

Standard of competition effect in female football

There is limited quantity of current research inquiries regarding the effect of standard of competition specifically on female soccer activity. Previous investigations have reported that female soccer players participating at the international level of competition tend to exhibit superior physical characteristics and perform greater locomotor activity during match play than their domestic professional counterparts (Andersson et al., 2010; Mohr et al., 2008). Brazilian senior international female team players cover significantly greater total distance, total distance at high and sprint intensities than U20 and U17 youth international female players during match competition (Ramos, 2017). Soccer players' maximal aerobic velocity and VO_{2max} performance are sensitive enough measures to distinguished between "starters" and "non-starters" on youth and senior international women teams. Collective consensus of the research suggests an emphasis be placed on physical capacity and match output development to the enable female players to meet the demands higher level of competition. (See Table 4.)

A recent study suggests an individual's physical characteristics might contribute to the outcome of a soccer match, but that in general the physical qualities and match performance between international and professional-elite level soccer players are not distinguishable (Scott et al., 2020). Thus, technical-tactical performance and other psychological elements might also play a prominent role in talent differentiation in women's football. Female soccer players of a higher

standard display better juggling, heading and target striking skill execution than lower-level equivalents (Pedersen et al., 2014). Australian first-team female players' better maintained passing accuracy and efficiency pre, during, and post football match simulation activity compared to their reserve-team colleagues (Lyons et al., 2021). In conjunction with a player's physical readiness, proper prioritization of technical-tactical skill augmentation to advance levels of competition in women's soccer is warranted.

Previous literature has aimed to highlight key differences in soccer players' physical capacity, match activity, and technical skill performance by standard of competition. While informative, the scope of these studies fails to acknowledge the potential effect differences in training according to the standard of competition may have on performance. Early chronic exposure and adaptation to higher-intensity more technical-tactically demanding training might account for previous reported performance differences in competitive-level soccer players. Obtaining a better understanding of training demands, subsequent physical adaptation, and acquirement of technical-tactical skill execution across various standards of play will help to enhance overall talent identification and development processes in women's soccer.

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