

TRAINING FACTORS AFFECTING RECOVERY BETWEEN FOOTBALL MATCHES

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Introduction

In most codes of football, matches are played on a regular weekly basis, over a long season. Additionally, it is not unusual for two or more matches to be played within a week which can place large physical and psychological stressors upon players [1]. Because of these high demands and the limited opportunities for recovery, it can be difficult for training to meet both the short (i.e. recovery for the next game) and long term (optimising fitness and player development) requirements of individual players and the team. Indeed if player fatigue and recovery are not managed appropriately, footballers may be at greater risk of underperformance, overreaching or injury [2, 3].

In this presentation, the factors that affect recovery from matches will be examined. First, the physiological and psychological responses of professional football players from matches and during the entire competition season will be described. Several 'real world' case studies from both Australian Football and Rugby League will be used to demonstrate the effects of different training on recovery and performance during this period. Finally, observations from both the laboratory and field will demonstrate how subtle changes in training load, different periodisation strategies and the duration between matches can affect player recovery and subsequent performance.

Collectively, these observations show that inappropriate training between matches can lead to an increased perception of fatigue and soreness, increased muscle damage, alterations in oxidative stress and inflammatory markers, a reduced anabolic-catabolic balance and poorer physical performance. It also seems that the 72 h period following matches is critically important for ensuring appropriate recovery for the next game. Moreover, since relatively small doses of additional training during this period can negatively influence performance, careful control of training periodisation essential.

To minimise training errors in football, these findings support the use of system for planning and monitoring training to ensure that training is well controlled at both the team and individual player level. When this system is applied effectively, sport scientists can assist coaches gain a better control football training. Ultimately this may lead to improved football performance.

References

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