SMALL-SIDED GAMES PRESENT AND EFFECTIVE TRAINING STIMULUS IN GAELIC FOOTBALL

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Introduction
Small-sided games (SSG’s) provide effective physiological training stimuli in soccer, however, of the efficacy of SSG’s for other codes particularly Gaelic football conditioning remains unknown.1 The purpose of the study was to assess the effects of SSG’s training on the physiological performance of sub-elite Gaelic footballers.

Methods
Seventeen sub-elite (club) Gaelic football players (Mean± SD: age: 26 ± 4 yrs; stature: 180 ± 6.8 cm; body mass: 79.3 ± 9.0 kg) participated in the study. The intensity of exercise was monitored by means of heart rate (HR) response (Polar Team System, Polar Electro, Finland). The training involved small-sided games (4 vs 4) of 6 x 4 min (performed at 85-95% HRmax), with 3 min active recovery (performed at 50–60% HRmax) performed over an eight-week period (a total of 20 SSG sessions undertaken). The playing area was 80 x 20 m. The sessions were incorporated into the normal weekly programme of the players. Performance measurements were taken pre- and post-intervention which included a counter-movement jump (CMJ), sprint speed over 5-, 10- and 20-m; and a multi-stage shuttle-run test to estimate \( \dot{V}O_2max \).

Results & Discussion
Results from the experimental period show that sprint speed over 5 m (1.14 ± .08; 1.08 ± .05 s) (F,32=6.237; p=.018) and estimated \( \dot{V}O_2max \) (56.9 ± 1.9; 59.4 ± 2.2 mL.kg\(^{-1}\).min\(^{-1}\)) (F,32=12.631; p=.001) was significantly improved. Whereas CMJ height (43.1 ± 6.5; 45.4 ± 7.8 cm) (F,32=.866; p=.359) and sprint speed over 10- (1.91 ± .09; 1.86 ± .08 s) (F,32=3.003; p=.093) and 20-m (3.19 ± .12; 3.13 ± .11 s) (F,32=1.881; p=.180), improved but not significantly. The evidence in the current study demonstrated that an eight-week SSG training intervention did significantly improve Gaelic football 5-m sprint speed and endurance performance.

Conclusion
It is concluded that SSG’s training can present an appropriate physiological training stimuli and therefore an effective training mode to enhance performance in sub-elite Gaelic football players.

References