

TITLE

THE EFFECT OF PITCH SIZE ON TECHNICAL DEMANDS IN SMALL SIDED POSSESSION GAMES IN AMATEUR FOOTBALLERS

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ABSTRACT**Introduction**

Small sided games (SSGs) have had a great significance in football training by providing physiological and technical development for all levels of participation (Rampinini et al. 2007). Various researchers have studied the effect of SSGs on technical demands (see Panter et al., 2008, Katis and Kellis, 2009) with both Platt et al. (2001) and Katis and Kellis (2009) agreeing that manipulation of player numbers and pitch size has an impact upon the technical actions recorded within SSGs. Whilst there is an abundance of research in SSGs, research in small sided possession games (SSPGs) is lacking. SSPGs can be defined as the use of fewer participants, smaller pitch dimensions and no football goals where the aim is purely to retain possession. The aim of this study was to examine the effect of pitch size on technical demands during SSPGs in amateur footballers.

Method

Players (n=8) participated in 3v3 and 4v4 small sided possession games over three different pitch dimensions (small; 20x25m, medium; 25x30m, large, 30x40m). Each SSPG was performed as three bouts of 4 minutes and one final bout of 2 minutes, separated by 2 minutes of rest. Each game lasted 20 minutes. Games were filmed and analysed post match with the following variables recorded; 1 touch possessions, 2 touch possessions, 3+ touch possessions, dribbles, pass, receive, interception, tackle, header and total number of actions.

Results

ANOVA mixed factorial test identified interception ($P>0.05$) and tackles ($P>0.05$) as a statistical significant difference for technical demands when the number of participants and pitch dimensions changes. Passes were the most frequent recorded event across all pitch sizes for both 3v3 and 4v4 SSPGs. Medium pitch size was found to provide the highest mean number of actions per player for both 3v3 and 4v4.

Conclusion

Small sided possession games can be used to develop football player's technical ability. Coaches should carefully consider the objective of the training session prior to manipulating pitch size and participant numbers in order to ensure the objective of the session remains central to the game.