



RAISE THE GAME



FEBRUARY 2023
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THE OFFICIAL ONLINE MAGAZINE
OF THE MALTA FA TECHNICAL CENTRE

FROM THE EDITOR

Dear coaches, welcome to the second edition of Raise The Game – the official online magazine of the Malta FA Technical Centre.

In this issue, we get to know the new coaches at the helm of the men's and women's national teams, Michele Marcolini and Manuela Tesse, while bringing you insights and projects from the Technical Centre together with a choice of the latest football research undertaken in Malta.

This is an issue of many firsts. It includes a concise summary from an international study in the area of grassroots supported by UEFA and in which the Malta FA was a participant. Over the past year, the Centre for Football Research and Development has opened its doors to various collaborations with external stakeholders in line with its mission to further widen the knowledge, expertise and research focusing on Maltese football.

'An Analysis of Goals Scored in the Maltese Premier League 2018/19' is the first joint publication involving staff from the Malta FA Technical Centre and MCAST academics.

A study carried out at the Malta FA by our U-21 physiotherapist, Sandro Vella, is also presented in this issue for all those interested in football medicine and injury prevention. Furthermore, we take a look at a typical Under-12/Under-13 training session from our own Regional Football Hubs project.

We hope that you enjoy this issue and you find it interesting and fruitful!

Karl Attard



The Malta Football Association
Technical Centre, West Stand,
National Stadium, Ta' Qali ATD 4000
T +356 2338 6000
E technicalcentre@mfa.com.mt
W www.mfa.com.mt

f Malta Football Association – 1900
t MaltaFA1900 **ig** maltafa1900

COVER PHOTO Mark Zammit Cordina

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Malta FA Technical Centre

EDITOR Karl Attard

EDITORIAL CO-ORDINATOR Kevin Azzopardi

CONTRIBUTORS Karl Attard, Kevin Azzopardi, Laura Finnegan, Charles Sciberras, Sandro Vella

DESIGN Joseph Schembri, Manuel Schembri

PHOTOS Domenic Aquilina, Joe Borg, Stephen Gatt, Mark Zammit Cordina, Malta FA Archives

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INTERVIEW

Getting to know... Michele Marcolini and Manuela Tesse – national team coaches



2023 heralds the start of a new chapter for our men's and women's national teams as both selections are now under the tutelage of new coaches – 47-year-old Michele Marcolini and Manuela Tesse, 46. The two bring a wealth of experience, having played at the highest level of Italian club football during their careers before moving into coaching. In this light interview with **Kevin Azzopardi**, Marcolini and Tesse talk about their passion for football, their career progression, both as a player and coach, their philosophies and their pride at being appointed coaches of the Malta men's and women's national teams...

Michele Marcolini and Manuela Tesse – what can you tell us about yourselves, your childhood, family, the town/village where you grew up and your early football memories...

Michele Marcolini: I was born in Savona, Liguria. I had the fortune of growing up in a splendid family, a family that taught me the values of education, respect towards others and the importance of achieving things through commitment and dedication. My childhood revolved around football, in the sense that since I was a little child, even when the ball was bigger than me, I always had it at my feet.

I stayed with Savona until the age of 14. At that point, I left my family to move to Torino where I spent four years in their youth sector – we lost the championship (*scudetto*) final to Juventus in my last year in Torino's youth team. Juventus had a great team at the time, the team of Del Piero, Cammarata and Milanetto... they had many strong players.

After this experience, I spent three years on loan with Sora in the third division. I then joined Bari in the Serie A... it was my first experience in probably the best league in the world at the time. It was fantastic for me to fulfil my dream – making my debut in the Serie A and against Genoa, so close to my family home, it was incredible.

After four years with Bari, I had a two-year spell with Vicenza, in the Serie B, and after that I joined Atalanta in

Bergamo. These were my favourite years because the club's fans were fantastic, the most passionate supporters I've met in my playing career. I had a very good relationship with them and they gave me great support.

We won the Serie B title twice and of course promotion to the Serie A. After my spell with Atalanta, I went to Chievo Verona and this was also a very enriching experience because this club gave me the possibility to play in Europe. We played in the qualifying stages of the Champions League, where we lost to Leuski Sofia, and in the Europa League where we faced Sporting Braga. It was the first time for me to play an official match in a UEFA competition.

I spent one year with Padova in the Serie B and concluded my playing career in the third division with Lumezzane where, at the end of that season, I changed my position, becoming the new coach. It was an immediate transition, from being a player to coaching my team-mates. I took my UEFA coaching courses in Couerciano that summer.

People have told me that the step-up from player to coach was not going to be difficult for me as I was already a coach on the pitch. I was very eager to help and improve my team-mates so it was natural for me to move into coaching.

Manuela Tesse: I am an islander, just like you, as I was born in Sardinia. I started playing football when I was 12... since I lived in the countryside, I didn't have many girls to play with, only boys, so I was attracted to football. You could say that I began to play →



football in the streets, just like many male counterparts.

I remember reading a newspaper article about a women's club in Sardinia, Torres, who were looking to recruit girls. Torres are the most decorated women's football club in Italy. Nowadays there is Juventus but Torres are still the most successful in terms of league titles won.

So, I joined Torres, making my debut at the age of 14 and that is how my football career took off. This sums up my childhood I would say. Women's football was the number one sport in Sardinia because we had this winning team, Torres. Unfortunately, the crisis, towards the year 2020, hit Torres very badly as they went bankrupt but the club has since been revived.

Torres are close to my heart as I won my first *scudetto* (championship) as player in 1994 and my last title as a coach in 2012-13. With them, I also reached two quarter-finals in the UEFA Women's Champions League.

My family supported me despite not being very keen on football. My two sisters and parents were not into sport but they supported me every step of the way during my playing career. Naturally, when I turned 18, I left Sardinia to continue my career elsewhere.

My coaching chapter... well this is my 17th season. I moved into coaching at a young age as I suffered many injuries, including five operations, and this ended my playing career prematurely despite being the captain of the Italy women's national team at the time. Initially, I was very frustrated at the fact that my career was cut short when I was 28 years old and having made so many appearances for the national team. During that period, I was one of the leading players in women's football back home.

After quitting football, I stayed away from the game for a year or two but then I decided to take up coaching. It was not plainsailing, though, as there



“I AM AN ISLANDER, JUST LIKE YOU, AS I WAS BORN IN SARDINIA. I STARTED PLAYING FOOTBALL WHEN I WAS 12... SINCE I LIVED IN THE COUNTRYSIDE, I DIDN'T HAVE MANY GIRLS TO PLAY WITH, ONLY BOYS, SO I WAS ATTRACTED TO FOOTBALL. YOU COULD SAY THAT I BEGAN TO PLAY FOOTBALL IN THE STREETS, JUST LIKE MANY MALE COUNTERPARTS”

were few female football coaches at the time. Therefore, the path was tough so much so that, until this day, I've done all the coaching licences offered by the FIGC technical sector to stay in the football world. Unfortunately, women must always work harder as the world is still culturally male-oriented, although progress has been made. →

What have been the highlights of your football careers so far?

Michele Marcolini: The first goal in the Serie A, for sure, against Napoli – it was only my third official game with Bari.

I also have fond memories of the promotions, two with Atalanta and one with Chievo Verona – these were all memorable experiences. The enthusiasm of the supporters was great, getting promoted creates a special vibe for the fans and the city.

Manuela Tesse: Honestly, as a player, it has to be the FIFA Women's World Cup in the United States (1999). I mean playing in front of 80,000 spectators was remarkable.

However, I derive more satisfaction from the honours I've won as a coach because, when you are a player you are part of a context, a group, but when you are the coach, you are the leader of the team. Therefore, the highlight of my career was the *scudetto* I won as coach of my home club, Torres, in 2012-13.

Away from football, what are your favourite hobbies?

Michele Marcolini: I like sports in general. I love to watch tennis, padel, and I like to listen to music a lot. At the moment, I don't have a lot of time to dedicate to my hobbies but I like to do sports because I believe that it is important not only for the health but also for the mind. In Italy, I practised padel. Naturally, I love to spend time with my family.

Manuela Tesse: Before becoming a professional coach, I worked because, at the time, it was not sufficient to play football or coach. I had two real estate agencies and I was doing well in this sector. I had 10 employees and therefore I already had my own 'football team' in my job and this helped me a lot in terms of managing the relationship with my staff and players when I moved into coaching. I eventually closed the two agencies I had in Rome... one fine day, I decided to seek a new challenge, earning less money perhaps but improving my life quality as I was doing something that I loved and that was to remain in the football world.

As hobbies, football is my passion, but I like to read books, listen to music and the sea – it is my life.

Who is your favourite all-time football player? And coach?

Michele Marcolini: When I was young, my idol was Roberto Baggio. I had the pleasure to meet him when we played against Inter, Bari-Inter – this match is remembered for (Antonio) Cassano's first goal for Bari. For me, it was a very special moment.

With regard to my favourite coach, it's a tough call. Many have left a legacy... it's easy to mention Guardiola but I think that, in every era, there was a coach who introduced new concepts and did great things. It's probably easier for me to name a player rather than a coach! →





In the last decade, Guardiola has made a profound impact and inspired a change in mentality. It was the same with Arrigo Sacchi when he coached the great Milan team but there are many.

There are others... a coach who I really like from a personal point-of-view is Carlo Ancelotti. I haven't had the pleasure of meeting him personally but I've always admired his humanity and the way he conducts himself with the players and others. He is his own man, always showing respect without ever exalting his approach or work.

I find it fascinating that Ancelotti lets the results do the talking rather than indulge in self-praise – I admire him a lot for this.

Manuela Tesse: Coach... Antonio Conte – he inspires me. Character-wise, people tell me that in Italy, I am like Conte of women's football because I'm very demanding and I expect a lot from myself.

As for my favourite player, when I was growing up women's football was still developing. My favourite player at the time was Alessandro Nesta, also because of his playing style as a defender – not big physically but very elegant in the anticipation phase, very fast and he read the game very well.

I have to say that I started my career on the flank because I was quite fast but during the European Women's Championship of 1997, where we finished runners-up in Norway and Sweden, the coach switched me to central defence because of my pace, and I continued to play in this position.

Which is your favourite club?

Michele Marcolini: Atalanta

Manuela Tesse: I don't have a favourite club in Italy to be honest. I must admit I was taken aback by the *calcioscommesse* scandal back in the days. Nowadays, I prefer to follow the coaches and how they are doing with their respective teams... I enjoy watching nice, flowing football, and teams that show determination and resilience.

Who were the people who had the biggest influence on your careers?

Michele Marcolini: I have always observed football in detail and also now as a coach, I strongly believe that the eye enables you to learn a lot. Watching and monitoring things helps you to improve. I have always been obsessed about football and therefore, since my childhood, the tons of matches I have watched must have helped me to grow and 'borrow' the secrets based on what I have observed.

As a coach, similar to the player, I strive to be myself because I believe that the most important thing for a coach is to be credible, coherent with what you believe in... if you are looking to instill a belief or even an idea, you need to transmit strong sentiments. Therefore, the people who are receiving these ideas must be convinced that the person who is imparting them strongly believes in them, and must be consistent with the way he conducts himself and the way he talks.

Manuela Tesse: Carolina Morace was one of the pioneers of women's football in Italy. She has raised me, football-wise, and later in my coaching path I collaborated a lot with her. However, my mentor at an academic level was Renzo Uliuieri, the head of the FIGC technical sector. →





Name three values that define who you are... and the teams you coach.

Michele Marcolini: Education, respect and hard work. I believe hard work is crucial to achieve success. These are the three factors I strive to transmit to my teams all the more so in modern football, where the values have become more aligned, especially from a physical point of view as all teams are improving a lot. I believe that managing to create a group that embraces these principles and values can be a decisive starting point which will enhance the quality of the squad.

Manuela Tesse: Passion and sacrifice, these are fundamental, along with competence.

What did you know about Malta before you were approached to take over as national coach of the men's and women's teams respectively?

Michele Marcolini: I must admit that I didn't know much but I followed the progress of the Maltese national team in recent years because the fact that they had an Italian coach attracted my attention. Certainly, since (Devis) Mangia was appointed as Malta coach, I monitored the team's results from a different perspective because it's natural that when an Italian counterpart is in charge of a national team, the level of attention increases.

In the past, whenever Malta was mentioned, somehow I associated it with Juventus because I knew that they had played against Valletta in Europe (1987).

“I STRESS THAT, ABOVE EVERYTHING, I FELT GREAT PRIDE BECAUSE THE MALTA FA, THE PRESIDENT AND ALL THOSE INVOLVED IN THE SELECTION PROCESS, ARE GIVING ME A GREAT OPPORTUNITY AND SHOWING FAITH IN ME BECAUSE THE PROJECT IS VERY AMBITIOUS AND WELL-STRUCTURED. I HOPE TO LEAVE AN IMPORTANT MARK IN THIS DEVELOPMENT PHASE”

I also played here during my time with Vicenza – a friendly match against Sliema Wanderers at the National Stadium (August 2001). If I remember well, it was the last club appearance for their goalkeeper at the time (Ernest Barry). I remember Sliema Wanderers and Vicenza had the same shirt sponsor at the time. We spent two to three days here – I also scored in that game.

Manuela Tesse: I had never been to Malta, this is the first time for me. I knew about Malta because I was assistant coach with Pietro Ghedin with the Italian women's national team, so I heard a lot about the country. →

I feel at home here because it's an island. The impression I felt when I arrived was like being at home and when a person feels comfortable at the workplace, I believe they give more.

What was your first reaction when you were offered the job by the Malta FA?

Michele Marcolini: I was very happy and proud that a National Association could think of me as a candidate for this position. I had followed Malta's results under Mister Mangia and therefore I was very pleased. From the moment the President explained the programme of the Association, a project centred around the development and growth of Maltese football, and the significant investment being made, I was impressed and very eager to start this adventure.

When President, Mr (Bjorn) Vassallo informed me that I had been selected, I immediately felt this great enthusiasm to begin this chapter. I stress that, above everything, I felt great pride because the Malta FA, the President and all those involved in the selection process, are giving me a great opportunity and showing faith in me because the project is very ambitious and well-structured. I hope to leave an important mark in this development phase.

Manuela Tesse: I felt that this was an exciting opportunity for me. I had other offers from clubs, not from the Serie A Femminile, but other divisions... I am probably one of the few coaches who has worked at all levels of Italian women's football. I started from the top as my first job was with Torres but then I coached in all divisions which was very useful as I gained more experience.

This role (Malta women's coach) is a prestigious one, something new for me in Europe. I was head coach of the U-17 team of Trinidad and Tobago in the Caribbean but, honestly, football in Europe is more evolved and therefore for my personal growth, I felt that this is the right job. I was very happy to be offered this position.

What are your objectives as coaches of the national teams of Malta?

Michele Marcolini: First and foremost, from a development perspective, we need to focus a lot on developing the skills and qualities of our youth players – physical, technical and tactical. To create a better future for Maltese football, the →



“I HAVE NOTICED THAT THERE ARE MANY INTERESTING, STRONG PLAYERS HERE, IN MY OPINION. THERE IS NOW A NEW FORMAT FOR THE UEFA WOMEN’S NATIONS LEAGUE – TARGETS MUST ALWAYS BE REALISTIC AND WITHIN REACH BUT I BELIEVE THAT WE CAN CHALLENGE FOR PROMOTION TO GROUP B”

basis must be to work well with the youngsters because they represent the future, and therefore this is the principal objective of the Technical Centre.

At the same time, we will strive to obtain the maximum possible with the national team. I recognise the fact that, under Mangia, the team has made significant steps forward, also in terms of being aware of their means. We cannot lose sight of who we are and what we want to achieve... I'm saying this because the EURO 2024 qualifying draw didn't give us a helping hand. On paper, we are the least-quoted team in the group when you consider that we have Italy and England, and the two teams that can be broadly regarded as 'accessible' are two nations (North Macedonia and Ukraine) that missed out on qualification to the last World Cup in the play-offs – it shows how difficult this group is.

However, I believe this situation can also be helpful for us in trying to forge an even stronger mentality, an approach that must always reflect our respect for the opposition, recognition that we face a difficult task to bring something home but also the conviction that, through hard work, the right attitude and by paying attention to the slightest of detail, we can make life difficult for everyone and why not, gain some satisfaction in terms of results... that is our hope. Certainly, managing to give positive performances and obtain something in these qualifiers can give us a nice push on a psychological level,

although we must always keep in mind that the teams we are facing are very strong.

Manuela Tesse: I am here to try and strengthen the evolution of women's football in Malta as I strongly believe that there is a lot of potential.

I have noticed that there are many interesting, strong players here, in my opinion. There is now a new format for the UEFA Women's Nations League – targets must always be realistic and within reach but I believe that we can challenge for promotion to Group B.

My objective here, and I will do my utmost, is to move up to Group B in the UEFA Women's Nations League.

FISH OR MEAT?

MM – Meat

MT – Meat

ESPRESSO OR CAPPUCCINO?

MM – Espresso

MT – Espresso

PIZZA OR PASTA?

MM – Both, always

MT – Both

SEA OR MOUNTAIN?

MM – Sea

MT – Sea

SERIES OR MOVIE?

MM – Both in different times

MT – Series

ROCK OR CLASSIC MUSIC?

MM – Pop

MT – Rock

KLOPP OR GUARDIOLA?

MM – Klopp because he is more practical. Guardiola is more about construction but Klopp has achieved a lot based on the level of investment made. Guardiola is extraordinary but every year he has a transfer budget of €300 to €400 million.

MT – Both. ■



AN ANALYSIS OF GOALS SCORED IN THE MALTESE PREMIER LEAGUE 2018/2019



CHARLES SCIBERRAS
National Teams Goalkeeper Coach and Coach Educator.

Charles Sciberras holds a UEFA Pro Coaching Licence and is a UEFA Goalkeeper B Licence Holder.

Co-authors: Karl Attard, Matthew Muscat-Inglott, Renzo Kerr Cumbo

This analysis is a complete census of the goals scored during the 2018/19 BOV Premier League season in Malta, with a view to identifying persistent patterns and trends in Maltese football. This season was the last to be played in full before the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted local football competitions in the following two seasons.

METHODS

From a total of 495 goals scored in the 182 matches played throughout season 2018/19, 491 goals could be considered in this study.

Figures 2 and 3 show how the pitch zones and goal zones were defined. →

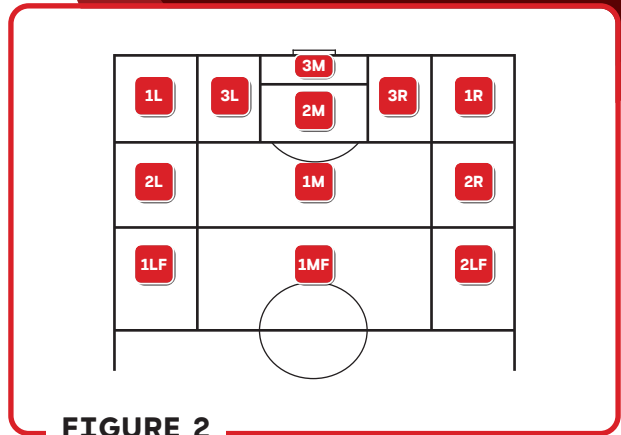


FIGURE 2
Pitch Zones.

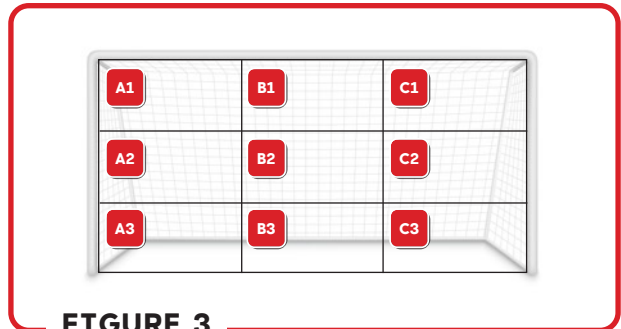


FIGURE 3
Goal Zones (Mitrotasios & Armatas, 2012).

TABLE 1

Contextual Variables collected (Rodenas et al., 2019).

CONTEXTUAL VARIABLES	
Match Number	Stadium
Date and Time of Match	Temperature Range
Team Scoring	Result before goal noted
Team Conceding the Goal	Result obtained by that goal

TABLE 2

Performance Indicators (Mitrotasios & Armatas, 2012); Wang & Qin, 2020).

PERFORMANCE INDICATORS	
TIME	0-15, 16-30, 31-45+, 46-60, 61-75, 76-90+
HALF TIME	First / Second
TYPE OF GOAL	Set Play (Corner, Free-kick, Penalty, Throw-in), Auto Goal
STYLE OF PLAY	Possession, Counter Attack, Direct Play
BODY PART SCORED WITH	Left foot, Right foot, Head
INITIATION ZONE OF THE ATTACK	Where goal action has started and ended (figure 3)
SCORING AREA	Last touch before ball ended in the net (figure 3)
GOAL ZONE	Area of goal post where ball went in (figure 4)

TABLE 3

Style of Play – Operational Definitions.

STYLE OF PLAY OPERATIONAL DEFINITIONS	
POSSESSION	“The use of short passes and a high number of passes in an attacking sequence” (Navarro Fernández, 2015, p.16). For the scope of this study, an action was considered as possession when it had five consecutive passes or more as suggested by Tenga and Larsen (2003)
COUNTER ATTACK	“The regain of the ball by a defending player close to their goal, followed immediately by a rapid attacking transition towards the opposition’s goal” (Navarro Fernández, 2015, p.16). For the scope of this study, an attack was considered by the authors as a counter attack when the team went to goal in fewer than three passes.
DIRECT PLAY	“A low number of passes in the attacking sequence and direct forward passes were the variables most commonly employed to describe the direct style of play” (Navarro Fernández, 2015, p.16)

Contextual variables (Table 1), and performance indicators (Table 2), constituted the main variables of interest, and were thus recorded for every goal in the sample. Furthermore, the operational definitions for the styles of play are presented in Table 3. →

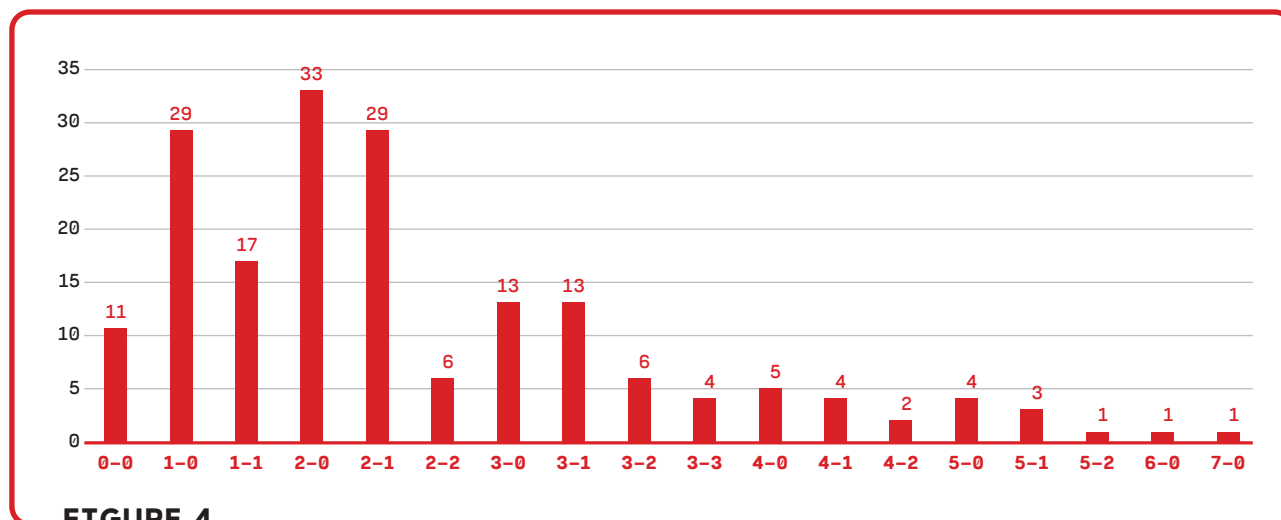


FIGURE 4

Final match results.

MAIN FINDINGS

Goal rates

Excluding goalless draws, the mean number of goals scored per match in our dataset, which included only matches wherein goals were actually scored, was 2.89 (Median=3, Mode=2). Including the goalless draws, however, the mean across the entire season was 2.72. These results are comparable with international tournaments such as the World Cup and European Championships (Anderson & Sally, 2013; Njororai, 2014). Figure 4 shows the most frequent final match result was 2-0 ($n=33$) followed jointly by 1-0 and 2-1 ($n=29$).

Goal mechanisms; types of play

The majority of goals ($n=149$) were scored from possession play, closely followed by direct play ($n=133$). There were a total of 179 (36%) goals scored from set-plays; these comprised 58, 49, 49, 23 and 19 goals scored from corners, free-kicks, penalties, throw-ins, and counter attacks, respectively (figure 5, table 4). The proportion of set-plays in the local league was relatively high when compared with findings presented elsewhere in the literature. →

TABLE 4

Action leading to goal per team.

NO.	ROW LABELS	CORNERS	FREE KICKS	PENALTIES	THROW INS	POSS. PLAY	COUNTER	DIRECT PLAY	GOALS	AUTO GOALS
1	VALLETTA	2	5	6	4	21	0	23	61	1
2	HIBERNIANS	5	2	3	1	19	1	23	54	2
3	GŻIRA UNITED	4	1	4	3	13	0	16	41	4
4	HAMRUN SPARTANS	8	4	4	1	6	2	7	32	0
5	SLIEMA WANDERERS	7	6	3	0	8	4	9	37	1
6	BALZAN	5	5	5	0	19	3	4	41	1
7	BIRKIRKARA	7	2	3	0	10	1	10	33	1
8	FLORIANA	5	4	4	1	10	0	4	28	0
9	MOSTA	4	3	2	4	7	0	10	30	0
10	TARXIEN RAINBOWS	3	2	3	3	9	0	9	29	2
11	SENGLEA ATHLETIC	3	5	4	0	10	4	7	33	0
12	ST ANDREWS	1	4	5	2	2	2	6	22	1
13	QORMI	3	2	0	3	9	2	6	25	1
14	PIETÀ HOTSPURS	1	4	3	1	6	0	10	25	1
	GRAND TOTAL	58	49	49	23	149	19	144	491	15

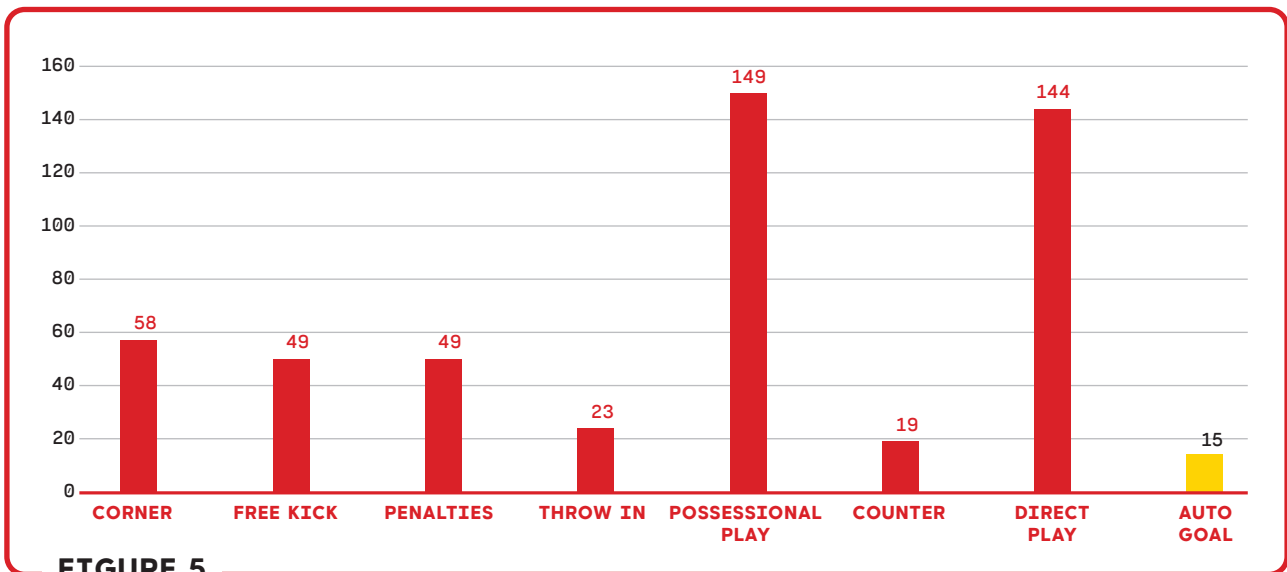
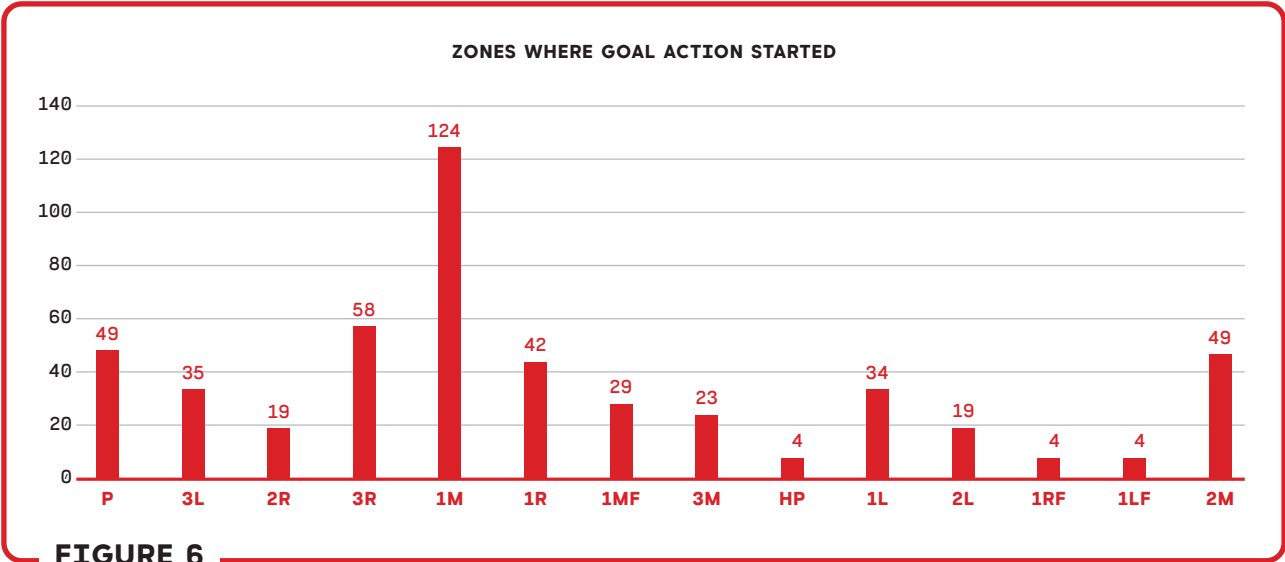
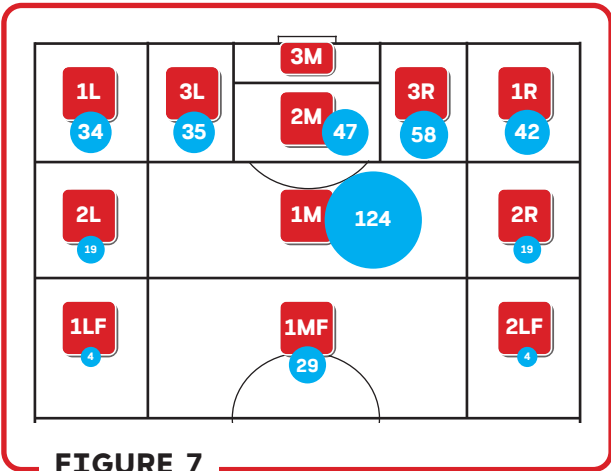


FIGURE 5

Action leading to goal.



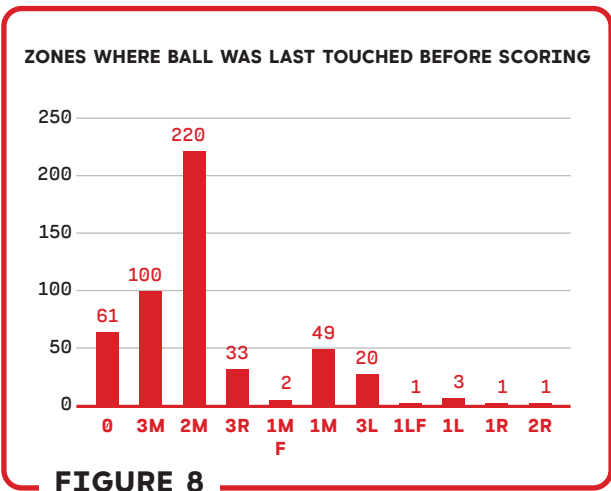
Action starting zone (Graph).



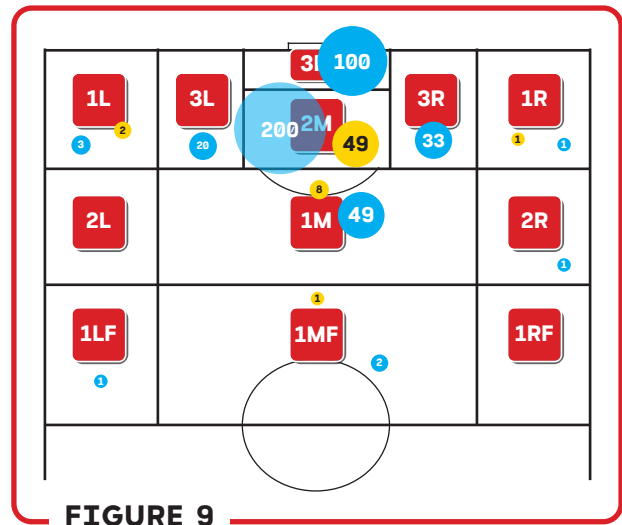
Action starting zone (Visual).

Goal localities; pitch zones

Figures 6 through 9 clearly illustrate the frequency of goals resulting from actions initiated and concluded in specific pitch zones. Zone 1M was the most common location for initiating successful goal-producing actions ($n=124$), with the goal action finishing mostly in Zone 2M ($n=220$). The latter supports finding of the goals scored in the Italian Serie A and Spanish La Liga came from within the penalty area (Papadopoulos et al., 2021). Actions ending in zone 0 figure 8, and shown in orange in figure 9, are direct goals, namely penalties (49) and free-kicks (12). →



Action ending zone (Graph).



Action ending zone (Visual).

File Photo: A goal scored during a BOV Premier League match in season 2018-19.

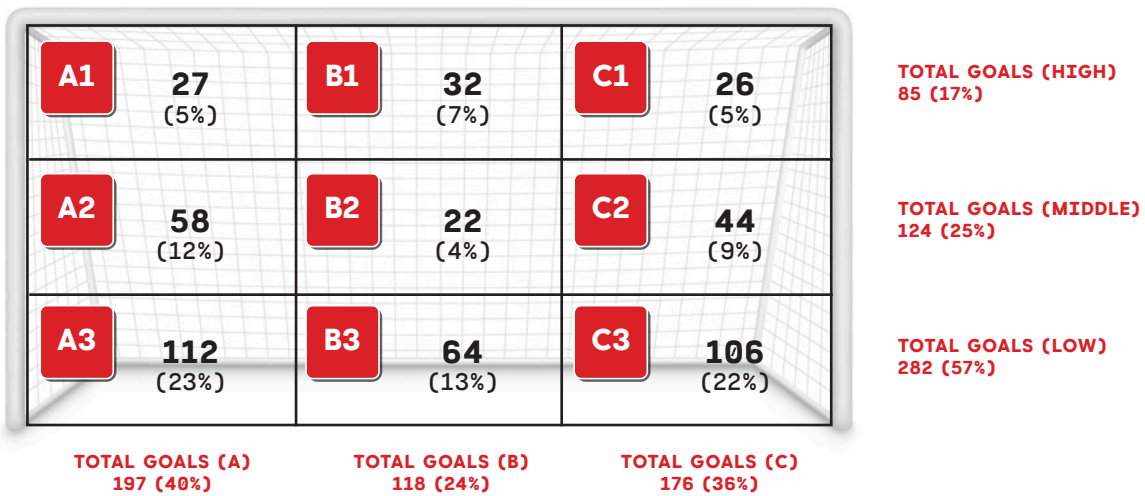


FIGURE 10

Goal Zones.

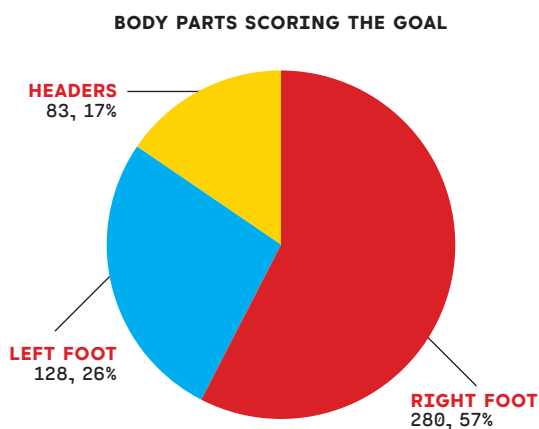


FIGURE 11

Body part scoring the goal.

Goal localities; goal zones

The majority of goals ($n=282$) were scored in the lower part of the net in terms of height, and on the left of the net (right of the goalkeeper) in terms of side ($n=197$). Goals scored on the right ($n=176$) and in the middle ($n=118$) are also shown (figure 10).

When it comes to body part used to score, regardless of pitch zones, there was no trend according to which foot was used to score goals in the right or left side of the net ($\chi^2=1.22$, $p=.27$). In other words, it cannot be predicted which side of the goal will be targeted, according to which foot is used when shooting. →

TABLE 5

Goals: Matches played in every stadium.

STADIUM	MATCHES PLAYED	GOALS SCORED	GOALS: MATCHES
NATIONAL STADIUM (TA' QALI)	74	188	188:74 (2.54 GOALS PER GAME)
VICTOR TEDESCO STADIUM (HAMRUN)	40	123	123:40 (3.075 GOALS PER GAME)
CENTENARY STADIUM (TA' QALI)	36	90	90:36 (2.5 GOALS PER GAME)
TONY BEZZINA STADIUM (CORRADINO)	32	94	94:32 (2.93 GOALS PER GAME)
TOTAL	182	495	2.71 GOALS PER GAME

Effects of stadia

There was no significant difference in the amount of goals scored in each venue ($\chi^2=4.90, p=.18$), (see Figure 12; Table 5).

Goal temporality

The majority of goals (291) were scored during the second half ($\chi^2=16.87, p<.001$), as opposed to 200 in the first. Similar to literature (Armatas et al., 2009; Alberti et al., 2013; Firdaus et al., 2015; Leite, 2017), the highest proportion (26%) of goals ($n=125$) were scored in the last 15 minutes of the match ($\chi^2=32.88, p<.001$). That was followed by the first 15 minutes of the second half (18%, $n=86$) (See Figure 13).

For approximately 74% of the time, the team that scored first went on to win the match ($\chi^2= 38.37, p<.001$). This coincides, almost precisely, with the probabilities reported elsewhere, namely, between 74% and 76%. It was interesting to note, however, that according to further post hoc analysis, this trend no longer held for games played in January or later ($\chi^2=7.03, p=.006$). According to binary logistic modelling, the probability that the first to score would win the match dropped by 18%, from approximately

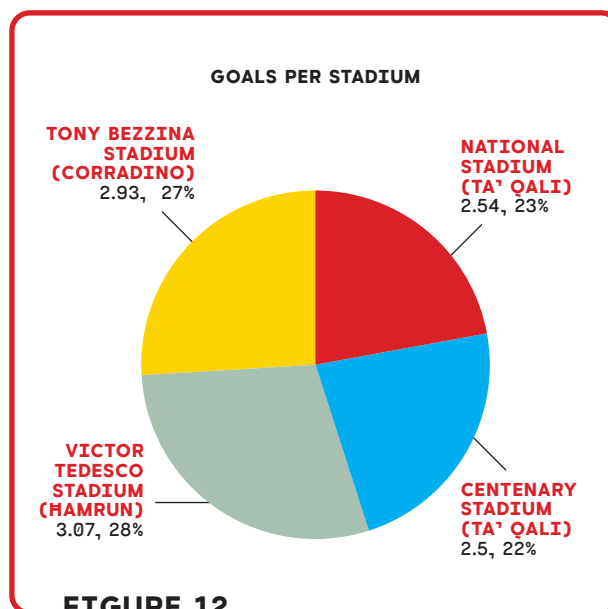


FIGURE 12

2018/19 Premier League goals per stadium.

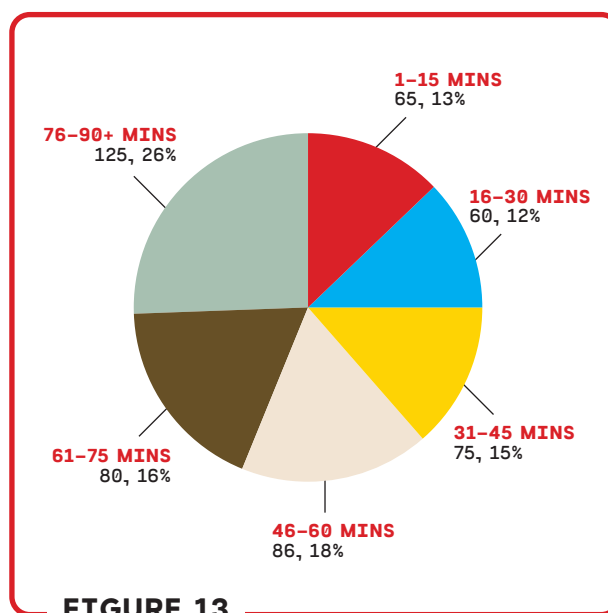


FIGURE 13

Goals per period of the game.

82% pre-January to 65% post-January ($\beta=-.95, p<.01$). Furthermore, it became even less likely that the first team to score would win the game, when both teams occupied the top four positions of the league table ($\chi^2=4.51, p=.03$). ■

For further reading one may view the full article on <https://journal.mcast.edu.mt/resources/html/article/details?id=233015&language=en>

150 players from Malta youth teams take part in six-week strength and conditioning project

The last 10 to 15 years have seen dramatic developments in applied science in football both from an academic and sport science support perspective. In a recent report conducted by FIFA entitled 'Increasing Global Competitiveness – An analysis of the talent development ecosystem', Member Associations were encouraged to recognise the multi-disciplinary nature of modern football and invest more resources in performance support services within their national team programme. FIFA added that incorporating sports science into national teams is part of the wider multi-disciplinary approach that modern football requires.

In line with this recommendation and with the strategy of the Malta FA, a six-week strength and conditioning project was implemented by the Technical Centre from June to August 2022. The project's main goal was to improve the individual fitness and technical skills of the athletes through a multi-factorial approach which includes also mental training and nutritional support. Furthermore, the Association has embarked on a sports science project that provides regular monitoring and testing through an external provider from the age group of U15s to the senior team. →





A total of 150 players from the national youth teams (U19, U18, U17, U16 and U15) had the opportunity to participate in the six-week strength and conditioning project which included 18 indoor resistance strength sessions and 18 individual technical pitch sessions.

Sessions were held between Mondays and Saturdays with Sundays being considered as rest days. Prior to the start of the project, all the players performed a full detailed fitness testing battery to determine the physical characteristics and create a player profile.

PERFORMANCE AREA

The main goal of the Performance Department of the Malta FA is to support the coaching staff in optimising the performance of the players through a holistic and player-centred approach underpinned by sound scientific principles and data analytics.

The main fitness goals of these six weeks of work were to create a solid strength base through a physiological anatomical adaptation while increasing the metabolic component using mainly a running-based approach.

A volume-based work has been administered to all players, including strength, hypertrophy and extensive plyometrics. Fundamental movement patterns have been selected and progressed throughout the six weeks with a double purpose: learning and/or consolidation and to increase the intensity during the weeks.

“THE MAIN FITNESS GOALS OF THESE SIX WEEKS OF WORK WERE TO CREATE A SOLID STRENGTH BASE THROUGH A PHYSIOLOGICAL ANATOMICAL ADAPTATION WHILE INCREASING THE METABOLIC COMPONENT USING MAINLY A RUNNING-BASED APPROACH”

Simultaneously, several accessory tasks on specific tissues have been performed to ensure capacity and robustness. Some intensive power work (mainly jumps and throws) has also been performed to maintain this key quality, with many extensive plyometrics contacts with the purpose of creating tolerance and efficiency during athletic movement. Hypertrophy was the main resistance goal for the upper body workout with the ultimate aim of making the players more robust and improve their physicality.

Furthermore, the internal and external training loads of the players were closely monitored throughout these six weeks for both the indoor and outdoor sessions. →

TECHNICAL AREA

The majority of the pitch sessions were individual and position specific, aiming to improve the young player from a technical-tactical point of view in five priorities set out by the Technical Coordinator. For this type of work, several exercises were created by the technical staff, focusing on specific targets, both general and specific for the role. This was of great benefit for the boys as well as for the staff who do

“SESSIONS WITH THE YOUNGER AGE GROUPS FOCUSED ON KEY AREAS RELATED TO ENHANCING PERFORMANCE – DEALING WITH ANXIETY AND PRESSURE; GOAL-SETTING; THE 5 C’S – COMMITMENT, CONCENTRATION, CONFIDENCE, CONTROL, COMMUNICATION; TEAM DYNAMICS; USE OF IMAGERY AS A MENTAL WARM-UP; CONFIDENCE AND FAILURE; DEALING WITH INJURIES AND MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES”

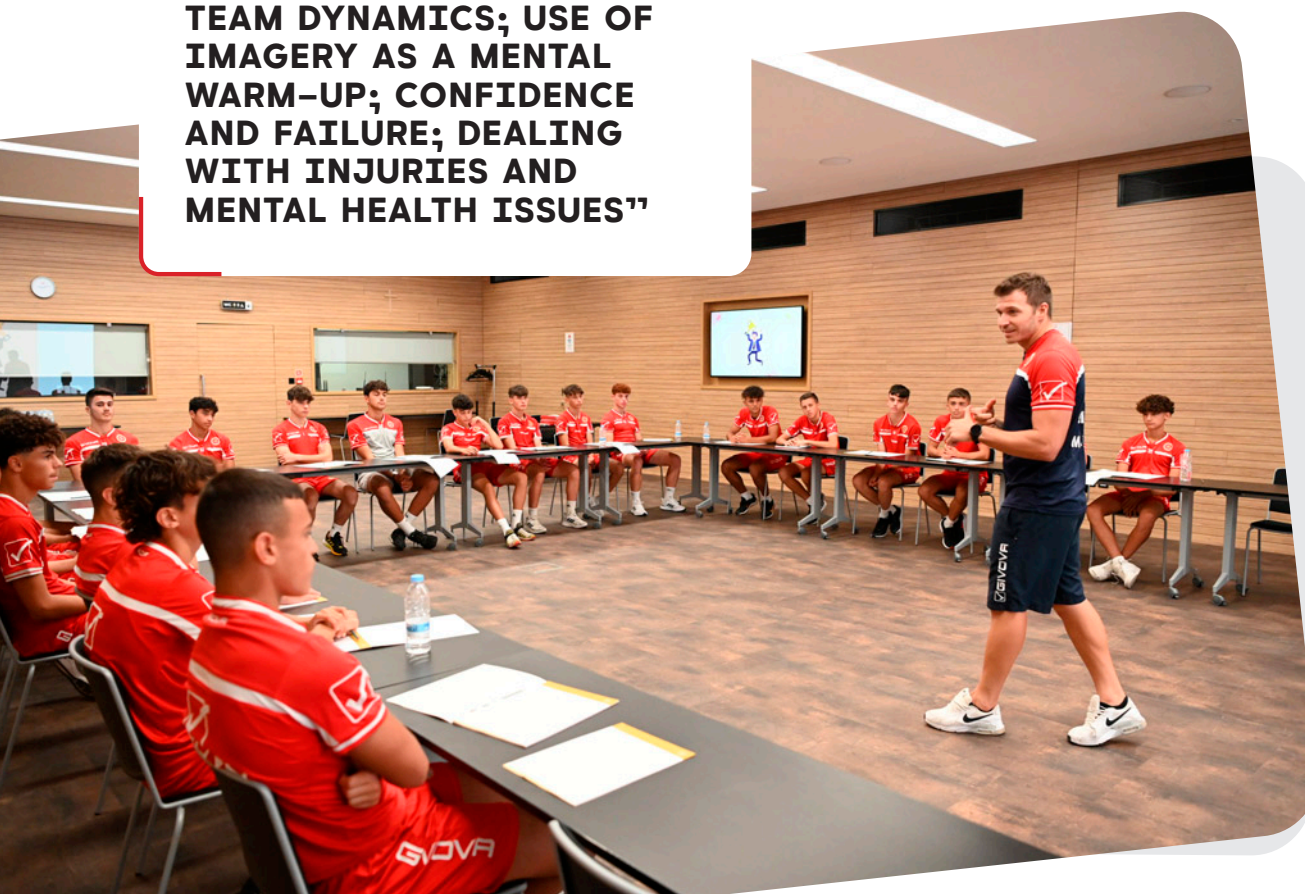
not have the time to work so analytically and individually during the season.

In the last part of the programme, situational exercises for departments and 11u11 games were also introduced, gradually using larger areas, and adding more playing time, as part of the planned weekly progressions. This allowed the players to work in a match scenario, under real pressure, and gain minutes to improve their fitness levels.

MENTAL PERFORMANCE

Sport psychology programmes were first introduced at the Malta FA in 2012 with evaluations of the programme over the years showing that players and coaches reported beneficial effects from such initiatives (Busuttill & Vella, 2017). Such a programme was inevitably not held during the COVID-19 pandemic but a revamped programme was introduced after the restrictions were lifted.

As part of this project, a six-week workshop was conducted for the U15, U16, U17, U18 and U19. →



The programmes of the U15s to U18s age groups were conducted by Dr Adele Muscat and Andrew Hogg. Sessions with the younger age groups focused on key areas related to enhancing performance – Dealing with anxiety and pressure; goal-setting; the 5 C's – commitment, concentration, confidence, control, communication; team dynamics; use of imagery as a mental warm-up; confidence and failure; dealing with injuries and mental health issues. The latter was a key point due to the increase of mental health issues reported among young footballers worldwide over the past years.

During the sessions, players were engaged in discussions on the said topics, practical exercises were also employed to engage players further and to teach them how to utilise mental skills in their training and matches. The U15s and U16s were asked to fill in the 5 C's questionnaire after each training session for a total of six weeks. This was done to increase awareness of the 5 C's.

The U19s programme focused on Mindfulness Acceptance Commitment (MAC) Therapy and was conducted by Dr Bernice Sant. The MAC approach comprises a combination of mindfulness exercises and acceptance techniques, and is designed to enhance sport performance and general psychological wellbeing. The MAC approach aims to enhance performance through the promotion of a non-judgmental, present-moment awareness and acceptance of one's thoughts and emotions. The programme also promotes focused attention to the performance task and effortful values-driven commitment to behaviours that support athletic goals.

MAC Programme Module division:

1. Psychoeducation
2. Mindfulness and Cognitive Diffusion
3. Introducing Values and Values-Driven Behaviour
4. Introducing Acceptance
5. Enhancing Commitment
6. Skill Consolidation and Poise
7. Maintaining and Enhancing Mindfulness, Acceptance, Commitment

Modules were delivered once weekly with the sixth and seventh module merged into one to fit within the 6-week athlete availability. The delivery was based on a mixture of direct teaching, discussions in class, exercises both in class and in-between class and applying taught material in practice.



CONCLUSION

Since the main objective of this programme was to optimise performance based on sound scientific principles and data analytics, player profiling for selected players followed by individual programmes continued after the end of this project.

The ultimate aim is to optimise the performance both at club and national team level and similar programmes will be introduced and implemented from one season to another. ■

PERCEIVING, REPORTING AND MANAGING AN INJURY

perspectives from Maltese
national team football players,
coaches and health
professionals



**SANDRO
VELLA**

Malta U/21
National Team
Physiotherapist

A Maltese physiotherapist who works in the field of sports, Sandro Vella is also currently reading for his PhD with Cardiff Metropolitan University in the field of injury prevention.

Co-authors: Caroline Bolling, Evert Verhagen,
Isabel Sarah Moore

Development of injury prevention measures rely on accurate reporting of injuries. It is acknowledged that the number of reported injuries is influenced by the stakeholders' socio-ecological factors concerning decisions taken when reporting and managing an injury. For example, in football, it has been suggested that injuries may be underreported

to avoid participation restrictions. In this sense, socio-ecological factors will affect the accuracy of reported data due to under or overreporting, affecting how an injury is managed.

Therefore, exploring (i) how Maltese national team players, coaches, and health professionals perceive a football-related injury and (ii) how their context influences perceptions and, consequently, decisions taken when reporting and managing an injury will provide new insights on how to monitor and manage players' injuries. →

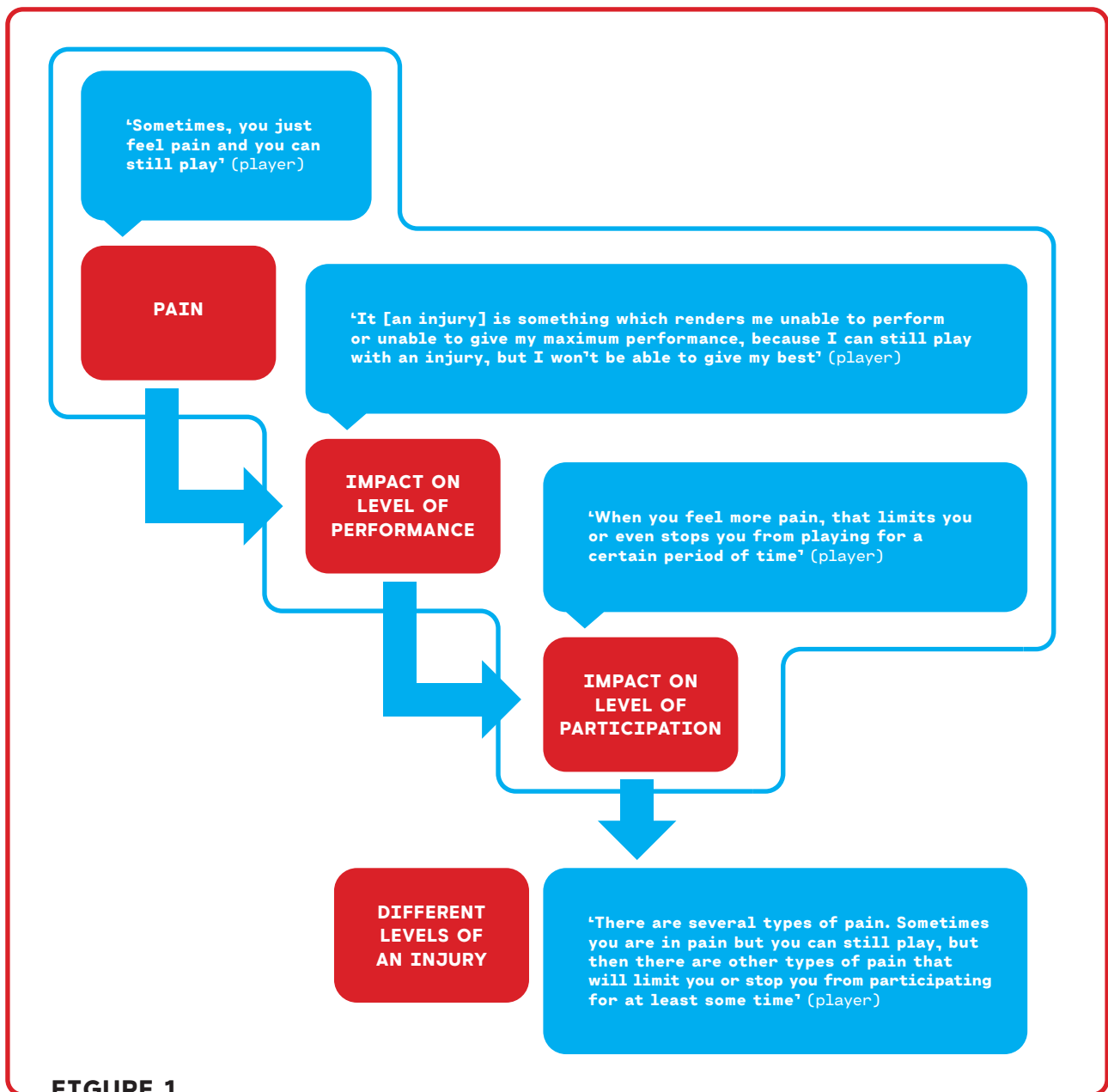


FIGURE 1

The injury process as perceived by participants.

METHOD

This qualitative study was undertaken at the Malta Football Association (Malta FA). Thirteen face-to-face semi-structured interviews were held with football players (n = 7), and their support staff, composed of national team coaches (n = 3) and health professionals (n = 3) forming part of the national football senior female and the Under-21 male squads.

RESULTS

HOW DO I PERCEIVE AN INJURY?

"It's a complex thing that we can continue to debate about" (coach)

Participants described a football injury based on three main aspects: (i) pain, (ii) impact on optimal performance, and (iii) impact on the level of participation (Figure 1). →

Yet, upon further questioning, most stakeholders expressed that players are injured when their pain hinders their performance. Therefore, pain, modification in training load and absence from participation were acknowledged as subcomponents of an injury, especially to gauge its severity.

HOW DO I DEAL WITH AN INJURY?

“I have to take care of my injury” (player)

Participants described how their injury perception influenced the injury management process. Players manage their pain before reporting. In reporting injuries, a team approach is considered essential to manage an injury (Figure 2).

WHAT INFLUENCES MY PERCEPTION, REPORTING AND MANAGEMENT OF AN INJURY?

“but then, you have to take everything into consideration, because there are many factors, like the importance of an upcoming match, which affect my decision and whether I should take the risk” (player)

All participants mentioned various contextual factors at different levels, ranging from player to cultural factors, that modulate injury perception and the way an injury is reported and managed. →

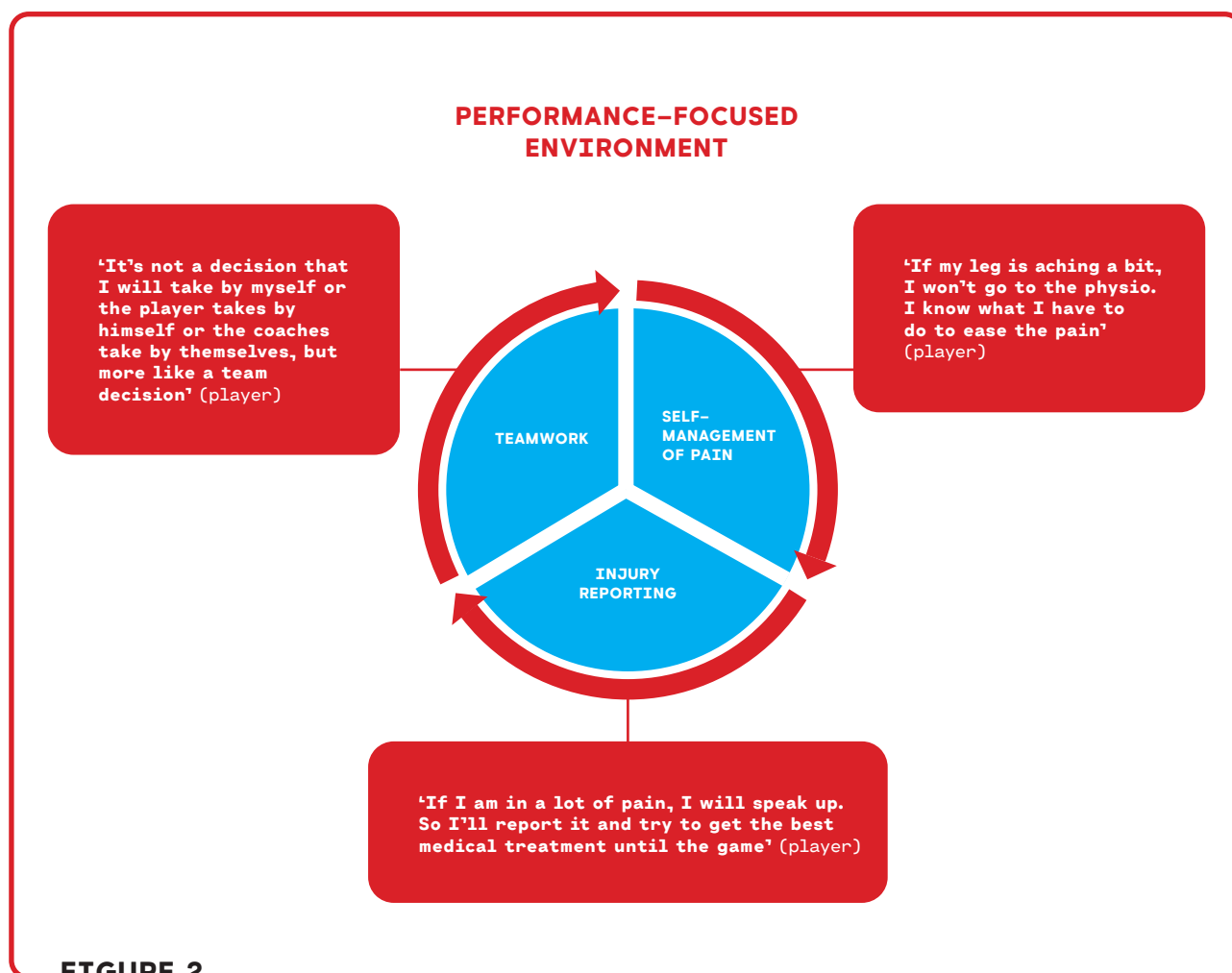


FIGURE 2

The injury management process.

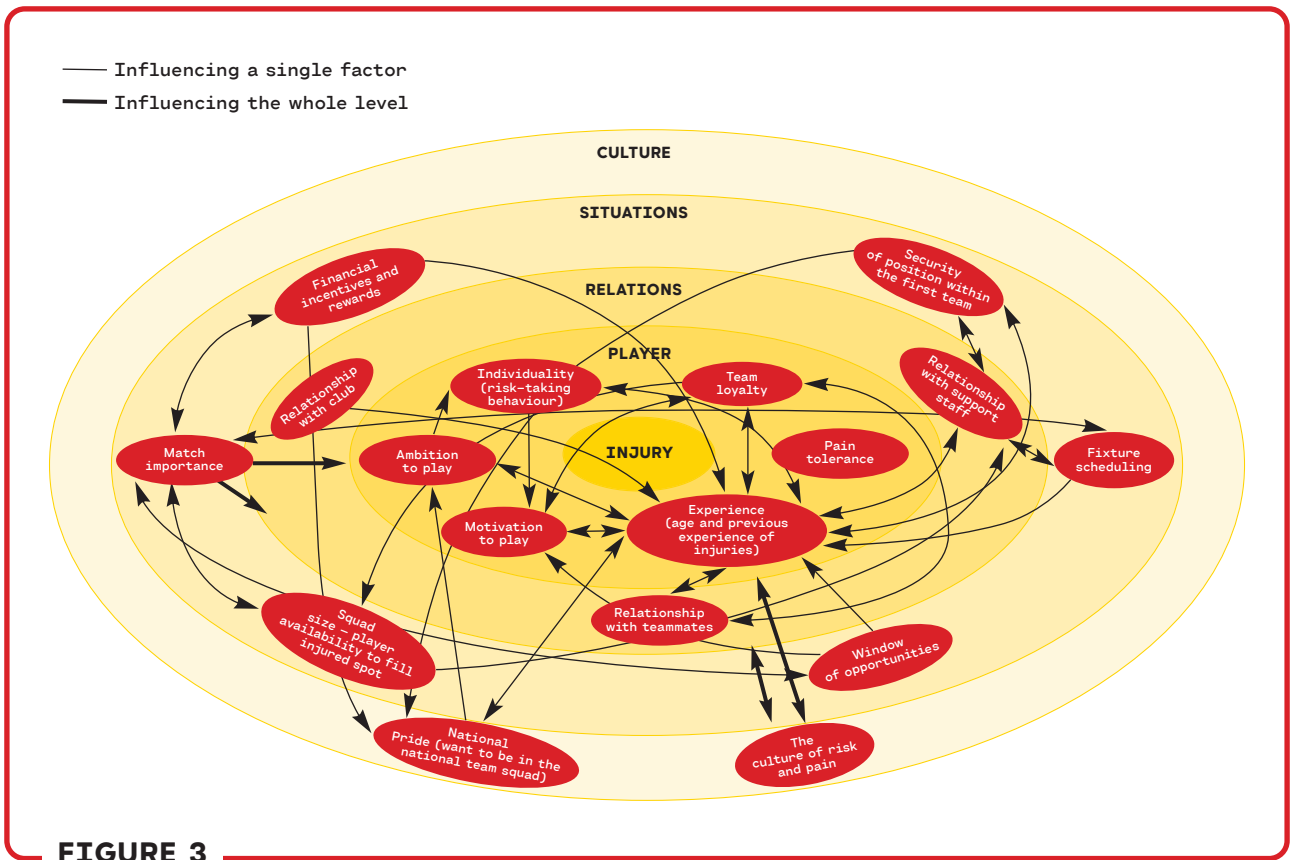


FIGURE 3 Personal and socio-ecological factors influencing injury perception, reporting and management.

DISCUSSION

AN INJURY IS ALL ABOUT PERFORMANCE

A football injury can be conceptualised as a process, with the constructs of pain, performance hindrance and impact on participation intimately interlinked. Yet, participants commonly defined an injury based on its consequences on performance. Within this context, the players' focus is on achieving peak performance and increasing team success chances. Hence, reducing performance-limiting injuries through injury prevention strategies may help maximise performance as ultimately, Maltese national team players play football to perform.

INJURY MANAGEMENT – IT IS A PROCESS

Want to empower players? Guide and educate them to self-manage their injuries

Findings indicate that players manage their symptoms before reporting them. This behaviour, influenced by the way pain is perceived, was described as a learning process, with players implementing self-management strategies that they had learnt over time through experiencing injuries. Therefore, if injury prevention and management is a learning process for the player, support staff should guide and support players through their own self-management decisions. Educating players in dealing with injuries empowers them and enhances their sense of self-efficacy in self-management. Moreover, given previous experience is a prime modulator of injury perception and management, younger players can be supported by experienced players leading them by example, enhancing the process of self-management. →

Want to improve injury reporting? Build and develop trustworthy relations with each player!

Findings indicate that injured players possess a great deal of power in deciding whether to report their injuries. Identification of whether athletes report the truth is still a challenge. Given that attempts have concentrated on altering the athlete's injury reporting behaviour through educating resources with limited success, there is a need to revisit how Maltese injured players conceptualise disclosure in their context.

Within a culture of injury risk acceptance, a trusting relationship is necessary for Maltese players to report their injuries. This trusting relationship is based on open communication between the player and support staff. For instance, in light of masking injuries, support staff should open safe communication lines to

foster supportive interpersonal relationships with their players. As relationships develop, honesty in injury reporting becomes a powerful attribute to gauge a player's injury risk. This is a fundamental component to promote effective player care.

Want to optimise player performance? As one team, pull the rope in the same direction!

The benefits of teamwork and communication between team stakeholders during the injury risk management decision-making process were highlighted. Evidence suggests that consistent internal communication in the team plays a critical role in mitigating the risk of injuries. Communication that is focused on the shared goal of performance optimisation enables a uniform narrative that delivers clear and consistent messages, enhancing the process of shared-decision making. The aim is to optimise player care through individualised adjustments to the injury management process, thereby maximising the player's performance. Ultimately, this approach can be visualised as a partnership between support staff and the player, enhancing the player's self-management process.

HOW DO WE ACHIEVE THIS? – A CALL FOR ACTION

The above-discussed aspects indicate that optimising players' performance necessitates a supportive environment in which they are guided in managing their injury, they feel safe in reporting their injury, and where shared-decision making is the normal routine practice. This calls for support staff to upskill their leadership skills, communicate effectively, build trustworthy relations, and promote positive group dynamics. After all, players are not machines waiting to be 'serviced' but social beings who strive to be healthy in a context where optimal performance is rewarded. ■

For further reading one may view the full article on <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/24733938.2021.1985164>



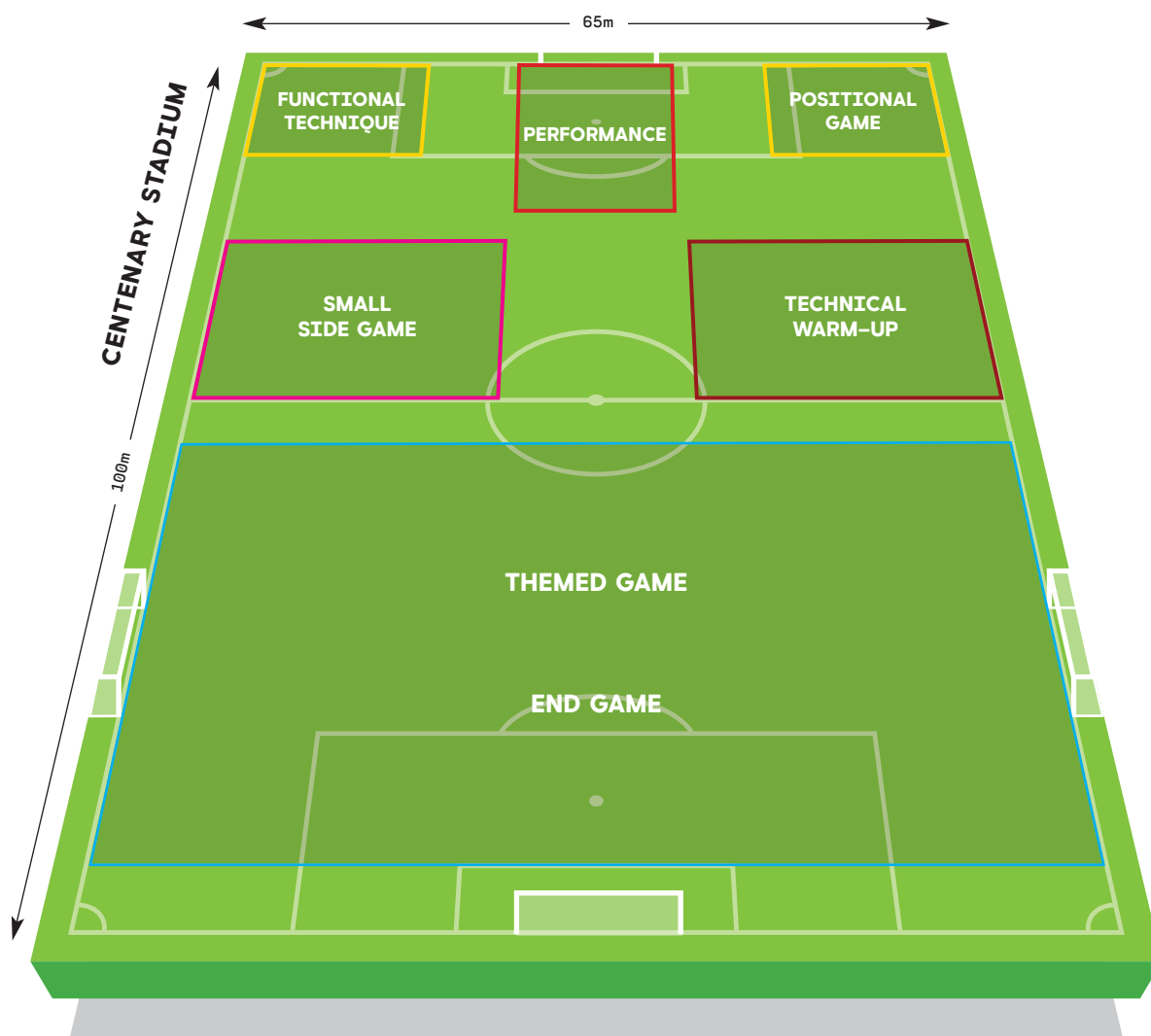


Regional Football hubs

TRAINING SESSION FOR U12 & U13

Approximately 50 players (48 outfield players + goalkeepers) participate in this session.

- The training session starts from a technical activation phase and six different stations lasting 12 minutes each.
- A coach is assigned to each station.
- The station sequence must be organised in a random manner. Therefore, there will be no predefined sequences.
- The training session will start from the technical activation (all the players excluding goalkeepers)
- All the other stations are designed for 8 players. Should the number of players vary, changes will be made in relation to the spaces used. However, the structure of the session will remain the same.
- During the technical activation phase, the goalkeepers carry out their training with the Goalkeepers' Coach and then join the whole group. →



STRUCTURE

TECHNICAL ACTIVATION

14'
18 x 18m

1 FUNCTIONAL TECHNIQUE

12'
15 x 15m

2 POSITIONAL GAME

12'
15 x 15m

3 SMALL SIDE GAME

12'
24 x 12m

4 THEMED GAME

12'
45 x 60m

5 PERFORMANCE

12'

6 END GAME

12'
45 x 60m

DURATION
86'

AIM OF THE SESSION

To identify where the space is and move into it to receive the ball with the correct body orientation.

OUTCOMES

- Play Where You See (PWYS) and move.
- Players must try to receive the ball in a new position.

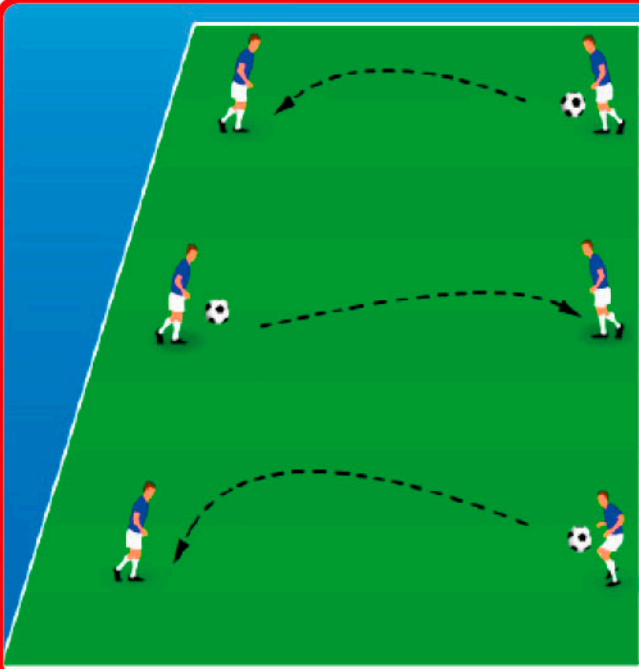
- Scanning and moving without the ball.
- Ball must be played to a team-mate in movement – timing of the run.
- Correct body position while receiving the ball.
- Emphasis on technique – weight of pass, direction of pass, first touch, etc.
- Communication/Reaction when losing or winning the ball. →

WARM-UP

Warm-up is divided into 4 stations and the ball is involved in all stations. Players work for 3 minutes in a stage and then move to the next stage accordingly. Every player is involved in all stations.

DURING WARM-UP WE FOCUS ON THE BELOW POINTS

- Using both feet
- Correct Technique / Body Position
- Weight of Pass
- Communication
- Ball mastery



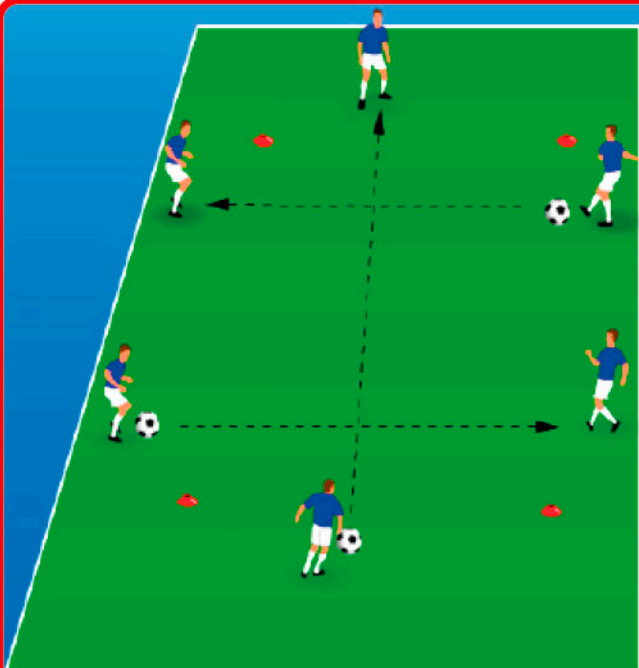
WARM-UP EXERCISE 1

WARM-UP 1

- Players in pairs. A ball between two.
- Variation of controls
- Chest control and pass back
- Instep volley pass back
- Side of foot volley pass back

COACHING POINTS

- Move towards the ball
- Weight of pass back
- Use both feet
- Get the ball under control as quickly as possible



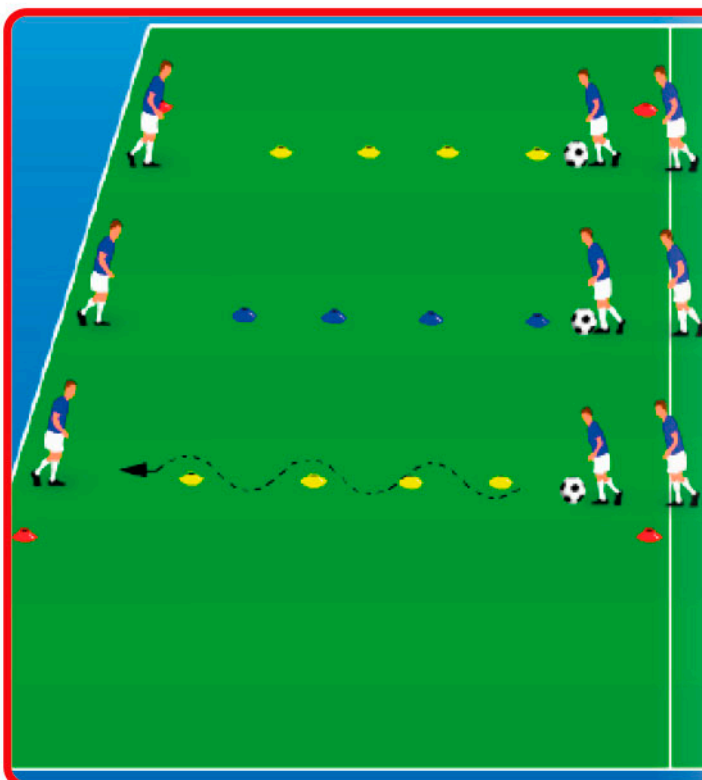
WARM-UP EXERCISE 2

WARM-UP 2

- Players on opposite end of the area
- Pass the ball to the opposite player avoiding the other balls

COACHING POINTS

- Using both feet
- Weight of pass – drive through the ball with the laces
- Cushion the ball in with the inside of the foot
- Good body positioning while receiving the ball
- Players must lift their heads to be aware of the other balls in traffic →



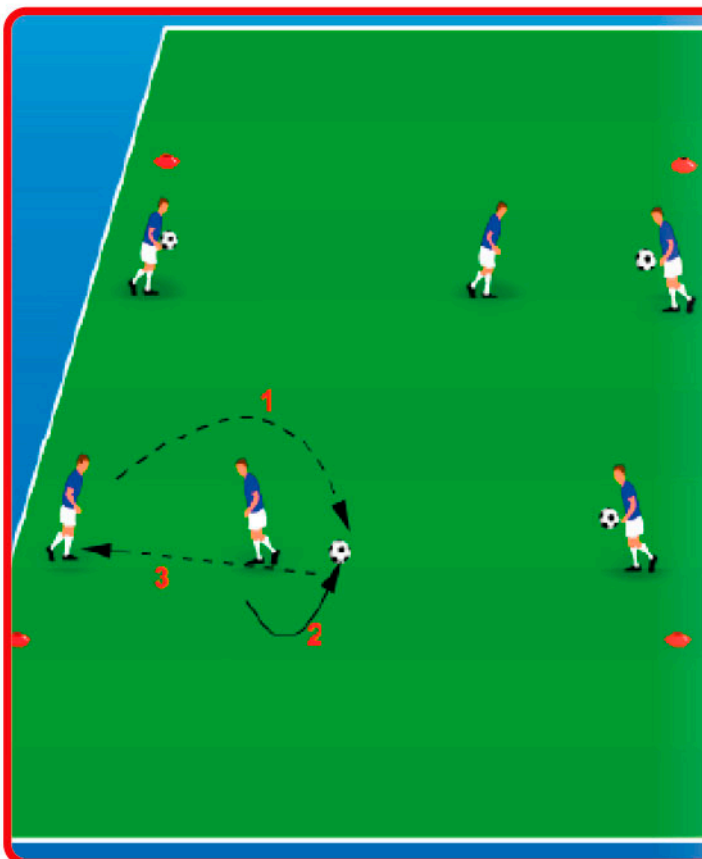
WARM-UP EXERCISE 3

WARM-UP 3

- Players in groups of three
- Variation of dribbles through the markers:
 - Inside-outside left and right foot
 - Outside-outside, inside-inside with right foot only and then with left foot only
 - Using the sole of the foot to roll the ball to the side

COACHING POINTS

- Use both feet
- Use the inside, outside and sole part of the feet
- Small, quick touches on the ball in tight spaces



WARM-UP EXERCISE 4

WARM-UP 4

- Players in groups of three. One player in the middle
- One of the outside players throws the ball behind the middle player
- The middle player must control the ball on the bounce, turn and pass back to same player
- Repeat from the opposite side
- Change middle player every 1 minute

COACHING POINTS

- 1 touch turn with ball
- Weight of pass back
- Turn on both sides – pivot with non-controlling foot
- Use the ground to aid control i.e. knee over the ball, inside of the foot over the ball to control in a downward motion →

STATIONS

Every station has its main objectives which are in line with the session outcomes. In the below stations, a lot of emphasis is placed on the fundamentals such as ball mastery, passing and receiving, attacking and defending 1 us 1 and shooting. Apart from the below stations, the session also includes a specific station for

goalkeepers and another for physical development (which we refer to as the Performance Station)

1. Functional Technique
2. Positional Game
3. Small Sided Game
4. Themed Game
5. 9 us 9 Game



STATION 1 FUNCTIONAL TECHNIQUE

- 2 players on each marker
- Pass to the next player and follow the pass
- Progress by introducing lay-off and third man
- 4"R + 4" L (both sides)

COACHING POINTS

- Receive in an open body position
- Strong pass to back foot
- Timing of run – visual cue
- Receive the ball on the run with first touch into space forward
- Stay active (in ready position and not flat on heels)
- Differentiate between weight of lay-off pass and pass into space

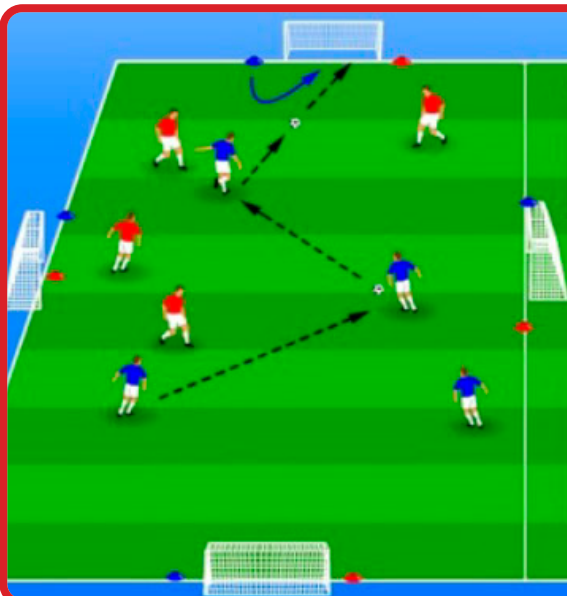


STATION 2 POSITIONAL PLAY

- 3 us 3 + 2 Neutrals.
- Emphasis on passing combinations and use of 3rd man run as well as making good use of the numerical advantage.
- Players look to receive the ball in the end zone.
- Neutral players are rotated every 2 minutes.

COACHING POINTS

- PWYS and move
- Strong pass
- Time the run into space to meet the ball in movement
- Communication and visual cue
- Always be available – create the passing line (find the available space) →



STATION 3 SMALL-SIDED GAME

- 4 vs 4
- Each team can score in all 4 posts.
- Once a team scores, then a marker should block that goal. Teams need to defend that goal and score in the remaining posts.

COACHING POINTS

- PWYS and move
- Promote combination plays – one-two and 3rd man.
- Quick reaction in positive and negative transitions
- Movement without the ball to find the free space
- Communication – verbal and visual



STATION 4 THEMED GAME

- 9 vs 9
- Free play. 3 points for a goal scored from a lateral pass/cross or a ball into space (attacking depth).

COACHING POINTS

- PWYS and move
- Goalkeeper is urged to play the ball short for build up
- Quick reaction in positive and negative transition
- Movement without the ball into space
- Timing of forward runs
- Emphasis on technical execution of pass, first touch and driving with the ball
- Communication – verbal and visual



PERFORMANCE STATION FITNESS COMPONENT

The session is aimed at improving overall body control and awareness of objects in a manner to adjust the player's body and avoid toppling it.

An additional objective, which is incorporated within the same session, is the concept of co-ordination and running mechanics – this is done without explicitly making it the principal aim of the said session.

Utilising the competitive game scenario enables the players to be able to competitively assess and evaluate ways in which they can overcome or “win the game”.

Additionally, this will also enable them to run at a greater rate during the session, it will also intrinsically motivate them to make decisions which can obviously put them at an advantage vis-a-vis their competition.



1. 15-METRES RUNNING OVER SHORT HURDLES

15-metres running over short hurdles to promote better running technique and reduce ground contact time.



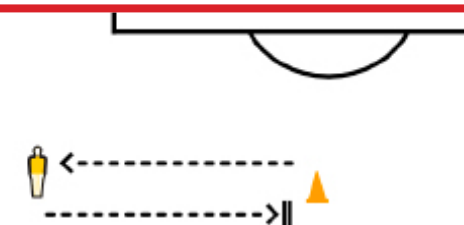
3. 10-METRES LATERAL WALK OVER HIGH HURDLES

10-metres lateral walks (side steps) inter-changing between sides, over high hurdles to improve body control and spatial awareness.



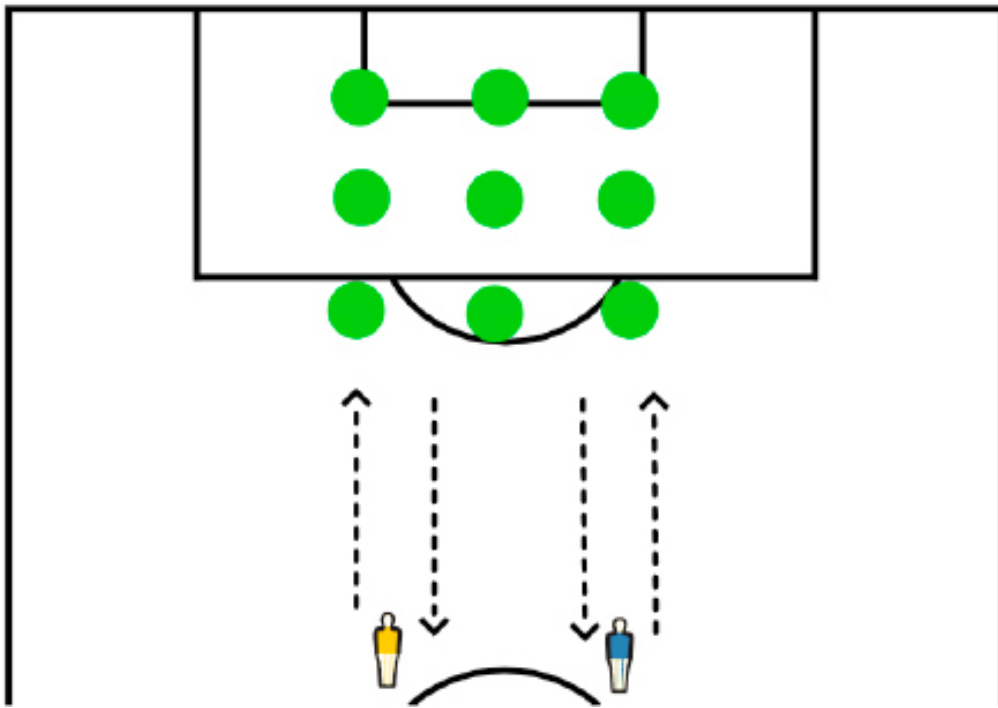
2. 15-METRES WALKING OVER HIGH HURDLES

15-metres walks over high hurdles to enable the players to mobilise their hip joint as well to gain awareness to keep their trunk fixed without twisting when stepping over each hurdle.



4. 10-METRES JOG/SPRINT

Jog 10-metres, touch the cone/marker and sprint to the start point to improve players reactive response and to mechanically work on the players' first few steps during acceleration. →



GAME TICK-TACK-TOE

This exercise requires 9 markers/rings spread out equally in the form of a square (while making sure the rings are not too close to one another, however this depends on the age group).

Two markers are placed 10 metres away in line with the middle ring (this would be the starting point).

Each team will have 3 bibs/markers.

Players will need to run and place the bib/ marker in the rings and connect 3 in a row (vertical, horizontal or diagonally).

Once the player places the bib/marker they have to run back and as soon as they cross the starting line their team-mate can go.

If there is no clear winner after the first 3 markers are placed, then one by one they would need to go and move one marker (of their own team) until a team wins.

The benefits of such exercise is that a number of positive outcomes will surface without any input from the coach.

These are:

- A higher intensity and the element of competition will make the players run harder.
- Communication, players will talk to each other and give instructions.
- Players will make use and train their decision-making skills.

This is a fun way for the players to work on multiple elements all at once without having to specifically coach for them.

The coach can adjust various components of the exercise to suit the players' needs such as the distance and if done with the ball or not. →

GOALKEEPERS TRAINING CROSSES AND DEEP PASSES

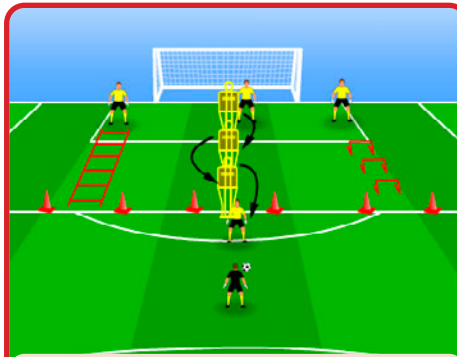
COACHING OUTCOMES

- Body position and be ready to see the ball
- Assess where it is going to land
- React to the ball
- Call Out (Keeper)
- Jump of one leg
- Drive with the knee closest to the ball
- Catch the ball (high contour save) at the highest possible point
- Land on both feet + What's next (positive transition + distribution)



WARM-UP PART 1

- 1 Activation + Dynamic Stretching
- 2 Handling drill + preparing for crossing
- 3 Focusing on correct technique (Catch the ball highest point as possible)



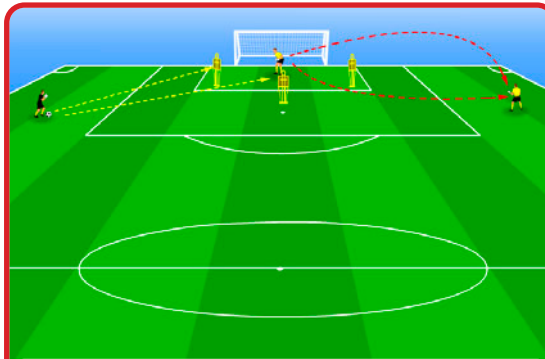
WARM-UP PART 2

- 1 Working on coordination exercises
- 2 Ball handling
- 3 Catching high balls from the side



MAIN EXERCISE 1

- 1 Working on side crosses first post both Left and Right (Drive with the knee closest to the ball)
- 2 Finishing + Low diving exercise



MAIN EXERCISE 2

- 1 Working on crosses, taking decisions + building attacks (all coaching outcomes)
- 2 Deciding from which gate to attack is crucial ■

all access







Football club environments

AND THEIR IMPACT ON PARTICIPATION,
PERFORMANCE AND PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT
(AGE 6-12)



DR LAURA FINNEGAN

Researcher and lecturer in South-East Technological University, Ireland

Laura Finnegan has a PhD from Liverpool John Moores University on development in youth football. She currently conducts research across many NAs and UEFA, and also presents on programmes such as UEFA Pro licence and US Soccer Talent scout licence.

Support can play an influential role in the social, personal, and moral growth of children and particularly when practised within club settings. Such involvement can potentially lead to outcomes classified as the 3Ps: **Participation** (engagement in sport or physical activity throughout life), **Personal development** (healthy psychological, social, and emotional development) and **Performance** (the development of sport expertise; Côté et al., 2016).

This research focused on documenting the initial football ecosystem provided to 6-12-year-old children within seven UEFA federations, as the stage of 'middle childhood' (aged 6-12) is a crucial yet underappreciated phase of human development. This study aimed to investigate how the football club environment (in terms of organisational capacity, assets and philosophies) impacts the ability of clubs to promote the positive outcomes of youth football (3 Ps).

Practical outcomes of this research project include providing insights into the organisational capacity of clubs to provide football opportunities, the current and latent value of grassroots clubs in contributing to broader community health, the differing patterns of concerns about dropout rates and the philosophy of clubs towards key elements supporting a successful childhood football experience.

MAIN FINDINGS

Clubs in the study provided football for 308,794 children (age 6-12). In almost 30% of communities, the participating club was the only football club available to 6-12-year-olds. Yet, the findings suggest that a lack of resources impacted the ability to provide football opportunities for over half →



of the clubs. Clubs identified dropout as a problem for their clubs; this issue grew significantly between the age groups of 6-12 to 13-16. Patterns varied across contexts, for example in different countries, size of clubs, resources available.

This indicates that there may not be a 'one size fits all' approach to the issue of dropout from youth football as it emerges in differing patterns across contexts. Grassroots clubs need **organisational capacity** (human, financial, structural) to fulfil their mandates, in this case, to provide a positive sporting experience for children which will facilitate the outcomes of participation, personal development and performance.

Organisational capacity issues were noted amongst clubs, for example, almost 13% of clubs disagreed that the physical environment of their club was appropriate for children's needs, while over 66% of clubs have a problem recruiting volunteers, yet infrastructural deficits and a lack of coaches can increase intention to dropout from youth football.

As organisational capacity problems increased for clubs, their scores on the 3 Ps scales decreased, indicating reduced effectiveness to provide appropriate footballing experiences due to organisational resources. Developing competence, relatedness and autonomy are important for developing sustained sporting engagement, the value of autonomy scored lowest of the **Participation** items in clubs.

Coach-athlete relationship quality and providing opportunities to interact with peers, which scored well across the clubs, can enhance **Personal development** and potentially aid the transfer of skills to other contexts. Football clubs' philosophy towards community engagement was generally positive across all countries, with items such as valuing social and community engagement, having a role to play in community health promotion and acting as role-models in the community being valued by clubs. Organisational capacity may limit the maximisation of this social engagement, as many clubs struggle with finances and also securing enough human resources to run even their basic football activities. Differing perceptions on the identification and nature of 'talent' in this age group were identified, which may impact on the environments provided in relation to enhancing long-term development and **Performance**. →



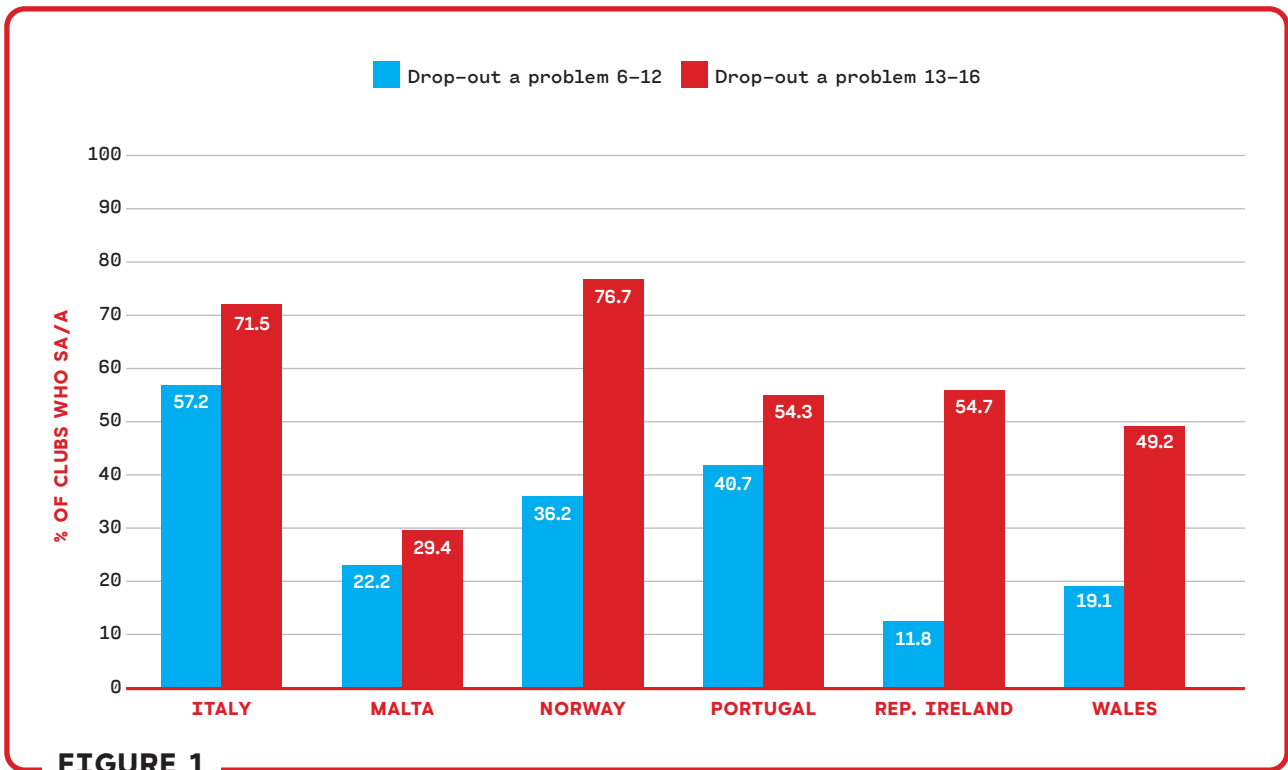


FIGURE 1

Percentage of clubs from each country who agree/strongly agree with dropout being a problem at each age-group.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Dropout concerns, combined with insights into an initial lack of playing opportunities due to organisational capacity, should focus the efforts of all stakeholders (clubs, NAs, Local Authorities, UEFA) to proactively address the football environment provided to children. This can include helping clubs to focus on the factors related to participation explored in the current study (e.g., autonomy, competence, relatedness, enjoyment) and engaging with clubs to develop their organisational capacity to provide a sporting experience for children which can lead to life-long participation, increased personal development and enhanced performance. From this study, community and club level characteristics have been shown to display different patterns in terms of the factors related to promoting the long-term adaptive outcomes of youth sport. This adds to the importance of local governments and NAs specifically tailoring interventions to these differing community and club contexts and generating further research to understand these concepts from a multi-level perspective.

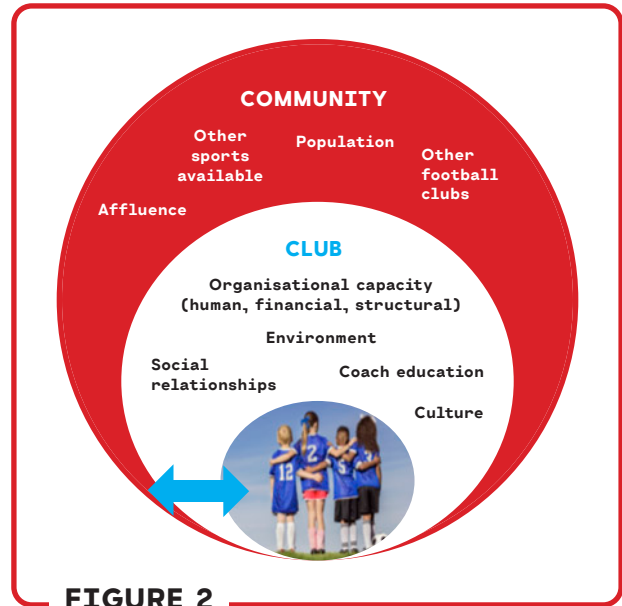


FIGURE 2

Theoretical framework of the project.

Note The Malta FA was among the National Associations that featured in this study. ■

For further reading one may view the full article on <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1kBA6t3nsugWJZAnFbFrsbDUNa78u2AB0/view>



MALTA FA & UEFA COACHING LICENCE RENEWAL THROUGH CONTINUOUS PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT SESSIONS

CPDs are an essential part of a coach's development and an opportunity to improve their knowledge about football and beyond. The Malta FA Technical Centre, through its Coach Education Department, is once again organising CPD sessions and seminars in order to support and enhance the coaching workforce across the Maltese islands. This area is constantly being developed and improved in line with the guidelines of the UEFA Coaching Convention.

These coach development sessions, organised by the Malta FA, other accredited educational institutions, football clubs and the Malta Football Coaches Association (MFCA), are mandatory for the renewal of the different coaching licences issued by UEFA and the Malta FA. According to the UEFA Coaching Convention, coaches should attend a minimum of 15 hours of CPD sessions over a period of three years in order to have their coaching licence renewed.

As from this season, there will be a slight change in the way these learning hours are accrued. The new system of CPDs will be spread over three calendar years rather than three football seasons, as is the norm with other UEFA associations. This means that every coach must attend at least 15 hours of CPD

sessions between January 2023 and December 2025 in order to obtain the licence. More information about these amendments will be sent to all licensed coaches through an official email.

The list of CPDs for the first part of the year (February to June 2023) will be published in the coming weeks and further details on the application procedure and payment for these CPDs will be sent to all coaches by email.

For more information, please contact us on learn@mfa.com.mt or technicalcentre@mfa.com.mt

COURSES FOR SEASON 2022-23

- UEFA Elite – in progress
- UEFA B – in progress
- Two UEFA C – in progress
- Goalkeeper Course Level 1 – Completed
- 3 Grassroots Leader Course (one of which was for female coaches) – Completed
- Another Grassroots Leader Course to follow in May
- Youth Fitness Coach Award – started 1st February
- CPDs (to start by end of February)



The Malta Football Association
Technical Centre, West Stand,
National Stadium, Ta' Qali ATD 4000
www.mfa.com.mt