

## **\*\*Understanding racial representation in German Soccer\*\***

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**Aim.** This research investigates whether players in German professional soccer (Bundesliga) are equally represented across all positions, or if a pattern called ‘racial stacking’ exists. Racial stacking happens when players of certain racial backgrounds are disproportionately placed in specific roles on the field, often based on perceived strengths rather than individual skill. The goal was to determine if this pattern suggests underlying biases within the sport.

**Methods.** Researchers analyzed data from the 2020/2021 Bundesliga season, categorizing players by their perceived race (‘Black’, ‘White’, or ‘other People of Color’) and their playing position. They also combined this data analysis with a historical look at how soccer tactics have evolved in Germany, and interviews with professional soccer scouts to understand how they evaluate players.

**Key Findings.** The studies consistently found evidence of racial stacking. Black players were significantly overrepresented in positions emphasizing athleticism, like wingers and strikers, and underrepresented in positions requiring more strategic thinking and leadership, such as goalkeepers and central midfielders. Scouts’ interviews revealed that they often associate specific physical and mental attributes with different racial groups, which influences their assessment of a player’s potential and suitability for certain positions. This suggests unconscious biases may play a role in shaping team composition.

**Limitations.** A limitation of the study is that race was determined through visual assessment, which doesn’t necessarily reflect self-identification. The data also focused on a single season, so it’s unclear if these patterns are consistent over time. The research also couldn’t definitively prove that racial bias is the only cause of stacking – other factors like socioeconomic background and access to training likely contribute. Finally, the findings are specific to German soccer and may not apply to other countries or lower levels of the sport. While the study demonstrates that stacking exists, further research is needed to understand the full extent of its causes and potential solutions.