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70TH BALLON D'OR · DATA PREVIEW

The Ballon d'Or snubs

The three biggest omissions, through the lens of **xValue**

SOCCERMENT RESEARCH | October 2026



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01

Introduction

Every Ballon d'Or shortlist leaves someone out. This year we looked at the data for and against the three biggest names who did not make the 30: Désiré Doué, Raphinha and Enzo Fernández.

The sample is the **2025/26 season** in Europe's **top five leagues**, the **Champions League** and the **2026 World Cup**: 2,683 players in total. Rankings **per 90 minutes** (a player's output scaled to a full match, so that players with different playing time can be compared) only include players with at least 1,800 minutes (1,109 players). Ranks are across the whole of Europe unless stated otherwise.

The numbers come from **xValue**, Soccerment's new event-value metric, combined with season stats from **SICS Atlas**, our recently launched AI platform for scouting and match analysis. The next section explains what xValue measures.

02

What is xValue?

Goals and assists only tell us about **the last two touches of an attack**. Most of the work that makes a chance possible happens earlier, and xValue is built to give it credit. At any moment in a match, the team in possession has some chance of **scoring** in the next 30 seconds and some chance of **conceding**: the difference between the two is the **value of the game state**. Every on-ball event (a pass, a carry, a tackle, a shot) moves the game from one state to the next, and **its xValue is the change it causes**.

$$V(S) = P(score\ within\ 30\ s \mid S) - P(concede\ within\ 30\ s \mid S)$$

$$xValue(event) = V(state\ after) - V(state\ before)$$

V = value of the game state S · P = probability

Values are in goals: an event worth +0.05 added five hundredths of a goal to the team's net expected outcome; a negative value means the event made the team more likely to concede than to score. Passes, carries, dribbles, tackles, interceptions, clearances, blocks, shots and saves all sit **on the same scale**, so a

centre-back's interception and a winger's dribble can finally be compared. Adding up all of a player's events gives his **season total**: how much he moved his team towards scoring and away from conceding, whatever his position.

THREE CHOICES BEHIND THE METRIC

Goals, not expected goals

The model learns from **real goals**, not from expected goals (xG, the probability that a shot becomes a goal), so it is not limited by what an xG model can see.

30 seconds, not ten events

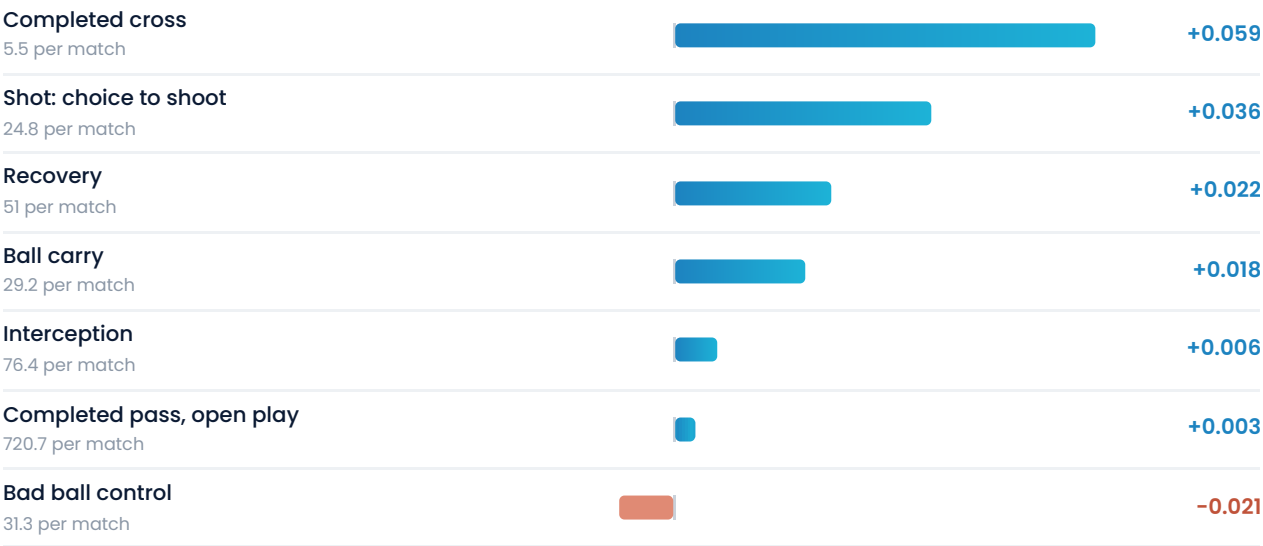
Ten events can last 20 seconds or more than a minute. A **time horizon** judges a counter-attack and a slow build-up on the same footing.

The shot in two steps

The **choice to shoot** and the **strike** are valued separately; whether the ball beats the goalkeeper is luck and goalkeeping, so it is not credited to the shooter.

The model was trained on **nearly 15,000 matches** and tested on two full seasons it had never seen: the 2025/26 Serie A and Premier League. It never sees who is playing: no team, player or competition enters the model, so **it rates the event, not the reputation**.

WHAT IS AN EVENT WORTH?



Average xValue of each type of event and how many there are in a match, top five leagues 2025/26 (1,751 matches).

Want to go deeper? Our blog post introducing xValue explains the full methodology: how the model is trained, how every event is credited and how it was validated.

Read: Introducing xValue →

03

How we picked them

To avoid contradicting ourselves between season total and per 90 minutes, we used a single rule with **two gates**: a player is in if he ranks in the **top 30 by season total** *or* in the **top 12 per 90 minutes** with at least 1,800 minutes.

In total, **32 players pass**: 11 nominees and **21 who were not nominated**. **Sixteen nominees pass neither gate** (Bruno Fernandes, Lautaro, Upamecano, Dembélé, Cubarsí, Nuno Mendes, João Neves, Hakimi, Gabriel, Marquinhos, Saliba, Rodri, Pacho, Cucurella, Ferran Torres and Fabián Ruiz). The other three nominees are not part of this comparison. All three players in this report pass: **Doué through both gates**, **Raphinha through the per-90-minutes gate** and **Enzo Fernández through the season total**.

> **Two limitations of the model to keep in mind.** xValue only measures **actions on the ball**, so it undervalues defenders: all nine nominated defenders rank 65th or lower. And it **does not see cards**: Enzo Fernández's red card in the World Cup final carries no weight. Where this matters, we say so in the case against.

HOW TO READ THE PLAYER PAGES

Season total xValue

The sum of the xValue of all a player's events over the season.

xValue per 90 minutes

The season total scaled to a full match, so that players with different playing time can be compared. Only players with at least 1,800 minutes are ranked.

Rank

Position among all 2,683 players in the sample, or among the 1,109 with at least 1,800 minutes for per-90 rankings.

Positive match

A match in which the player's total xValue was above zero: overall, he moved his team towards scoring more than towards conceding.

Skill ranks

Ranks for passing, carrying, shooting or defending refer to the xValue a player earned from that type of event.

Expected goals (xG)

The probability that a shot becomes a goal, based on where and how it is taken. Non-penalty xG (npxG) leaves penalties out.

Expected assists (xA)

The expected goals of the shot that a pass sets up: the probability that the pass becomes an assist.

Expected Threat (xT)

How much a pass or a carry increases the chance of scoring by moving the ball into a more dangerous zone.

Expected Offensive Value Added (xOVA)

Soccerment's metric that combines expected goals and expected assists into a player's overall attacking output.

Key passes · progressive carries

Passes that lead directly to a shot · carries that move the ball substantially towards the opponents' goal.

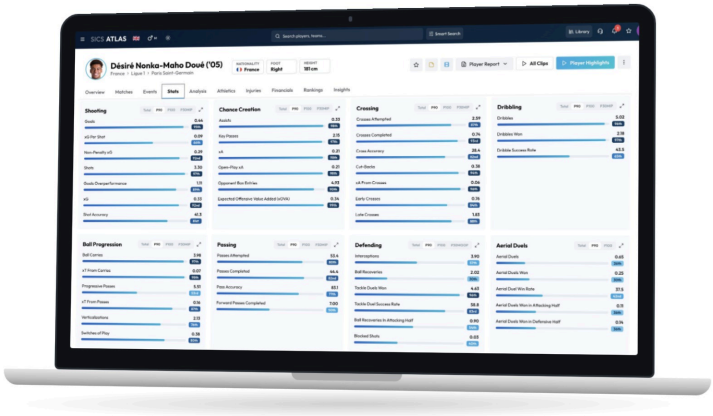
04 · SNUB



Désiré Doué

PSG · Ligue 1 / Champions League 2025/26 | **France** · World Cup 2026
2,832 minutes · 44 matches in the sample

+15.7	0.500	+5.9	13 + 9	7 of 9
XVALUE TOTAL · 25TH	XVALUE PER 90 MIN · 11TH	XVALUE IN CHAMPIONS LEAGUE · 11TH	GOALS + ASSISTS	NOMINATED TEAM-MATES BEHIND HIM



FOR

- **Best inside attacking midfielder in Europe**, both by season total and per 90 minutes (147 players in the role).
- **Won the Champions League as a key player**: +5.9 xValue in 934 minutes, 11th in the competition by total and 9th per 90 minutes among players with at least 630 minutes. Braces against Leverkusen and Monaco, two assists in the first leg of the semi-final against Bayern, and a start in the final against Arsenal (137 minutes, +0.79).
- **Ahead of 7 of his 9 nominated PSG team-mates**, behind only Kvaratskhelia and Vitinha. **Dembélé, the holder, is 75th in Europe** and worth +1.4 in the Champions League, 124th of 167.
- **Value from carrying the ball and winning fouls**: 17th per 90 minutes for the xValue of his carries and dribbles, **3rd in Europe for the xValue of fouls won** (0.111 per 90 minutes), 16th for progressive carries (carries that move the ball significantly towards goal) and 23rd for carries into the box.
- **World Cup worth +2.1 xValue** in 448 minutes, 22nd in the tournament by total. Started almost every game and scored against Norway.

AGAINST

- **Two muscle injuries** (calf at the start of the season, thigh at the end of October): **23 of 34 Ligue 1 matches**, only 15 of them for at least 60 minutes; 13 of 17 in the Champions League, 9 for at least 60.
- **On the bench for the World Cup semi-final** lost to Spain: Deschamps preferred Barcola, and Doué played 41 minutes as a substitute.
- **His value does not come from playmaking**: 170th per 90 minutes for the xValue of his passes. He is a player of bursts and box presence, so comparing him with Vitinha or Neves means comparing different roles.
- **Only 4 league goals**: his scoring is concentrated in the Champions League and the World Cup.
- **36 positive matches out of 44** (82%), the second-lowest share of the three, after Raphinha.

OUR READ

The hardest exclusion to defend. The data raises no objection to his performance, only to his minutes and his place in PSG's pecking order. In the Champions League Doué was worth +5.9; Dembélé, the holder, +1.4.

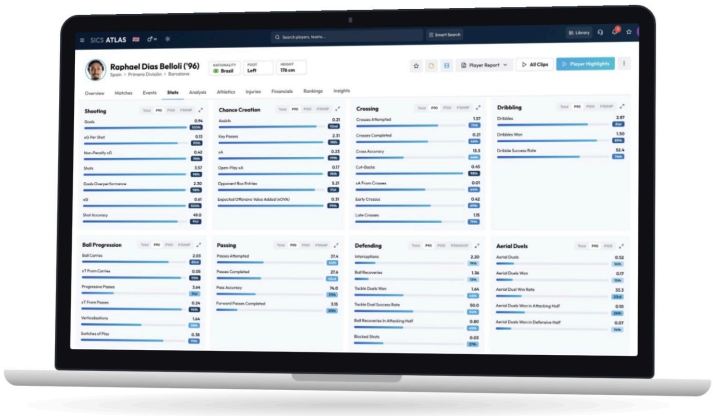
05 · SNUB



Raphinha

Barcelona · La Liga / Champions League 2025/26 | **Brazil** · World Cup 2026
2,221 minutes · 31 matches in the sample

+13.4	0.543	0.618	16 + 5	22 / 38
XVALUE TOTAL · 35TH	XVALUE PER 90 MIN · 7TH	PER 90 MIN IN LA LIGA · 1ST	GOALS + ASSISTS	LA LIGA MATCHES PLAYED



FOR

- **The best player in La Liga per 90 minutes** (0.618 xValue in 1,486 minutes), **ahead of Yamal** (0.602) and **Vinícius** (0.547). 7th in Europe per 90 minutes and 5th among wingers.
- **Strong output on the classic metrics**, all per 90 minutes: 10th in Europe for goals plus assists, 10th for non-penalty expected goals plus expected assists (npxG+xA), 10th for expected assists (xA, the probability that a pass becomes an assist), 14th for key passes (passes that lead to a shot), 23rd for Expected Threat (xT, how much passes and carries move the ball into dangerous areas) and 8th for Expected Offensive Value Added (xOVA, combined attacking output from xG and xA).
- **16 goals in 2,221 minutes**, and 13th per 90 minutes for the xValue of his shots.
- **The best single match of the three**: Newcastle, second leg of the Champions League round of 16, two goals and two assists, +2.65 xValue.
- **The internal comparison**: Barcelona's other attacking nominee besides Yamal is **Ferran Torres, 392nd by total** and 459th per 90 minutes, with 0.175 per 90 minutes in La Liga.

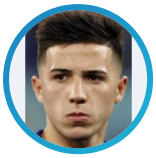
AGAINST

- **Availability**: around 25 matches missed for club and country with hamstring injuries (a relapse at the end of October, another layoff in March after the friendly with France, an injury at the World Cup against Haiti after 40 minutes).
- **Half a season**: 22 of 38 La Liga matches (16 of them for at least 60 minutes), 7 of 12 in the Champions League, and 2 of 5 for Brazil at the World Cup (144 minutes, −0.11).
- **Missing from the two biggest stages**: the Champions League quarter-final lost to Atlético and, in practice, the whole World Cup.
- **35th by season total**, outside the top 30: his case rests on the per-90-minutes gate alone.
- **24 positive matches out of 31** (77%), the lowest share of the three, with 7 negative ones.

OUR READ

An exclusion explained by minutes, not by performance. Raphinha is the per-minute case: per 90 minutes, nobody in La Liga was better, but he played half a season.

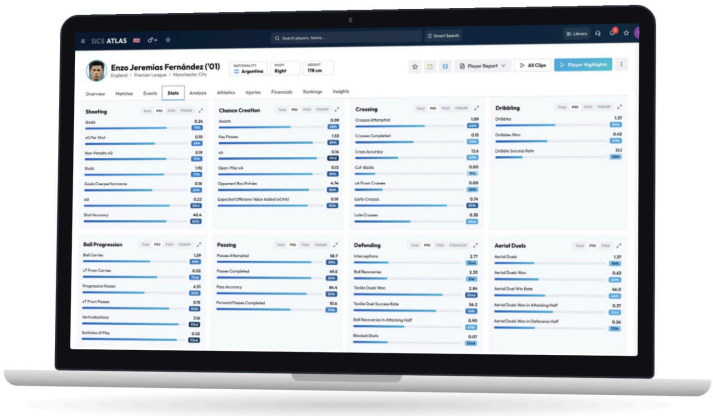
06 · SNUB



Enzo Fernández

Chelsea · Premier League / Champions League 2025/26 | **Argentina** · World Cup 2026
5,033 minutes · 53 matches in the sample

+19.6	0.351	1st	15 + 5	93'
XVALUE TOTAL · 9TH	XVALUE PER 90 MIN · 38TH	MIDFIELDER IN EUROPE	GOALS + ASSISTS	RED CARD IN THE WORLD CUP FINAL



FOR

- **The best midfielder in Europe by season total**, ahead of Rice (+18.7), Vitinha (+17.6), Valverde (+17.5) and Bellingham (+17.0). 2nd in the Premier League by total (+15.2), behind Senesi.
- **Among the 209 midfielders in the sample**: **1st for goals** (15), **goals plus assists** (20), non-penalty expected goals plus expected assists (npxG+xA, 19.7) and Expected Offensive Value Added (xOVA); 2nd for expected assists (xA, 8.2) and one-two combinations (39); 3rd for opponents bypassed with passes that break the last defensive line (626).
- **Always available**: 36 of 38 Premier League matches, 10 of 10 in the Champions League, 7 of 8 at the World Cup. His **5,033 minutes** are the most in the top 10.
- **Consistency**: 45 positive matches out of 53 (85%), best match +1.65 xValue.
- He answers the objection that xValue rewards attackers: he is **the only midfielder in Europe's top 10**.

AGAINST

- **Sent off in the World Cup final**: a yellow card at 82' for dissent, a second at 93' for a challenge on Cubarsí. Argentina played the 30 minutes of extra time with ten men and lost 1-0. The award's **third criterion is class and fair play**.
- **xValue does not see cards**: his final counts like any other match (−0.05).
- **Team results**: Chelsea finished 10th in the Premier League with two managers and went out of the Champions League in the round of 16 against PSG.
- **Value built on volume**: only 38th per 90 minutes. +3.1 xValue in the Champions League (45th in the competition) and +1.4 at the World Cup (66th).
- **A low defensive contribution for the role**: 123 ball recoveries, 118th of 209 midfielders, and 885th per 90 minutes for the xValue of his defending.

OUR READ

The strongest numbers of the three and the most awkward story: Europe's best midfielder on the pitch and, in everyone's memory, the man sent off in the final.

OUR VERDICT

Doué is the hardest snub to explain

+5.9
Doué's xValue in the Champions League

+1.4
Dembélé's (the holder) 124th of 167

0.618
Raphinha's xValue per 90 min 1st in La Liga

Of the three, Désiré Doué is the exclusion the data finds hardest to defend: there is no objection to his performance, only to his minutes and his place in PSG's pecking order.

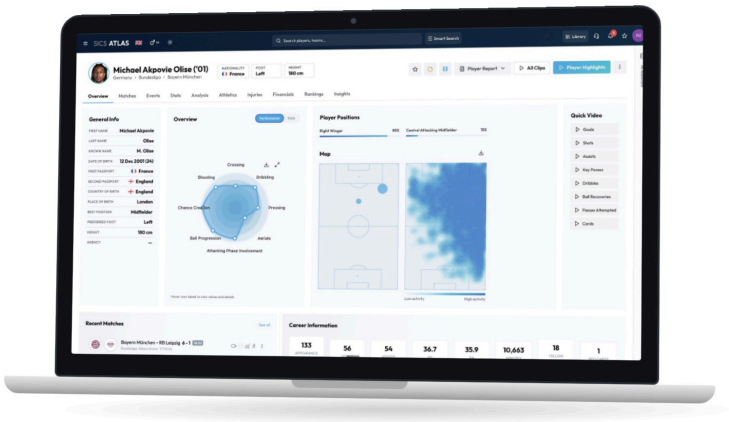
Raphinha's omission is explained by minutes rather than performance: per 90 minutes, nobody in La Liga was better, but he played half a season. **Enzo Fernández has the strongest numbers of all** – Europe's best midfielder by season total – but the award also weighs class and fair play, and xValue does not see his red card in the World Cup final.

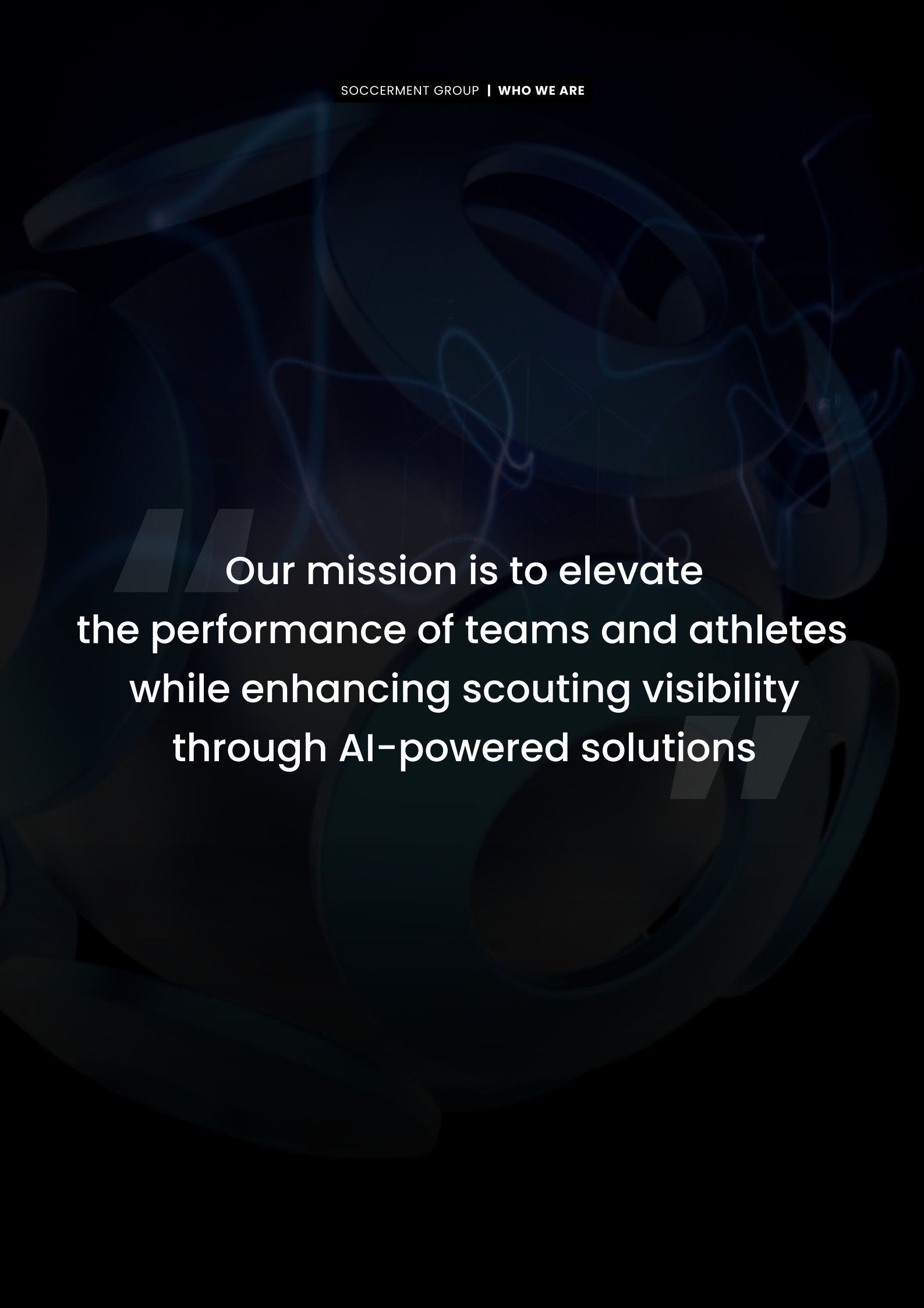
Our call: if one name deserved a place in the 30, the data says it is Doué.

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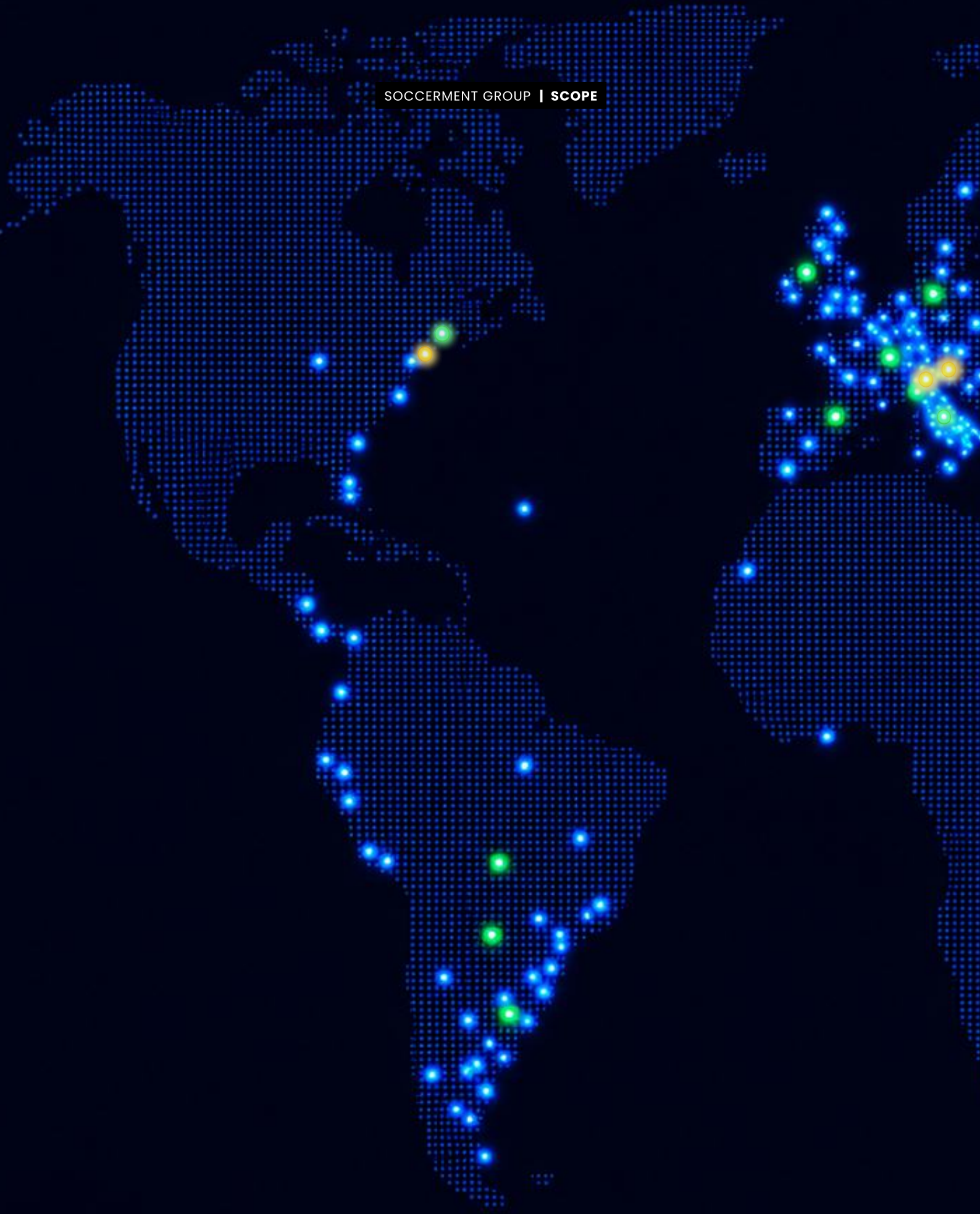




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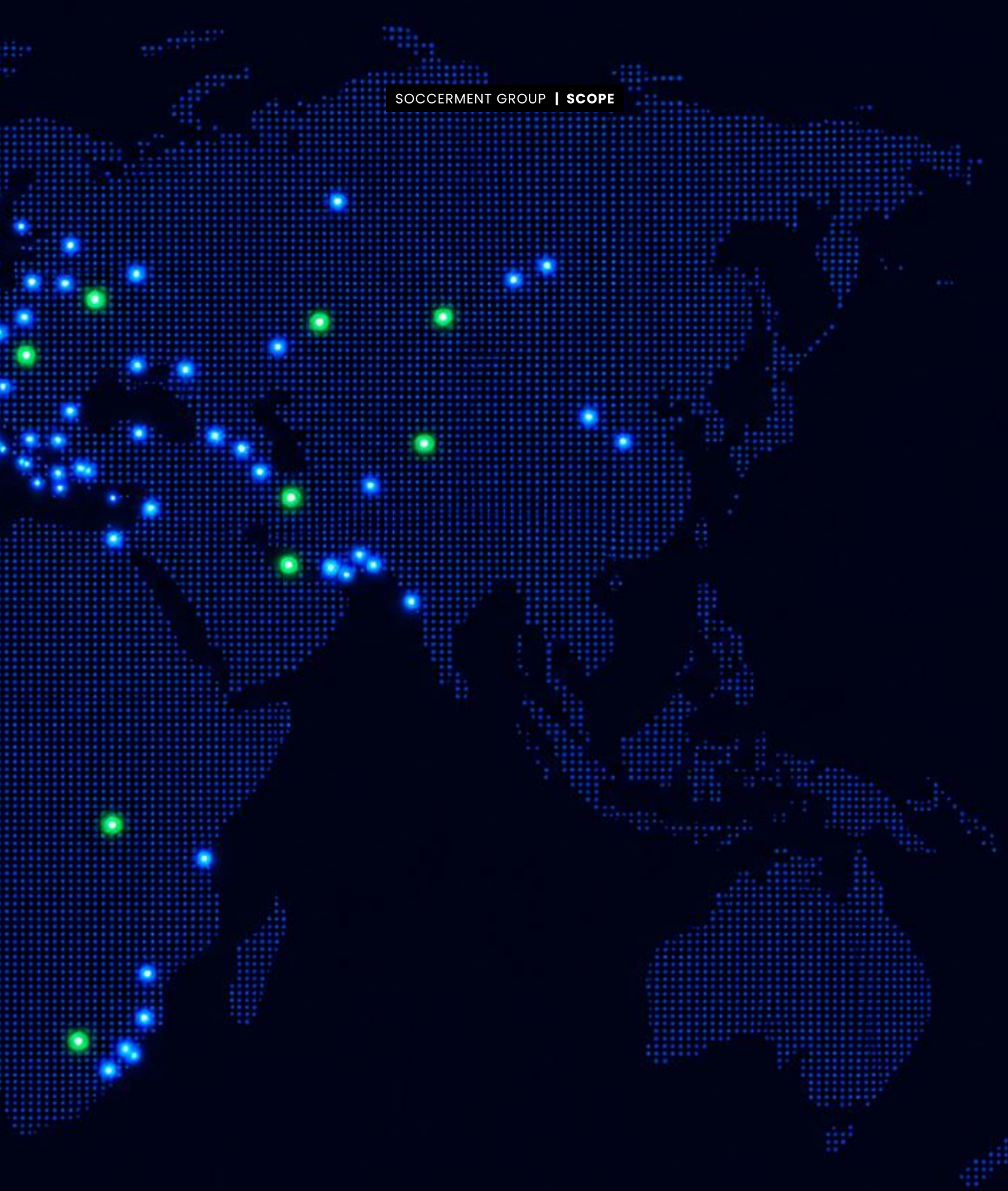
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