

Paper IV

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Assessing the individual relationships between physical test improvements and external load match parameters in male professional football players – A brief report

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9 **Keywords:** Team sports, GPS, Athlete monitoring, Player development, Performance.

10 **Abstract**

11 **Purpose:** To explore if a meaningful improvement in physical performance following an in-season
12 strength training intervention can be related to external load match parameters at an individual level
13 in professional male football players.

14 **Methods:** Eight male professional football players (25.4±3.1 yrs, 184.1±3.4 cm, 79.3±2.2 kg)
15 completed a 10-week strength intervention period, in addition to football specific training and
16 matches. Commonly used physical and external load measures were assessed pre- and post-
17 intervention. Physical performance improvements had to exceed the measurements typical error and
18 the smallest worthwhile difference (SWD) to be considered meaningful. SWD and non-overlap of all
19 pairs (NAP) analysis was performed to assess external load match parameters pre- and post-
20 intervention period. A Bayesian pairwise correlation analysis was performed to assess relationships
21 between changes in physical performance and external load match parameters.

22 **Results:** Three players displayed meaningful improvements in 2 to 5 measures of physical
23 performance. However, positive changes greater than SWD, and positive effects in NAP results were
24 shown for all players in external load match parameters. Kendall's Tau correlation analysis showed
25 evidence (base factor >3) for only one correlation (maximum speed – decelerations, $\tau = -.62$),
26 between the changes in physical performance and external load measures, while the remaining
27 comparisons were unrelated.

28 **Conclusions:** The findings suggest that improvements in physical performance may not necessarily
29 translate to improvements in external load match parameters. Further research, with larger sample
30 sizes, is needed to understand potential mechanisms between acute and chronic physical performance
31 changes and football external load parameters during training and matches.

32

33 **1 Introduction**

34 Coaches and practitioners may interpret improvements in physical capacity of fitness tests as
35 coinciding with improvements in physical match performance, based on the assumption of a causal
36 relationship between these variables, with little evidence of the construct validity (e.g., dose-response
37 relationship) (1). Well-developed physical performance is indeed important for football-specific
38 performance. However generic measures of physical performance are influenced by numerous
39 factors, including reliability and validity, which must be considered whenever interpreting changes
40 in physical performance (2, 3). E.g., to minimize the impact of extraneous factors it is imperative to
41 conduct physical testing in controlled environments, with an understanding of the equipment's
42 inherent measurement errors. For example, common physical performance measures, such as 10- and
43 30-m linear sprint time, maximum speed, countermovement jump (CMJ) and leg press power have
44 demonstrated a raw and relative (%) typical error (TE) of 0.03-0.05 seconds (TE%: ~1.3), 0.18 m/s
45 (TE%: 1.4), 1.7 cm (TE%: 4.6) and 70 W (TE%: 4.4), respectively (2). Besides awareness of
46 reliability, determining the meaningfulness of any observed change is an essential aspect of player
47 monitoring, and can, as an example, be calculated by estimating the smallest worthwhile difference
48 (SWD) (2-4). Thus, utilizing the TE and SWD may be seen as feasible criteria in the process of
49 determining whether performance improvements or declines should be interpreted as meaningful or
50 not.

51 In addition to tracking changes in physical performance over time, external load data is commonly
52 used to monitor training and match load in football at a group and individual level (5, 6). Previous
53 research has found strong cross-sectional associations between physical performance and match
54 running performance in football (7, 8), and football-specific training has been shown to improve
55 physical performance (9). Thus, recent research suggests that external load measures can be reflective
56 of players physical performance (10). However, physical performance and external load data are
57 known to differ between competitive levels (7) and there is a lack of knowledge on how changes in
58 physical performance is reflected in external load parameters among highly trained players. For
59 example, speed and explosive movements are regarded as important for football-specific
60 performance (5, 11) and minor performance enhancements in these players may potentially influence
61 the likelihood of success in match-decisive actions (12, 13). Contrastingly, external load is typically
62 assessed cross-sectionally and it is currently unknown how changes in physical performance
63 measures impact external load in match-play. In addition, when evaluating highly trained players,
64 subtle differences and unique variation within and between players is of upmost importance (12).
65 Consequently, the assessment of players in elite sports necessitates a personalized approach,
66 highlighting the significance of tailoring evaluations to individual needs (11, 14). Contrastingly,
67 research has traditionally focused on group assessments when presenting their findings (6, 14).

68 With the importance of assessing individual responses in both physical test performance and external
69 match load data, this brief report aims to explore if a meaningful improvement in players physical
70 test performance is related to external load match performance by assessing the individual player
71 response. This brief report is based on data from a strength intervention study by Byrkjedal et al
72 (2023) including a team of male professional football players (15).

73 **2 Methods**

74 This case study originates from a 15-week study where professional footballers underwent a 10-week
75 strength training intervention (15). Physical performance (30-m sprint, CMJ, and leg press power)
76 was measured pre- and post-intervention, and external load match parameters were monitored in five

77 matches at the start ("baseline") and at the end ("follow-up") of the intervention period. An overview
78 of the study period is presented in Figure 1. This report aims to identify meaningful improvements in
79 player's physical test performance and to explore the relationship with changes in external load
80 match parameters. See Byrkjedal et al., 2023 (15) for more details on the original study design and
81 data processing.

82 *"Insert Figure 1 here"*

83 **2.1 Subjects**

84 16 outfield players representing a Norwegian 2nd tier club completed the strength intervention period
85 and were eligible for inclusion in this brief report. However, players had to participate in a minimum
86 of two matches (with ≥ 60 min playing time per match) in both the baseline- and follow-up period to
87 be included in this brief report. Eight male players (baseline $n=6$, follow-up $n=2$) were excluded due
88 to lack of match participation and/or sufficient playing time. Thus, a total of eight players (25.4 ± 3.1
89 yrs, 184.1 ± 3.4 cm, 79.3 ± 2.2 kg) are included for further analysis. Written informed consent was
90 obtained before the study commenced. The study was performed according to the Helsinki
91 declaration of 1975, approved by the local ethical committee at the University of Agder,
92 Kristiansand, Norway, and Norwegian Center for Research Data (approval reference: 464080).

93 Briefly, physical performance testing pre- and post-intervention was completed in one day using a
94 test-battery of 30-m sprint, CMJ, and Keiser leg press. The 30-m sprint test involved 2-4 maximal
95 sprints with 4 min passive rest, where the best attempt was analyzed. CMJs were completed with 2-3
96 sets of 3 jumps performed 30 s apart, separated by 2-3 min passive rest. The mean jump height of the
97 two best attempts was analyzed. Lower limb strength and power were assessed using a horizontal
98 pneumatic leg press device with a 10-RM protocol (15). To be considered a meaningful
99 improvement, performance enhancements had to exceed raw and relative (%) TE and SWD (2-4).
100 The same test equipment and protocols as Lindberg et al (2022) (2), were used, and pre-test results
101 were used to calculate SWD (3, 4).

102 Match performance was assessed with a tracking system from Catapult Sports (Vector S7, Firmware
103 8.10, Catapult Sports, Melbourne, Australia). Ten matches, five in the baseline and in the follow-up
104 period were included to investigate the effect in external load match parameters after the intervention
105 period. External load parameters, relative to playing time, included distance per min, PlayerLoadTM,
106 high-speed running (19.8-25.2 km/h; HSR) and sprint running (>25.2 km/h) distance, accelerations,
107 decelerations and change of directions (summary of movements in the respective direction's with an
108 intensity >2.5 m/s). The sum of these were displayed as high-intensity events (16).

109 **2.2 Statistics**

110 Descriptive results were calculated using Microsoft Excel (version 16.67, 255 Microsoft Corp.
111 Redmond, WA, USA) and are reported as Mean \pm SD (standard deviation). Differences in external
112 load parameters are reported as mean with 95% upper and lower confidence limits. A nonparametric
113 Bayesian correlation analysis was performed in JASP (Jeffreys's Amazing Statistics Program;
114 version 0.16.1) to investigate the relationship between the physical test performance and external
115 load parameters. The Kendall Tau correlations in combination with Bayes Factors (BF) were
116 calculated for each comparison. The BF is one method to quantify the likelihood of an alternative
117 hypothesis (H1) compared with the null hypothesis (H0) and is expressed as BF_{10} . A $BF_{10} > 3$ was
118 interpreted as evidence supporting the association. For a more comprehensive description and full
119 interpretation of BF_{10} , see Byrkjedal et al (2023) (16).

120 Differences in external load match parameters between the baseline- and follow-up period were
121 analyzed using SWD, calculated as 0.2 of the between players SD at pre-test/baseline (3), and non-
122 overlap of all pairs (NAP). NAP is a nonparametric technique for measuring non-overlap or
123 “dominance” for two phases, and a feasible way to interpret individual effects between two periods.
124 Advantages with the NAP are, for example, that it can be applied in distributions that lack normality
125 and all data points collected is included into the analyses. Disadvantages are that it cannot be used to
126 evaluate trends or serial dependency. For a more thorough explanation of NAP and its application,
127 see Parker and Vannest, 2009 (17). Effect sizes for NAP values were interpreted according to
128 previous recommendations: 0–.65 = week effects, .66–.92 = moderate effects, .93–1.0 = large or
129 strong effects (17).

130 **3 Results**

131 Results from pre- and post-intervention period and changes in physical test performance and external
132 load match parameters are presented in Table 1. Kendall’s Tau correlations between changes in
133 physical test performance and external load are presented in Table 2. Three players showed physical
134 test improvements greater than the SWD, TE and TE%, and their individual NAP effects in the three
135 most common external load match parameters (total-, high-intensity running- and sprint running
136 distance) (5) are presented in Figure 2. Individual figures and NAP effects across all variables for all
137 eight players are available in supplementary materials.

138 *“Insert Table 1 and 2 here”*

139 *“Insert Figure 2 here”*

140 **4 Discussion**

141 This study explored the effects in external load match parameters following a meaningful change in
142 physical test performance post an in-season strength intervention including a small sample of
143 professional football players. Our results suggest that a meaningful change in physical test
144 performance does not directly impact external load match parameters, and we do not observe changes
145 in physical test performance to be associated with changes in external load match parameters.

146 When looking at the results (Table 1), three players (a, e, and h) showed meaningful physical test
147 improvements. Contrastingly several other players showing strong NAP-effects and changes >SWD,
148 suggesting that meaningful improvements in physical test performance were not consistently
149 reflected in external load match parameters. Indeed, this study was conducted in-season, with a high
150 football-specific focus likely explaining the uniform improvements in external load match
151 parameters.

152 External load has been explored as a simple tool to monitor players physical fitness in a previous
153 study, and although some parameters were correlated, it was highlighted that the measures may not
154 be sensitive enough to detect small but meaningful alternations in players fitness (10). This
155 observation is coherent with our findings. Furthermore, a small range of physical performance
156 improvements complicates the identification of a relationship, nevertheless, such minor
157 improvements may still be important for football-specific performance. Despite cross-sectional
158 assessments demonstrating a relationship between physical performance and external load data across
159 subjects (7, 11), our finding suggests that small but meaningful within-subject improvements in
160 physical performance might not affect external load parameters.

161 Current research emphasize the large variations within external load match data, therefore the lacking
162 sensitivity that is a huge challenge when attempting to assess associations in changes of potentially
163 associated data such as physical fitness test results (18). It is possible that larger physical
164 performance improvements typically seen after years of practice, for example from youth academy to
165 senior elite level players (7, 8, 11), would be necessary to reflect changes in external load data.

166 Sport-specific performance such as match-play is a highly complex task, difficult to decipher by
167 fixed moving patterns such as generic physical performance tests or external load parameters (1, 7,
168 16). The inherent challenge of identifying small but meaningful performance changes is evident even
169 in simple physical performance assessments (1, 2), and with the variation in external load parameters
170 (11, 15), the lack of an association in the current study is not unexpected. However, the importance of
171 physical performance testing or external load monitoring per se, should not be neglected. While we
172 emphasize the challenges of assuming a causal relationship between them without supportive data
173 (1), both physical performance results and external load data in themselves can be of high value for
174 practitioners in optimizing player performance and development, minimizing risk of injuries and
175 preparing for competitive performance (5, 7, 11).

176 Previously (9, 10) and in the current study, external load match data has been included to explore the
177 relationships with physical performance, despite the known challenges with match-to-match
178 variabilities (19) and influence of contextual factors (20). However, drills, such as small sides games,
179 have been thoroughly utilized as a way of standardizing game-play (21). Such drills may represent a
180 feasible measure of players performance and should be further explored as a method to standardize
181 the external load demands when exploring the relationships between physical fitness and external
182 load parameters in future studies (6).

183 **5 Practical application**

184 Although this data set has a small sample size, we believe our findings can serve as a foundation for
185 future studies. In general, we highlight the need to increase the knowledge on how strength training
186 adaptations can impact a variety of football match external load parameters and performance. With
187 no direct link between improvements in physical performance tests and changes in external load
188 match parameters, coaches and practitioners should evaluate the importance of physical and external
189 load monitoring separately and avoid postulating an effect between two measures without supportive
190 data. We emphasize the need for researchers and practitioners to work closely together to better
191 understand and explore how physical performance changes can potentially affect different measures
192 of football specific parameters.

193 **6 Conclusions**

194 Improvements in physical test performance may not necessarily translate to changes in external load
195 match parameters. More research is needed to address and understand the mechanisms between
196 changes in physical performance and how this affects measures of match related external load
197 performance. Future studies should include larger samples of trained players and include a non-
198 strength training control group to further investigate the relationship between changes in physical test
199 performance and measures of external load from both training and match situations.

200 **7 Nomenclature**

201 CMJ: Countermovement jump

202 TE: Typical error

203 SWD: Smallest worthwhile difference
204 NAP: Non-overlap of all pairs
205 HSR: High-speed running
206 Bayes Factors: BF

207 **8 Conflict of Interest**

208 *The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial*
209 *relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.*

210 **9 Acknowledgments**

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Table 1: Individual results and change from pre-test/baseline to post-test/follow-up in physical test performance and external load match parameters.

	Physical performance						External load							
	10-m s	30-m s	Max speed m/s	CMJ cm	Pmax W	TD m/min	Peak speed m/s	Player- Load au/min	HIR m/min	SPR m/min	HIE nr/min	Acc (>2.5) nr/min	Dec (>2.5) nr/min	CoD (>2.5) nr/min
<i>Pre-test/baseline period</i>														
Player a (n=4)	1.60	4.04	8.64	41.5	1534	106.6 ± 5.5	7.96 ± 0.58	10.6 ± 0.8	3.31 ± 0.92	0.55 ± 0.44	1.03 ± 0.06	0.21 ± 0.04	0.21 ± 0.03	0.61 ± 0.02
Player b (n=5)	1.65	4.27	7.97	27.4	1165	132.4 ± 7.0	7.56 ± 0.20	13.7 ± 1.2	7.92 ± 1.77	0.66 ± 0.39	1.01 ± 0.14	0.25 ± 0.06	0.19 ± 0.04	0.58 ± 0.09
Player c (n=5)	1.44	3.71	9.42	46.9	1164	112.2 ± 4.1	8.74 ± 0.39	12.0 ± 0.3	6.62 ± 1.48	1.90 ± 0.79	0.93 ± 0.13	0.21 ± 0.03	0.24 ± 0.03	0.47 ± 0.08
Player d (n=4)	1.49	3.85	9.06	44.0	1902	100.4 ± 4.1	8.01 ± 0.39	9.7 ± 0.5	2.28 ± 0.84	0.51 ± 0.35	1.44 ± 0.07	0.41 ± 0.10	0.22 ± 0.04	0.81 ± 0.09
Player e (n=5)	1.49	3.80	9.36	47.5	2098	121.0 ± 2.4	8.29 ± 0.24	12.9 ± 0.3	7.19 ± 1.12	1.60 ± 0.66	1.21 ± 0.13	0.28 ± 0.05	0.27 ± 0.08	0.66 ± 0.07
Player f (n=3)	1.54	3.93	8.77	42.7	1597	128.6 ± 6.1	8.25 ± 0.49	13.3 ± 0.8	7.94 ± 1.55	1.98 ± 1.24	1.26 ± 0.04	0.23 ± 0.03	0.35 ± 0.05	0.68 ± 0.08
Player g (n=2)	1.46	3.79	9.09	38.7	1719	127.0 ± 8.1	8.33 ± 0.21	11.3 ± 1.3	7.61 ± 1.33	1.01 ± 0.19	1.59 ± 0.39	0.36 ± 0.09	0.33 ± 0.11	0.90 ± 0.19
Player h (n=5)	1.52	3.92	8.87	39.0	1673	110.3 ± 7.3	8.32 ± 0.34	10.4 ± 0.9	8.40 ± 2.43	2.47 ± 0.57	1.51 ± 0.19	0.24 ± 0.02	0.31 ± 0.09	0.96 ± 0.11
<i>Post-test/follow-up period</i>														
Player a (n=5)	1.53	3.88	9.06	49.4	1599	111.8 ± 4.2	8.58 ± 0.55	11.2 ± 0.6	5.08 ± 0.95	1.16 ± 0.63	1.17 ± 0.07	0.30 ± 0.05	0.18 ± 0.02	0.70 ± 0.10
Player b (n=3)	1.67	4.29	7.94	28.7	1035	130.4 ± 3.0	7.70 ± 0.40	12.5 ± 0.6	8.72 ± 0.79	0.90 ± 0.47	1.04 ± 0.15	0.20 ± 0.06	0.22 ± 0.04	0.61 ± 0.20
Player c (n=5)	1.47	3.78	9.35	43.8	1105	115.3 ± 3.5	8.59 ± 0.47	12.1 ± 0.4	8.30 ± 1.00	2.50 ± 0.49	1.19 ± 0.20	0.27# ± 0.03	0.26 ± 0.06	0.65 ± 0.18
Player d (n=5)	1.51	3.89	9.14	42.8	1764	107.8# ± 3.6	8.31 ± 0.26	10.4 ± 0.4	4.93# ± 1.01	0.93 ± 0.44	1.30 ± 0.16	0.39 ± 0.08	0.21 ± 0.05	0.69 ± 0.13
Player e (n=5)	1.46	3.72	9.60	55.7	2267	126.5 ± 4.6	8.57 ± 0.56	13.3 ± 0.4	7.45 ± 0.61	1.77 ± 0.43	1.42 ± 0.11	0.33 ± 0.07	0.25 ± 0.06	0.84# ± 0.10

Player f (n=5)	n/a	3.99	n/a	39.6	1478	130.3 ± 3.2	8.26 ± 0.37	13.4 ± 0.3	7.93 ± 1.22	1.67 ± 0.55	1.77# ± 0.12	0.34# ± 0.04	0.42 ± 0.06	1.00# ± 0.15
Player g (n=4)	1.46	3.79	9.06	38.9	1683	126.6 ± 3.8	8.81# ± 0.24	11.7 ± 0.8	8.73 ± 0.92	2.08# ± 0.51	1.39 ± 0.13	0.32 ± 0.07	0.20 ± 0.04	0.86 ± 0.13
Player h (n=4)	1.52	3.88	9.31	43.9	1573	110.0 ± 1.6	8.45 ± 0.20	10.2 ± 0.3	8.38 ± 0.35	3.25 ± 0.72	1.30 ± 0.06	0.27 ± 0.01	0.23 ± 0.02	0.81 ± 0.04
<i>Change pre/baseline period – post/follow-up period</i>														
Player a	0.08*	0.16*	0.42*	7.9*	65	5.3†	0.62†	0.7†	1.77†	0.61†	0.14†	0.08†	-0.03	0.09†
						-2.4,	-0.28,	-0.4,	0.28,	-0.28,	0.03,	0.01,	-0.07,	-0.03,
						12.9	1.51	1.8	3.26	1.49	0.25	0.15	0.01	0.22
Player b	-0.02	-0.02	-0.04	1.3	-130	-2.0	0.14†	-1.3	0.80†	0.24†	0.02	-0.05	0.04†	0.03
						-12.1,	-0.36,	-3.1,	-1.90,	-0.51,	-0.23,	-0.15,	-0.03,	-0.21,
						8.6	0.64	0.6	3.50	0.99	0.28	0.06	0.11	0.28
Player c	-0.03	-0.07	-0.07	-3.1	-59	3.1†	-0.14	0.1	1.68†	0.60†	0.26†	0.06†	0.02†	0.18†
						-3.1,	-0.72,	-0.4,	-0.17,	-0.42,	0.02,	0.01,	-0.05,	-0.02,
						11.5	0.44	0.6	3.52	1.62	0.50	0.10	0.10	0.38
Player d	-0.02	-0.04	0.08	-1.2	-138	7.4†	0.30†	0.7†	2.65†	0.42†	-0.14	-0.02	-0.01	-0.12
						1.4,	-0.21,	0.1,	1.15,	-0.23,	-0.35,	-0.16,	-0.08,	-0.30,
						13.7	0.82	1.3	4.14	1.06	0.06	0.13	0.07	0.06
Player e	0.03*	0.08*	0.23*	8.2*	169*	5.5†	0.28†	0.4†	0.25	0.17†	0.22†	0.05†	-0.03	0.19†
						0.1,	-0.35,	-0.1,	-1.06,	-0.65,	0.05,	-0.04,	-0.13,	0.06,
						10.9	0.90	1.0	1.60	0.99	0.38	0.14	0.07	0.31
Player f	n/a	-0.05	n/a	-3.0	-119	1.7	0.00	0.0	-0.01	-0.32	0.51†	0.11†	0.07†	0.32†
						-6.9,	-0.74,	-1.0,	-2.40,	-1.82,	0.33,	0.05,	-0.03,	0.09,
						10.3	0.75	1.0	2.39	1.19	0.68	0.18	0.17	0.56
Player g	0.00	0.00	-0.03	0.2	-36	-0.4	0.48†	0.4†	1.12†	1.06†	-0.20	-0.04	-0.13	-0.03
						13.0,	-0.08,	-1.9,	-1.39,	-0.03,	-0.75,	-0.21,	-0.29,	-0.39,
						12.2	1.04	2.7	3.63	2.17	0.35	0.14	0.03	0.32
Player h	0.00	0.03	0.45*	5.0*	-100	-0.3	0.13†	-0.3	-0.03	0.78†	-0.20	0.03†	-0.08	-0.15
						-9.3,	-0.33,	-1.3,	-2.97,	-0.23,	-0.44,	0.01,	-0.19,	-0.29,
						8.6	0.59	0.81	2.91	1.79	0.03	0.05	0.03	-0.01

283 Note: Positive change in 10- and 30-m sprint times indicate improved performance from pre to post. Physical performance results are reported
284 with raw data points and raw difference. External load parameters are reported with mean ± SD in the baseline and follow-up period, while
285 changes are reported as mean difference including 95% lower and upper confidence limits. N/a, missing data. *Bold text indicates that physical
286 test performance changes were >SWD, raw and relative (%) TE. #Strong effects in Non overlap of all pair analysis (in follow-up period
287 compared to baseline period). † >SWD calculated from baseline-period results. n: number of included matches in the respective periods, CMJ:
288 Countermovement jump, Pmax: Max power (W), TD: total distance, AU: Arbitrary units, HSR: high speed running distance, SPR: sprint running
289 distance, HIE: high intensity events, Acc: accelerations, Dec: decelerations, CoD: change of directions.

290 **Table 2:** Kendall's Tau correlations between changes in physical performance and external load match parameters from pre-
 291 test/baseline period to post-test/follow-up period.

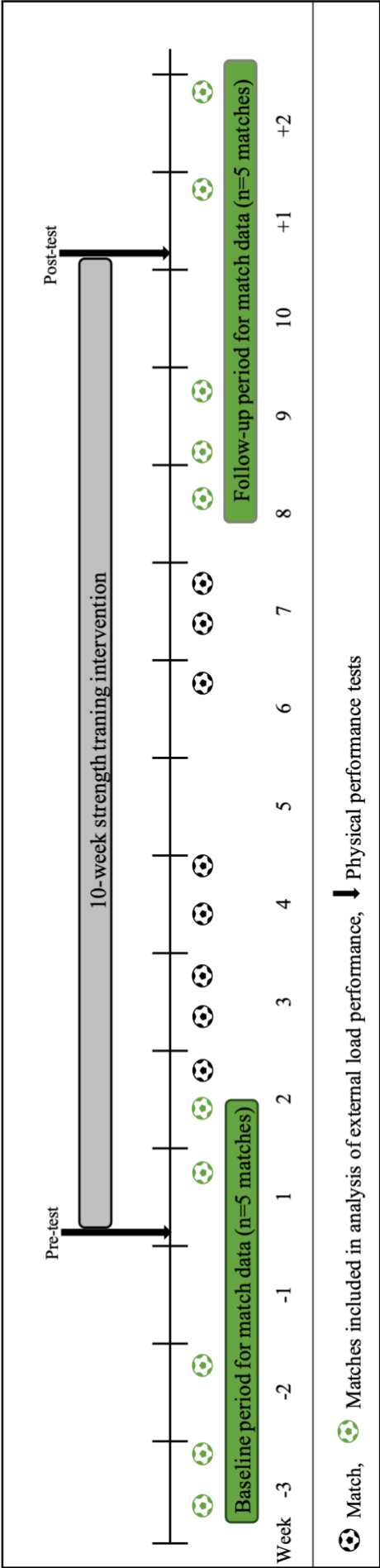
	10-m	30-m	Max speed	CMJ	Pmax
<i>TD</i>	0.07 (-0.38, 0.48)	0.07 (-0.38, 0.48)	0.14 (-0.33, 0.53)	0.07 (-0.38, 0.48)	0.21 (-0.28, 0.57)
<i>Peak speed</i>	0.22 (-0.27, 0.58)	0.57 (-0.03, 0.78)	0.36 (-0.18, 0.66)	0.43 (-0.13, 0.70)	0.14 (-0.33, 0.53)
<i>PlayerLoadTM</i>	0.15 (-0.33, 0.53)	0.21 (-0.28, 0.57)	0.29 (-0.23, 0.62)	0.07 (-0.38, 0.48)	0.36 (-0.18, 0.62)
<i>HSR</i>	-0.30 (-0.63, 0.22)	-0.07 (-0.49, 0.38)	0.00 (-0.43, 0.43)	-0.21 (-0.57, 0.28)	-0.07 (-0.48, 0.38)
<i>SPR</i>	-0.22 (-0.58, 0.27)	0.14 (-0.33, 0.53)	0.36 (-0.18, 0.66)	0.00 (-0.43, 0.43)	0.14 (-0.33, 0.53)
<i>HIE</i>	0.15 (-0.32, 0.53)	-0.26 (-0.60, 0.25)	-0.47 (-0.73, 0.10)	-0.11 (-0.50, 0.35)	0.11 (-0.35, 0.50)
<i>Acc</i>	0.52 (-0.07, 0.75)	0.07 (-0.38, 0.48)	0.00 (-0.43, 0.43)	-0.07 (-0.48, 0.38)	0.21 (-0.28, 0.57)
<i>Dec</i>	-0.04 (-0.46, 0.40)	-0.40 (-0.69, 0.15)	-0.62* (-0.80, -0.01)	-0.33 (-0.65, 0.20)	-0.33 (-0.65, 0.20)
<i>CoD</i>	0.30 (-0.21, 0.63)	-0.14 (-0.53, 0.33)	-0.50 (-0.74, 0.08)	0.00 (-0.43, 0.43)	0.29 (-0.23, 0.62)

292 * Indicates $BF_{10} > 3$. Values in brackets indicate 95% lower and upper credible intervals. TD: total distance, HSR: high speed
 293 running distance, SPR: sprint running distance, HIE: high intensity events, Acc: accelerations, Dec: decelerations, CoD: change
 294 of directions, CMJ: countermovement jump, Pmax: maximum power (W).

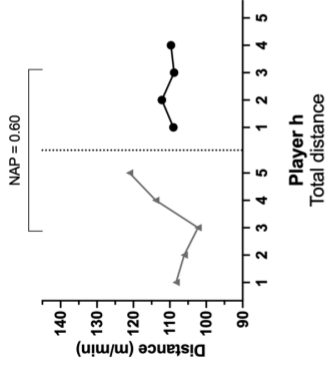
295

296 **Figure 1:** Schematic overview of the study, including specific test points, strength
297 intervention period and matches played.

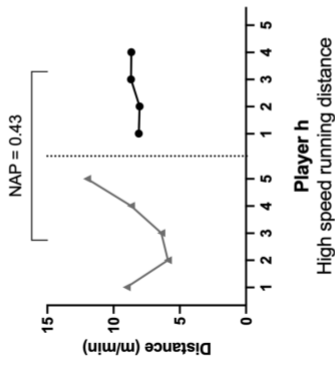
298 **Figure 2:** Non-overlap of all pairs analysis results for total distance, high-speed running
299 distance and sprint running distance for players with a meaningful improvement in physical
300 performance post-strength intervention period.



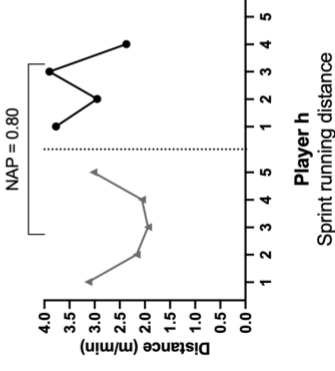
Baseline
Follow-up



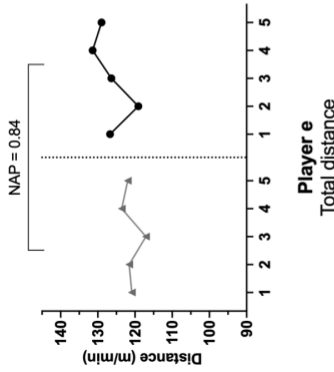
Baseline
Follow-up



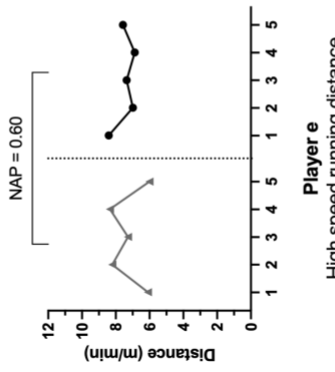
Baseline
Follow-up



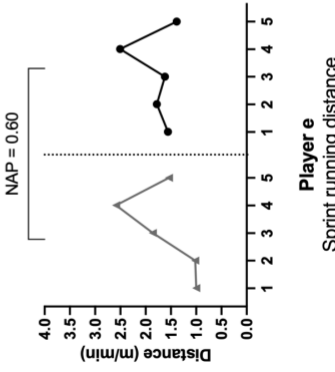
Baseline
Follow-up



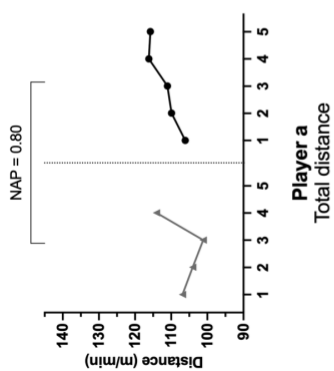
Baseline
Follow-up



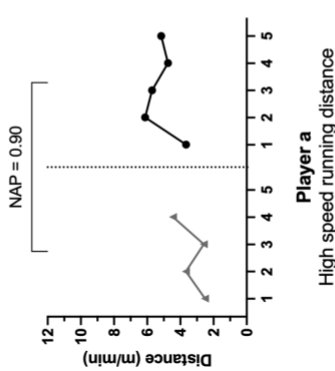
Baseline
Follow-up



Baseline
Follow-up



Baseline
Follow-up



Baseline
Follow-up

