

# CLASSIFICATION OF PLAYING STYLES IN FOOTBALL

## THE USE OF BALL ACTION DATA

Without mathematicians like Carl Wensveen, Ajax would not be very successful. Nor would any other football club that can benefit from her 'ball action data' analysis. The mathematician Carl Wensveen (23) graduated with a method that analyses playing styles in football. "For coaches, it is handy to be able to recognise a team's playing style on the basis of objective data. They can analyse the opponent's game, for instance, or examine their own team's style and adjust it as necessary".

But assuming that most teams follow one of four common styles, can't a trained coach spot it without help? Apparently not, Wensveen discovered, because there are always variables. "For example, Ajax plays like the Dutch School: focus on possession of the ball but not offensive." Of course, this does not mean that another style

element never inserts itself once in a while. Her algorithms cover the variables, she assigns them a priority and incorporates them in the determination of the playing style.

The average football club would not exactly be amazed by that, but Wensveen's method does much more. "It also focuses on the general playing style without assigning it to one of the most common styles. It looks at all the details." She did not encounter anything like that in her literature survey. The ultimate objective is that her method will be included in a general software package for analysing football data.

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**Highlights**  
Carl Wensveen her thesis was  
assessed with an 8.