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Indicators to contextualize the Pattern of Game in Cuban Women Soccer

Indicadores para contextualizar el modelo de juego, en el fútbol femenino cubano

Indicadores para contextualizar o modelo de jogo no futebol feminino cubano

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ABSTRACT

Soccer is one of the sports that, as a result of competitive demands, experiences a continuous improvement in the training systems, particularly the tactical component evolves with great dynamism, in order to achieve the highest possible performance. Nowadays, the structuring



of training takes on different forms based on modern methodological concepts, one of them being that related to game models whose approach and methodological procedure contribute to optimizing the tactical action of the teams. The objective of this work was to propose 16 indicators to improve performance and competition, in order to contextualize the game model in Cuban women's soccer. Scientific research methods such as interviews, observation, documentary review and consultation with specialists were used. As a result of the research process, tactical training was optimized, which impacted the organization of the collective game and therefore the competitive performance, based on the contextualization of the game model according to the characteristics and conditions in which Cuban women's soccer is developed.

Keywords: contextualization, women's soccer, game model, tactics

RESUMEN

El fútbol es uno de los deportes que, como consecuencia de las exigencias competitivas, experimenta un continuo perfeccionamiento en los sistemas de preparación, particularmente, el componente táctico evoluciona con gran dinamismo, en función de lograr el máximo rendimiento posible. En la actualidad, la estructuración del entrenamiento cobra disímiles formas sobre la base de concepciones metodológicas modernas, una de ellas es la referida a los modelos de juego cuyo enfoque y proceder metodológico contribuye a optimizar el accionar táctico de los equipos. El presente trabajo tuvo como objetivo proponer 16 indicadores para perfeccionar el rendimiento y la competición, en función de contextualizar el modelo de juego en el fútbol femenino cubano. Se utilizaron métodos de investigación científica como la entrevista, la observación, la revisión documental y la consulta a especialistas. Como resultados del proceso investigativo se optimizó el entrenamiento táctico, lo que impactó en la organización del juego colectivo y con ello en el rendimiento competitivo, a partir de la contextualización del modelo de juego acorde a las características y condiciones en que se desarrolla el fútbol femenino cubano.

Palabras clave: contextualización, fútbol femenino, modelo de juego, táctica



RESUMO

O futebol é um dos esportes que, em decorrência das exigências competitivas, experimenta uma melhoria contínua em seus sistemas de preparação, em especial o componente tático, que evolui com grande dinamismo, a fim de atingir o maior rendimento possível. Atualmente, a estruturação do treinamento assume diferentes formas baseadas em conceitos metodológicos modernos, um deles é aquele que se refere a modelos de jogo cuja abordagem e procedimento metodológico contribuem para otimizar o desempenho tático das equipes. O objetivo deste trabalho foi propor 16 indicadores para melhorar o desempenho e a competição, a fim de contextualizar o modelo de jogo no futebol feminino cubano. Foram utilizados métodos de pesquisa científica como entrevistas, observação, revisão documental e consulta a especialistas. Como resultado do processo de pesquisa, otimizou-se o treinamento tático, o que impactou na organização do jogo coletivo e, portanto, no desempenho competitivo, a partir da contextualização do modelo de jogo de acordo com as características e condições em que se desenvolve o futebol feminino cubano.

Palavras-chave: contextualização, futebol feminino, modelo de jogo, tática

INTRODUCTION

Cuban female soccer players have sufficient qualities and talent to achieve superior competitive results, however, they have not yet managed to transcend, there is a lack of practical implementation of the scientific-pedagogical foundations that are currently a trend in the context of world women's soccer, such as those related to the organization of collective play, from the use of game models (Williams and Ward, 2020).

The study of the state of the art reveals the need to delve deeper into the regularities that characterize the tactical training of women's soccer (Fernández and Sánchez, 2020), which is why it is essential to find concrete and objective answers to the existing gaps in its management and to be able to project new methodological proposals in this direction.



Tactical preparation in Cuban women's soccer is an area of study whose priorities are oriented towards methodological approaches related to the game model that constitute the methodological conceptual platform of strategic and tactical work, guiding the coach to structure training and exercises based on the specificity of the game (Haro and Cerón, 2019; Martín and Martínez, 2019).

Based on the diagnosis, it is clear that when adopting a game model for Cuban female soccer players, it is not enough to act based on the most up-to-date canons; it is essential to determine objective indicators for their contextualization, in accordance with the real concrete conditions of the sports field in which they develop the training and competition process.

This scientific-methodological line of work opens up different perspectives of analysis and approaches, from the very complexity of its practical and operational approach (López and Giménez, 2022). In this sense, the present article aimed to propose 16 indicators to improve performance and competition, in order to contextualize the game model in Cuban women's soccer.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

The research was descriptive in nature, using non-probabilistic intentional sampling, which took as a sample the players from the eight teams that were the object of observation, in the national women's soccer championship, and a group of prominent coaches and specialists in this sport with extensive work experience and work results.

The study was conducted over 28 matches. The players had an average age of 23.7 years, with 3.4 years of sporting experience and participation in 5.7 competitive events. From an academic point of view, more than 50% of them were studying at university, and the rest had a high school or technical level.

Theoretical methods such as the analytical-synthetic method were used to understand the essential aspects related to the theory of game models and to synthesize the necessary information regarding the female sector; the inductive-deductive method made possible the



study of the particular elements, the structuring and conformation of said model adjusted to the reality of the context in which the Cuban soccer players developed.

The empirical level methods were documentary review, consultation with specialists and scientific observation. The documentary review consisted of an exhaustive search and analysis of important documentary sources stored at the headquarters of the Cuban Soccer Association, the National Institute of Sport Physical Education and Recreation (INDER) Information and Documentation Center, the Cuban Sports Information Resources Center, and the library of the Manuel Fajardo University of Physical Culture and Sports Sciences.

An exploration was carried out by subject and authors, on the information of interest and relevance, to consider elements or indicators in the contextualization of the Cuban women's soccer game model, according to its international practice (Garganta, 2019). On this basis, 23 documents were consulted and studied, including books, articles, brochures, conferences, technical reports and the Comprehensive Program for the Preparation of Soccer Athletes, registered in the consulted bibliography.

On the degree of coincidence, the elements most frequently mentioned or referred to in the consulted documents and those of greatest significance were identified and tabulated, in accordance with the objective set out to establish trends and regularities, issues presented in the discussion of the results.

Consultation with specialists was used to theoretically validate the elements obtained as a result of the analysis of documentary sources; the process was based on the considerations of the specialists to achieve a more objective position and make decisions regarding the inclusion or not of the different elements for the contextualization of the model.

For the determination of the specialists, the criteria of Fleitas et al. (2013) were assumed on some qualimetric methods, and methodologies validated and recognized by the scientific community of physical culture and sport, and the following were considered as inclusion criteria:



- a) Have a degree in Physical Education.
- b) Possess specific knowledge about the game model.
- c) Have at least five years of experience in managing soccer teams.
- d) Impartiality in decision making.
- e) Independence in the conduct of trials.
- f) Possess a professional C license in Cuba.

To determine the specialists' mastery, a closed-type survey was applied, in a time of five minutes, related to the subject under study, with the objective of knowing the level of knowledge. To assess the criteria that addressed the elements for the contextualization of the game model, a questionnaire-form was prepared, where one of the five options was marked with an X: very adequate, quite adequate, adequate, slightly inadequate and not adequate, with the 13 elements that emerged from the documentary analysis.

In addition, the possibility of providing suggestions in order to improve the proposal of elements obtained from the documentary analysis was left open. As a result of this procedure, 10 possible specialists were obtained who were initially considered in the nomination, five were chosen to issue value judgments, regarding the elements for the contextualization of the game model in Cuban women's soccer, considering that their answers were correct, clear and precise; demonstrating mastery in the specific knowledge to be evaluated; impartiality in decision-making; breadth in the diversity of approaches; and independence when issuing judgments, as required by the methodology.

The scientific observation was carried out by specialists previously trained for the task. Three observers were designated for each team, and the observational protocol was used in 28 matches of the 2022 national women's soccer championship, already eight of the 10 participating teams, with the aim of contrasting to what extent the formal and functional



elements for the contextualization of the game model, emanating from the documentary analysis and consultation with specialists, were manifested in the matches.

Likewise, the correspondence between the previously conceived tactical plan, according to the game model and the way the players proceeded during the match was sought. The following elements were taken as units of observation and analysis: club history (HDC in Spanish), game philosophy (FDJ in Spanish), game tendencies (TDJ), game style (EDJ), game idea (IDJ), game identity (ITJ), game principles (PDJ in Spanish), player profile (PJJ in Spanish), game systems (SDJ in Spanish), game patterns (PTJ in Spanish), strategic game direction (DEJ in Spanish), player characteristics (CJG in Spanish), club objectives (ODC in Spanish), game model (MDJ in Spanish) and set pieces (JBP in Spanish). Each of these elements received an ascending score from one to 10, according to the intensity of the manifestation of the element during the development of the match by the team.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the documentary analysis work, which basically focused on the exhaustive review of the 23 documentary sources, the main criteria and elements related to the construction or configuration of a game model were identified. Figure 1 reflects the 13 elements that were most frequently identified in the consulted documents, an issue that correlates with the most recurrent criteria and approaches in modern literature on the subject (Bradley and Vescovi, 2021; Martín and Martínez, 2019).



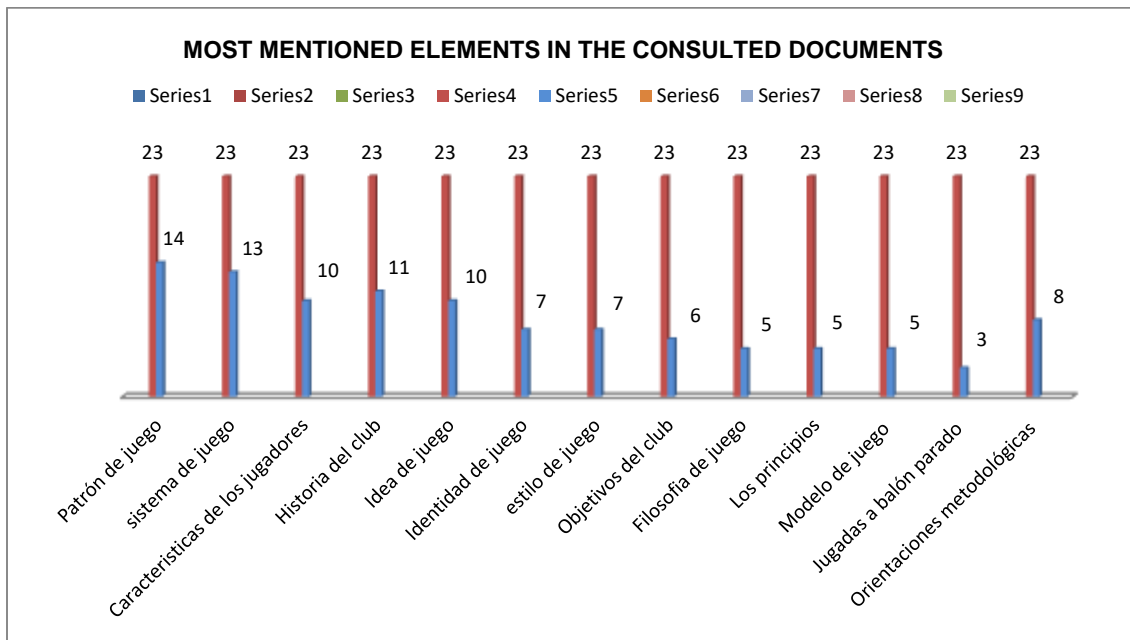


Figure 1. Elements most mentioned in the consulted documents

When tabulating and interpreting the data based on the frequency analysis, it was observed that of the 13 elements referred to, those with the highest frequency level were game pattern, game system, club history, player characteristics, game idea and methodological orientations, aspects to be taken into account when making any type of inference; in this sense Bradley and Vescovi (2021) expressed some considerations, in order to move from the theoretical conception of a game model to its practical implementation.

Based on this positioning, the results were taken to contextualize the women's soccer game model, according to the characteristics of its field of action, it was considered that what was established and validated for men's soccer was not always applicable to the female sex. The tendency to transfer new technologies, procedures and methodologies from European or South American soccer to Cuban soccer was generally focused on high-competition men's soccer (Carralero, 2021). It was then necessary to adjust these precepts to the reality of women's soccer.

One of the documents analyzed was the Comprehensive Programme for the Preparation of Soccer Athletes (PIPD, 2016-2024), which did not state the elements used worldwide to



build a game model; reference was made to the history, objectives and tactical preparation, but was not linked to the game model; in the history element, the emergence of soccer and the most relevant results were mentioned, but not how to assess historical aspects specific to each territory, in order to contribute to strengthening the sense of belonging, the idea of the game, the style and identity, elements of great significance for the contextualization of a game model of its own.

The PIPD reflected a tendency to prioritize the physical-motor aspect and little emphasis on objectives and content of a cognitive nature related to tactical preparation, by not guiding how to deal with the relationship between the players' profile and their connection with elements of the game system, movement patterns and their direction, issues with significance for the operationalization of the game model.

Continuing with the analysis of Figure 1, the most prominent element was the game pattern, since 14 of the 23 documents consulted referred to it, which indicated its importance for the contextualization of the female game model. On the other hand, 13 of 23 of the studies mentioned the game system as an important element; and the third significant element (10 times discussed) was the characteristics of the players.

Once the results of the consultation of the documentary sources were obtained, it was found that the history of the club or team was addressed on 11 occasions. This indicator was favorable for the contextualization in Cuba, from each province and territory in general, with its own local history and combative and sporting struggle. The idea of the game was raised on 10 occasions; the identity of the game and the style of play, on seven; club objectives and philosophy of play, on six; principles of play and game model, on five; set pieces, on three; and the methodological guidelines had eight references, in the 23 documents.

Below are the results of the consultation with specialists as a way to theoretically validate the elements that emerged from the documentary analysis presented (Figure 2).



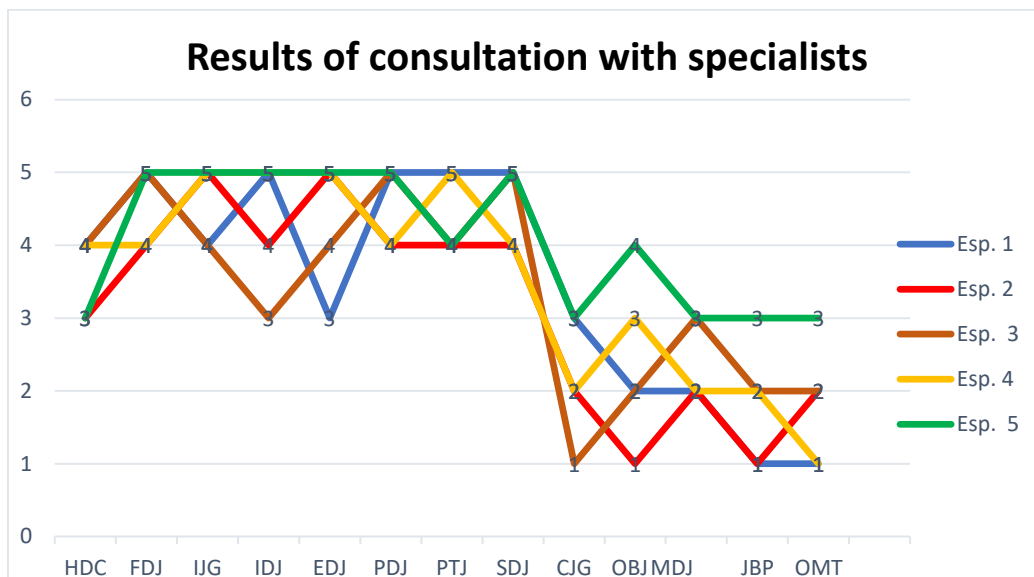


Figure 2. Results of consultation with specialists

After a thorough study of the material submitted for their consideration, the specialists issued their opinions on the 13 elements identified in the analysis of documents and which were considered important for the contextualization of the game model in Cuban women's soccer.

When tabulating the information from the responses offered by the specialists, it was found that 100% agreed in giving a high weighting (very adequate and quite adequate) to the elements of club history, playing philosophy, playing idea, playing identity, playing style, playing principles, playing patterns and playing systems, which corresponded with some reasoning by García and Serrano (2021); on the other hand, the elements of player characteristics, club objectives, playing model, set pieces and methodological guidelines turned out to be rated with a lower weighting (adequate and somewhat inadequate), in no case did the specialists express the category of not adequate.

After the specialists issued their value judgments on the relevance of the elements proposed to be included as indicators for the contextualization of the game model in Cuban women's soccer, they proposed including three other elements: game tendencies, player profiles and strategic direction of the game.



In general, the specialists issued their judgments with a high consensus in their criteria, regardless of the weight assigned to each of the 13 elements subject to evaluation and the proposed incorporation of the other three; since all of them were articulated in practice, from the structural and functional point of view, according to the competitive demands, the particularities of the context and the evaluation mechanisms, in accordance with the approaches of Guindos (2015); Martín and Bonora (2019).

The considerations made led to a common consent that reflected the use of the analyzed elements for the process of contextualizing the game model in national women's soccer. It was important to highlight that the game trend element did not emerge from the documentary review, but since it was proposed by the specialists, it was considered to be taken into account, based on the level of outdatedness observed in the coaches. It is necessary to add that other elements of greater or lesser significance for the work developed may arise, according to the needs of the team and the model that is to be implemented.

In general terms, it was considered that the designed proposal constituted a way to efficiently influence the improvement of the women's soccer game model, based on the contextualization of the elements that compose it.

Figure 3 reflects the way in which the teams manifested the use of the indicators, based on the contextualization of the game model. Based on the analysis of the data collected in the observation process of the 28 games, the criterion was obtained that even the Cuban women's soccer teams have not reached the level of organization to visualize the presence of the structural and functional elements of a defined game model, as proposed by some authors at an international level such as Castelo (1999); Cano (2009) .



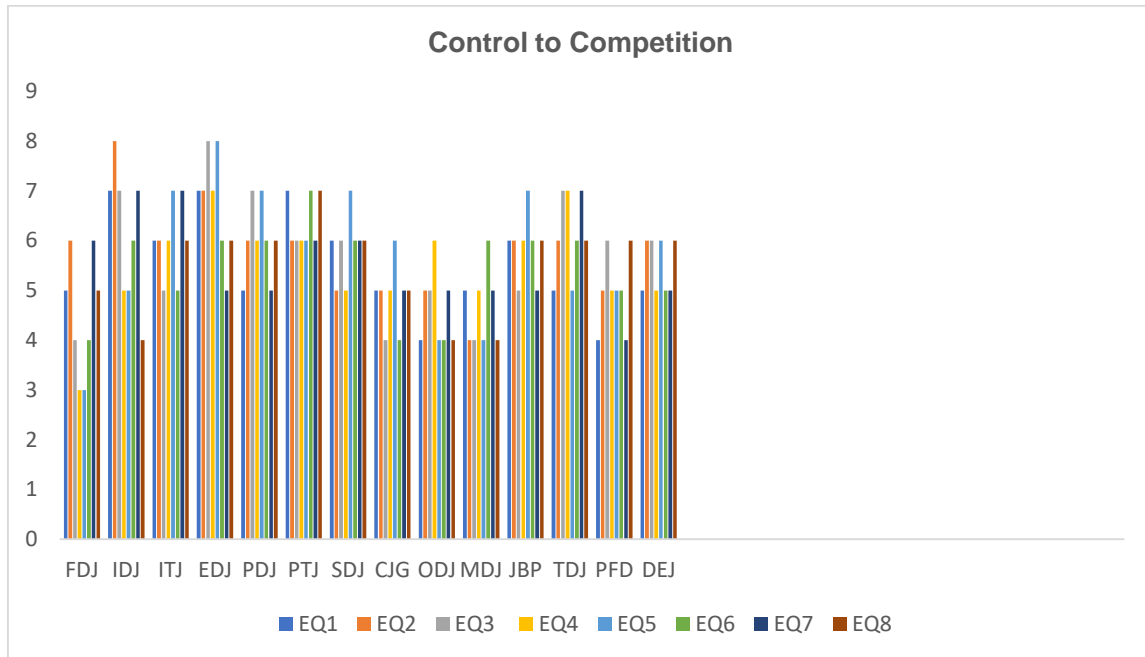


Figure 3. Elements manifested in the competition by the teams.

It was found that only three teams (1, 4 and 6) managed to demonstrate during the matches certain elements of the game model such as identity and game idea, fairly defined patterns, a stable game system, and to some extent, the presence of strategic game management actions.

Regarding the style of play element, five of the eight teams presented a counterattacking style that was identified by the use of few touches and medium or long passes to reach the opponent's goal. On the other hand, the three teams that showed gradual construction used short and medium passes to build their attacks, and achieved better results in the last matches played; in addition, from the defensive point of view they showed a style based on the use of mixed marking.

The idea of play element was used more by teams one, two, six and eight, in which a fairly defined and stable idea was valued when carrying out counterattacks, through long strikes, to the players closest to the opposing goal in order to surprise and create goal-scoring opportunities. The teams that showed gradual build-up or constructed attack as an idea of



play, used it to maintain possession of the ball and try to reach the opposing goal through association.

As for the game patterns, it was estimated that teams one, six and eight were well defined, with certain automatisms that allowed them to resolve game situations together with good mobility and speed in transitions; however, the other teams showed positional soccer in attack and defense.

Regarding the system of play element, of the eight teams only one maintained a consistent application of its system on the field throughout the competition, using a 1-4-3-3 positioning, and it was team one; another five teams showed a moderately consistent application of the 1-4-4-2 and 1-3-5-2 systems, while teams two and four played in a very disorganized manner and it was not possible to define the proposed system of play.

Observational analysis revealed that the elements of game philosophy, player characteristics, game objectives and game model were the ones with the lowest frequency of appearance in the matches; in the case of player characteristics, only team one showed an intention to use its tall players for headers, for example in corner kicks, an expression of set pieces.

In the case of the player profile element, team three was the one that showed the best use of it since they used both offensive and defensive players according to their characteristics, in the different sectors of the court.

The strategic direction of the teams' play by coaches, according to Morales (2021), must be based on scientifically sound criteria. The coach's decision-making should not have been based on unipersonal positions such as "I think" and "it seems to me", but on a philosophy of play based on modern principles and concepts. Coaches regularly made the change of players to any position, from one half to another or from one match to another. Based on the results of the observation of competition, it was recommended to evaluate the relevance of including the philosophy of the game and the characteristics of the players as elements for the contextualization of the game model in women's soccer.



Once the diagnostic analysis was completed, it was identified that women's soccer teams have not yet managed to implement a distinctive game model in the competitive dynamics, as a team with its own personality, with its characteristic features.

During the strategic and tactical management, the coaches had theoretical and methodological gaps in directing the actions of their players towards the application of the declared game model prior to the match. Based on the above, it became evident that it was necessary to carry out scientific work aimed at the formation of a methodology that, based on the information collected, is structured and implemented to achieve the contextualization of the game model according to the characteristics of Cuban women's soccer.

In addition, the necessary information was gathered to reveal the elements to be assumed as indicators for the contextualization of the game model in Cuban women's soccer: history of the club, philosophy of play, game idea, game identity, style of play, game principles, game patterns, game systems, player characteristics, club objectives, game model, set pieces and methodological guidelines, as well as game trends, player profiles and strategic direction of the game.

The study presented, unlike others carried out with similar objects such as those by Bradley and Vescovi (2021); Williams and Ward (2020) focused on a trend analysis of the tactical evolution of game models in women's soccer, especially in the youth category; it focused on identifying elements, such as indicators that allowed the model to be contextualized to the reality of each team, to develop the athletic and competitive potential of the players.

In Cuba, studies carried out by Hechavarría (2017) and Sánchez (2024) referred to a game model; however, this concept was not explored in depth, as they focused on the treatment of tactics as an essential component of the game.



CONCLUSIONS

The study of the state of the art revealed the great relevance of the topic of game models in soccer. In most countries with a deep-rooted soccer culture, studies were carried out that provided knowledge on theoretical and conceptual elements and empirical experiences to support the criteria on the validity of the proposal presented in this paper. The 16 elements selected after the diagnostic study were used as patterns to create a game model in accordance with the characteristics of Cuban women's soccer and to improve the training process and competition.

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Conflict of interest statement:

The author declares that there are no conflicts of interest.

Author's contribution:

The author is responsible for writing the work and analyzing the documents.



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