

# ECCENTRIC TRAINING PRIOR TO SMALL-SIDED GAMES DECREASES SPACE EXPLORATION AND DISTANCE COVERED IN FOOTBALL AMATEUR PLAYERS

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## // INTRODUCTION

A major aim of football training sessions is to enhance players' capabilities and collective movement coordination. However, the main training session is often complemented by activities to enhance players' performance. For example, strength training is regularly performed before the MD-4 session. While this is approach is common in professional football, its effect in amateur football is unknown. Thus, this study aimed to explore the effects of including an eccentric body-weight strength intervention in amateur players' performance during small-side games (SSG).

## METHODS

Twenty-one male players (age:  $23.6 \pm 3.7$  years; playing experience:  $13.3 \pm 4.01$  years) participated in this study. Players were exposed to four testing conditions: a) two sessions with eccentric body weight work (consisting of 15-min, 3 sets of 4 reps from the Nordic hamstring exercise and single-leg deadlift) before the SSG, PRE-STRENGTH; and b) two sessions in which performed the SSG without prior strength session, WITHOUT. On each testing day, players performed 3 bouts of 4-min of a Gk+4v4+Gk SSG in a 32mx22m pitch.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

When playing without previous strength training, players increased the distance to the nearest teammate ( $0.62; \pm 0.13, t = -4.76, p < 0.001$ ), which was also reflected in the effective playing space ( $13.0; \pm 3.1, W = 6, p = 0.007$ ) as result of using higher length ( $0.6; \pm 0.28, t = -2.19, p = 0.05$ ). These differences in space exploration seems to result from the lower ability to move during the PRE-STRENGTH, expressed by the higher distance while walking ( $-4.1; \pm 3.4, t = 2.36, p = 0.022$ ) and lower while jogging ( $19.8; \pm 8.2, t = -2.41, p = 0.020$ ).

## CONCLUSIONS

These results may help coaches to decide when to plan the strength training, whereas it may be applied before the session when focusing on compact behaviors under lower external load (e.g., defensive tasks), while in the end of session when the major aim is to emphasize space exploration (e.g., offensive tasks).

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