Video Analysis in Indoor Soccer using a Quadcopter

Filipe Trocado Ferreira¹, Jaime S. Cardoso^{1,2} and Hélder P. Oliveira² ¹Faculdade de Engenharia da Universidade do Porto, Porto, Portugal ²INESC TEC, Porto, Portugal

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Abstract:

Automatic vision systems are widely used in sports competition to analyze individual and collective performance during the matches. However, the complex implementation based on multiple fixed cameras and the human intervention on the process makes this kind of systems expensive and not suitable for the big majority of the teams. In this paper we propose a low-cost, portable and flexible solution based on the use of Unmanned Air Vehicles to capture images from indoor soccer games. Since these vehicles suffer from vibrations and disturbances, the acquired video is very unstable, presenting a set of unusual problems in this type of applications. We propose a complete video-processing framework, including video stabilization, camera calibration, player detection, and team performance analysis. The results showed that camera calibration was able to correct automatically image-to-world homography; the player detection precision and recall was around 75%; and the high-level data interpretation showed a strong similarity with ground-truth derived results.

1 INTRODUCTION

Soccer is without question one of the most popular sports worldwide. All the monetary amounts related to this sport justify the millionaire budget of the teams, not only in the acquisition of players, but also technical staff. They have the responsibility to prepare the team and help the coach in order to achieve the best results. In the strategic planning for the games, information about position and movement of the player on the field is used by the coach and other technical staff.

Indoor soccer is gaining more and more visibility nowadays due to its dynamic nature and reduced space to play, which often forces the teams to think better and practice their tactics to the extreme. For this reason, this sport has been the target of technical and scientific interest, showing several applications dedicated to tactical, physical and physiological analysis.

Initially, statistics on collective and individual performance were extracted manually with low reliability and precision. Currently, automatic vision systems are used to collect this information with high accuracy. However, they have high acquisition and license prices, because of high complex installation with multiple fixed cameras around the stadium or sports hall, as well as excessive human intervention in the video analysis making them not accessible for the majority of the teams.

An alternative solution for an image acquisition system is based on Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAV). These vehicles have been gaining relevance in different areas of use, from military to sports. The UAV normally equipped with high definition cameras, can be used autonomously to obtain images in a stadium or other sports hall. UAVs allow to setup a reliable, portable and low cost solution to capture images from indoor soccer games. These images can be processed offline in order to extract useful information about individual and collective performance during soccer matches.

The aim of this work is to design an automatic video analysis framework, for a low cost image acquisition system of indoor soccer games, in order to get complex information about the game from image sequences shot by an UAV. We extract automatically the position of the player from the image sequence and map it in the world coordinates. From these low-level data, high-level information can be derived, such as occupational heatmaps, offensive and defensive trends, tactics interpretation, among others.

1.1 Related Work

The (semi-)automatic video analysis system of a soccer game typically comprises modules such as background/foreground segmentation, camera cali-

Trocado Ferreira F., Cardoso J. and Oliveira H..

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bration and player detection. The acquisition is most commonly based on multiple fixed cameras around the stadium or sports hall, covering all the playfield (Figueroa et al., 2006; Ren et al., 2009; Choi and Seo, 2011; Iwase and Saito, 2004). With these topologies, the spatial segmentation task can be easily performed applying an approach based on background subtraction. On the other hand, simpler image acquisition architectures, such as with a single camera (Lu et al., 2009; Dearden et al., 2006) or using TV broadcasting sequences (Ekin et al., 2003; Khatoonabadi and Rahmati, 2009) require more complex processing for the background/foreground segmentation, but also on the following stages, mainly on player detection and camera calibration. The most usual techniques for image segmentation range from background subtraction using a background model created from initial frames (Iwase and Saito, 2004) to more complex dynamic model using a representation on a specific colorspace taking advantage of a dominant and homogeneous color field (Figueroa et al., 2006; Ren et al., 2009; Ekin et al., 2003). However, when background is neither static nor there is a dominant field color as in indoor sports, the basic methods presented above are not suitable for players' segmentation.

The relation between image coordinates and world coordinates is a fundamental task of the sports analysis problem, solved using the calibration of the camera with respect to the field. By knowing the camera parameters, it is possible to relate the position of the players in the image with their actual position on the field (Figueroa et al., 2006; Lu et al., 2013a). When fixed cameras are used, this stage is trivially accomplished and can be performed manually; otherwise, when the camera moves, dynamic and automatic methods are required (Lu et al., 2013b).

The detection of the players has been addressed with different techniques. Some of these methods rely on the extraction of features and posterior classification (Lu et al., 2009; Liu et al., 2009). However, if temporal tracking is not taken into account, false positives and missed detections are frequent. The dynamics of the players together with complex observation models are therefore also used to improve the detection and tracking of the players. In this sense, mean shift (Kheng, 2011), Kalman Filters (Welch and Bishop, 1995), and Particle Filters (Doucet and Johansen, 2011) are the most commonly adopted solutions. Recently, Linear Programming based methods (Shitrit et al., 2011) or Conditional Random Fields (Lu et al., 2013b) were used to overcome the difficulties of multiple people tracking.

Most of the work found in literature focus mainly on players' position, trajectories and high level and collective performance information. On the other hand, just a few examples of research works include ball, goals, passes and set pieces detection (Santiago et al., 2010). From the technological point of view, relevant aspects are left out. For example, computation time and real time constraints are barely considered. Finally, all the image acquisition architectures use one or more fixed cameras and there is no relevant work using portable or moving systems for image acquisition.

2 A FRAMEWORK FOR VIDEO ANALYSIS IN USING AN UAV

In this section we present the proposed methodology, designed to automatically capture, process, and extract player and team performance statistics from a soccer video stream captured with an UAV. Only in the beginning of the processing, the system interactively queries the user to obtain initial information to support the automatic processing of the whole video. A block diagram of the main steps of the proposed methodology is presented in Figure 1. The main stages of the framework are: video stabilization, camera calibration, player detection and tracking and high level interpretation of the game.

2.1 Image Acquisition

The images from indoor soccer games used in this research are shot by the Ar.Drone's frontal camera. The Drone is controlled using Parrot's commercial application for mobile devices¹. The drone was programmed to hover on a static position, 5 to 7 meters above floor, close to the side line of the pitch (see Figure 2). The structure of the Ar.Drone was modified to make its frontal camera point 30 degrees down, in order to capture the game action and simultaneously avoid occlusions with other objects.

2.2 Video Stabilization

Due to unavoidable drone's motion, the image sequences will suffer from undesired global movement. Since most of the techniques for the following processing stages assume a static background, it is fundamental to stabilize the video. This step will severely impact the global performance of the framework.

We designed a method based on feature matching between two consecutive frames. Feature extrac-

¹https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.par rot.free flight



Figure 2: Representation of UAVs position while recording the image sequences from indoor soccer games.

tion was implemented using the Features from Accelerated Segment Test (FAST) algorithm (Rosten and Drummond, 2006), due to its efficiency. For the feature matching, the M-estimator SAmple Consensus (MSAC) (Torr and Zisserman, 2000), a variant of the RANdom SAmple Consensus (RANSAC), was employed.

The transformation between the two sets of inliers was estimated using the least squares method, and the motion estimation was computed based on a similarity transformation, which is composed by Scale-Rotation-Translation transformations with four degrees of freedom.

Finally, the stabilization of the video over time is performed with the chain of the transformations between consecutive frames. Let us define H_i as the similarity transformation between frames i + 1 and iso that: Camera calibration is a necessary step in 3D computer vision in order to extract metric information from 2D images. If images are taken by the same camera, correspondences between images are sufficient to recover the parameters which allow us to reconstruct the 3D structure (Zhang, 2000). We will only use points in the field plane and the field is assumed rectangular with known height/width ratio. We are interested in finding the mapping between image coordinates and the position in the field (see Figure 3).

2.3.1 Initialization

In the beginning of the process the user's manual intervention is required to identify the corners of the field in the initial frame. Subsequently, the least squares algorithm is performed to calculate the eight parameters of the perspective transformation. Since the Drone's camera is covering only half of the field, the points to pick correspond to the corners of half field. Let us define the point in the image represented in homogeneous coordinates $\tilde{m} = [x, y, 1]^T$ and the corresponding point in the field plane $\tilde{M} = [X, Y, 1]^T$.



(a) Players in the image domain.



(b) Players mapped in the virtual field

Figure 3: Mapping between image coordinates and the position the field.

They are related by the following expression:

$$Ah = b, (2)$$

where

$$A = \begin{bmatrix} X_1 & Y_1 & 1 & 0 & 0 & 0 & -x_1X_1 & -x_1Y_1 \\ 0 & 0 & 0 & X_1 & Y_1 & 1 & -y_1X_1 & -y_1Y_1 \\ X_2 & Y_2 & 1 & 0 & 0 & 0 & -x_2X_2 & -x_2Y_2 \\ 0 & 0 & 0 & X_2 & Y_2 & 1 & -y_2X_2 & -y_2Y_2 \\ X_3 & Y_3 & 1 & 0 & 0 & 0 & -x_3X_3 & -x_3Y_3 \\ 0 & 0 & 0 & X_3 & Y_3 & 1 & -y_3X_3 & -y_3Y_3 \\ X_4 & Y_4 & 1 & 0 & 0 & 0 & -x_4X_4 & -x_4Y_4 \\ 0 & 0 & 0 & X_4 & Y_4 & 1 & -y_4X_4 & -y_4Y_4 \end{bmatrix},$$
$$b = \begin{bmatrix} x_1 \\ y_1 \\ x_2 \\ y_2 \\ x_3 \\ y_3 \\ x_4 \\ y_4 \end{bmatrix} \quad \text{and } h = \begin{bmatrix} h_{11} \\ h_{22} \\ h_{23} \\ h_{31} \\ h_{32} \end{bmatrix},$$

with h_{ij} corresponding to the elements of the projective matrix. The solution is given by least square method and can be expressed as:

$$h = (A^T A)^{-1} (A^T b) \tag{3}$$

The user is also requested to identify in the first frame 'good lines to track'. Most of the indoor sports venues are used for multiple sports so all the lines of



(a) Result of binarization procedure.



(b) Result of line detection based on Hough Transform

Figure 4: Example of binarization and line detection results.

the courts are painted in the floor. The user is asked to identify the most salient lines (by identifying two points in each), to be detected and matched automatically in the succeeding frames.

2.3.2 Line Detection and Matching

To estimate automatically the image-to-world homography, we detect lines automatically on the current frame and match them to the lines manually identified by user in the first frame.

The line detection is performed using the Hough transform. The Hough transform is performed over a binary image obtained by a morphological gradient transformation (result of the subtraction of the result of opening operation by the result of closing on the current frame) followed by image binarization with the Otsu's method (Otsu, 1975). See Figure 4 for an example.

The next step of the automatic calibration procedure is to match the detected lines with the lines in the first frame. This matching problem is modeled as an assignment problem and solved using Munkres algorithm (Munkres, 1957). This method is performed minimizing the total cost of assignment. The cost of assigning a detected line to a manually delineated line is calculated using the distance between their parameters in Hough Space:

$$cost_{ij} = \sqrt{\left(\theta_i - \theta_j\right)^2 + \left(\rho_i - \rho_j\right)^2}$$
(4)

The intersecting points of the matched lines are used to estimate the homography from the current

frame to the initial frame and update the mapping between image coordinates and the position the field. Since, after video stabilization, the homography does not change significantly from frame to frame and the Hough Transform is computationally expensive, we perform this calibration step once every B > 1 frames.

2.4 Player Detection

Due to the camera motion and to the existence of simultaneously multiple colored lines on the court, basic segmentation methods (background segmentation and subtraction) are not suitable for this application. Some preliminary results showed poor results with low detection rate and high number of false positive detections.

We avoided the problematic segmentation and opted for solution fusing temporal tracking with a static people detector approach.

2.4.1 Static People Detector Approach

This module includes a cascade of a standard people detector with a postprocessing for team identification and false positive handling.

The detector is based on an Histogram of Oriented Gradients (HOG) descriptor followed by a SVM classifier (Dalal and Triggs, 2005). This approach was found to be robust to changes in intensities information such as for example person and equipment colors.

The HOG detector is unable to discriminate players from the two teams and since the players posture can deviate significantly from the upright position, the output includes multiple false positives. Therefore, the results obtained from the HOG detector will be verified taking in account the appearance measured in the bounding box outputted by the HOG detector. As part of the initialization process, the HOG detector is run over a sample of frames and the user is requested to manually label a small number of detected objects as 'player from team A', 'player from team B', and 'not a player'. During the automatic processing, the representation of the detected objects will be compared with the stored representative examples manually annotated and the detected objects are labeled in one of the aforementioned three classes. This procedure allows to discard false positive detections and also group the detections in two classes representing both teams in the field. The decision is made comparing the histogram h_i of the detected object with all the histograms h_i of the objects collected in the initialization process. The distance between each channel of two histograms is calculated using the Bhattacharyya method (Choi and Lee, 2003):

$$d_{i,j} = \sqrt{1 - \frac{1}{\sqrt{\bar{h}_i \bar{h}_j N^2}} \sum \sqrt{h_i(n) h_j(n)}, \qquad (5)$$

where $\bar{h}_k = \frac{1}{N} \sum_{n=1}^{N} h_k(n)$. The result of this expression is a value between 0 and 1 where 0 means a perfect match and 1 a total mismatch between both histograms.

2.4.2 Mean Shift and Short Term Tracking

In parallel with the static detector, we apply a temporal tracking method based on the mean shift. Mean shift is an algorithm that iteratively moves a search window in the direction of its center of mass until it coincides with the geometric centroid. Despite its simplicity, this is a widely used method for object tracking on the image sequences (Comaniciu et al., 2000). It provides reliable prediction of an object position based on its appearance but it fails over time once that player's appearance and size change.

The output of the temporal tracking is finally fused with the static detector taking in account both the position and size of the resulting bounding boxes. Static detections close to temporally tracked positions are used to updated the tracker; static detections corresponding to objects not currently tracked are used to initialize a new track if the total number of tracked objects is still below the known number of players in the game. See Figure 5 for an illustrative example.

2.5 High Level Interpretation

After gaining knowledge about the players position in the field during the game, we can now extract high level information about the individual and collective performance. Even with an inaccurate low-level information it is possible to infer some high level interpretation related to field occupancy, offensive trends and defensive tactics. The preliminary analysis that follows is based on the common knowledge of the authors about the game and evaluated considering mainly subjective criteria.

2.5.1 Occupation Map

The position of the players mapped onto the world coordinates is used to show how players occupied the field and can give important clues about teams' strategies and performance (Lu et al., 2013b). The field model is divided in a grid of $N_1 \times N_2$ cells in which the actual position of the players is projected. Each grid cell accumulates the number of players there over time; the accumulated counts provide a spatial histogram showing the most occupied zones of the field for each team.



(a) Raw HOG detector results.
(b) Results after Team Identification.
(c) Final results with HOG+ Mean Shift.
Figure 5: Evolution of detection results through the different stages of the proposed method.

2.5.2 Team Attitude

Team attitude or offensive/defensive trends can illustrate which team is being more dangerous or more close to score a goal. We assume that in each frame we have available the position (x_i, y_i) on the field of one to four players from each team and that it is known *a priori* which team is attacking and defending. For each team the offensive trend is calculated taking in account the relative position of the rearmost player on the ground to the midfield line and the relative position of the most advanced player to the opponent goal line.

2.5.3 Team Tactics

It is possible to make an analysis of the team tactical behavior and its evolution over time. In indoor soccer there are two main defensive formations: "2-2" is based on two front player making high pressure and two back players. Other usual formation is "1-2-1" where only one player is making high pressure and a back player assumes most of the defensive tasks. To distinguish between the two formations, we use an approach based on the spatial distribution relative to the frontmost and rearmost players. A 3-bin histogram of players x coordinates is created considering the distance to the rearmost and frontmost players. Then the histograms are compared to the model: if histogram is [1,2,1] we will assume that the formation at that instant is the "1-2-1", if the histogram is [2,0,2] the formation "2-2" is assumed. Finally each formation counter is accumulated and normalized being possible to observe its evolution over time.

3 EXPERIMENTAL RESULTS

The proposed methodology was evaluated with sequences captured during games or warm ups of

Although we conofficial amateur tournaments. ceptualize a setting where the field is covered by 2 or more UAV, due to budget constraints, only 1 UAV was used in this work, covering one half of the field. The videos recorded have 1280×720 pixels and were acquired at 30 frames per second (fps). During the acquisitions team players used different shirt colors in order to distinguish the two teams. Referees as well as spectators can appear on some these sequences. We tried to cover different circumstances and deal with usual difficulties on this kind of systems. We used three different video sequences to test the different stages of the methods in different pavilions, light conditions and with different team colors. The sequences obtained have a duration between 30 seconds to 1 minute, and were selected to avoid situations with sudden movements of the air vehicle but including some other undesired, but usual, situations in this kind of systems, such as: players moving in and out of the image, occlusions and camera motion:

- Sequence Number 1²: Shot during team warm up. In the field there are eight players from the white team and three from the black team. At the 5th second the drone suffers a strong oscillation.
- Sequence Number 2³: Shot during an official game. Two different teams of four field players wearing black and white equipments. This sequence suffers from bad illumination reflection of the floor.
- Sequence Number 3⁴: Shot during an official game. Two different teams of four field players wearing yellow and orange equipments. In some parts of the field the yellow and orange equipments appear to be very similar.

²https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3VDAR10wqDM ³https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tUpY8VHWWaw ⁴https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TNCkiUTyqIk

For a more objective evaluation of the developed methodology, ground truth data annotation was performed, including the position and team of the players and also the four points needed to define the homography between the field and the image plane. This ground truth data was manually collected at a predefined frame rate and then interpolated to all the frames.

The people detector used in this framework was already implemented in the MATLAB Computer Vision toolbox. The model is trained to detect people on upright position and it is based in (Dalal and Triggs, 2005). Note that in sports context players are many times running, tackling, occluding each other's and all these are propitious situations to fail the detection.

3.1 Video Stabilization Evaluation

In this project the results of video stabilization stage will be evaluated qualitatively and with subjective criteria such as motion compensation, long term accuracy and efficiency. In Figure 6 we can visualize the difference of using and not using video stabilization.



(a) Mean of non-stabilized sequence (1 second)



(b) Mean of stabilized sequence (1 second) Figure 6: Impact of the video stabilization stage.

The proposed method allows us to eliminate high frequency jittering and to compensate almost all of the short term camera movement. However, lowfrequency movement is not compensated since using a cascade approach, error is accumulated over time. The main cause of this error is the geometric transformation chosen to model the frame-to-frame movement. The method developed fails also in cases of strong drone's oscillations because of the reduction of visible image area loosing visual relevant information which is very prejudicial to player tracking and camera calibration.

3.2 Camera Calibration Evaluation

To evaluate the camera calibration step, we measured the distance in pixels of the four corner points of the half field rectangle. These four points are used since they usually appear in all sequences and are enough to define the world-to-image homography. Let us define $X_i = (x_i, y_i)$ with $i \in [1, 2, 3, 4]$ as the four points manually annotated in a frame *t* and $\tilde{X}_i = (\tilde{x}_i, \tilde{y}_i)$ as the four points resulting of the camera calibration method on the same frame. The error of the calibration method can then be expressed as:

$$error_t = \sum_i \sqrt{(x_i - \tilde{x}_i)^2 + (y_i - \tilde{y}_i)^2}$$
(6)

The method was evaluated using different sampling rates, namely: $\frac{1}{5}$, $\frac{1}{50}$, $\frac{1}{100}$ corrections per frame. Additionally, the error evolution was also compared with the initial and static homography. Figure 7 shows the efficiency of the method under the different aforementioned correction rates. While initial homography diverges on time, the proposed method is more stable.



Figure 7: Error of camera calibration method with different correction rates on sequence 3.

In Figure 8 is possible to observe the influence of the detection rate and position of the drone to the efficiency of the calibration. In this case we use a sequence shot with low altitude and far from the covered half field. This causes that most of the detected lines are not well spread across the field, increasing the probability of bad lines matching and consequent calibration drift. Low calibration rates can also lead to lose the correct assignment of the lines.

3.3 Player Detection Evaluation

Player detection methods were evaluated in terms of precision and recall. In this stage only sequences 2



Figure 8: Error of camera calibration method with different correction rates on sequence 1.

and 3 were used, because they were the only recorded during match situation while the other two were shot during warming ups.

In Table 1 and 2 are presented the results of player detection on sequence 2 and 3 considering three different approaches. It is presented the raw results from HOG detection (HOG), the results of the detector after applying team identification and false positive handling (HOG+TI) and finally, results of the complete method based on HOG detection and mean shift tracking (HOG+MS).

Table 1: Evolution of Player detection results through the different stages of the method on sequence 2.

	HOG	HOG+TI	HOG+MS
Precision	32%	85%	76%
Recall	70%	50%	72%

Table 2: Evolution of Player detection results through the different stages of the method on sequence 3.

	HOG	HOG+TI	HOG+MS
Precision	42%	86%	78%
Recall	72%	48%	72%

The precision of the raw detector is very low producing too much false positives. Using information of the players appearance is possible to eliminate part of these bad detections. The results with false positive handling showed a notable increase on the precision but on the other hand the recall decreased. Finally with mean short term tracking is possible to estimate players position in the case of missing detections increasing the recall. Otherwise, because of tracking and the difficulty to deal with new and lost tracks the influence of false positives will be higher and that is the reason why precision falls.

3.4 High Level Interpretation Evaluation

High level data interpretation is a very subjective topic and requires highly expert knowledge about the

different aspects of the game to have an accurate evaluation. In this work the evaluation was based on basic and common knowledge about indoor soccer tactical and technical aspects.

In Figure 9 is possible to observe the results of the occupation map.



Figure 9: Occupation map of player on sequence 2. a) and b) relates to information extracted from ground-truth data for each one of the teams, and c) and d) the proposed method.

Figure 9 a) and b) illustrates occupation from players of team 1 and 2 in the sequence 2, inferred from ground data annotation. Figure 9 c) and d) are the analogous for the methodology developed in this work. In this sequence, the defending team (team 1) were more compacted on the field while the attacking one (team 2) were spread on the field exploring the sidelines. The similarities between the proposed method and the ground truth is notorious but it is also possible to observe the influence of precision and recall of players detection method.

Figure 10 illustrates the results of offensive trend of team 1 and team 2 generated both from the ground truth data and the results of automatic player detection with short term tracking.

In the beginning of the sequence, the recall and precision are lowest, influencing the result of offensive trend profile. This method lies only on partial information of players' position. Although the obtained result is similar to the ground truth, to achieve more robust estimation of teams attitude during the game it would be necessary also include information about ball possession.

Figure 11 is presentes the evolution of the utilization of each one of the formations during the game. These results illustrate the relative utilization of a defensive formation in smaller periods of time (in this case around 100 frames).

The obtained results are very similar to the ground truth, however the methodology developed is very simple and uses just simple relations between play-



Figure 10: Result of the method to extract information on teams attitude and offensive trend. a) Illustrate the result for ground truth data and b) with the proposed detection and calibration methods.



Figure 11: Evolution of the tactics counter for the sequence 2. a) Results extracted from ground truth data. b) Results from the proposed method.

ers positions. A deeper analysis of the subject could be performed including more types of formations and more data as distance between players and also the interaction of the opponent team.

4 CONCLUSIONS

In this paper we presented a new approach to automatically analyze an indoor game, yielding valuable information about individual and collective performance. We propose to use a UAV as the video source, facilitating the deployment of the acquisition system. We addressed the challenges raised by the UAV dynamics proposing a robust pipeline of image processing.

Video stabilization applied first to maintain spatial coherence of pixels intensities despite the drone's motion. The proposed method can deal with the highfrequency jittering of the camera but over time errors are being accumulated and not all the movement is properly compensated. A new camera calibration approach was proposed. It is based on detection of the lines marked on indoor sports venues and the posterior match with the lines of the virtual field. It was proposed a methodology based on HOG people detector with short term position estimation with mean shift tracking. The algorithm shown difficulties to deal with players entering and leaving the image since is there non prediction of where and when a new track must be created. Finally some methods are proposed to extract high level information from the data corresponding to players' positions on the field.

4.1 Future Works

It was presented a set of methods to the different stages achieving some positive preliminary results. However, is possible to refine the results and upgrade the functionality. Some of the future work should include: generalize the video stabilization to deal with both intentional and unintentional camera movement, and without decreasing visible area over time; increase the robustness of the camera calibration method without needing the Hough transform that is very expensive computationally; create of a classifier based on HOG descriptor specialized for players' detection. By collecting a large set of positive and negative samples is possible to develop a more precise detector turning detection easier; results of detection must be refine using linear or nonlinear filtering such as a particle filter.

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