

OFFENSIVE SEQUENCES IN YOUTH SOCCER: EXPERIENCE AND SMALL-SIDED GAMES EFFECTS

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Keywords: skill acquisition, constraints-led approach, youth soccer

Introduction

The interactional effects of deliberate practice and its task constraints are insufficiently explained in the process of skill acquisition of young soccer players. Based on the constraints-led approach [1], this study aimed to analyze the Offensive Sequences (OS) produced by different experienced groups of young soccer players in two small-sided game formats (Gk+3v3+Gk and Gk+6v6+Gk).

Methods

Thirty U-15 male players were distributed to two groups according to their deliberate practice experience: the Non-Experienced group (N-Exp) and the Experienced (Exp) group (3.87 ± 0.99 years of experience). The experimental protocol consisted of three independent sessions separated by one week intervals. In each session both groups performed the two small-sided games during 10 minutes. Two levels of performance indicators were used to characterize the OS in all drill conditions. The simple indicators were simple counts of the game performance: Duration of ball possession, Number of Players, Ball Touches, Number of Passes, Number of Shots. The composite indicators were defined as “ratios” obtained by dividing two simple indicators: Number of Players/Duration, Ball Touches/Duration, Number of Passes/Duration, Ball Touches/Number of Players, Number of Passes/Number of Players, Number of Passes/Ball Touches and Goal/Shots. A non-parametric MANOVAs were used to analyze the effects of experience and small-sided game format on the OS characteristics.

Results & Discussion

Considering all matches, the factor “experience level” revealed a significant effect on simple and composite indicators that characterize the OS ($\chi^2(5) = 30.966$; $p = 0.0001$ and $\chi^2(6) = 32.554$; $p = 0.0001$, respectively). The “small-sided game format” evidenced a significant effect on simple ($\chi^2(5) = 32.604$; $p = 0.000$) and composite ($\chi^2(6) = 11.445$; $p = 0.001$) indicators that characterize the OS produced by the N-Exp group. Regarding the Exp group, a significant effect on simple indicators ($\chi^2(5) = 31.79$; $p = 0.000$) was identified. This effect was not noted on composite indicators ($\chi^2(6) = 2.057$; $p = 0.914$).

Conclusion

For both groups (N-Exp and Exp), the manipulation of the small-sided game format (i.e., pitch size and the number of players) influenced the OS characteristics. This evidence supports the usefulness of the constraints-led approach in the skill acquisition and performance enhancing in team sports.

References

1. Davids, K. et al. (2005), In T. Reilly et al. (Eds.), Science and football V: 556-569