

Effectiveness Of In-Season Dismissal of a Football Team Manager in The Polish Ekstraklasa

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Abstract

The dismissal of a football team's coach during the season and their replacement with a new one is a common phenomenon in football, often driven by unsatisfactory team performance. Club owners typically make this decision under pressure from fans, sponsors, and media, who interpret poor results as a sign of the coach's incompetence. However, studies focusing on Europe's top football leagues (the so-called Big Five) indicate that this interpretation is often unjustified. This empirical study aims to evaluate the effectiveness of coaching changes on team performance in the Polish Ekstraklasa, based on data from the 2016/2017 to 2023/2024 seasons. Poor team performance can stem from either bad luck or the coach's insufficient skills. To determine whether coach dismissals were justified based on objective team performance conditions, the study incorporated a control group. The analysis distinguishes between justified dismissals, which follow genuinely poor team form, and unjustified ones, stemming from poor results caused merely by unfortunate circumstances. The categorization of coach dismissals utilized the xG (expected goals) metric, which is less susceptible to randomness in match outcomes. The results indicate that coaching dismissals in the Polish Ekstraklasa do not significantly improve team performance. Slightly better results following a dismissal can be attributed to mean reversion—the natural return of a team to its long-term performance level.

Keywords: coach, ELO ranking, expected goals, team performance, turnover