | [2000] Federico Navarro (CA Talleres)     | 83.8 |
| 6  | [2001] Franco Ibarra (Argentinos Juniors) | 82.5 |
| 7  | [2000] César Huerta (Mazatlán FC)         | 82.0 |
| 8  | [2000] Vinicius Abner (CA Paranaense)     | 79.5 |
| 9  | [2002] David Ayala (Club Estudiantes)     | 76.2 |
| 10 | [2000] Idekel Domínguez (Club Necaxa)     | 75.9 |

### 3. Expatriates

The pandemic has also provoked changes in the proportion of expatriates present in the squads. Expatriates are players having grown up outside the association of the club employing them. The percentage of this category of footballers has fallen in all the championships studied. The difference between leagues remains marked, with values varying between 46.0% in the Mexican top division (-5.6%), and barely 9.2% for the Brazilian Serie A (-1.1%).

Nine of the ten clubs where expatriates played the highest percentage of minutes are Mexican, with a maximum of 65.4% at Atlas Guadalajara. The highest percentages in the other leagues studied were measured for Universidad de Concepción (46.6%), Gimnasia y Esgrima (26.2%) and CA Mineiro (21.2%). At the other end of the scale, we find four teams that did not field any expatriate footballers: CA Tucumán, Atlético Goianiense, Ceará SC and CD Guadalajara.

Eight expatriates have played the totality of domestic league minutes between July and December 2020. Among them notably are the top scorer of the Mexican Liga, the Frenchman André-Pierre Gignac, and three Paraguayans: Víctor Ayala (Gimnasia y Esgrima), Víctor Velázquez (FC Juárez) and Julio González (Club Necaxa). The youngest player in the top ten is the Spaniard Unai Bilbao, who has been playing in Mexico since 2018.

Figure 6: % of minutes by expatriates

|       | 2020 | 2019 |
|-------|------|------|
| ARG   | 12.2 | 14.8 |
| BRA   | 9.2  | 10.3 |
| CHI   | 29.5 | 31.5 |
| MEX   | 46.0 | 51.6 |
| Total | 23.0 | 25.9 |

Figure 7: % of minutes by expatriates, second semester 2020

Highest % of minutes by expatriates

|    |                              |      |
|----|------------------------------|------|
| 1  | Atlas Guadalajara (MEX)      | 65.4 |
| 2  | Atlético San Luis (MEX)      | 62.1 |
| 3  | Club León (MEX)              | 59.7 |
| 4  | Tigres UANL (MEX)            | 59.4 |
| 5  | CF Monterrey (MEX)           | 59.1 |
| 6  | Club Necaxa (MEX)            | 54.3 |
| 7  | FC Juárez (MEX)              | 51.5 |
| 8  | Club Pachuca (MEX)           | 48.6 |
| 9  | Universidad Concepción (CHI) | 46.6 |
| 10 | CF Puebla (MEX)              | 44.9 |

Teams that did not field expatriates

- CA Tucumán (ARG)
- Atlético Goianiense (BRA)
- Ceará SC (BRA)
- CD Guadalajara (MEX)

Figure 8: expatriates having played the highest % of minutes, second semester 2020

|    |  |       |
|----|--|-------|
| 1  | André-Pierre Gignac (Tigres UANL/MEX)    | 100.0 |
| 2  | Nicolás Sánchez (CF Monterrey/MEX)       | 100.0 |
| 3  | Víctor Ayala (Gimnasia y Esgrima/ARG)    | 100.0 |
| 4  | Víctor Velázquez (FC Juárez/MEX)         | 100.0 |
| 5  | Julio González (Club Necaxa/MEX)         | 100.0 |
| 6  | Unai Bilbao (Club Necaxa/MEX)            | 100.0 |
| 7  | Matías Dituto (Universidad Católica/CHI) | 100.0 |
| 8  | Leonardo Burián (CA Colón/ARG)           | 100.0 |
| 9  | Hugo Nervo (Atlas Guadalajara/MEX)       | 99.9  |
| 10 | Guillermo Reyes (Univ. Concepción/CHI)   | 99.9  |

### 4. Origins

With regard to origins, in all the leagues surveyed, the vast majority of expatriate players come from other South American countries.

#### Argentina

As for the Argentinean top division, the three main expatriate origins are the Uruguayans (26 footballers), the Colombians (19) and the Paraguayans (14). These three origins account for about four-fifths of the total number of expatriates.

#### Brazil

Out of the 79 expatriates having played during the second semester of 2020 in the Brazilian Serie A, 75 were from other Latin American countries. With 22 nationals, the Argentineans were the most numerous, followed by the Colombians (17) and the Uruguayans (10). The nationals from these three countries made up two thirds of expatriate footballers active in the top division of the quintuple world champions.

Figure 9: origins of expatriates in Liga Profesional (ARG)

|   |  |             |    |  |
|---|--|-------------|----|--|
| 1 |  | Uruguay     | 26 |  |
| 2 |  | Colombia    | 19 |  |
| 3 |  | Paraguay    | 14 |  |
| 4 |  | Chile       | 4  |  |
| 5 |  | Peru        | 3  |  |
| 6 |  | Ecuador     | 2  |  |
| . |  | Venezuela   | 2  |  |
| . |  | Brazil      | 1  |  |
| 9 |  | Mexico      | 1  |  |
| . |  | Senegal     | 1  |  |
| . |  | Switzerland | 1  |  |
| . |  | Italy       | 1  |  |

Figure 10: origins of expatriates in Serie A (BRA)

|   |  |             |    |  |
|---|--|-------------|----|--|
| 1 |  | Argentina   | 22 |  |
| 2 |  | Colombia    | 17 |  |
| 3 |  | Uruguay     | 10 |  |
| 4 |  | Ecuador     | 6  |  |
| . |  | Chile       | 6  |  |
| 6 |  | Paraguay    | 5  |  |
| 7 |  | Venezuela   | 4  |  |
| . |  | Peru        | 4  |  |
| 9 |  | Spain       | 1  |  |
| . |  | Bolivia     | 1  |  |
| . |  | Portugal    | 1  |  |
| . |  | Ivory Coast | 1  |  |
| . |  | Japan       | 1  |  |

### Chili

The expatriate presence in Chilean top division clubs is clearly greater than in Brazil and in Argentina. This situation can be explained by the strong presence of Argentinean footballers. Indeed, with 75 nationals, Argentina was the most represented origin during the second semester of 2020 (58.5% of all expatriates), far ahead of Uruguay (18 players) and Venezuela (14).

### Mexico

As in Chile, the Argentineans are the most employed by clubs in the Mexican top division. In comparison to Chile, the origins of expatriates in Mexico are more diverse. Indeed, the 44 Argentineans having played domestic league minutes during the second semester of 2020 accounted for a quarter of the total number of expatriates. Other origins were very numerous, notably the Uruguayans (29 players) and the Colombians (25).

Figure 11: origins of expatriates in Primera División (CHI)

|   |  |           |    |  |
|---|--|-----------|----|--|
| 1 |  | Argentina | 75 |  |
| 2 |  | Uruguay   | 18 |  |
| 3 |  | Venezuela | 14 |  |
| 4 |  | Paraguay  | 7  |  |
| 5 |  | Colombia  | 5  |  |
| 6 |  | Ecuador   | 2  |  |
| . |  | Brazil    | 2  |  |
| . |  | Panama    | 2  |  |
| 9 |  | Bolivia   | 1  |  |
| . |  | Mexico    | 1  |  |
| . |  | Honduras  | 1  |  |

Figure 12: origins of expatriates in Liga MX (MEX)

|    |  |               |    |  |
|----|--|---------------|----|--|
| 1  |  | Argentina     | 44 |  |
| 2  |  | Uruguay       | 29 |  |
| 3  |  | Colombia      | 25 |  |
| 4  |  | Ecuador       | 18 |  |
| .  |  | Chile         | 18 |  |
| 6  |  | Paraguay      | 16 |  |
| 7  |  | Brazil        | 5  |  |
| 8  |  | Spain         | 4  |  |
| 9  |  | Peru          | 3  |  |
| .  |  | USA           | 3  |  |
| 11 |  | Venezuela     | 1  |  |
| .  |  | Bolivia       | 1  |  |
| .  |  | Portugal      | 1  |  |
| .  |  | Côte d'Ivoire | 1  |  |
| .  |  | Costa Rica    | 1  |  |
| .  |  | Netherlands   | 1  |  |
| .  |  | Ghana         | 1  |  |
| .  |  | England       | 1  |  |
| .  |  | France        | 1  |  |

## 5. Club-trained players

Following the COVID-19 pandemic, the percentage of club-trained footballers - those having played at least three seasons between 15 and 21 years of age in their employer club - has grown in all the leagues analysed. The most spectacular increase was recorded in the Argentinean top division, where the percentage of club-trained players was already the highest. In a financially very delicate context, Argentinean teams have relied more than ever on players from their youth academies.

Club-trained footballers played over 50% of domestic league minutes in three Argentinean teams. This proportion has even reached three quarters at CA Banfield. The record values for the three other leagues studied were measured for CD Santiago Wanderers (43.6%) in Chile, Vasco da Gama (37.5%) in Brazil and CD Guadalajara (31.5%) in Mexico. Only three teams did not field any club-trained footballers: Querétaro FC, RB Bragantino and Mazatlán FC.

Two teams among the most prestigious in Latin America are at the top of the rankings for clubs having trained the most players active in the four leagues analysed: Boca Juniors (48 players, seven of whom are still at the club), and the recent unfortunate finalists of the Copa Libertadores, Santos FC (38 footballers). Universidad Católica (37) and Atlas Guadalajara (31) are the greatest training clubs among the Chilean and Mexican teams.

Figure 13: % of minutes by club-trained players

|       | 2020 | 2019 |
|-------|------|------|
| ARG   | 34.1 | 22.5 |
| BRA   | 18.5 | 14.7 |
| CHI   | 18.8 | 17.7 |
| MEX   | 13.5 | 13.3 |
| Total | 22.1 | 17.3 |

Figure 14: % of minutes by club-trained players, second semester 2020

Highest % of minutes by club-trained players

|    |                          |      |
|----|--------------------------|------|
| 1  | CA Banfield (ARG)        | 76.1 |
| 2  | CA Lanús (ARG)           | 65.8 |
| 3  | Rosario Central (ARG)    | 55.8 |
| 4  | Club Estudiantes (ARG)   | 49.4 |
| 5  | Vélez Sarsfield (ARG)    | 45.3 |
| 6  | Newell's Old Boys (ARG)  | 44.8 |
| 7  | CA Independiente (ARG)   | 44.7 |
| 8  | Santiago Wanderers (CHI) | 43.6 |
| 9  | CA Unión (ARG)           | 43.5 |
| 10 | Racing Club (ARG)        | 39.1 |

Teams that did not field club-trained players

- Querétaro FC (MEX)
- RB Bragantino (BRA)
- Mazatlán FC (MEX)

Figure 15: principal training clubs, four Latin American leagues, second semester 2020

|   | Players                    | In the club |
|---|----------------------------|-------------|
| 1 | Boca Juniors (ARG)         | 48          |
| 2 | Santos FC (BRA)            | 38          |
| . | CA Lanús (ARG)             | 38          |
| 4 | Universidad Católica (CHI) | 37          |
| . | River Plate (ARG)          | 37          |
| 6 | Colo Colo (CHI)            | 34          |
| 7 | Newell's Old Boys (ARG)    | 33          |
| 8 | Flamengo (BRA)             | 32          |
| 9 | Vélez Sarsfield (ARG)      | 31          |
| . | Atlas Guadalajara (MEX)    | 31          |

## 6. New signings

As in Europe, in Latin America too, the pandemic has led to a slowdown in the transfer market. The percentage of players recruited in 2020 among those fielded by teams during the second semester has fallen globally: -4.5% in comparison to the previous year. The biggest drop was recorded in Argentina (-9.4%). At the other end of the scale, the percentage of new recruits in Mexican teams has even increased (+1.5%).

The clubs analysed differ strongly when it comes to the stability of their squads. At one extreme, 25 out of 28 players used by the Mexicans of Querétaro FC during the second semester of the calendar year 2020 were recruited after the 1st of January of the year in question (89.3%). At the other, with a single new signing among the 26 players fielded, the Argentineans from River Plate had the most stable squad among the 80 clubs studied.

Thirteen players recruited in 2020 played all the championship minutes during the second semester of the year. The youngest among them were born in 1997: the CA Banfield winger, returning from a loan to Brown de Adrogué, Emanuel Coronel, as well as the goalkeeper Facundo Cambeses, loaned by CA Banfield to CA Huracán. Another goalkeeper, Johnny Herrera, has made a complete success of his change from Universidad de Chile to CD Everton.

Figure 16: % of players recruited during the year

|       | 2020 | 2019 |
|-------|------|------|
| ARG   | 34.4 | 43.8 |
| BRA   | 41.8 | 46.7 |
| CHI   | 43.5 | 47.3 |
| MEX   | 42.5 | 41.0 |
| Total | 40.1 | 44.6 |

Figure 17: % of players recruited during the year, second semester 2020

| Most stable squads  |                              |      |
|---------------------|------------------------------|------|
| 1                   | River Plate (ARG)            | 3.8  |
| 2                   | São Paulo FC (BRA)           | 11.5 |
| 3                   | Newell's Old Boys (ARG)      | 16.0 |
| 4                   | Santos FC (BRA)              | 16.7 |
| 5                   | Racing Club (ARG)            | 17.1 |
| 6                   | SE Palmeiras (BRA)           | 18.2 |
| 7                   | Flamengo (BRA)               | 18.4 |
| 8                   | CF Monterrey (MEX)           | 19.2 |
| 9                   | Universidad Católica (CHI)   | 20.0 |
| 10                  | Tigres UANL (MEX)            | 20.8 |
| Least stable squads |                              |      |
| 1                   | Querétaro FC (MEX)           | 89.3 |
| 2                   | CD La Serena (CHI)           | 75.0 |
| 3                   | Atlético Goianiense (BRA)    | 73.5 |
| 4                   | Coquimbo Unido (CHI)         | 72.4 |
| 5                   | Universidad Concepción (CHI) | 71.4 |
| 6                   | Club Necaxa (MEX)            | 65.4 |
| 7                   | Central Córdoba SdE (ARG)    | 64.0 |
| 8                   | Club Tijuana (MEX)           | 63.0 |
| 9                   | CA Mineiro (BRA)             | 60.6 |
| 10                  | RB Bragantino (BRA)          | 60.0 |

Figure 18: new signings having played all the championship minutes, second semester 2020

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## 7. Conclusion

The second study of the CIES Football Observatory covering four Latin American top divisions shows several effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on the profiles of teams and players. The number of footballers employed has increased, while the average age of players has decreased. The percentage of expatriates went also down, contrary to that of footballers trained by their club of employment.

The most important changes were recorded for the Argentinean top division, with a notable increase of 11.5% in the percentage of club-trained players. The latter has risen from 22.5% to 34.1%. As a comparison, this percentage was 18.8% in Chile (+1.1%), 18.5% in Brazil (+3.8%) and 13.5% in Mexico (+0.2%). The clubs of the latter country are the only ones to have signed a greater proportion of players in 2020 compared to the previous year.

The study also reveals that Boca Juniors is by far the team having trained the greatest number of players present in the four leagues studied: 48, of whom only seven are still at the Buenos Aires club. With 38 players from their youth academy, Santos FC et CA Lanús are the second biggest training clubs, just ahead of the Chileans of Universidad Católica and the Argentineans of River Plate (37 players trained in both cases).