

Do Goalkeepers Impact Team Success in Major League Soccer?

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Abstract

In Major League Soccer, team success hinges on a balance of offensive effectiveness and defensive solidity, with goalkeepers playing a pivotal role. To analyze this, we investigate the impact of goalkeeper performance metrics — save percentage, goals against, shots faced, minutes played, and games played — on team win percentage. The analysis revealed that save percentage was a strong positive predictor of success ($\beta = 0.3932$, $p < .001$), while goals against had a significant negative impact on win percentage ($\beta = -0.9629$, $p < .001$). On the other hand, factors such as shots faced ($\beta = 0.0606$, $p = 0.218$), minutes played ($\beta = 0.0014$, $p = 0.920$), and games played ($\beta = 1.3002$, $p = 0.286$) were not statistically significant in predicting team success. These results emphasize the crucial role of goalkeeper efficiency — particularly shot-stopping and goal prevention — in influencing team performance in the MLS.

Keywords: MLS, goalkeeper performance, save percentage, goals against, team success