SKILLCORNER

STRIKER ARCHETYPES



BENCHMARK REPORT

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INTRODUCTION

In this benchmarking report, we take a closer look at modern striker archetypes. The goal is to understand how different archetypes emerge through their behaviour, and how data and positional profiling can help us separate them.

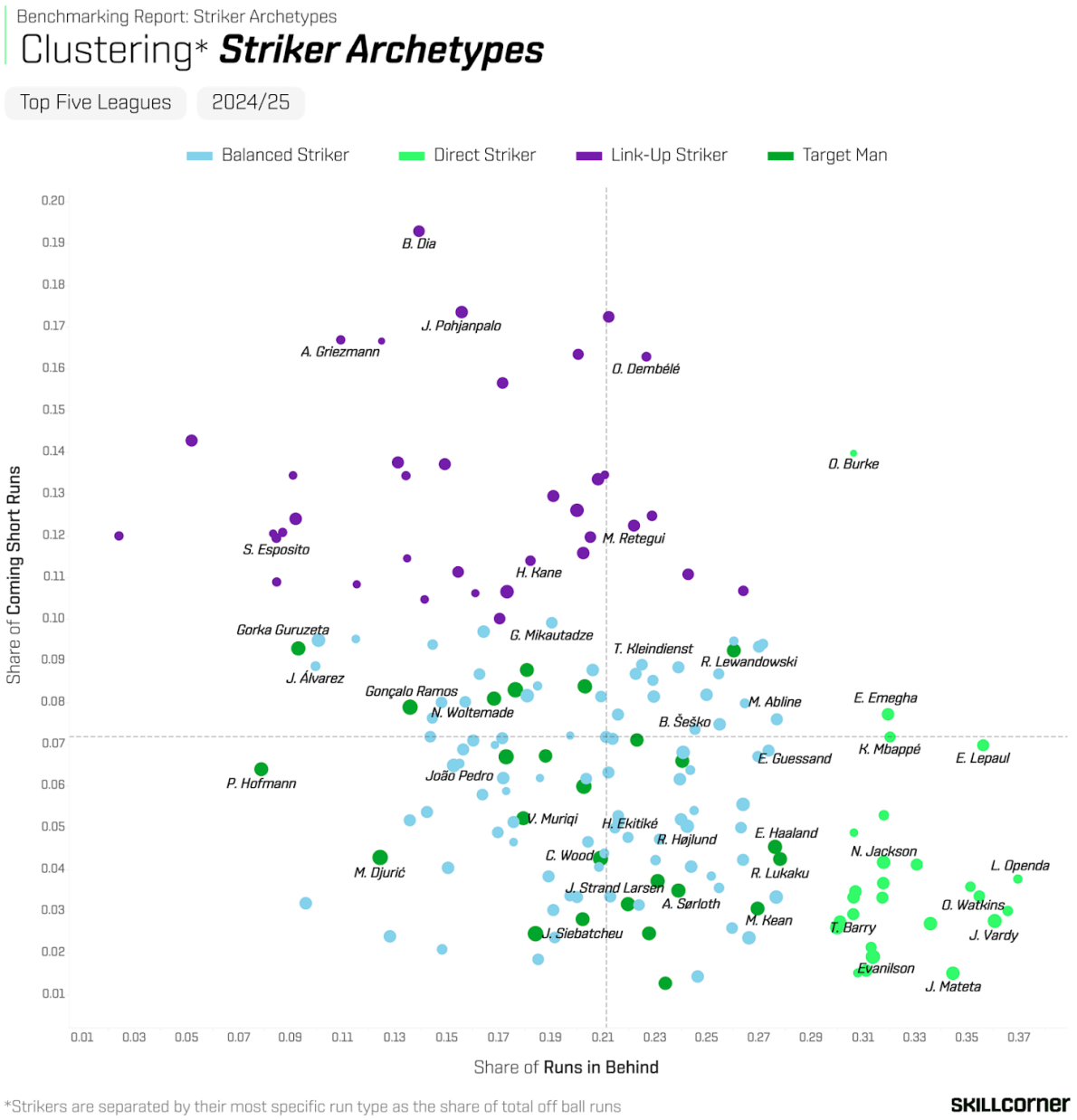
Note that the report evaluates strikers through the lens of stylistic differences within a single season (2024/25). It is not intended to determine which players are the "best," but rather to highlight how different profiles operate and create impact.

While ranking outputs can reflect certain stylistic traits, they are also influenced by team context, tactical structure, and overall style of play.

DEFINING ***STRIKER ARCHETYPES***

Our starting point is to examine how strikers can be meaningfully separated through their *Off Ball Movement*. In the scatter plot below, we use a simple rule-based approach where each striker is placed into an archetype based on the run type that makes up the largest share of their total movement. The x-axis shows the *Percentage of Runs In Behind*, while the y-axis captures the percentage of *Coming Short Runs*. The size of the circles represents the higher or lower shares of *Cross Receiver Runs*. This gives us a first view of how strikers naturally distribute across the different run behaviours that shape their playing identity.

1. *LANDSCAPE*



*Strikers are separated by their most specific run type as the share of total off ball runs

As we can see, the cluster above places all Center Forwards in the top five leagues from the 2024/25 season into 4 different categories. The cluster is defined by a simple IF function that says that if a striker's Share of Runs In Behind is higher than 30 percent of his total off ball runs, he will be placed in the Direct Striker archetype (green). In this group, we see players like Jean-Philippe Mateta, Ollie Watkins and Kylian Mbappé who naturally thrive on pace and directness.

The second argument states that if a striker records more than 10 percent of Coming Short Runs, he will be categorised as a Link-Up Striker (purple). Players like Harry Kane, Ousmane Dembele and Antoine Griezmann fit into this category.

Thirdly, we highlight the Target Man archetype. Their focus metric does not appear in the visualisation, but they are labelled as Target Man if their share of Cross Receiver Runs exceeds 30 percent. This suggests that their teammates frequently target them inside the penalty area. Chris Wood and Milan Djuric operate as traditional target men, while Erling Haaland and Romelu Lukaku stand out in this group as they almost fit the Direct Striker archetype at the same time.

Lastly, the Balanced Striker does not meet any of the criteria above but instead shows a more even spread across multiple run types. Here, we find players like Joao Pedro, Benjamin Sesko and Hugo Ekitike.

Scouting *Striker Archetypes*

While the rule-based approach gave us a clear first look at the standout strikers within each archetype, the next step is to go a level deeper. Here, we want to demonstrate how we can build performance indices tailored to each profile and show how these can be applied directly to a scouting search. Here, we select four to six key metrics to define each archetype. These metrics are grouped into distinct categories, allowing us to rank players both within each category and across a combined total index score.

2. *DIRECT STRIKER INDEX*

The Direct Striker thrives on attacking depth and exploiting open spaces. This archetype is constantly on the move, timing his actions to attack crosses and taking advantage of transitions with swift forward movements. His speed and sustained sprint intensity make him a constant threat to stretch defensive lines.

To quantify and evaluate these functions and behaviours, we use the following metrics from our unique Physical and Game Intelligence data:

METRICS	*MEASURE*	*CATEGORY*	*WEIGHT (%)*
Avg PSV-99	Top Speed	Physical	16,7
Sprint Count P90	Repeated Sprints	Physical	16,7
Count Runs in Behind P30 TIP	Volume	Movement	16,7
Off ball runs in Transition P30 TIP	Volume	Movement	16,7
% Runs In Behind *Received*	Share, %	Efficiency	16,7
Share of runs in behind (% of total runs)	Share, %	Efficiency	16,7

Note: Categories are weighted equally for the Total Index Score. However, players can also be ranked by individual categories depending on specific tactical needs.

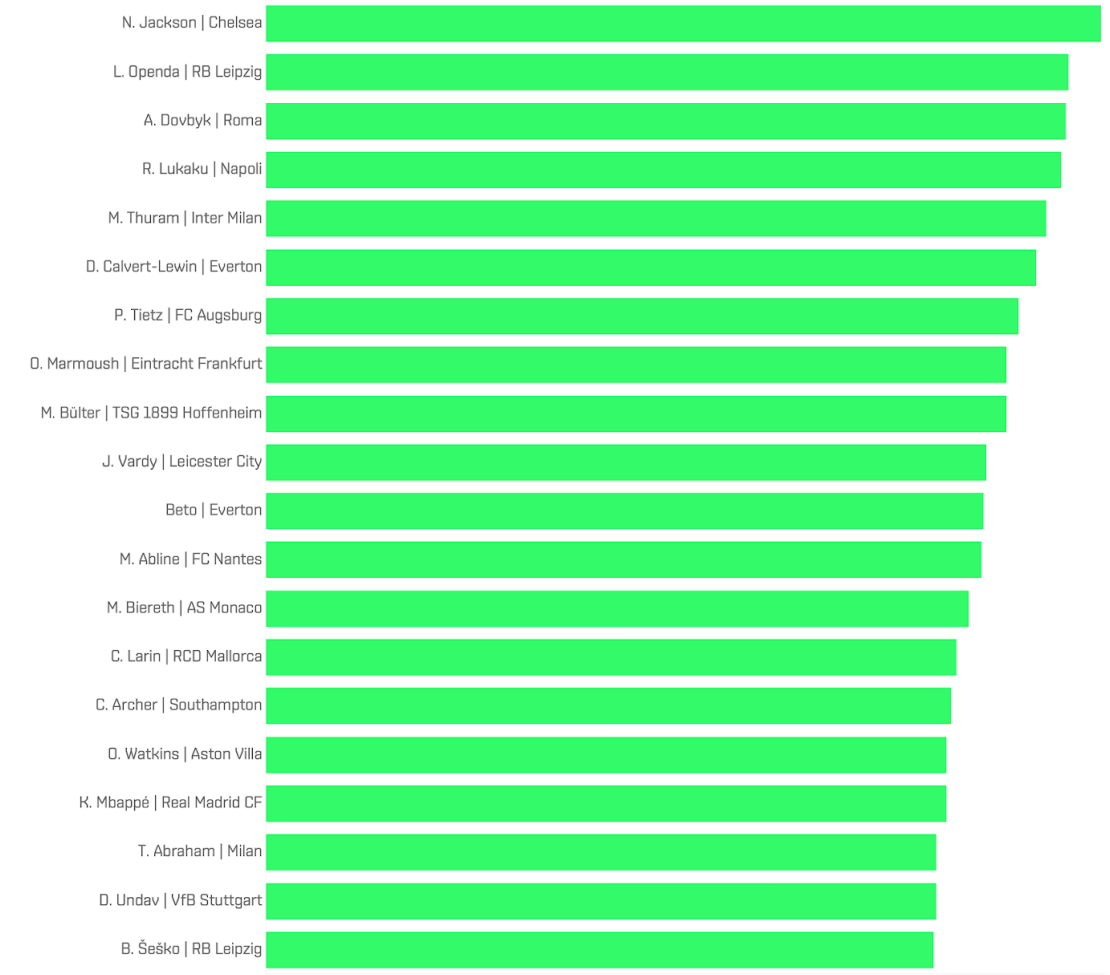
With this combination of metrics, we should be able to identify strikers who consistently run in behind, both in general play and specifically during transitions, while also ensuring they meet the physical demands required for this archetype.

In the charts below, we have ranked the top 20 strikers in “The Big Five” and “The Next Five” leagues from the 24/25 season by their combined Efficiency score:

Benchmarking Report: Striker Archetypes

Direct Striker Index | Big Five

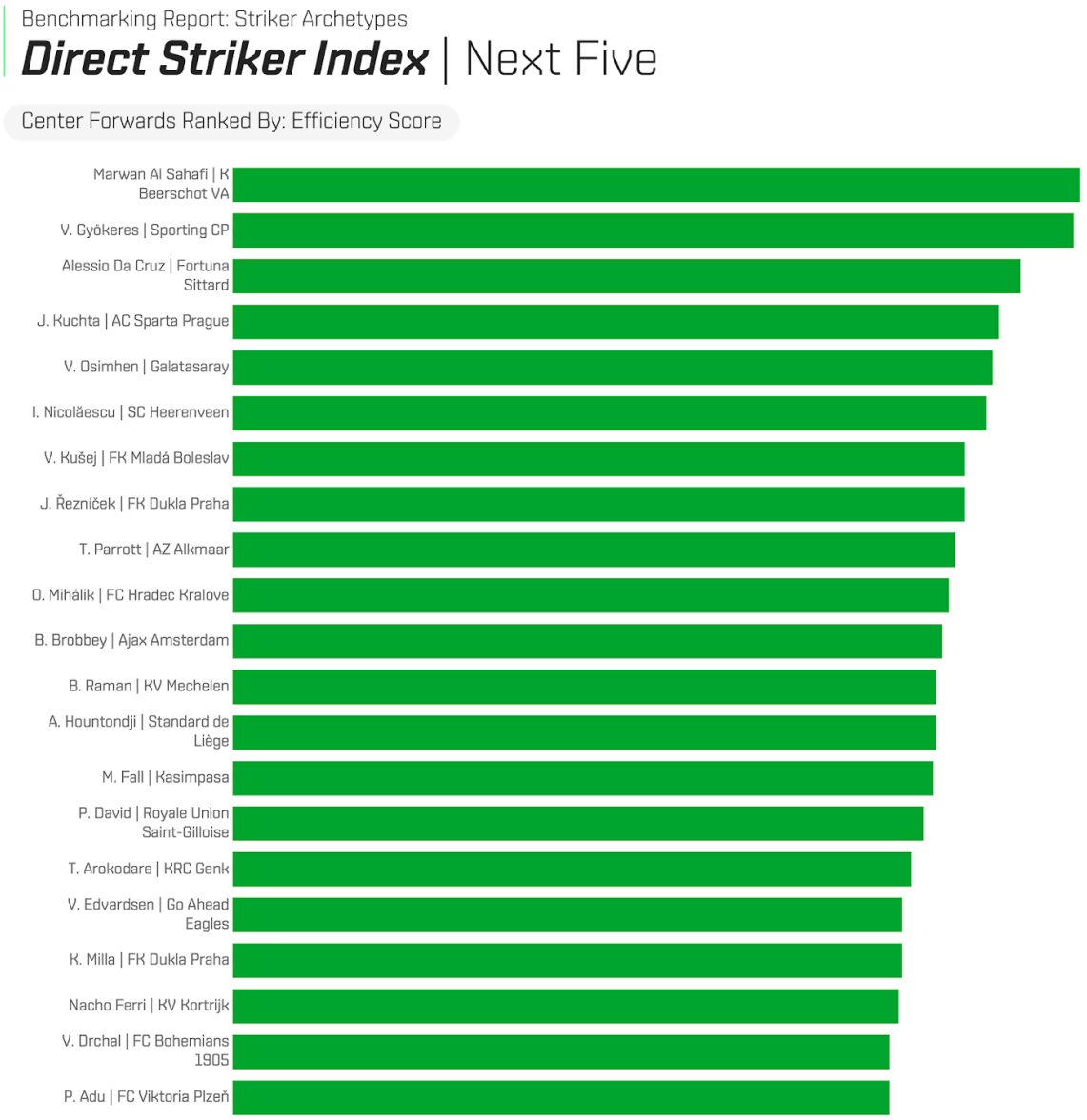
Center Forwards Ranked By: Efficiency Score



When viewed together, the two Efficiency metrics capture how deliberately and how successfully a striker attacks depth. A high share reflects intent and stylistic focus, while the reception rate reflects how efficiently that movement translates into actual ball receptions.

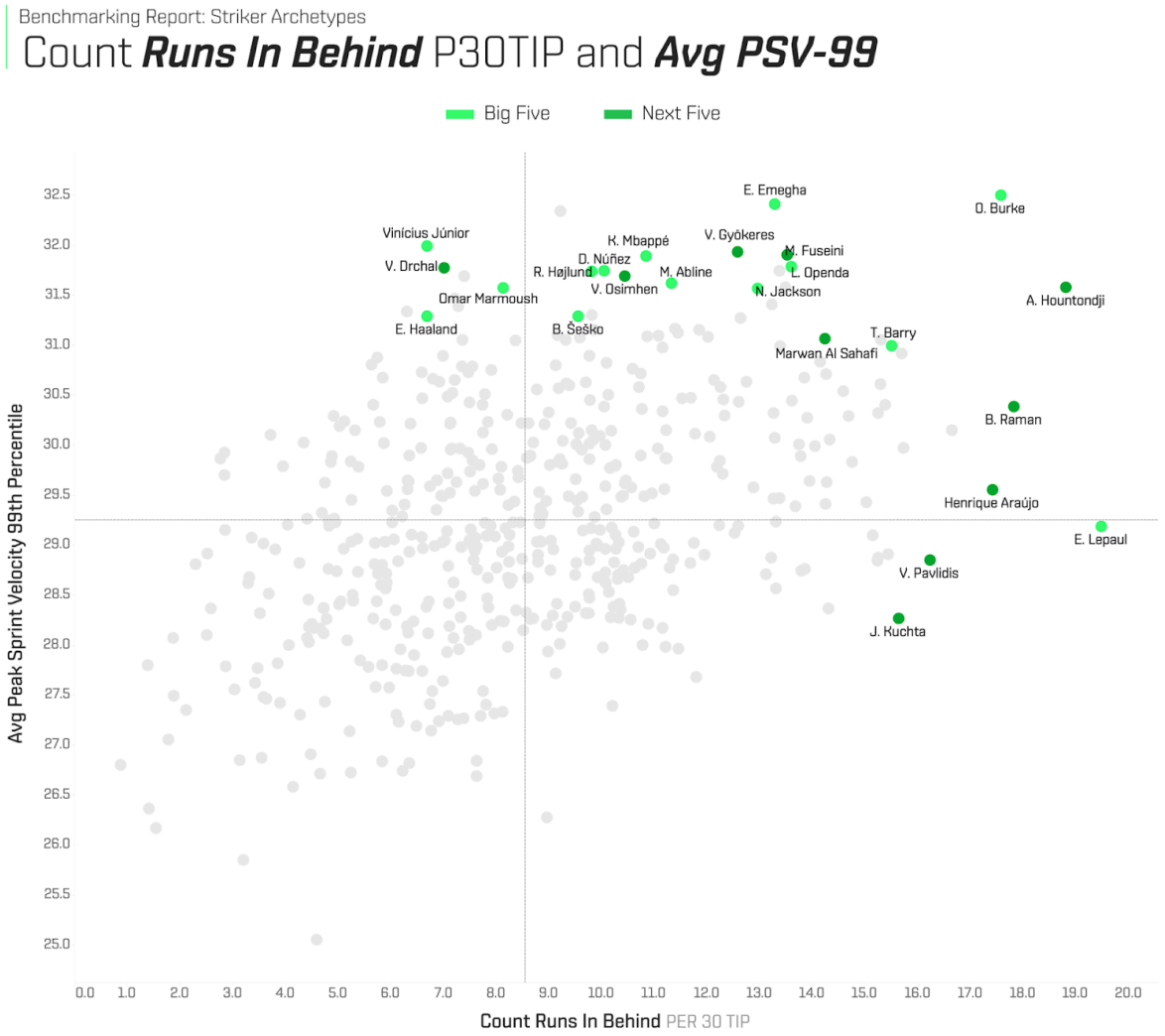
The data highlights several prominent strikers known for their directness. Nicolas Jackson leads the group in efficiency; his share of runs in behind sits at 32%, but he maintains a high reception rate of 64.4% for runs in behind. In contrast, Loïs Openda recorded the highest share of runs in behind at 37% in the big five, though with a lower reception rate of 55%. When normalized per 30 minutes of Team in Possession (P30 TIP), Jackson averaged 13 runs compared to Openda's 13.6. This suggests that while Openda likely engages in more 'selfless' movement to stretch the opposition, Jackson's runs are more targeted and effective. Further down the list, Ollie Watkins shows a similar high-volume profile, averaging 13.9 runs p30 TIP with a 35% run share and a 49% reception rate.

Next, we want to explore the similar ranking in the “Next Five” leagues:



The bar chart identifies Viktor Gyökeres as a standout performer during his tenure at Sporting, prior to his move to Arsenal. 31% of his off ball movements were runs in behind and he managed to receive almost two thirds of them, with a reception rate of 63 % (averaging 12.6 runs in behind), similar numbers as Jackson and Openda.

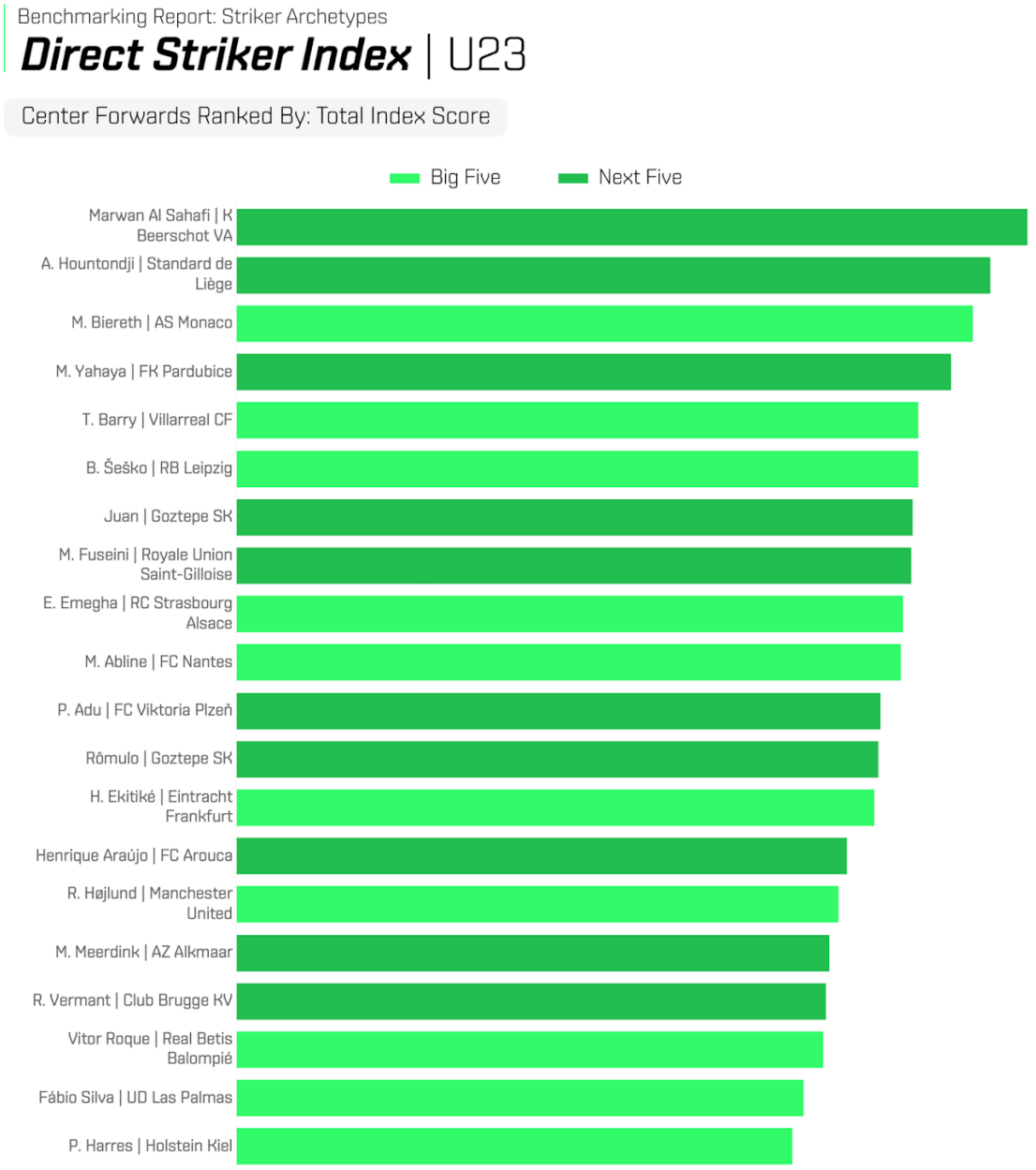
To further contextualize these direct strikers, the following scatter plot combines volume with physicality, where we have Count of Runs In Behind P30 Tip on the x-axis and Avg Peak Sprint Velocity (PSV-99) on the y-axis:



The scatter plot reveals a tight cluster between Gyökeres, Jackson, Openda and Mohamed Fuseini (Union St. Guilliose) regarding Runs In Behind p30 TIP. However, Gyökeres distinguishes himself with a higher average peak speed - comparable to that of Kylian Mbappé and Vinícius Júnior. This elite speed tier is surpassed only by a few outliers: Oliver Burke (Werder Bremen), and Emmanuel Emegha (Strasbourg).

When shifting the focus to pure run volume, Esteban Lepaul emerges as the leader, averaging 19.5 runs in behind p30 TIP. While such high volume typically results in a diminished reception rate (37% in his case), Lepaul's effectiveness remains undisputed; his performance for Angers earned him a move to Rennes, where he has become one of Ligue 1's top scorers so far this season. Trailing just behind Lepaul, three players from the 'Next 5' leagues also recorded high-volume profiles.

Our last chart highlights U23 players across the big five and next five leagues with the highest Total Index Scores covering Movement, Efficiency and Physicality.



At the top of the U23 rankings is Marwan Al Sahafi, following a successful loan stint at K Beerschot from Al Ittihad. Currently continuing his development on loan at Royal Antwerp, Al Sahafi's data provides a clear picture of his threat: he averaged 14.2 runs in behind p30 TIP with a 32.6% share and a 60% reception rate. These metrics highlight a player who is not only prolific in his movement but also highly efficient at being found, marking him as an interesting prospect for teams in need of a direct striker. The list also features several high-profile strikers who secured major transfers after last season, including Benjamin Šeško (Manchester United), Thierno Barry (Everton), Rômulo (RB Leipzig), and Hugo Ekitike (Liverpool), while Emmanuel Emegha is prepared for his upcoming arrival at Chelsea.

3. *LINK-UP STRIKER INDEX*

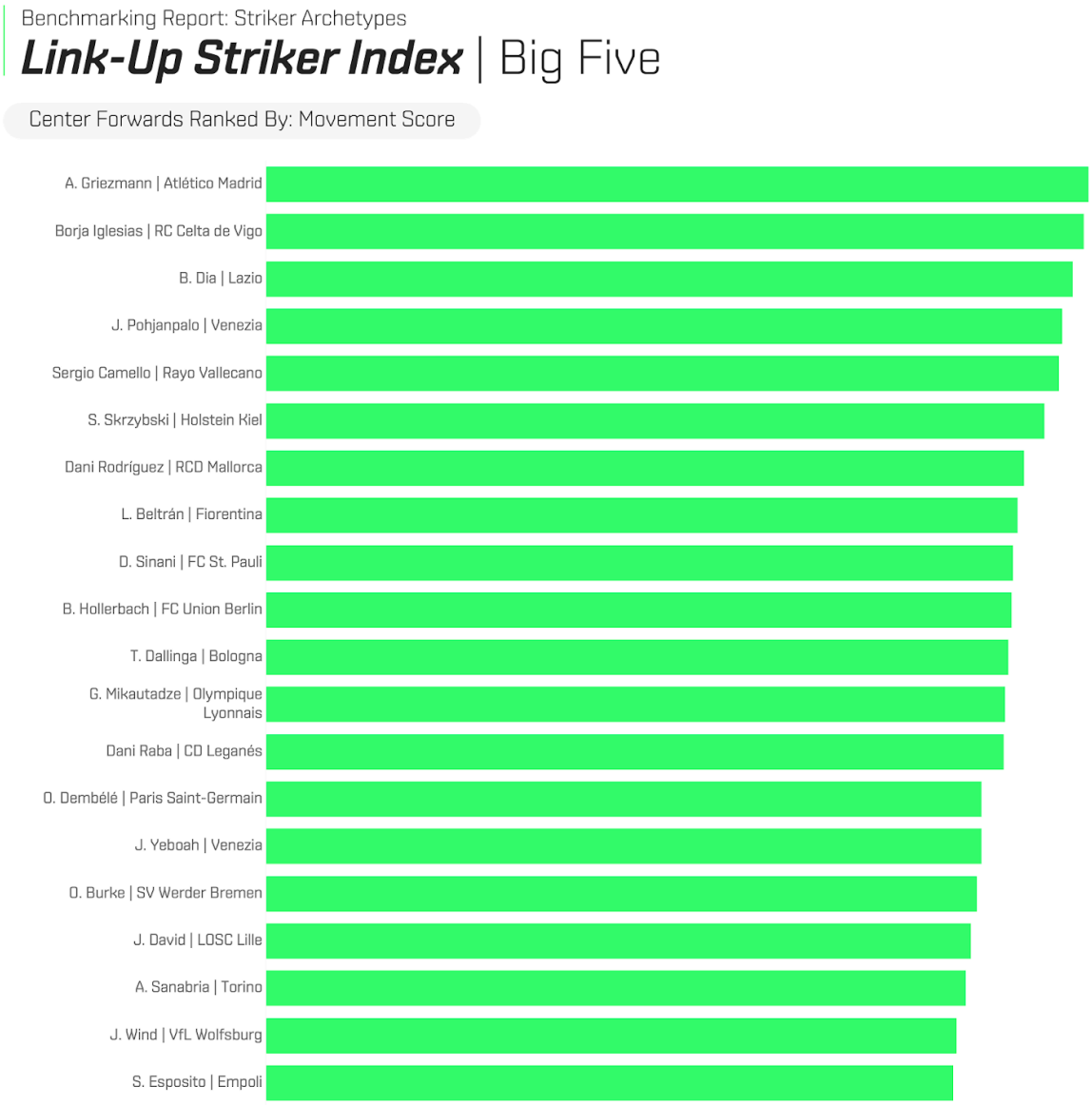
The Link-Up striker is a technically skilled forward who connects play between midfield and attack, often showing for the ball, offering passing options through the lines. He is quick in combination play, and looks to find runners in behind or teammates moving into crossing areas.

To quantify and evaluate these functions and behaviours, we use the following metrics from our Physical and Game Intelligence data:

METRICS	MEASURE	CATEGORY	WEIGHT (%)
Passing Options Through Second Last Line P30 TIP	Volume	Movement	16,7
Coming Short runs P30 TIP	Volume	Movement	16,7
Share of Coming Short runs	Share, %	Movement	16,7
Quick Passes Retentions P30 TIP	Volume	Playmaking	12,5
Pass Attempts to Runs in Behind P30 TIP	Volume	Playmaking	12,5
Pass Attempts to Cross Receivers P30 TIP	Volume	Playmaking	12,5
Pass Attempt Ratio to Dangerous Runs	Share, %	Playmaking	12,5

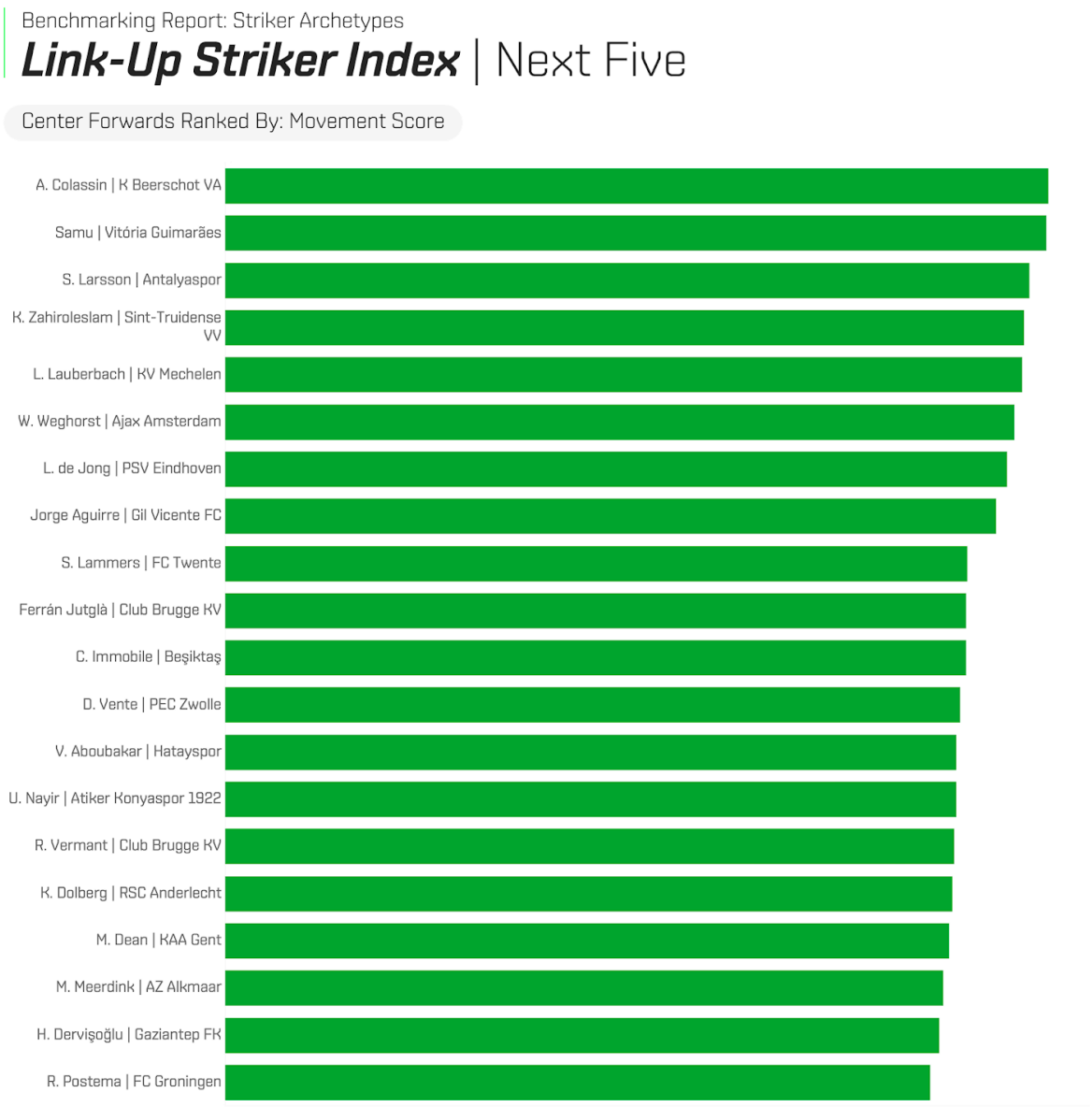
With this combination of metrics, we can identify center forwards who consistently move into pockets to become available between the lines, link play, and create chances for their teammates.

In the bar chart below, we have ranked the top 20 strikers in "The Big Five" leagues from the 2024/25 season by their overall Movement score:



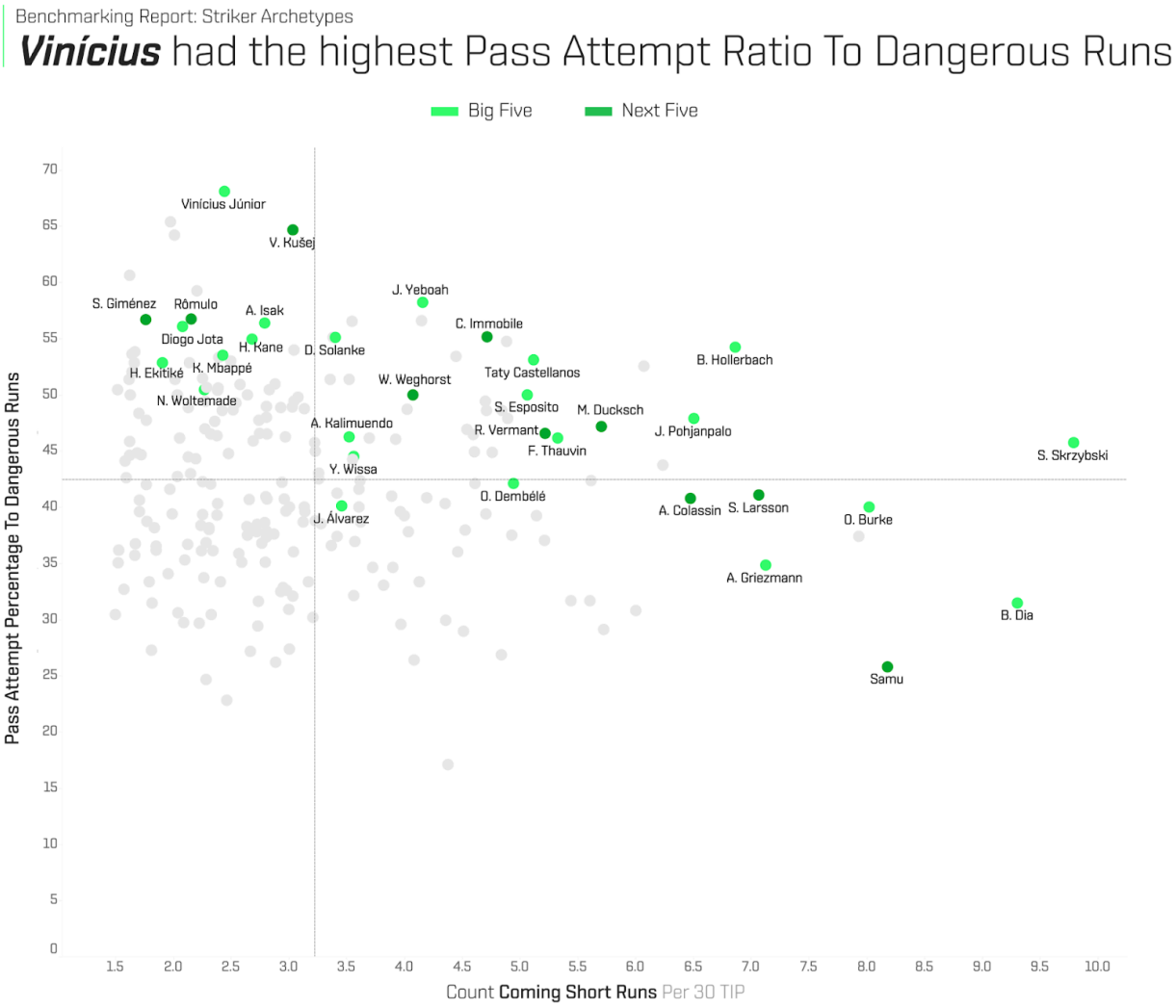
Antoine Griezmann ranks first in the combined Movement category, driven by a high frequency of coming short runs (7.1 runs p30 TIP). He also ranks among the top five players for his share of coming short runs, which account for 16.7% of his total off-ball movement. Griezmann's reception rate for these runs stands at 92%, underscoring the trust his teammates place in him to drop deep and link play. In terms of providing passing options between the lines, Griezmann was only surpassed by Georges Mikautadze (who joined Villarreal following last season) with 22.7 options through the second last line p30 Tip. Closely following them are Umar Sadiq (now at Real Sociedad) and Nick Woltemade (now at Newcastle). Assessing passing options could serve as a key metric for identifying strikers capable of knitting play together, especially for teams that prioritize this element within their game model.

Let's further investigate the most frequent movers in the "next five" leagues as well:



Antoine Colassin (now Sporting Charleroi) and Kahveh Zahiroleslam (now Cracovia) piqued our interest as they have the highest scores for passing options through the second last line p30 tip. Sam Larsson has the highest share of coming short runs with 19 per cent, while Samu had the highest volume with 8.1 coming short runs p30 Tip.

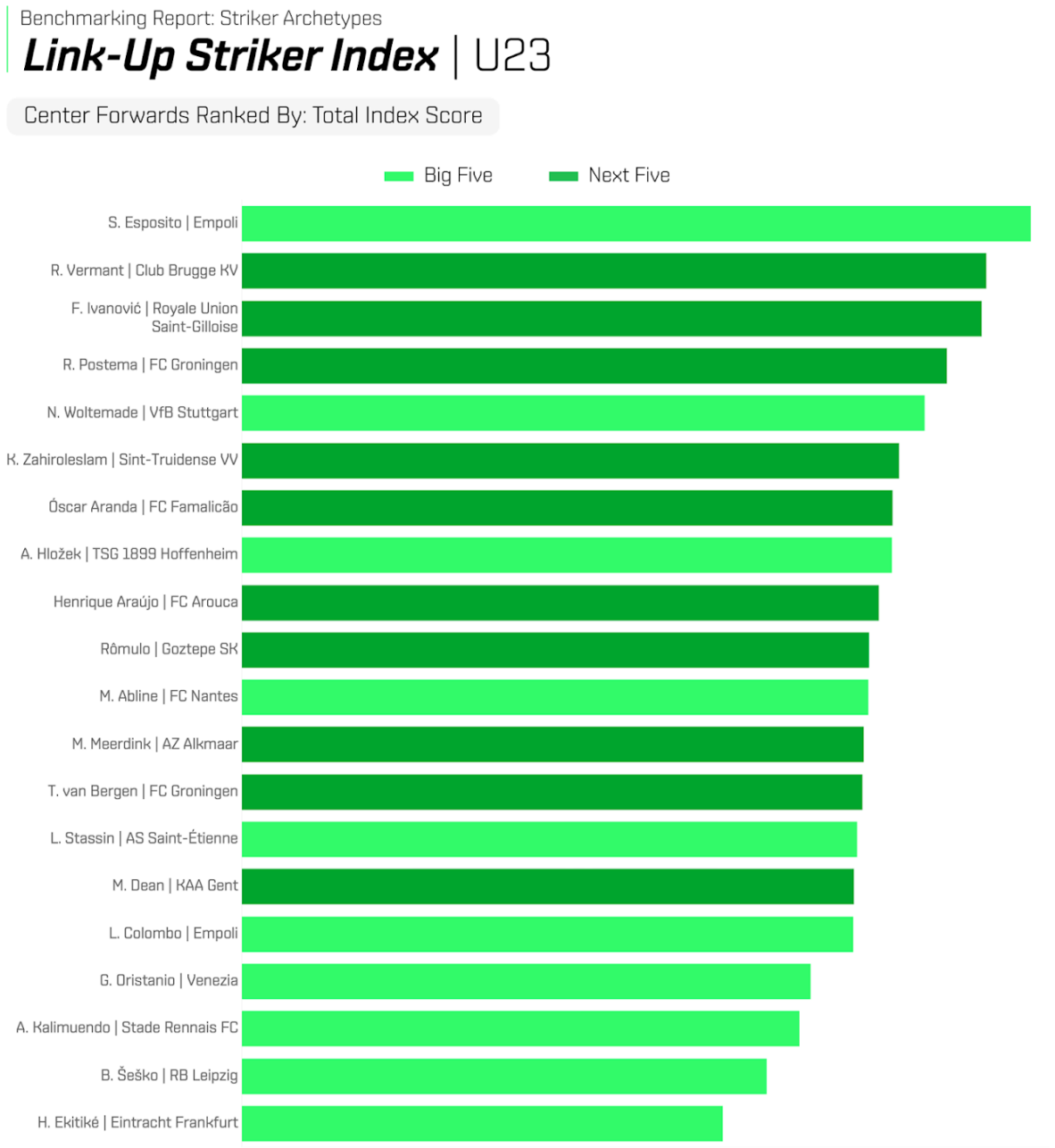
Next, we introduce a custom chart that compares volume of coming short runs with pass attempt percentage to dangerous runs. This highlights which players most frequently look to play into dangerous off ball runs (most often includes runs in behind or cross receiver runs) relative to how often they drop to receive.



In the upper-left quadrant, we can spot some elite names and high-impact strikers. These players don't come short as often, but they demonstrate high impact when involved via pass attempts to dangerous runs. In the top-right quadrant, however, we see more distinct link-up profiles that still manage to show high-impact involvement, such as Sebastiano Esposito (now Inter) and Benedict Hollerbach (now Mainz).

Nick Woltemade is an interesting case; he was a low-volume mover but high-impact passer at VfB Stuttgart last season, while he now averages more than 4.49 coming-short runs p30 Tip at Newcastle in The Premier League. This doubling of his movement output highlights his strength in dropping deep to receive, and utilizes more of his passing options.

Again, we have ranked the most complete U23 link-up strikers by their Total Index Score combining Movement and Playmaking:



Romeo Vermant (22) tops our U23 index for young link-up strikers in the “Next Five”, sitting inside the top-right quadrant of our scatter plot. Developed in the Club Brugge NXT Academy and a regular in the Belgium national youth teams setup, he is a player to watch for his balanced ability to both drop deep, provide high-impact service and finish chances.

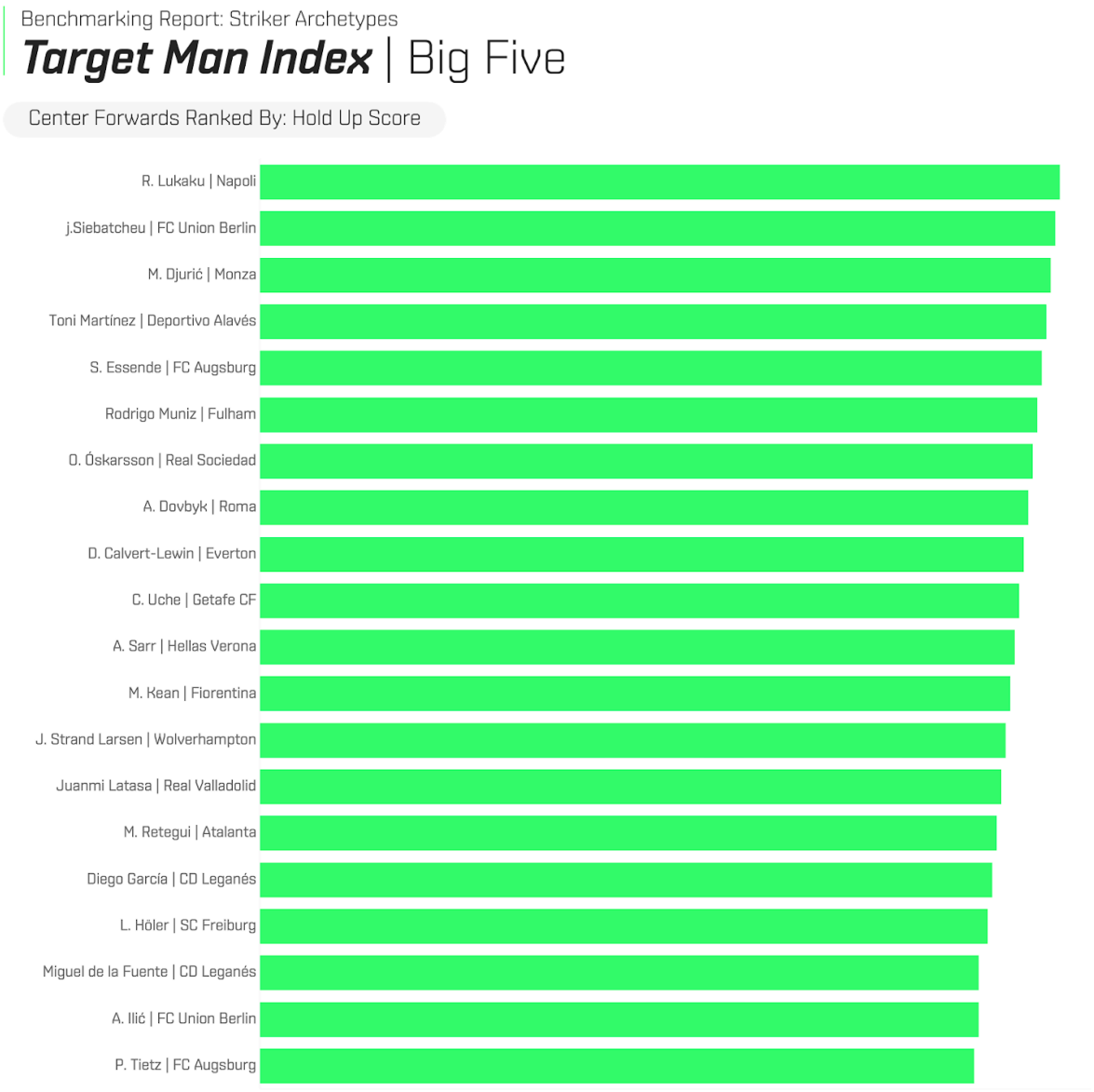
4. *THE "MODERN" TARGET MAN INDEX*

The Target Man functions as a central reference point in attack and is often the primary crossing option inside the box. This is why we anchor the archetype in a high share of cross receiver runs. Another important trait is the ability to hold up the ball and connect play, which mirrors some of the behaviour we see in link up strikers. While the old fashioned long ball target man has become less common, there is a renewed interest in tall and physically dominant strikers who can also operate within modern structures. For example, some clubs now look for players who can contribute in "artificial transitions" that emerge from deep build-up, where the aim is to draw opponent pressure and open space higher up the pitch.

Below, we highlight a set of metrics selected to translate this profile into measurable data points:

METRICS	MEASURE	CATEGORY	WEIGHT (%)
Passing Options in Build Up	Volume	Build-Up	33,3
Count Cross Receiver Runs P30 TIP	Volume	Movement	16,7
%, Share of Cross Receiver Runs	Share, %	Movement	16,7
%, Possession Retention In Low Separation Start (high opponent pressure)	Share, %	Hold-Up	33,3

In the bar chart below, we have ranked the top 20 strikers in "The Big Five" leagues from the 2024/25 season by their overall Hold-Up score:



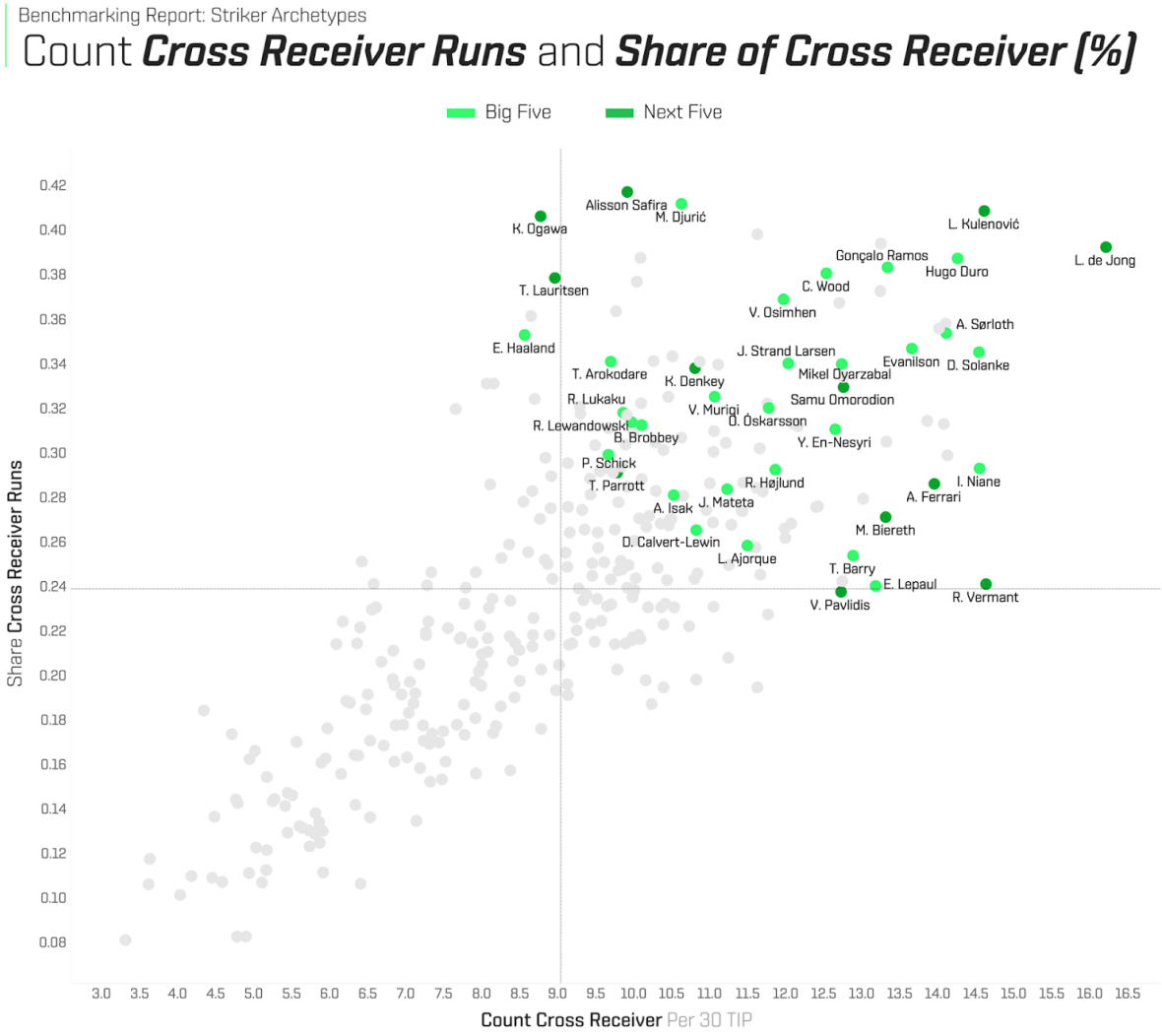
The ability to hold up the ball when being tightly marked by defenders is a key trait that we associate with effective target men, and few do this better than Romelu Lukaku with a retention rate of 61.8 per cent in these kinds of situations. The list of strikers features other tall and strong profiles such as Samuel Essende (1.98m), Artem Dovbyk (1.89m) and Jørgen Strand Larsen (1.93m).

Next, we rank the top 20 hold-up players in the “next five” leagues:



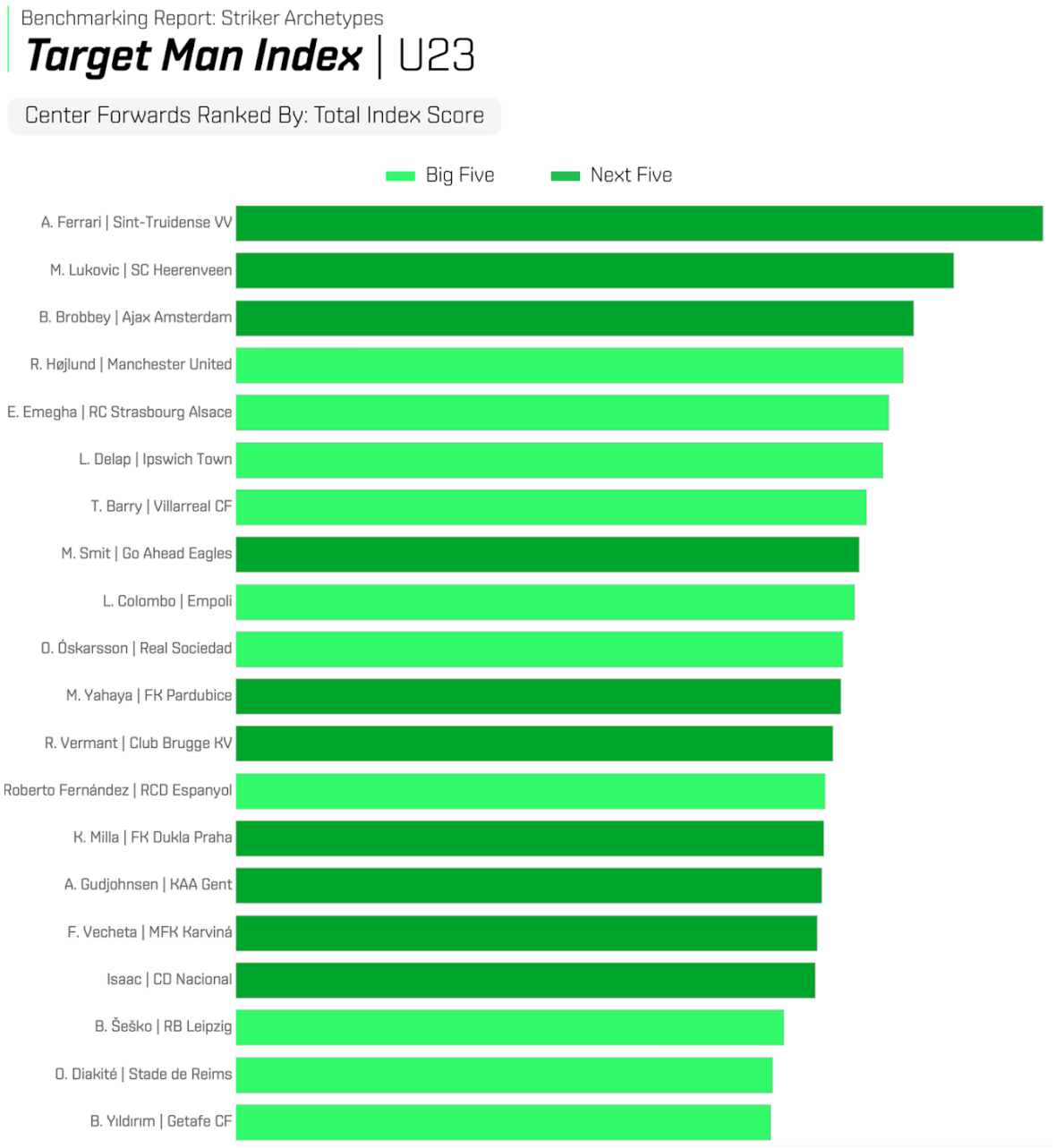
For the next five leagues, two players from the Belgian Pro League lead the rankings: Nacho Ferri (Kortrijk) with a retention rate of 58.6% and Andrés Ferrari (Sint-Truiden) with a ratio of 57.1%. Brian Brobbey takes third place at 56.4%. Brobbey’s strengths have already been on display this season in the Premier League following his transfer to Sunderland; most notably, his prolonged hold-up play during a late counter-attack against Chelsea proved decisive in securing the win. In fourth place is Canadian striker Promise David, who enjoyed a clinical start to the 25/26 season with 8 goals in 11 games for Union SG.

Next, we turn to the Movement category of assessing target men. To rank our center forwards here, we look at cross receiver runs, which is their most relevant run type given their primary objective to occupy the opponent's penalty area. We combine this volume with their share of cross receiver runs as outlined in the initial rule-based analysis.



From this chart we can compare three Norwegian strikers in Alexander Sørloth, Jørgen Strand Larsen, and Erling Haaland. Here, we see a fascinating contrast in run count despite their nearly identical cross receiver shares of 34-36%. Sørloth leads the trio with a high-frequency profile, recording over 14 cross-receiver runs per 30 minutes (TIP), which marks him as one of the most active cross receivers in the dataset. Strand Larsen follows with a strong volume of roughly 12 runs, representing a highly active box presence as well. In contrast, Haaland operates with a more surgical "quality over quantity" approach; his lower volume of 8.5 runs suggests he prioritizes efficient, high-value movement over constant box activity. This observation is coherent with Manchester City's style of play last season; a possession-heavy and patient team, represented by their 100th percentile score for time spent in the finish phase.

In our next chart, we rank the most promising young target men profiles combining all metric categories creating the Total Index Score:



Andrés Ferrari tops our U23 index for target men, driven by his strong combined Hold-Up and Movement scores. From the previous scatter plot, we can see that he averaged around 14.5 cross-receiver runs p30 Tip with a cross-receiver share of 29%. It is also worth noting that Romeo Vermant, who featured prominently in our link-up striker index, recorded the second-highest raw cross-receiver count in the dataset, only surpassed by Luuk de Jong despite having a lower specialization share of roughly 24%.

5. *TO GO FURTHER*

Want to read and learn more about striker archetypes?

How to scout Big German Strikers: *Separating Style and Stature through off ball runs*

https://skillcorner.com/articles/scouted-finding-the-right-massive-number-nine-a-big-german-case-study

Introduction to the Power Forward (The Direct Striker):
https://scoutedftbl.com/power-forward-introduction-scouted-archetype/

https://skillcorner.com/articles/scouted-power-forward-archetype

Ashwin Raman (SCOUTED): Why All the Strikers Are Massive Again.

https://scoutedftbl.com/why-all-the-strikers-massive-again/

The Striker Factories: https://scoutedftbl.com/the-striker-factories/