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SPECIALIZED SPEED TRAINING DRILLS CORRESPONDING TO VARIOUS PITCH POSITIONS AND THEIR IMPACT ON SELECTED SOCCER SKILLS AMONG YOUNG PLAYERS

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A B S T R A C T

Research Objectives:
The objectives of this research are to prepare specialized exercises for developing the speed attribute according to different playing positions among the research sample individuals. It also aims to identify the impact of these specialized exercises on enhancing the speed attribute according to different playing positions among the research sample individuals. Additionally, the research seeks to examine the influence of the speed attribute on some fundamental soccer skills according to different playing positions among the research sample individuals. Chapter Three includes the research methodology (experimental approach) and the sample consisting of 20 players divided into two groups (control and experimental) based on the playing positions (4 for defense, 4 for midfield, and 2 for attack). The methodology also includes specialized exercises for developing speed attributes according to different playing positions. The researchers utilized tests related to speed attribute and soccer skills, with the program comprising 24 training units, conducted over three training sessions per week for eight weeks. The survey was conducted on a sample from the same original community and the main experiment, which is the youth club of Mosul. Additionally, the researchers used the SPSS statistical package to extract the statistical results.
Specialized exercises have a positive impact on developing the speed attribute according to different playing positions for defense, midfield, and attack in the experimental group. They also have a positive effect on some skills (dribbling, shooting, and running with the ball). Furthermore, specialized exercises for transitional speed had the greatest impact on the development percentage for attacking players. One of the key recommendations is to utilize these specialized speed exercises for young players under the supervision of coaches, as they have a positive impact on the players' performance, considering that young players are the real prospects. Additionally, there should be an emphasis on diversifying specialized training methods for speed and focusing on the special preparation

K E Y W O R D S

Speed exercises, playing areas, football, players.

stage, highlighting the importance of skill and tactical preparation. These exercises can also be used for advanced teams and different age groups.

Introduction

1- Research definition:

1-1 Research Introduction and Significance:

Speed plays a distinct and crucial role in achieving high results and accomplishments in the game of soccer. Modern soccer heavily relies on speed, especially in transitioning from one half of the field to the opponent's half quickly, which can disrupt the opposing team and contribute to winning matches when combined with well-practiced skills from the players. Many players excel in running fast but face significant challenges at the beginning of a sprint, when stopping from it, or changing direction, especially when executing movements required in certain individual games.

To harness the potential of speed, training must incorporate speed and endurance together. This combination allows players to acquire the necessary attributes and perform various skills at the appropriate speed throughout the competition. Speed is considered a talent that is either innate or acquired to a limited extent through training. Therefore, the development of speed requires proper training methods, including flexibility, special strength, speed endurance, running technique, and the utilization of energy sources, such as anaerobic systems.

Training for speed development involves several methods, including uphill running, running with the wind direction, and resistance running using elastic bands. However, unlike strength and endurance, speed can be relatively improved through proper and organized training.

This research focuses on the importance of dividing the field into large and small areas depending on the goal of the exercise, a method that has been established and confirmed in training as the most effective solution. It aims to achieve tangible improvement in motor skills for a specific sport with the aim of achieving competence in competitions. A player who can combine tactical proficiency with a high degree of physical fitness (strength, speed, endurance, agility, and flexibility) can withstand the demands of a match.

The significance of this research lies in the development of specialized exercises, designed by the researchers, that encompass a variety of approaches to a player's performance during a game. These exercises address the challenges associated with speed, stopping, and changing direction, contributing to the overall enhancement of a player's performance on the field.

1-2 Research Problem:

The researchers have noticed a deficiency in the level of physical fitness and specialization in developing the speed attribute among young players. Given the significant importance of speed in the success of teams, training plans often rely on shaping different playing positions when applying defensive and offensive strategies, including defensive lines, midfield, and the attacking line. Therefore, the research problem lies in the lack of speed attribute across different playing positions and variations in their abilities, such as the speed of play and ball movement, among players. This issue has a substantial impact on the development of young players, as they are the real backbone of their teams in the Iraqi Premier League and national teams.

Hence, the researchers decided to prepare specialized exercises and implement them during training sessions to contribute to the success and development of young soccer players.

1-3 Research Objectives:

1. Develop specialized exercises to enhance the speed attribute (response speed, movement speed, transitional speed) according to different playing positions among the research sample individuals.
2. Determine the impact of specialized exercises on enhancing the speed attribute (response speed, movement speed, transitional speed) according to different playing positions among the research sample individuals.
3. Examine the influence of the speed attribute (response speed, movement speed, transitional speed) on some fundamental soccer skills according to different playing positions among the research sample individuals.

1-4 Research Assumptions:

1. There are statistically significant differences between the pre-test and post-test results for the research variables (response speed, movement speed, transitional speed) and skill level for both the experimental and control groups in favor of the post-test results.
2. There are statistically significant differences between the experimental and control groups in the post-test results for the research variables (response speed, movement speed, transitional speed) and skill level in favor of the experimental group.

1-5 Research Scope:

1-5-1 Human Scope: Young soccer players of Mosul Youth Club.

1-5-2 Time Scope: The period from May 18, 2023, to August 9, 2023.

1-5-3 Spatial Scope: Mosul Youth Club's soccer field.

1-6 research methodology:

The experimental methodology is one of the scientific approaches used to find solutions to many problems[1], including training-related scientific problems. Each research study has a specialized method for finding solutions, and based on this perspective, the researchers used the experimental methodology by designing two equivalent groups, the control, and experimental groups, to suit the nature of the problem.

3-2 Research Community and Sample:

There are many methods for selecting the research sample, but it is a condition to consider them when choosing this sample or that one. Among these conditions is that the chosen sample represents the original community truly and authentically, ensuring the generalization of its results to the community from which it was selected[2].

The original research community consists of players from the Mosul Clubs participating in the Youth Soccer League for the sports season (2022-2023), totaling 12 teams. The sample was deliberately chosen, consisting of 25 players from the Youth Club (Shabab Al-Mosul). Five players, including 3 goalkeepers and 2 others who did not participate in the tests, were excluded, resulting in a final sample size of 20 players. These players were divided into two groups, control and experimental, through individual and paired drawing, with each group comprising 10 players. They were categorized according to playing positions: 4 defenders, 4 midfielders, and 2 forwards, as determined by the preliminary tests to ensure the homogeneity and equivalence of the two groups, as shown in Tables (1) and (2).

[1] Mohammed Azhar Al-Sumak; Fundamentals of Scientific Research, Mosul, Mosul Printing Press, 1980, p. 42.
[2] Mohammed Azhar Al-Sumak; The same source, page 42.

The original research community consisted of 300 players from the youth clubs. The research sample represented 8.33% of the original research community. The selection of Shabab Al-Mosul Club was deliberate for the following reasons:

1. The cooperation of the team's coach and assistants with the researchers.
2. The availability of two soccer fields.
3. The availability of equipment and tools.
4. The proximity of the assistant research team to the club's location.

Table (1)
Homogeneity of the Sample in Age, Weight, and Height Variables

Variables	Mean	Median	Standard Deviation	coefficient
Age (years)	17.7	17.5	0.80	0.75
Weight (kg)	67.2	64.5	7.18	1.12
Height (cm)	174.95	176	5.50	0.57

Table (2)
Equivalence of the Control and Experimental Research Groups in Research Variables

No.	Tests	Unit	Experimental		control		Calculated T-value	Real Significance	Sig
			M	SD	M	SD			
1	Passing Defense	Repetition	12.50	0.57	12.00	0.81	1.80	0.12	Random
	Passing Midfield	Repetition	12.00	0.81	11.75	0.95	0.00	1.00	Random
	Passing Attack	Repetition	12.50	0.70	12.00	0.00	0.00	1.00	Random
2	Scoring Defense	Degree	12.50	1.29	11.25	0.50	0.00	1.01	Random
	Scoring Midfield	Degree	12.25	1.50	12.25	1.50	0.00	1.00	Random
	Scoring Attack	Degree	17.00	0.00	17.00	1.41	0.00	1.00	Random
3	Ball Dribbling Defense	Second	7.67	0.22	7.64	0.24	1.03	1.00	Random
	Ball Dribbling Midfield	Second	7.70	0.18	7.73	0.16	0.00	0.13	Random
	Ball Dribbling Attack	Second	7.48	0.02	7.71	0.04	0.00	0.12	Random

3-3 Research Tools, Devices, and Means of Assistance:
3-3-1 Data Collection Tools:
• Scientific sources (Arabic and foreign).

3-3-2 Used Tools and Devices:
• Soccer field.
• Electronic timing watch (5).
• Video camera.
• Soccer goal.
• Markers (4).
• Measuring tape.
• Adhesive tape.
• Whistles (4).
• Regulation soccer (8) of size 5.
• Hurdle with a length of 46 cm and a height of 15 cm.
• Device for testing horizontal leg movement speed.
• Backless chair.

3-4 Determination of Research Variables and Tests: Determination of Skill-related Variables and Appropriate Tests:
The fundamental soccer skills were identified based on the opinions of experts and specialists, which include (dribbling, passing, shooting, ball control, heading, running with the ball, tackling, and running with the ball). The researchers prepared a questionnaire to determine the most suitable test for measuring each skill, with approximately 2-3 tests for each skill.

1-2-4-3 Test: Rebounding dribble test against the wall for 20 seconds[3].
2-2-4-3 Test: Shooting accuracy test towards a goal divided into sections[4].
3-2-4-3 Test: Running with the ball for 50 meters[5].
3-5 Pilot Experiment:
The researchers, along with their assistant team, conducted their pilot experiment on June 3, 2023, at 5:30 PM, involving six players from the same original research community, who are youth players from Mosul Soccer Club. The purpose of this pilot experiment was to assess:
1. The suitability of the tests for the sample's level.
2. The reliability and suitability of the tools used.
3. The adequacy of the assistant team.
4. The time required.
After conducting the pilot experiment, it was confirmed that the assistant team was suitable, the allocated time for execution was sufficient, and the tests were appropriate for the sample.

[3] Hussam Saeed Al-Moumin; A Proposed Approach for Developing Some Physical and Fundamental Skills of Five-a-side Football Players (master's Thesis), College of Physical Education - University of Baghdad, 2001, pp. 71-72.
[4] Muftee Ibrahim Hamad; a source previously mentioned, 1994, p. 260.
[5] Mohammed Abdo and Saleh Al-Wahsh; Mohammed Abdo Al-Wahsh and Muftee Ibrahim; "Essentials of Football," 1st edition, Cairo, Dar Al-Alam Al-Ma'arif, 1994, p. 191.

6-3 Scientific Foundations of the Tests:

The selection of the tests (skill tests under study) was based on scientific principles before commencing the research procedures. These tests are known for their scientific validity, reliability, and objectivity. They have been used in most similar research studies.

3-7 Pre-test:

The pre-tests were conducted on the research sample by applying speed and skill tests to assess the results of each test. These pre-tests were recorded in data collection forms and took place on June 6 and 7, 2023, at 5:30 PM, at Mosul Soccer Club's stadium.

3-8 Main Experiment:

The main experiment aimed to apply the specialized methodology, where specialized exercises were conducted in two groups, with two exercises for each type of speed during the training unit. This took place in the primary section of the training unit.

The main experiment began on June 13, 2023, and concluded on August 5, 2023, lasting for 8 weeks with three training units per week on Sundays, Tuesdays, and Thursdays, totaling 24 training units.

The researchers systematically administered specialized exercises with specific intensities and repetitions. Intensities were adjusted according to the weeks and were applied in a wave-like manner (1:2). Rest periods between repetitions were provided based on the intensity of the work.

The percentage of exercise intensity (difficulty level) was calculated for all training units using the inverse percentage of time according to the following equation[6]:

$$\frac{Maximum\ Intensity \times Maximum\ Time}{Required\ Intensity}$$

As for the control group, they work with the team's coach in all training unit sections, following the coach's curriculum.

3-9 Post-Tests:

The aim of conducting post-tests is to identify the extent of differences that may have arisen because of the specialized exercises and measure them by conducting the same tests that were conducted in the pre-tests, considering the conditions that accompanied them in terms of location and timing. The post-tests were conducted on August 8-9, 2023. The results were recorded on a dedicated form for the purpose of making comparisons with the pre-test results using statistical methods.

3-10 Statistical Methods:

The researchers used the statistical software package SPSS to extract the statistical results.

4 - Presentation, Analysis, and Discussion of Results

4.1 Presentation and Analysis of Results

4.1.1 Presentation and Analysis of the Arithmetic Means and Standard Deviations for the Speed Variable in the Experimental Group in the Pre and Post-Tests.

4.1.2 Presentation and Analysis of the Arithmetic Means and Standard Deviations for the Skill Variables in the Experimental Group in the Pre and Post-Tests.

[6] Bastoussi Ahmed; Foundations and Theories of Sports Training, Cairo: Arab Thought Publishing House, 1999, p. 70.

Table (3) Arithmetic Means and Standard Deviations for the Skill Variables of the Experimental Group in the Pre and Post-Tests

No.	Tests	Unit	Pre-test		Post-test	
			M	SD	M	SD
1	Passing Defense	Repetition	12.50	0.57	13.75	0.50
	Passing Midfield	Repetition	12.00	0.81	13.50	0.57
	Passing Attack	Repetition	12.50	0.70	14.00	0.00
2	Scoring Defense	Degree	12.50	1.29	15.50	0.57
	Scoring Midfield	Degree	12.25	1.50	15.50	1.29
	Scoring Attack	Degree	17.00	0.00	18.50	0.70
3	Ball Dribbling Defense	Second	7.67	0.22	7.27	0.06
	Ball Dribbling Midfield	Second	7.70	0.18	7.49	0.20
	Ball Dribbling Attack	Second	7.48	0.02	7.16	0.28

Table (3) displays the arithmetic means and standard deviations for the skill variables of the experimental group in the pre and post-tests.

2-1-4 Presentation and analysis of the arithmetic means and standard deviations for the skill variables of the control group in the pre and post-tests.

Table (4)
Arithmetic Means and Standard Deviations for Skill Variables of the Control Group in the Pre and Post-Tests

No.	Tests	Unit	Pre-test		Post-test	
			M	SD	M	SD
1	Passing Defense	Repetition	12.00	0.81	13.00	0.81
	Passing Midfield	Repetition	11.75	0.95	12.25	0.95
	Passing Attack	Repetition	12.00	0.00	12.50	0.70
2	Scoring Defense	Degree	11.25	0.50	13.25	1.25
	Scoring Midfield	Degree	12.25	1.50	14.25	1.50
	Scoring Attack	Degree	17.00	1.41	17.50	2.12
3	Ball Dribbling Defense	Second	7.64	0.24	7.56	0.21
	Ball Dribbling Midfield	Second	7.73	0.16	7.66	0.14
	Ball Dribbling Attack	Second	7.71	0.04	7.47	0.24

Table (4) shows the arithmetic means and standard deviations for the skill variables of the control group in the pre and post-tests.

3-1-4 Presentation and Analysis of the Arithmetic Mean Differences, Standard Deviations of the Differences, Calculated Tau (τ) Value, True Significance, and Development Percentage for the Skill Variables of the Experimental Group in the Pre and Post-Tests.

Table (5)

Arithmetic Mean of the Mean Differences, Standard Deviation of the Mean Differences, Calculated Tau (τ) Value, True Significance, and Percentage of Development for the Skill Variables of the Experimental Group in the Pre and Post-Tests.

No.	Tests	Units	F	MD	Calculated (τ) Value	True Significance	Significance Level	Development Percentage (%)
1	Return Passing Defense	Repetition	1.25	0.50	5.00	0.01	Significant	10
	Return Passing Midfield	Repetition	1.50	0.57	5.58	0.01	Significant	12
	Return Passing Attack	Repetition	1.50	0.70	3.00	0.20	Random	12
2	Shooting Defense	Degree	3.00	1.41	4.24	0.02	Significant	24
	Shooting Midfield	Degree	3.25	1.25	5.16	0.01	Significant	26.53
	Shooting Attack	Degree	1.50	0.70	3.00	0.20	Random	8.82
3	Dribbling Defense	Second	0.40	0.18	4.38	0.02	Significant	5.21
	Dribbling Midfield	Second	0.21	0.19	2.20	0.11	Random	2.72
	Dribbling Attack	Second	0.32	0.04	9.28	80.6	Random	4.27

Significant at (≤ 0.05) level.

4-1-4 Presentation and Analysis of the Mean Differences, Standard Deviations of Mean Differences, Calculated Tau (τ) Values, True Significance, and Development Percentage for Skill Variables in the Control Group in the Pre and Post-Tests.

Table (6)

The arithmetic means of the differences in the central tendencies, standard deviations of the differences in the central tendencies, calculated τ values, true significance, and the percentage of development for the skill variables of the control group in the pre-test and post-test measurements.

No.	Tests	Units	F	MD	Calculated (τ) Value	True Significance	Significance Level	Development Percentage (%)
1	Return Passing Defense	Repetition	1.00	0.81	2.44	0.09	Significant	8.33
	Return Passing Midfield	Repetition	0.50	1.73	0.57	0.60	Significant	4.25
	Return Passing Attack	Repetition	0.50	0.70	1.00	0.50	Random	4.16
2	Shooting Defense	Degree	2.00	1.41	2.82	0.06	Significant	17.77
	Shooting Midfield	Degree	2.00	0.00	2.00	0.10	Significant	16.32
	Shooting Attack	Degree	0.50	3.53	0.20	0.87	Random	2.94
3	Dribbling Defense	Second	0.08	0.03	4.37	0.02	Significant	1.04
	Dribbling Midfield	Second	0.06	0.26	4.91	0.01	Random	0.90
	Dribbling Attack	Second	0.23	0.20	1.62	0.35	Random	3.11

Significant at (≤ 0.05) level.

5-1-4 Presentation and analysis of the arithmetic means, standard deviations, the calculated τ value, and the real significance for the skill variables of the experimental and control groups for the post-tests.

Table (7): Arithmetic means, standard deviations, calculated τ values, and real significance for the skill variables of the experimental and control groups for the post-tests.

No.	Tests	Unit	Experimental		control		Calculated T-value	Real Significance	Sig
			M	SD	M	SD			
1	Passing Defense	Repetition	13.75	0.50	13.00	0.81	1.56	0.16	Random
	Passing Midfield	Repetition	13.50	0.57	12.25	0.95	2.23	0.06	Random
	Passing Attack	Repetition	14.00	0.00	12.50	0.70	3.00	0.09	Random
2	Scoring Defense	Degree	15.50	0.57	13.25	1.25	3.25	0.01	Random
	Scoring Midfield	Degree	15.50	1.29	14.25	1.50	1.26	0.25	Random
	Scoring Attack	Degree	18.50	0.70	17.50	2.12	0.63	0.59	Random
3	Ball Dribbling Defense	Second	7.27	0.06	7.56	0.21	2.54	0.04	Sig
	Ball Dribbling Midfield	Second	7.49	0.20	7.66	0.14	1.35	0.22	Random
	Ball Dribbling Attack	Second	7.16	0.02	7.47	0.24	1.78	0.21	Random

Significant at (≤ 0.05) level.

4-2 Discussion of the Skill Test Results:

4-2-1 Discussion of the Results of the Wall Pass Test for 20 seconds.

It was found that there were significant differences in the defensive and midfield passes between the pre-test and post-test for the experimental group in favor of the post-test. The improvement percentage for the defense was 10%, and for the midfield, it was 12.5%. The researchers attribute this improvement to the training exercises used during the training sessions.

This skill is considered one of the most crucial skills used during matches, as emphasized by Muftee, who stated, "Perhaps nothing undermines a team more than poor, unregulated passes, and nothing builds confidence among team members like good passes between players"7 As for the attack, although it did not reach statistical significance, a significant improvement occurred. The researchers attribute this to the possibility that the duration may not have been sufficient, and the players may need more exercises than those provided in the curriculum. The rate of improvement was 12%. As for the control group, there was no significant difference between defense, midfield, and attack, but a good improvement rate appeared. The researchers attribute this to the fact that the control group underwent a training program by the coach that focused on the skill aspect. The rate of improvement for defense was 8.33%, midfield was 4.25%, and attack was 4.16%. In the post-tests, there was no significant difference between the three areas, and the researchers attribute this to the similarity in the skill levels of both groups, as the control group had undergone training by the coach during the preparation period and had reached a good level.

4-2-2 Discussion of the results of the "Shooting Balls" test:

It is evident that there are statistically significant differences in both defense and midfield between the pre-test and post-test for the experimental group in favor of the post-test. The researchers attribute this to the specialized exercises used in the training units and their suitability for the game. These exercises take into consideration the playing field's dimensions, the number of players, and the dynamic situations that occur during the match. Therefore, it is difficult to take advantage of all the opportunities for scoring, and players need to be accustomed to quick and appropriate decision-making in a rapidly changing context. As stated, "the player must think and aim quickly because slow thinking and hesitation allow the defending opponent to intervene and disrupt the shot.8" In the defensive and midfield areas, there were statistically significant differences in favor of the post-tests for the experimental group, with improvement percentages of 24% and 26.53%, respectively. However, in the offensive area, while there were no significant differences, there was still notable improvement, possibly due to the insufficiency of the training units, resulting in an improvement percentage of 8.82%.

As for the control group, although there were no statistically significant differences among the three areas, there was still significant improvement. This can be attributed to the training curriculum designed by the coach during the specified period, focusing on this important soccer skill. The improvement percentages for the control group were 17.77% for defense, 16.32% for midfield, and 2.94% for the attack.

[7] Muftee Ibrahim Hamad; a previously mentioned source; 1st edition; Cairo; Arab Thought Publishing House; 1985; page 12.

[8] Hany Mahmoud Mokhtar; "Scientific Foundations of Football Training," Cairo, Dar Al-Fikr Al-Arabi, 1987, p. 87.

In the post-tests, there was a statistically significant difference only in the defensive area, while there were no significant differences in the midfield and offensive areas, indicating similar results between the two groups.

3-2-4 Discussion of the Results of the 50m Ball Running Test:

Statistically significant differences were observed only in the defensive area for the experimental group. This suggests that the specialized training exercises contributed to the development of this skill, which included running with the ball over various distances. Speed played a role in this improvement. Ball running is a fundamental skill in soccer, allowing players to transition from one position to another, whether from defense to offense or vice versa. Mahmoud Hany Mokhtar emphasizes that ball running is a key skill used in executing offensive and individual plans. This underscores its importance in soccer (source citation). 9

As for the control group, there was a significant difference for defense and midfield. The reason for this was the curriculum designed by the coach, focusing on skill development during training. Most of the exercises given involved ball control, in addition to a significant emphasis on skills. The rate of development for defense was (1.04%), midfield (0.90%), and attack (3.11%).

In the post-tests, there was a significant difference for defense, while there was no difference for midfield and attack, and the results may have been close between the two groups.

5 - Conclusions and Recommendations.

5 - 1 Conclusions:

• Specialized speed exercises according to playing positions have a positive impact on various playing positions: defense, midfield, and attack for the experimental group.

• Specialized speed exercises according to playing positions have a positive impact on some skills (passing, shooting, dribbling) for players in defense, midfield, and attack in the experimental group.

5 - 2 Recommendations:

• The researchers recommend using these specialized speed exercises for young players aged (17-19) by coaches due to their positive impact on player development, as they represent the real talent pool for the advanced category.

• Attention should be paid to diversifying specialized training methods for different types of speed (reaction speed, motor speed, transitional speed) to align with the requirements of modern soccer.

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