

ATTACKING STRATEGIES DURING THE ULSTER SENIOR GAELIC FOOTBALL CHAMPIONSHIP

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Introduction

Gaelic football is a fast, free flowing game with the objective being to score more points than the opposition (Reilly, 2001). The high scoring nature of the game is facilitated by a rapid transition from defence to offence once possession is gained. The ball can be transferred into the scoring zone using a long kick pass, short hand-pass, or by soling the ball. The aim of the present study was to analyse the factors associated with successful outcomes of attacks.

Methods

Video footage from the eight games, involving nine different teams, played in the Ulster Championship in 2010, were analysed using the Dartfish TeamPro version 5.5 software. The tagging facility was used to record key events relating to attacking play throughout each match. The proportion of successful attacks was analysed using chi square tests of independence for nominal variables and Mann Whitney U tests for ordinal and ratio scale variables.

Results & Discussion

There were a total of 630 attacks, of which less than a third, 178 (28.3%) were successful. The outcomes from the successful attacks included 124 points (19.7%) and 11 goals (1.7%). Of the 63 scoreable free-kicks awarded (10.0%), 42 points and 1 goal was scored. Source pass was the only factor with a significant effect on attack outcomes ($p = .048$) with the most productive being attacks originating in the attacking area (16 / 39 = 41.0% success rate) and attacks originating in the centre (56 / 171 = 32.7% success rate). Dispossessing the opposition and then counter-attacking was clearly effective. The median number of passes was 3 in both successful and unsuccessful attacks. The median of 16s duration for a successful attack was not significantly greater than the 14.5s for an unsuccessful attack ($p = .381$).

Conclusion

These results demonstrate the range of attacking strategies used and subsequent outcomes during the Ulster Championship. Coaches can use this information to plan training scenarios to rehearse the tactics identified during simulated match play.

References

1. Reilly, T. & Doran, D. (2001). *J Sports Sci*, 19: 181-193.