



TALENT DEVELOPMENT

On the African Continent

Introduction



Context

This case study examines the evolving landscape of football club partnerships and talent development trends Africa. Using extensive data analysis and predictive modeling, we explore common traits, key markets, notable examples, and the overall commercial ecosystem of African football. This report offers valuable insights for industry stakeholders, addressing both the potential and challenges in African football's rapidly changing partnership landscape.

Framework

This case study examines the growing trend of partnerships between European football clubs and African academies or clubs, with a focus on talent development. We analyze key examples such as the collaboration between **FC Metz and Generation Foot in Mali**, and **Ajax Cape Town** in South Africa. We explore common traits of these partnerships, their impact on African football development, and provide recommendations for optimizing talent identification and nurturing processes.

Trade Strategy

The tightening financial landscape in football, marked by media rights plateaus and stricter regulations, is pushing even giants like Barcelona towards a 'Moneyball' strategy of buying low and selling high. While smaller clubs, particularly in **Belgium**, have traditionally excelled at this approach, the potential decrease in broadcast revenue could intensify focus on talent development and shrewd market moves across the board. This shift might create an intriguing scenario where clubs of vastly different sizes, such as Gent and Barcelona, find themselves competing for the same undervalued players in a more crowded market.

FIND UNDERVALUED
PLAYERS

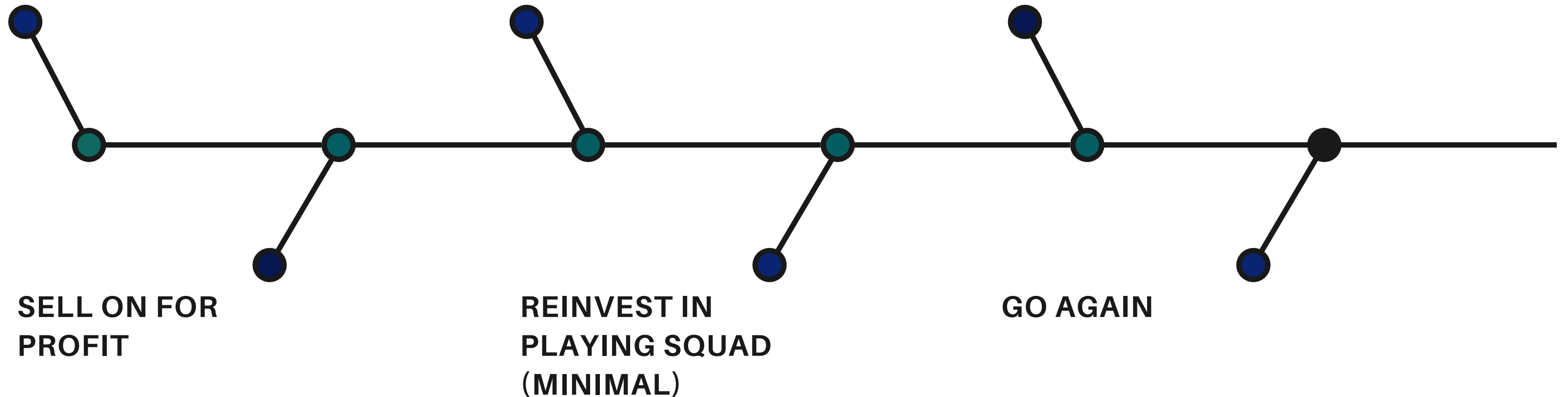
OR/AND, PROVIDE
ON FIELD VALUE

OR/AND, REINVEST
IN ACADEMY

SELL ON FOR
PROFIT

REINVEST IN
PLAYING SQUAD
(MINIMAL)

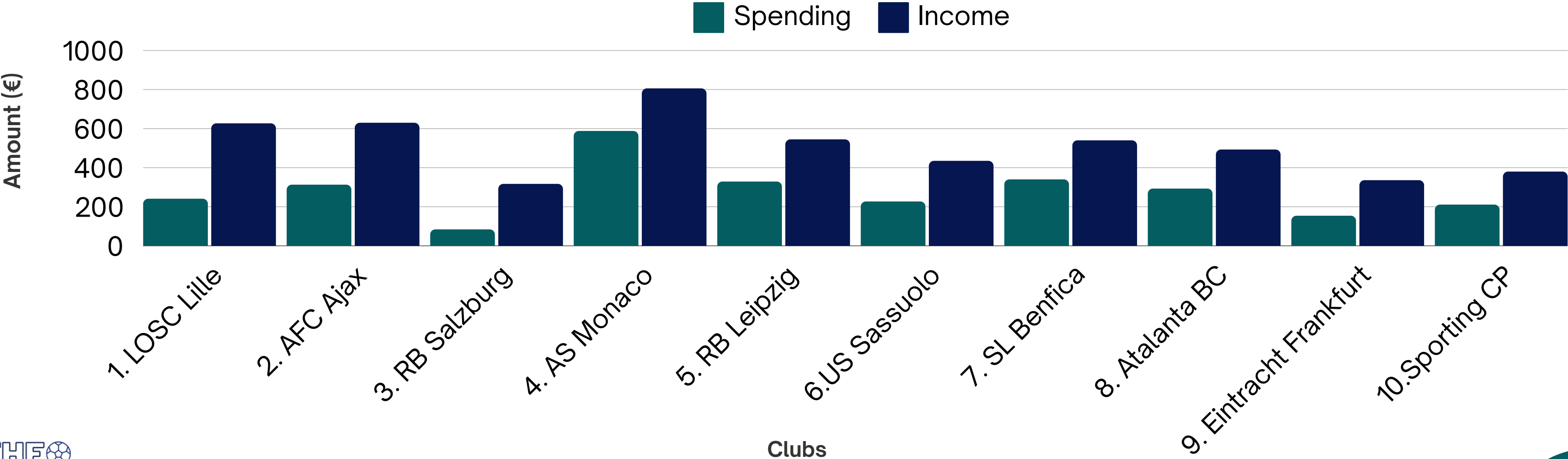
GO AGAIN



LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS

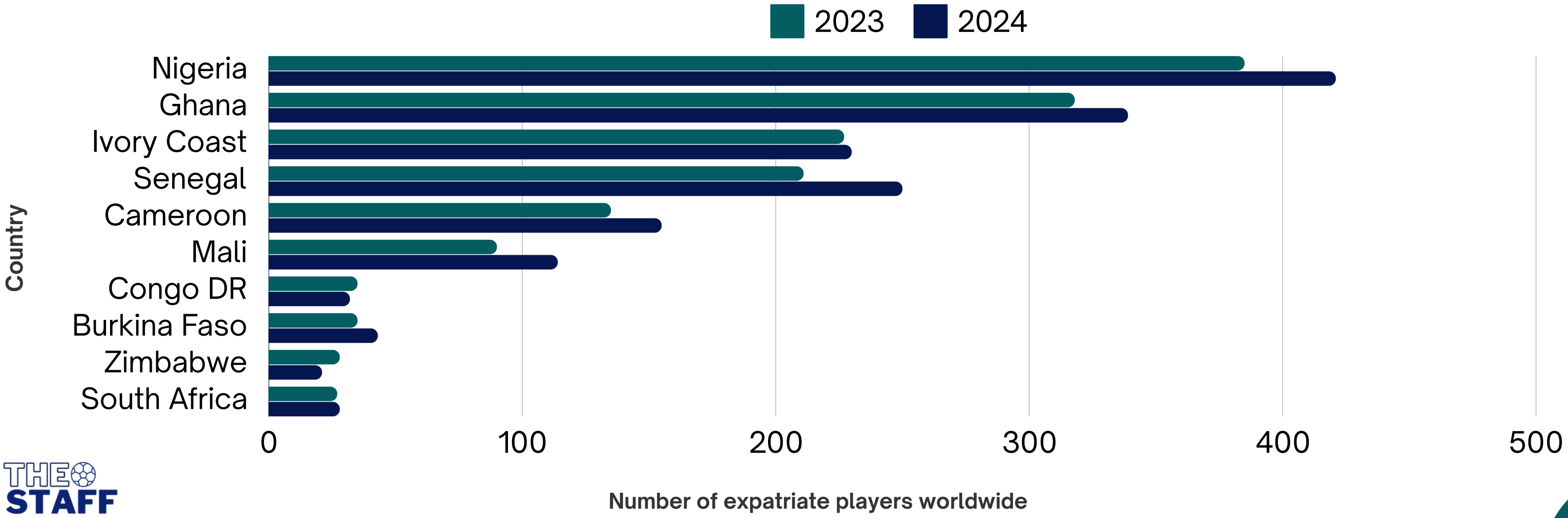
Top Player Trading Clubs

LOSC Lille stands out as the most successful club in transfer strategy, directly scouting talent in Africa with signings like Baleba and Bissouma. The Red Bull network, including RB Salzburg and RB Leipzig, aggressively pursues young talents such as **Karim Konate** and **Oumar Diakité**, leveraging their extensive club network for development. AS Monaco employs a multi-faceted approach, allowing players to take intermediate steps through clubs like Metz, utilizing **RB Salzburg** as a talent source, and benefiting from their relationship with Cercle Brugge as a feeder club, exemplified by players like Kevin Denkey and the Camaras (Lamine and Mohamed).



Expatriate Landscape

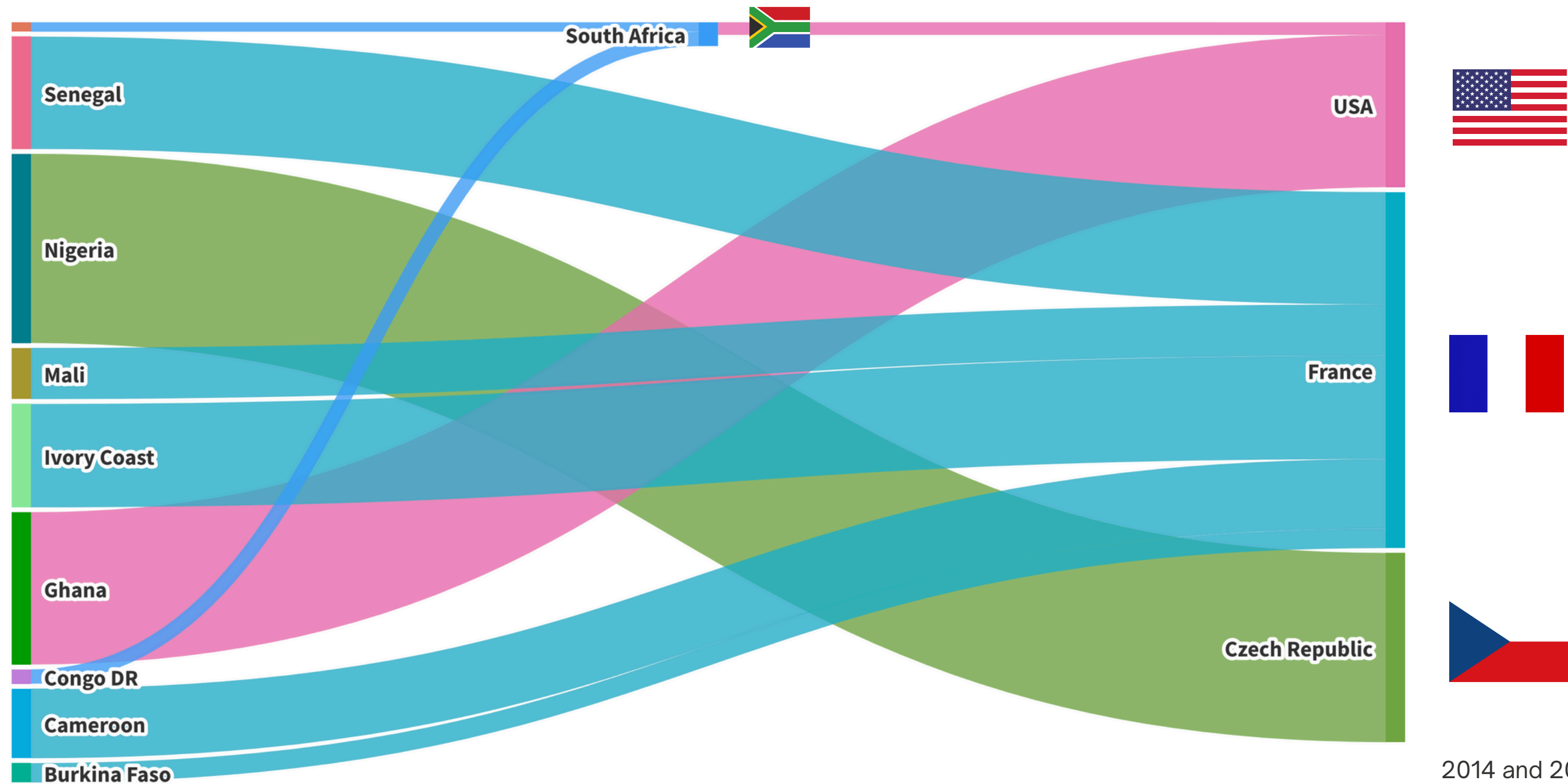
African nations contribute significantly to the global pool of expatriate footballers, accounting for **14.3%** of the total, with **Nigeria (421)**, **Ghana (339)**, and **Ivory Coast (230)** leading the continent. While individual African countries generally have fewer expatriates than top European and South American nations, the data reveals a concentration of talent from West Africa and widespread representation across the continent. This trend highlights Africa's role as a major talent exporter and suggests potential for further investment in youth development and local leagues to strengthen domestic football ecosystems.



2014 and 2023
2023 *CIES

Top Destinations

African expatriate football players show a significant upward trend from 2023 to 2024, with the top 10 African countries increasing their overseas representation by 142 players, led by **Nigeria and Senegal**. France emerges as the primary destination for African talent, while the diversification of destinations like the **USA and Czech Republic** suggests a broadening appeal of African players across different leagues and continents.



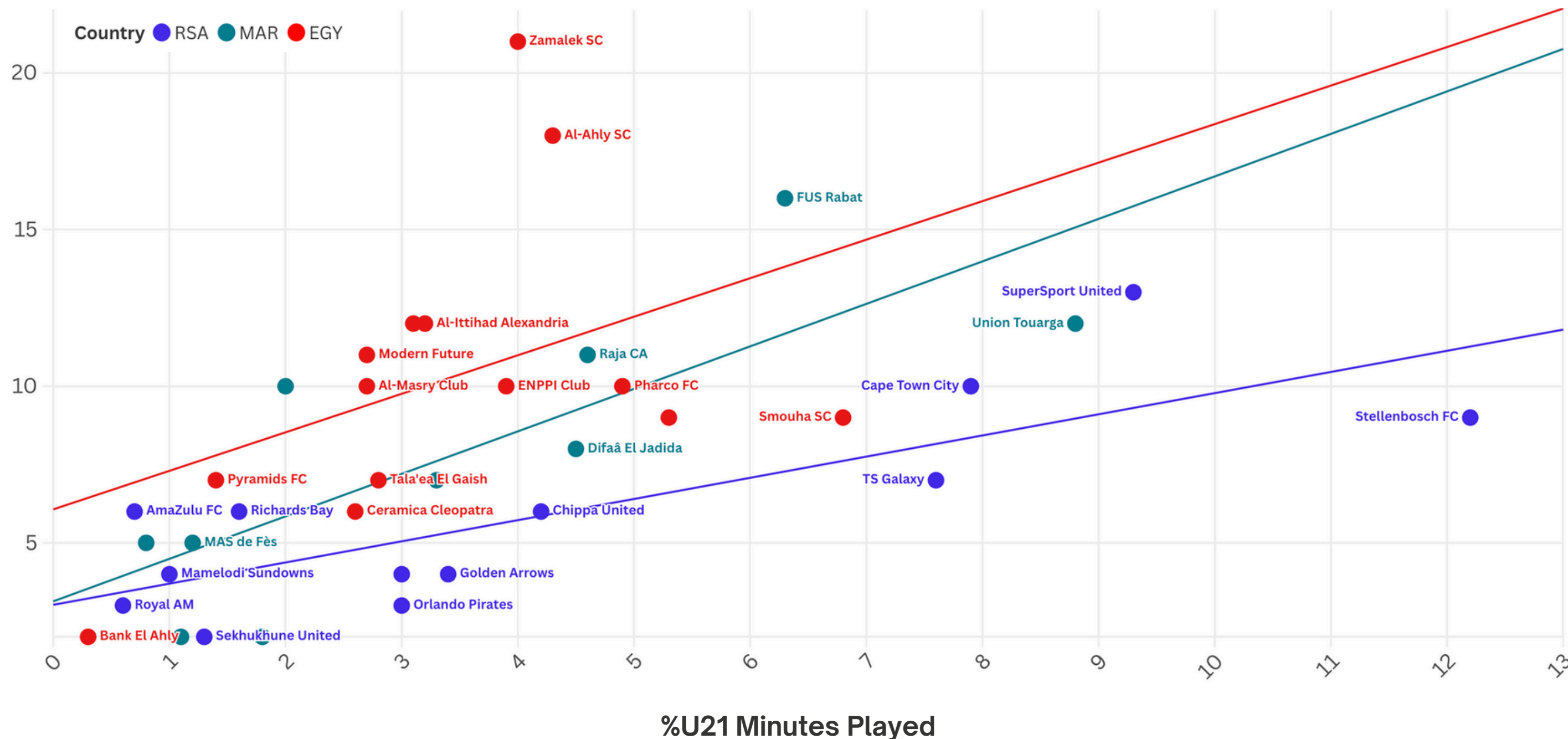
2014 and 2023
2023 *CIES

**A LACK OF AFRICAN
TOP-FLIGHT
FOOTBALL CLUBS
STRUGGLE TO SELL
DIRECTLY TO
EUROPE'S ELITE?**

Quality of Opportunity

African clubs in top leagues show a reluctance to give significant minutes to young players, with only **Stellenbosch FC** in South Africa allocating more than 10% of playing time to U21 players. This trend, coupled with high average squad ages nearing 29 in some leagues, may drive talent-seeking clubs to look beyond established African teams and leagues. Additionally, the vast population in countries like **Nigeria** offers a deep talent pool, making it an attractive source for discovering promising young players outside traditional club structures.

U21 Players Fieled



Club Trained Players

Egyptian Premier League clubs show strong commitment to developing local talent, with **ENPPI Club** leading at 97% club-trained and 45% association-trained players, far above league averages. While giants **Al-Ahly** and **Zamalek** nurture homegrown talent well, smaller clubs like Ismaily SC also excel in this area. This league-wide focus on cultivating Egyptian talent contrasts with some larger African clubs, such as **Mamelodi Sundowns**, which tend to rely more on external recruitment.



CASE EXAMPLES

Case Study 1

Ousmane Diomande's rapid rise from a **€400,000 prospect** to a **€40 million-valued** defender at Sporting CP in just one year highlights the effectiveness of African talent scouting and development. His journey from Ivory Coast through Midtjylland to becoming a target for elite European clubs like Arsenal and Real Madrid exemplifies the lucrative pathway for African players in modern football. Diomande's case underscores the potential for massive returns on investment in young African talent, with a big-money transfer seeming inevitable in his future.

Ousmane Diomande

Club - Sporting CP

Position - Defender

Nationality - Cote d'Ivoire

Current MV - €40m

				
→	→	→	→	→
<i>OS Abobo</i>	<i>FC Midtjylland</i>	<i>Mafra</i>	<i>Sporting CP</i>	
League - Cote d'Ivoire 3rd Division	League - Danish Super League Date: 2022 Type - Permanet Transfer	League - Liga Portugal 2 Date -2022 Type - Loan	League - Liga Portugal Year -2023 Type - Permanet Transfer	

MV - 400k →

MV - €40m →



Case Study 2

Carlos Baleba's journey from Cameroon to Brighton further exemplifies the rapid rise of African talent in European football. His swift progression from Lille's team to a €30 million Premier League transfer in just one year showcases the accelerated development path for exceptional African players. As Baleba continues to impress in high-profile matches, he is likely to become another lucrative transfer success story, highlighting Brighton's effective strategy in developing and selling African talent.

Carlos Baleba

Club - Brighton

Position - Midfielder

Nationality - Cameroon

Current MV - €22.00m

 →	 →	 →	 →
<i>Brasseries du Cameroun</i>	<i>LOSC Lille</i>	<i>Brighton</i>	
League - South Africa Premier Division	League - Ligue 1 Date: 2021 Type - Permanent Transfer	League - English Premier League Date - 2023 Type - Permanent Transfer	

MV - 150k →

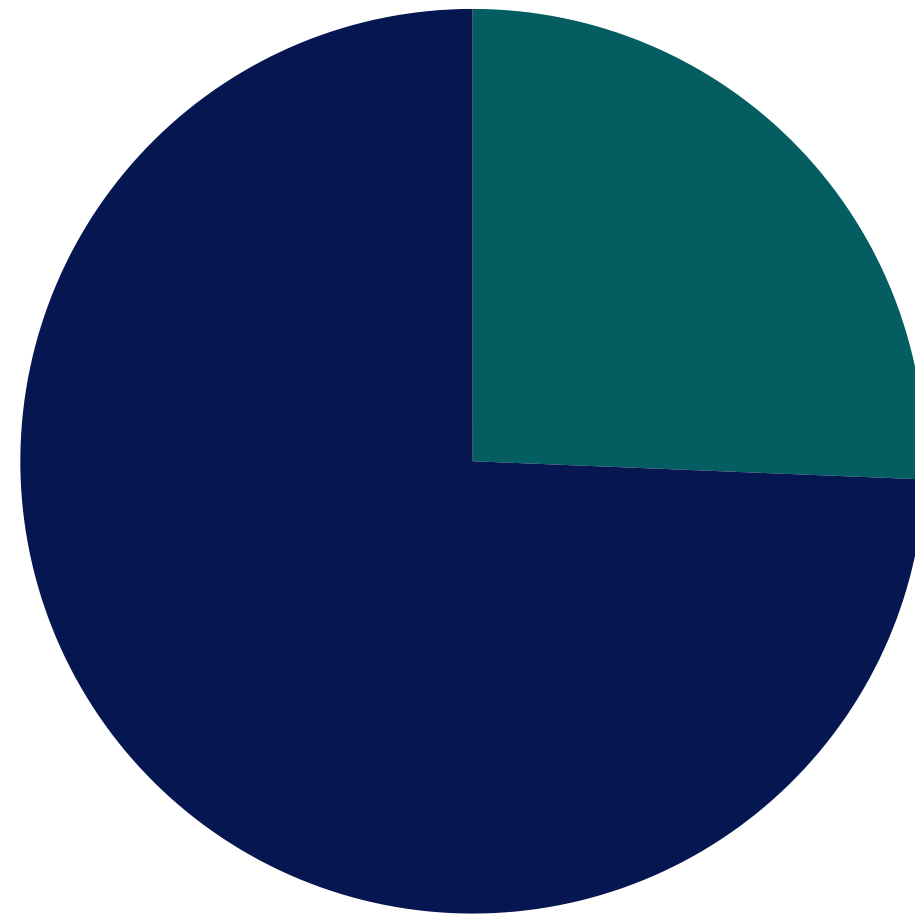
MV - €22m →



PARTNERSHIP EXAMPLES

FC Metz–Generation Foot

The partnership between FC Metz and Génération Foot, established in 2003 and recently extended to 2033, has been a significant success, producing top talents like Sadio Mané, Ismaila Sarr, and Pape Matar Sarr. Since 2013/14, 20 players have transferred directly from Génération Foot to FC Metz, representing 25.6% of all departures, while other players have moved to various European clubs across France, Belgium, North Macedonia, Malta, and Poland. This partnership has not only provided FC Metz with valuable players and transfer income but has also contributed to the development of Senegalese football, with six players from this pathway recently starting for Senegal's national team in an AFCON match.



Total Departures

Key Players

Ismaila Sarr was sold by Metz for €17 million in 2017 (club record sale at the time), Pape Matar Sarr was sold for €16.9 million in 2021, Sadio Mané was sold for €4 million in 2012, but later transfers totaled over €100 million.

National Impact

6 players from this pathway started for Senegal in a recent AFCON match, showing the quality produced.

Details

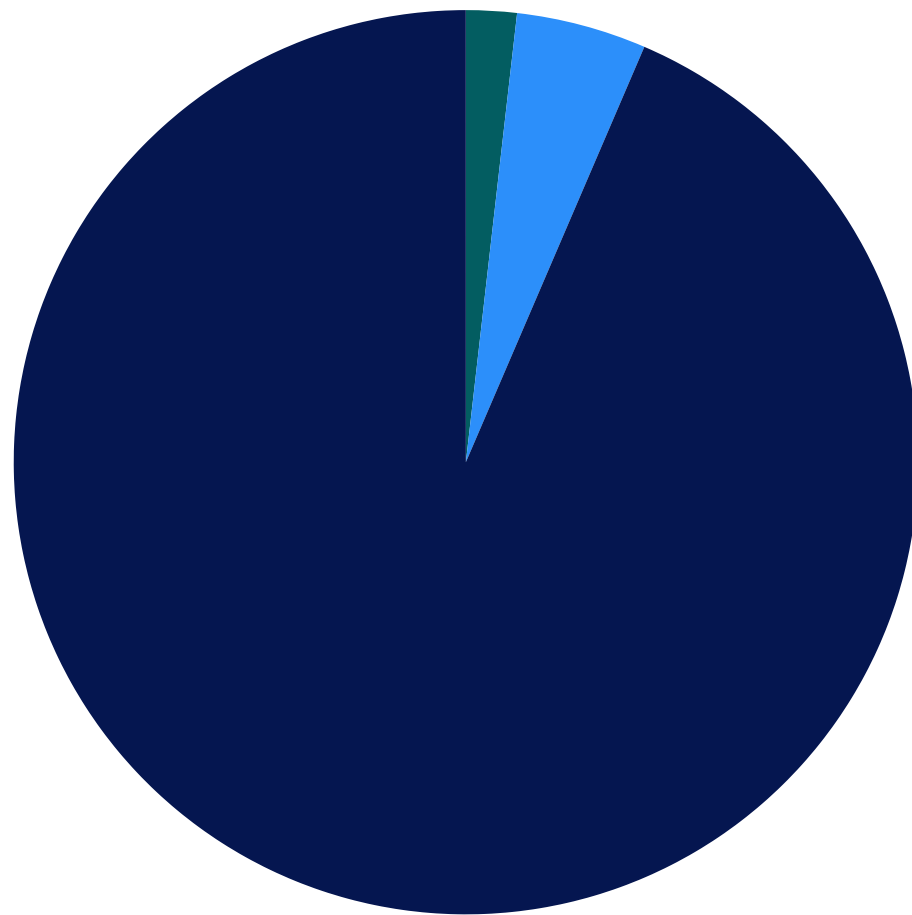
Metz built a training facility in Dakar in 2014 to develop players aged 15-18 before they can move to Europe at 18. The partnership has been renewed for another 10 years, showing its ongoing value.

AJAX AMSTERDAM – AJAX CAPE TOWN

Ajax Amsterdam's 21-year partnership with Ajax Cape Town ended in 2020 due to insufficient talent production at the desired level for European football. While the venture did produce some high-quality players who succeeded locally and internationally, such as Steven Pienaar and Thulani Serero, the overall output did not meet Ajax Amsterdam's expectations. The partnership's decline was marked by Ajax Cape Town's relegation in 2017-18 and subsequent failure to regain top-flight status, highlighting the growing disparity between the two clubs' ambitions and results.



■ Ajax Amsterdam ■ Europe ■ Other Clubs



Total Departures

Key Players

Steven Pienaar (2002) Eyong Enoh (2008)
Daylon Claasen (2009) Thulani Serero (2011)
Leo Thethani (2018) Dean Solomons (2018)

Other Key Players

Bryce Moon to Panathinaikos (2008) Thulani Serero to Ajax (2011) Keagan Dolly to Montpellier (2017, via Sundowns)

Details

The partnership did not produce as many high-profile transfers to Europe as initially hoped. Most departures were to other South African clubs. The relationship ended in 2020

Other Partnerships

Football clubs are employing various partnership models to enhance talent development and global reach. These range from strategic alliances like Cape Town Spurs F.C.'s collaboration with Core Sports Capital to comprehensive networks like Right to Dream's academies. Whether through multi-club ownership, talent development schemes, or direct partnerships with European clubs, these initiatives primarily focus on cultivating young talent in Africa, especially West Africa, to create pathways to top European leagues.



***Cape Town Spurs &
Core Sports Capital***

South Africa



***FC Nordsjælland &
Right to Dream***

Ghana



***Gambinos Stars
& Bayern Munich***

Gambia



***FC Barcelona &
Africa Foot***

Mali



***FC Midtjylland & FC
Ebedei***

Nigeria



***Paris Saint-Germain
Academy Senegal***

Senegal

INNOVATION IN THE CONTINENT

Bridging the Gap

AFRISKAUT

Comprehensive Player Profiles

Afriskaut offers detailed player profiles including biodata, performance statistics, and video highlights. This feature allows scouts to thoroughly evaluate players' skills, potential, and development over time.

Advanced Search and Filtering

The platform provides powerful search and filtering tools based on criteria such as Afriskaut rating, region, age, and position. This enables recruiters to quickly narrow down their search and find players that match their specific requirements.

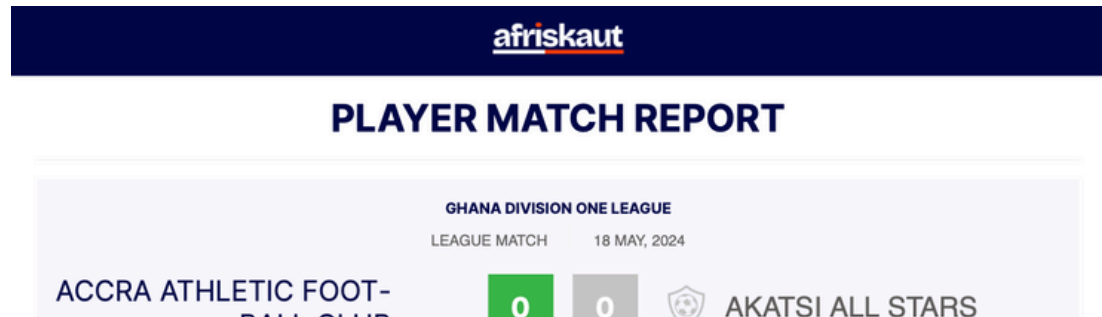
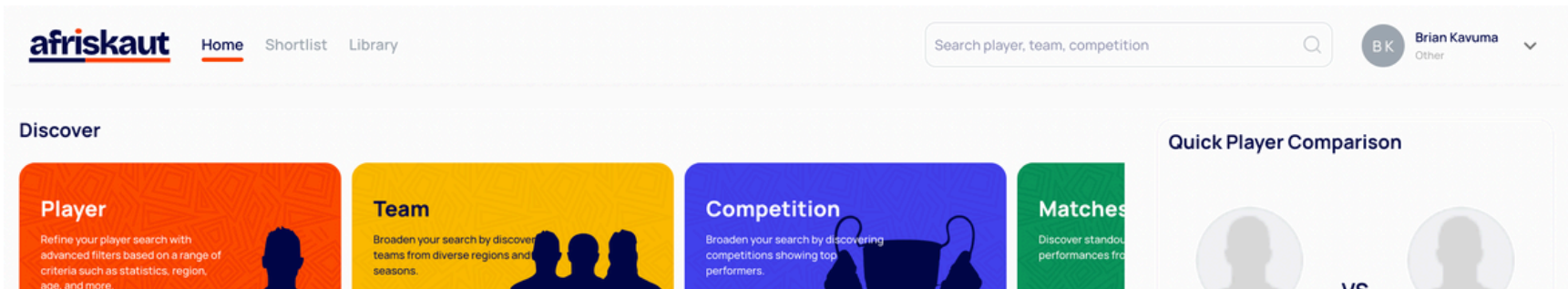
Competition and Team Insights

Afriskaut offers insights into top African competitions and teams, showcasing the best-performing players across various statistics. This feature helps scouts identify emerging talents in specific leagues or teams, providing a broader context for player performance.



Afriskaut is a robust scouting platform that revolutionizes talent discovery in African football. By leveraging data and AI technology, it provides comprehensive player information, statistics, and video highlights for over 8,000 African players, making it significantly easier for scouts and recruiters to identify undervalued talent across the continent without the need for extensive travel.

Snapshots



A circular portrait of a young Black man with short hair, wearing a blue soccer jersey with white stripes and a crest. He is looking slightly to the side with a neutral expression.

END