

EXPLORATORY STUDY OF THE HOME ADVANTAGE FACTOR IN PROFESSIONAL SOCCER PLAYERS' GOAL SCORING

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ABSTRACT

The study investigated the goal scoring abilities of professional league soccer players in Nigeria with a view to identifying the home advantage factor. All goals scored in the first twenty nine (29) weeks of the league competition were collated and analyzed with simple percentages and t-test statistical procedure for related measures. The result showed significant differences in the goal scoring ability of the professional players at home matches and matches played away from home. The result confirmed the potency of home advantage factor in goal scoring ability of the professional league players.

Key Words: Home Advantage, Goal Scoring

Introduction

Success in the game of soccer is determined by the number of goals scored by the two teams in contest. So far, no other criterion is being used to determine the winner in soccer matches. To this end goal scoring in soccer matches remain paramount. Observations have shown goals are scored mainly through teamwork with the collective display of soccer skills namely ball control, functional passing, heading skills and accurate shooting. Ability to display these skills during game situation will depend largely on level of mastery of the skills. Goal scoring may be affected by so many motor performance parameters such as balance, agility and accuracy all of which may affect acquisition of basic soccer skills like ball control skill, heading skill and shooting skill. Soccer is a high spectator sport and success could be determined by the nature or

composition of spectators. One of the things spectators look forward to in the game of soccer is goal scoring. The spectators most often have significant impact on the behaviour of the players. This article is the report of the analysis conducted on the goal scoring ability of the professional soccer league players with a view of ascertaining the impact of the home advantage factor.

Brief Review of Literature

Schartz and Barsky (1977) opined that there existed a psychological advantage in favour of the home team over teams playing away from home. Home crowd behaviour of support and encouragement of the home team and criticism of the team playing away from home may have effect in game situation (Brooks 1981). Islo-Ahola and Hatfield (1986) posited that the sports fans are generally partisan by doing everything possible to encourage and enhance the motivation of the home team. Empirical evidence showed that in 1974, 1975, and 1976, over 54% of the 349 professional American games were won by home team (Edward, 1979). In Nigeria, after analyzing the performance of national soccer league teams during 1984, 1985 and 1986 league seasons, Oyewesi and Ogundari (1988) posited that home-field advantage is more likely to be true in team sports than individual sports. Geer (1983) worked on the social influence of the crowd and found that the booing of the home crowd led to low scoring and high violations of the visiting team thus resulting in decline in the performance of the team playing away from home and corresponding improvement in the performance of the home team.

Purpose of The Study

The study investigated the goal scoring ability of the professional league soccer players in Nigeria during the first professional soccer league championships and the factor of home advantage. This study is of central importance due to paucity of empirical research on the home advantage phenomenon in Nigeria. The purpose was also to follow-up on the work of Oyewusi and Ogundari (1988) in the professional league as the two researchers earlier worked on amateur league.

Hypothesis

It was hypothesized that there is no significant difference in goal scoring at home and away matches of the Nigerian League soccer players.

Data Collection

Data collection spanned over a period of twenty-nine (29) weeks of the first professional soccer league competition in Nigeria. All the goals scored by the teams both at home matches and matches played away from home were used. The goals scored in week thirty of the league competition were not included due to communication breakdown with the source of information. However the number of weeks covered was found to be adequate as it represented 90% of the total number of weeks of the duration of the competition.

Treatment of Data

The data collected were treated with descriptive statistics that yielded the mean goals scored and standard deviation. Simple percentages were computed to determine the percentage of goals scored by each

team at home matches and matches played away from home. The data were also treated with the t- test for related measures with strict adherence to the Bruning and Kintz (1968) procedure. Graphical representation of the home and away goals scored by the teams was also drawn up to give a pictorial view of the results presented in tables I and II.

Results and Discussion

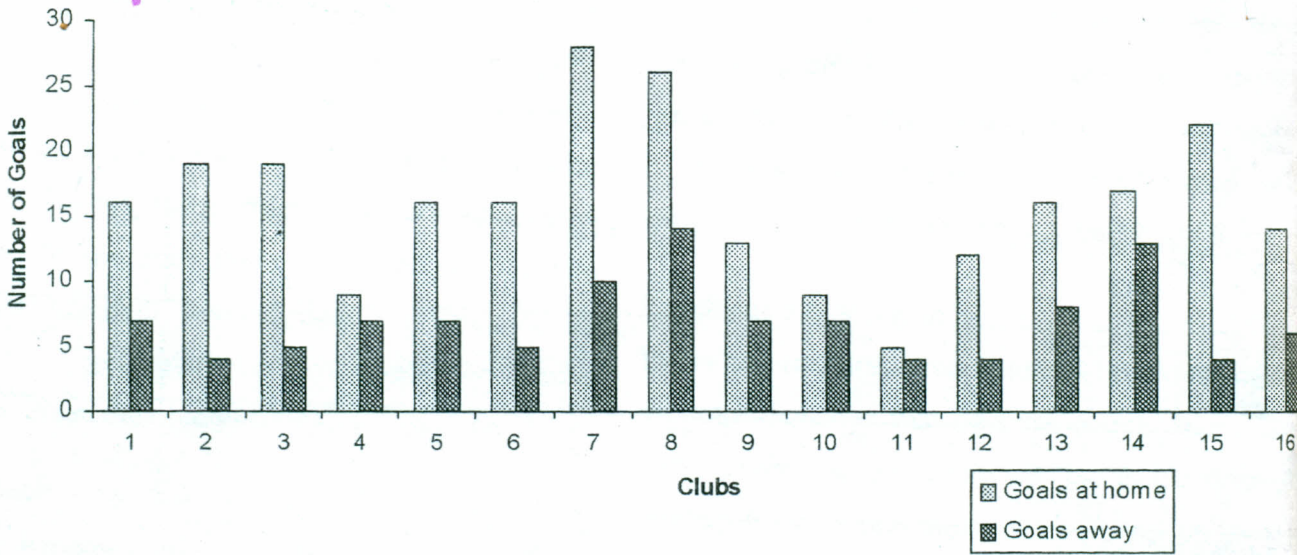
The results are presented in tables I and II. It should be noted however that because a goal is a whole and cannot be proportioned or approximated, results of the computations were round up to the nearest whole number.

Table one shows that while teams playing at home scored an average of nine (9) goals teams playing away from home scored an average of four (4) goals. The comparison of these two means through t- test statistic yielded a t- value of 10.324, which was significant at 0.05 alpha levels. Hence the null hypothesis was rejected. This showed that there existed a significant difference in the goals scoring ability of professional soccer league players during the first professional soccer league competition Nigeria. The analysis showed clearly that teams scored more goals at home to show that the home advantage factor may not be a myth after all.

Table 1: Showing the mean and result of t-test for the related measures of home and away goals

Teams	Goals Scored At Home		Goals scored away from home		Total Goals Scored
	Number	%	Number	%	
1. Acb F.C Of Lagos	16	69.57 (70)	07	30.43 (30)	23
2. 2.Bcc Lions Of Gboko	19	82.61(83)	04	17.38 (17)	23
3. Bendel Insurance F.C Benin	19	79.77(79)	05	20.83(22)	24
4. Bendel United F.C Benin	09	56.25(56)	07	43.75(44)	16
5. Yimba F.C Aba	16	69.56(70)	07	30.43(30)	23
6. High Landers F.C	16	76.19(76)	05	23.81(24)	21
7. Iwuayanwu Nationale Owerri	28	73.68(74)	10	26.32(26)	38
8. Jib Rocks Fc Jos	26	65	14	35	40
9. Jullius Berger F.C, Lagos	13	65	07	35	20
10. Kano Pillers Fc	09	56.25(56)	07	43.75(44)	16
11. Obanta United FC Ijebu-Ode	05	55.55(56)	04	44.44(44)	09
12. Ranchers Bees Fc Kaduna	12	75	04	25	16
13. Rangers International Fc Enugu	16	66.66(67)	08	33.33(33)	24
14. Rovers Of Calabar	17	56.67(57)	13	43.33(43)	30
15. Shooting Stars Sports Club	22	84.62(84)	04	15.38(15)	26
16. Stationary Stores FC Lagos	14	70	06	30	20
	257	69.65(70)	112	30.35(30)	369

Goals scored at home and away matches



Key

1. ACB F.C of Lagos	9. Julius Berger F. C. Lagos
2. BCC Lions Of Gboko	10. Kano Pillers Fc
3. Bendel Insurance F.C. Benin	11. Obanta United Fc Ijebu-Ode
4. Bendel United F.C. Benin	12. Ranchers Bees Fc Kaduna
5. Eyimba F.C. Aba	13. Rangers International FC Enugu
6. High Landers F.C.	14. Rovers of Calabar
7. Iwuayanwu Nationale Owerri	15. Shooting Stars Sports Club
8. Jib Rocks Fc Jos	16. Stationary Stores F.C. Lagos

Psychological Implications for Coaching

It may be inferred that goal scoring skills like functional accurate passing and shooting, heading skills, quick decision making process and reaction time may be affected by the precursors of anxiety or arousal and most especially nervousness while playing away from home. Hence, the low scoring ability experienced while playing away from home. Also, mere dismissal of the potency of home

advantage factor in goal scoring ability may not be enough in achieving psychological calmness while playing away from home. It is advisable therefore to as a matter of necessity spice coaching programmes with psychological tuning or intervention on long-term basis. This may enhance the goal scoring ability of team preparing to play away from home if suggested that further study a wider dimension be professionally handled by Sports Psychologist.

It is conducted to shed more light on the home advantage phenomenon as a means of justifying the rule of away goals counting double.

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