

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE OR DOMESTIC LEAGUE: A coach's choice

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CHAMPIONS LEAGUE



First edition (1992): 32 (8) teams – 61 matches (+8 qualifiers)



Latest edition (2019): 32 teams – 77 matches (+ 91 qualifiers)

EUROPA LEAGUE



UEFA Cup (1992): 64 teams – 126 matches (no qualifiers)



Europa League (2019): 48 teams – 133 matches
(+314 qualifiers)

DOMESTIC LEAGUES

	1992-1993		2018-2019		
	#teams	#matches/team	#teams	#matches/team	
France	20	38	20	38-40	
Belgium	18	34	16	30-42	↑
Russia	18	34-39	16	30-32	↓
Ukraine	16	30	12	32	↑
England	22	42	20	38	↓
Spain	20	38-40	20	38	
Italy	18	34	20	38	↑
Germany	18	34	18	34	
Portugal	18	34	18	34	
Netherlands	18	34	18	34-38	↑

LOTS OF MATCHES!

Number of matches per team (2018-19)



63



61



61



60



58




























58



58

Number of matches per player (2018-19)

 Daley Blind Centre-Back	28		 Ajax  Eredivisie	57
 Donny van de Beek Attacking Midfield	21		 Ajax  Eredivisie	57
 Quincy Promes Left Winger	26	 	 Spartak Moscow  Premier Liga	56
 Dusan Tadic Left Winger	29		 Ajax  Eredivisie	56
 Willian Right Winger	29		 Chelsea  Premier League	56
 Dani Parejo Central Midfield	29		 Valencia  LaLiga	56

CONGESTED SCHEDULE

What is the impact of a congested schedule?

1) Fatigue & reduced physical performance

- Deteriorates anaerobic performance until up to 72 hours after a match (Ispirlides et al., 2008)
- Recovery time of 72 to 96 hours is sufficient to maintain physical performance level (Dupont et al., 2010)

2) Injuries

- Injury rates are 6x higher when players play 2 matches per week (Dupont et al., 2010)
- Performance of a team is highly influenced by injury situation (Hägglund et al., 2013)

CONGESTED SCHEDULE

Jose Mourinho latest Premier League coach to complain about fixture congestion



Aaron West [@avyv_west](#)
Jan 30, 2017 at 2:10p ET



Sarri moans about the congested fixture list

By Obinna Echi - 12:01 am - April 27, 2019

Pep Guardiola: Man City boss says fixture list congestion a 'disaster' for players



🕒 2 January 2018 | Man City | 🗨️



How to maintain adequate performance, given all these matches?

Player rotation

Kevin de Bruyne, who has the most assists in the league this season, was carried off at Crystal Palace



The Premier League's congested schedule is a "disaster" for players, says Manchester City boss Pep Guardiola.

top-flight.

Maurizio Sarri is moaning about the congested fixture list after comparing it to the Italian

SOME ANECDOTICAL EVIDENCE

Champions League 2011-12, semifinals



April 17th
2-1



April 21st, 1-2

No Ribery, Kroos, Robben, Gomez,
Alaba, Lahm, Boateng, ...



April 21st, 1-2

With Ronaldo, Benzema, Ozil, Khedira,
Pepe, Ramos, Di Maria, ...



April 25th
2-1, 3-4 (pen)

SOME ANECDOTICAL EVIDENCE

Champions League 2010-11, group stage



October 30th
1-0



November 3rd



November 7th
0-1

No Kocielny, Fabregas, Arshavin,
Chamakh, Song, Sagna, ...

Arsenal lose 2-1, and end 2nd in their group,
Face FC Barcelona in the round of 16 -> out

RESEARCH QUESTION

Is there a difference between countries wrt commitment to Champions League (Europa League)?

Does this have an impact on the results in the domestic league?



METHOD

Compare strenght of starting line-up in consecutive matches

$$\text{Ratio} = \frac{\text{strength Champions League}}{\text{strength Domestic League}}$$

Ratio > 1 indicates commitment to Champions League

We approximate team strength by Σ player marketvalues (transfermarkt.com)



April 21st, 1-2



April 25th, 2-1

Strength: 146,960,000€

Strength: 289,520,000€

Ratio = 1.97

METHOD

Remarks

- Ratio is computed only if ≤ 6 days in between
- Ratio doesn't measure player rotation
- Ratio is a proxy for coach's commitment
- Ratios are aggregated per country

Limitations

- We ignore dependencies between players, positions, ...
- We ignore substitutions
- We ignore injuries
- We ignore player transfers



DATA

- 10 major European associations:

Spain, Germany,
England, Italy, France,
Portugal, Russia,
Ukraine, Netherlands,
Belgium

- Market value & results of collected for seasons 2010-11 to 2014-15

A screenshot of the Transfermarkt website showing a match page for the Bundesliga. The match is between SV Werder Bremen (Position 8) and Bayern Munich (Position 2). The score is 1:2 (0:0) at the 45th minute. The match is taking place at the Weserstadion with an attendance of 42,100 and referee Manuel Gräfe. The page includes a timeline, line-ups, and substitutes for both teams.

Match Information:
Bundesliga | 32. Matchday | Sat, Apr 21, 2012 | 2:30 PM
SV Werder Bremen (Position: 8) vs Bayern Munich (Position: 2)
Weserstadion | Attendance: 42.100 | Referee: Manuel Gräfe

Timeline: 0, 45, 90

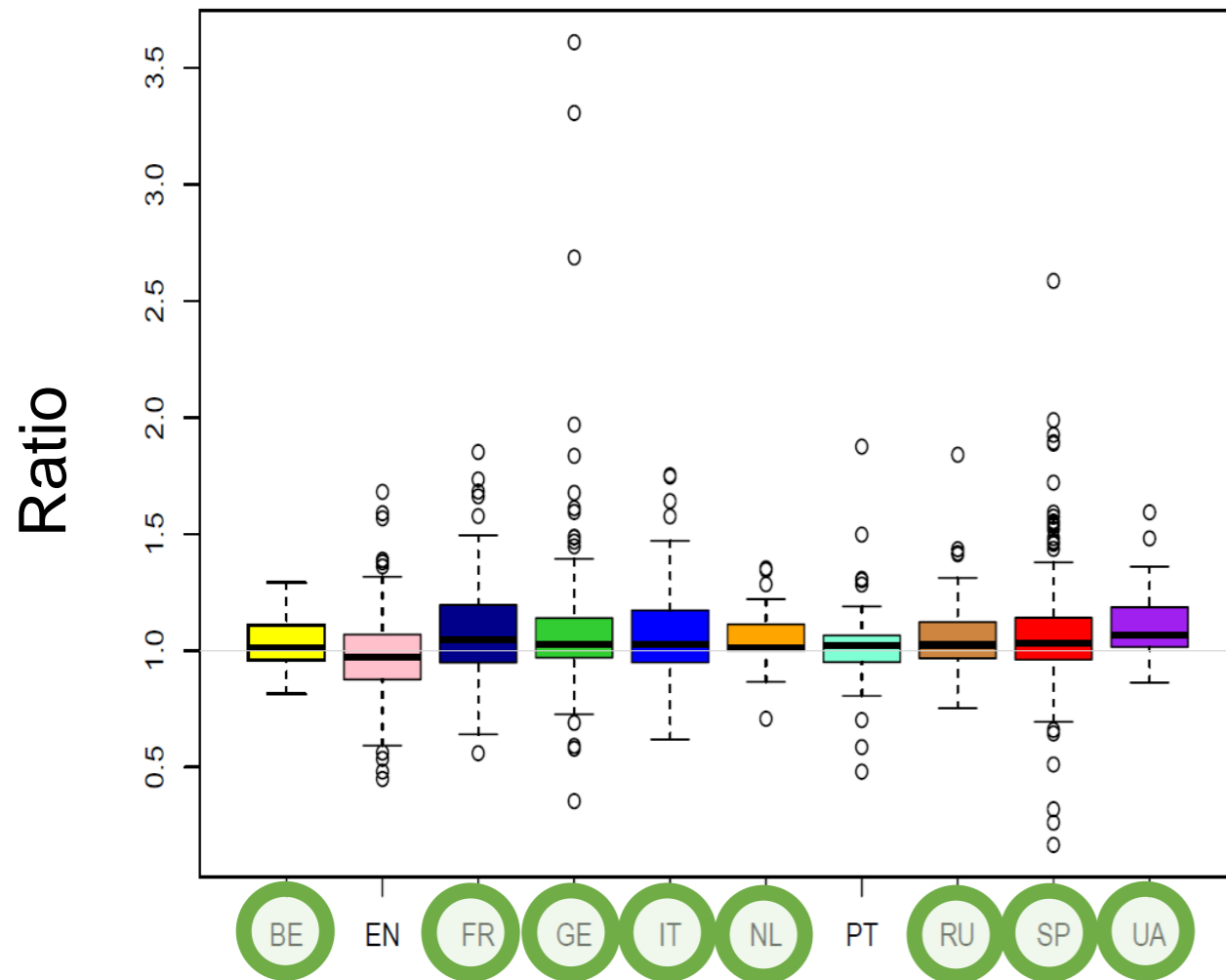
LINE-UPS

SV Werder Bremen	Bayern Munich
Starting Line-up: 4-4-2 Diamond	Starting Line-up: 4-2-3-1
Substitutes: 21 Sebastian Mielitz (GK) 15 Sebastian Prödl (CB) 16 Mikael Silvestre (CB) 7 Marko Arnautovic (CF) 9 Denni Avdic (CF) 41 Niclas Füllkrug (CF) Manager: Thomas Schaaf	Substitutes: 22 Hans Jörg Butt (GK) 27 David Alaba (LB) 17 Jérôme Boateng (CB) 39 Toni Kroos (CM) 7 Franck Ribéry (LW) 10 Arjen Robben (RW) 33 Mario Gómez (CF) Manager: Jupp Heynckes

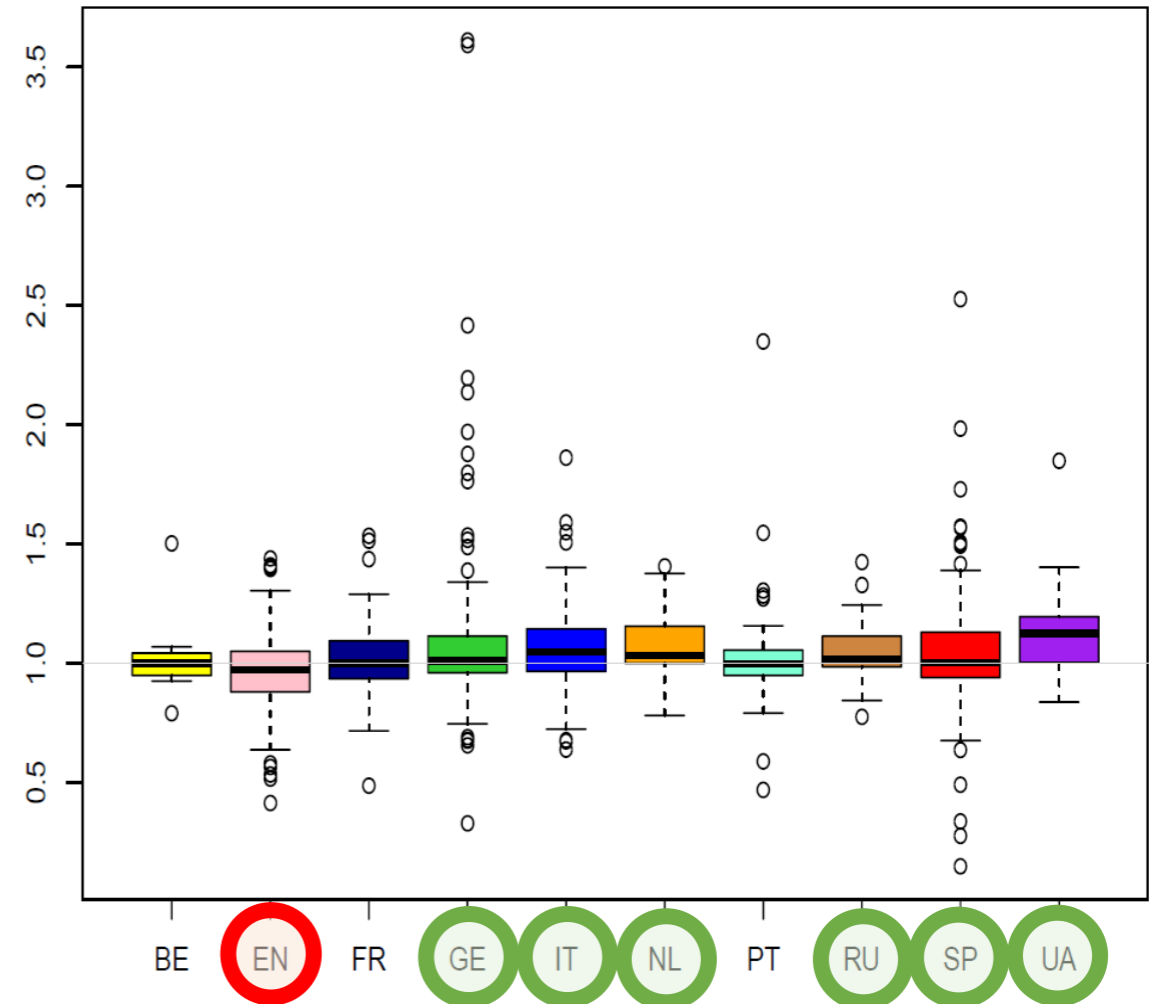
RESULTS



Domestic match before CL



Domestic match after CL



Most teams give their key players rest before (and after) the CL match

England is the only country to line-up weaker teams in CL

There is a lot of variation among teams and rounds

RESULTS



What is the impact of CL on performance in the domestic league?

Simple measure: points collected in domestic matches before CL – points collected in domestic matches not followed by CL

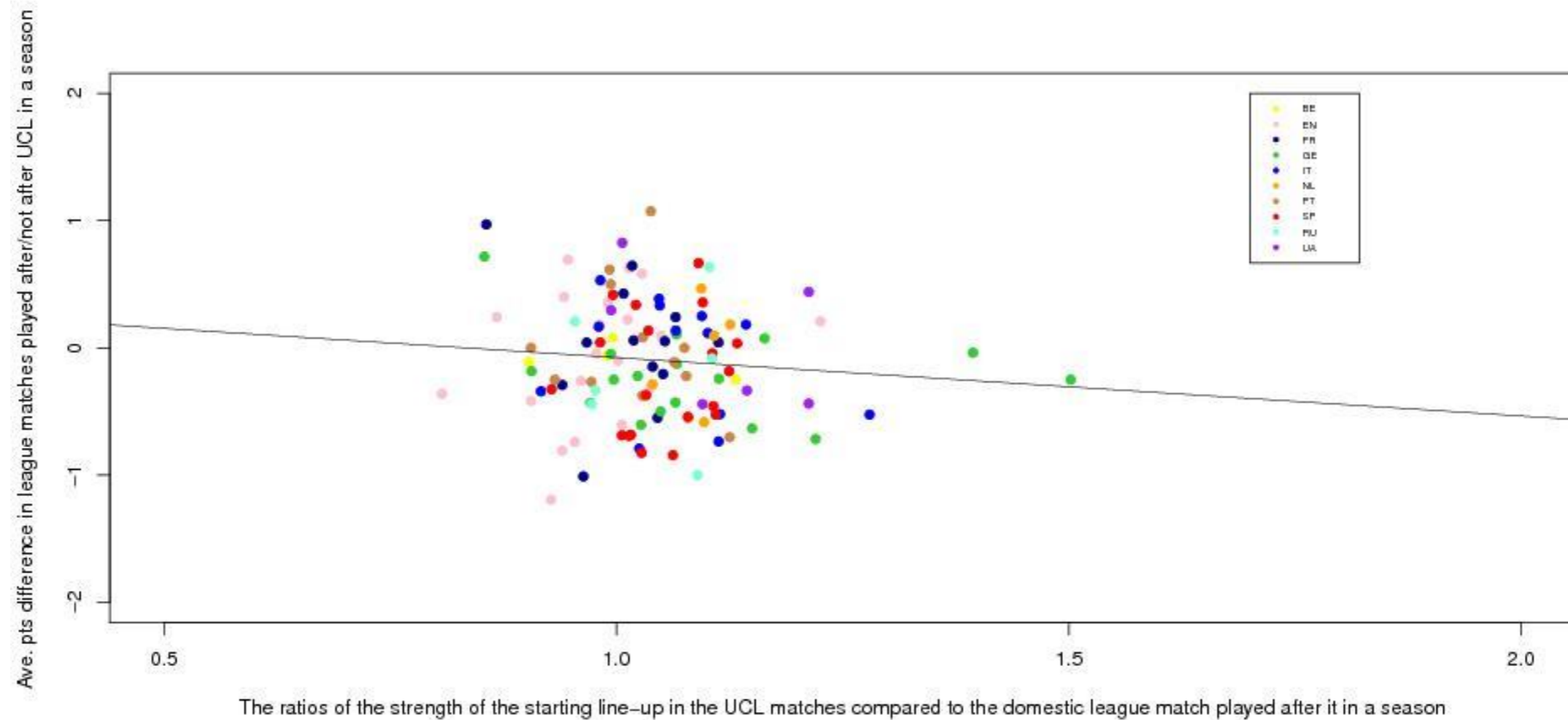
Country	Before UEFA CL					After UEFA CL				
	mean	st.dev.	#obs	t-value	p-value	mean	st.dev.	#obs	t-value	p-value
Belgium	0.105	0.789	4	0.267	0.807	-0.091	0.190	4	-0.953	0.411
England	-0.061	0.697	20	-0.393	0.699	0.063	0.528	20	0.531	0.602
France	0.018	0.534	13	0.124	0.903	0.050	0.304	13	0.592	0.565
Germany	0.059	0.442	17	0.554	0.587	-0.206	0.287	17	-2.948	0.009
Italy	-0.075	0.375	13	-0.725	0.482	0.006	0.373	13	0.062	0.951
Netherlands	0.058	0.350	6	0.403	0.704	-0.246	0.522	6	-1.153	0.301
Portugal	-0.160	0.575	12	-0.964	0.356	0.030	0.285	12	0.370	0.719
Russia	-0.324	0.339	6	-2.339	0.066	-0.286	0.538	6	-1.305	0.249
Spain	0.216	0.354	19	2.657	0.016	-0.207	0.468	19	-1.923	0.070
Ukraine	-0.176	0.338	6	-1.277	0.258	-0.002	0.531	6	-0.008	0.994

Note: we did not account for opponent strength
schedule may have an impact

RESULTS

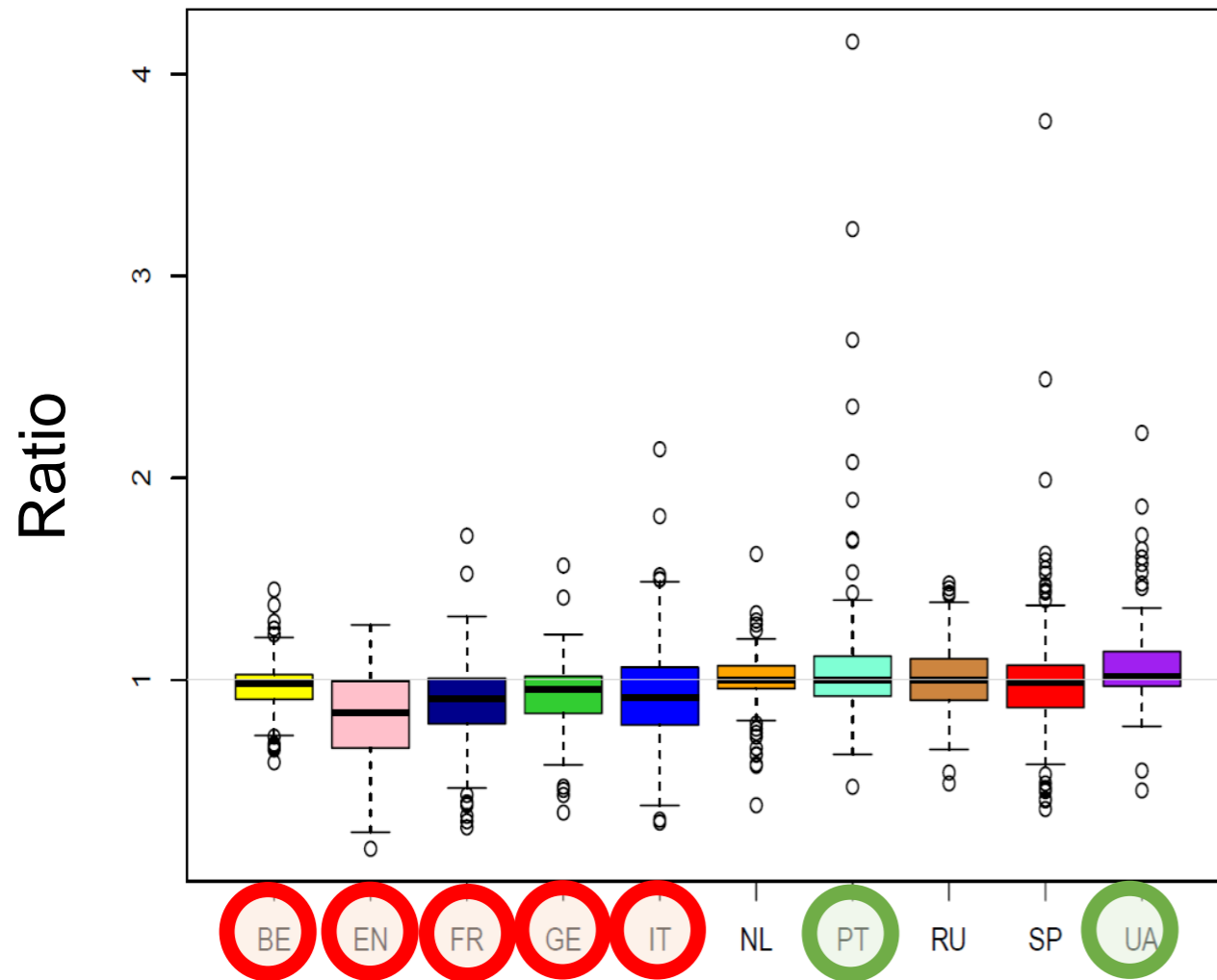


Is there a correlation between commitment and impact on the domestic results?

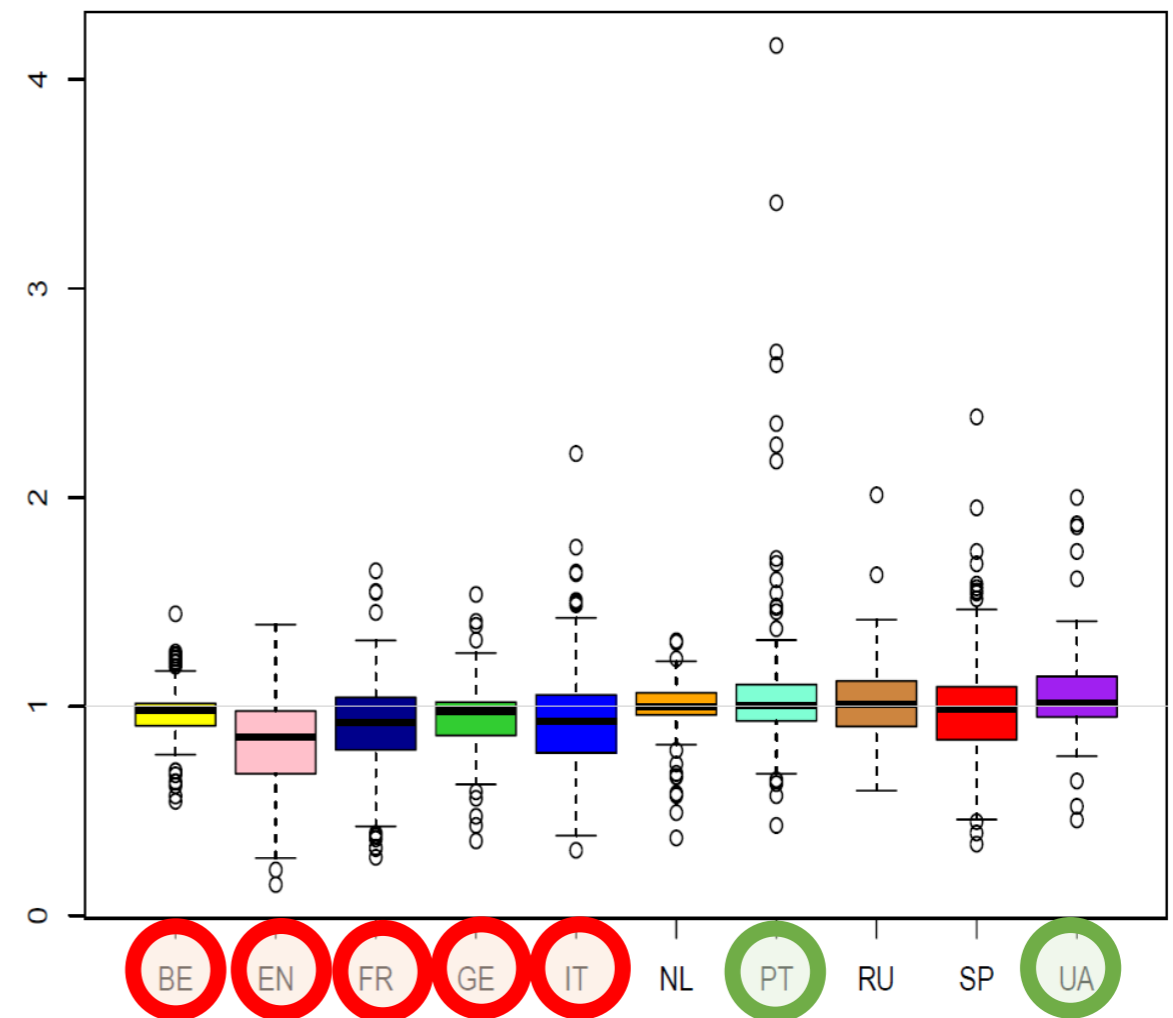


RESULTS

Domestic match before EL



Domestic match after EL



Only Portugal and Ukraine focus on Europa League

Lack of commitment to EL is most outspoken in England

RESULTS

What is the impact of EL on performance in the domestic league?

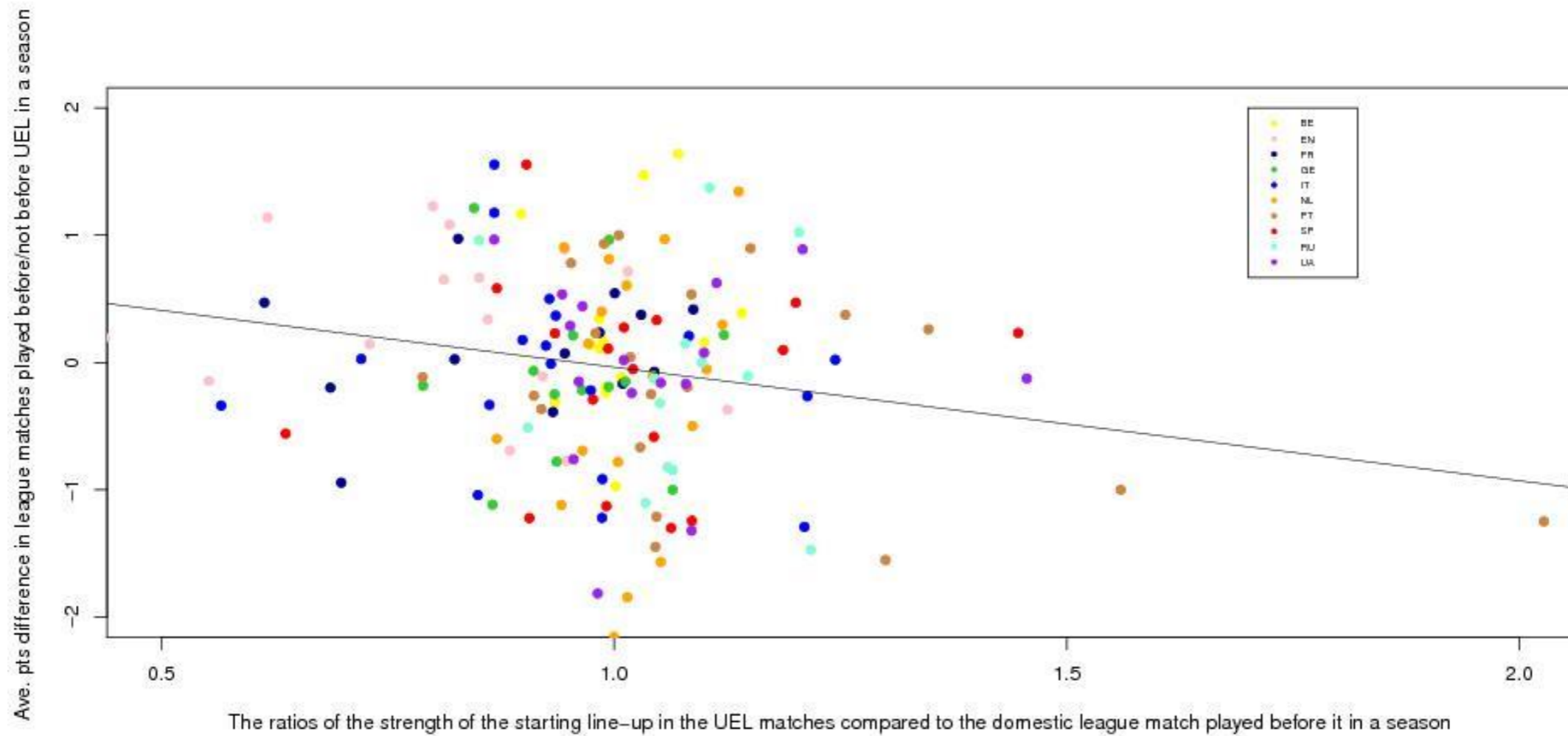
Simple measure: points collected in domestic matches before EL – points collected in domestic matches not followed by EL

Country	Before UEFA EL					After UEFA EL				
	mean	st.dev.	#obs	t-value	p-value	mean	st.dev.	#obs	t-value	p-value
Belgium	0.126	0.665	15	0.733	0.476	0.095	0.489	15	0.751	0.465
England	0.193	0.605	16	1.279	0.220	0.191	0.616	16	1.243	0.233
France	0.180	0.426	12	1.469	0.170	-0.298	0.558	12	-1.852	0.091
Germany	-0.015	0.812	13	-0.066	0.948	0.008	0.576	13	0.050	0.961
Italy	-0.031	0.595	19	-0.228	0.822	-0.022	0.537	19	-0.181	0.858
Netherlands	-0.014	0.738	18	-0.079	0.938	0.154	0.617	18	1.058	0.305
Portugal	-0.024	0.574	19	-0.181	0.859	-0.008	0.594	19	-0.056	0.956
Russia	-0.251	0.960	12	-0.907	0.384	0.081	0.673	13	0.434	0.672
Spain	-0.036	0.597	16	-0.241	0.813	0.375	0.753	16	1.992	0.065
Ukraine	0.038	0.368	14	0.388	0.704	0.196	0.586	16	1.340	0.200

Note: we did not account for opponent strength
schedule may have an impact

RESULTS

Is there a correlation between commitment and impact on the domestic results?



CONCLUSIONS

- Teams are more committed to the Champions League than their domestic league, except in England.
 - They side-line key players before (and after) the CL match
 - Teams do not suffer from worse results in domestic league, except in Germany
 - There is a lot of variation between clubs and CL rounds
- Teams are not committed to the Europa League, except in Ukraine and Portugal
 - EL teams do not perform worse in their domestic league
 - Higher commitment to EL correlates with worse results in domestic league

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