

# KNOWLEDGE OF SOCCER TERMINOLOGY IN JUNIOR PLAYERS



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## OBJECTIVES

The importance of different forms of knowledge for skilled sport performance has been acknowledged in sport research during the last few decades. Findings suggest that skilled performers have a more refined task-specific knowledge base when compared to novices (Helsen & Pauwels, 1993). Furthermore, the type and amount of knowledge and the way the information is possessed and used during task performance differs between experts and novices (Williams & Davids, 1995). It has also been suggested that higher scores on the knowledge tests are related to more accurate and faster decision-making during game play, which on the other hand is considered as one of the most important prerequisite for successful game play.

In this study we concentrate on establishing what the knowledge base of junior players is for soccer and how it develops with increasing age and expertise.

## METHODS

Junior football players (N=42) in three different age groups B-10 (n=15, 10.4±0.3 yrs) B-12 (n=13, 12.3±0.2 yrs) and B-14 (n=14, 14.3±0.3 yrs) served as participants. A questionnaire containing technical and tactical soccer terms was developed based on current literature and researcher's experience as a soccer player, coach and coach instructor. The questionnaire included four parts: **Part I** contained 38 terms from which 9 were technical, 18 tactical offensive and 11 tactical defensive. **Part II** represented the continuous model of the game (figure 1).

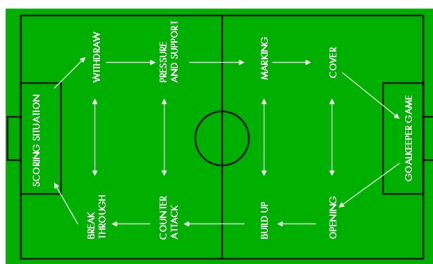


Figure 1. A schematic presentation of the continuous model of the game (part II).

**Part III** included 30 terms of defensive play, from which 15 were related to defending player-to-player and other half to zone defense. **Part IV** contained five illustrative figures representing different team formations from the perspective of the defending team (figure 2).



Figure 2. An example of the team formation figures (part IV).

The data were analysed in a separate one-way analysis of variance with Tukey's post-hoc test.

## RESULTS

A significant difference  $F(2,36) = 46.89$ ,  $p < .001$  was found between the age groups in the playing experience (B-10:  $4.1 \pm 1.0$ , B-12:  $6.3 \pm 0.9$  and B-14:  $7.8 \pm 1.2$  years). Significant differences  $F(2, 39) = 12.74$ ,  $p < .001$  between the groups were also found in the total points of the knowledge test (B-10:  $46.33 \pm 11.59$ , B-12:  $51 \pm 5.82$  and B-14:  $61.43 \pm 5.06$ ). The mean scores and SDs of different test parts for each group are presented in table 1.

Table 1. The mean scores and SDs of different groups for each test part.

Group	Part I	Part II	Part III	Part IV
B-10	22.53 (4.70)	4.07 (1.71)	16.27 (5.08)	3.47 (2.85)
B-12	22.69 (4.0)	3.08 (1.55)	19.15 (2.70)	6.08 (1.38)
B-14	25.92 (3.77)	5.93 (1.86)	22.43 (1.91)	7.14 (1.46)
F	2.93	9.70	10.81	12.35
p	.065	.000	.000	.000

Tukey's post-hoc indicated that the B-14 group scored significantly higher in three test parts (II, III and IV) out of four when compared to B-10 group and in the test part II when compared to group B-12. B-12 group differed significantly from B-10 group only in part IV.

On average players achieved 60.1 % of correct answers in the knowledge test (max 88 points). As shown in figure 3 the highest percentage (64%) of correct answers in the test was achieved in part III and the lowest (43.6%) in part II.

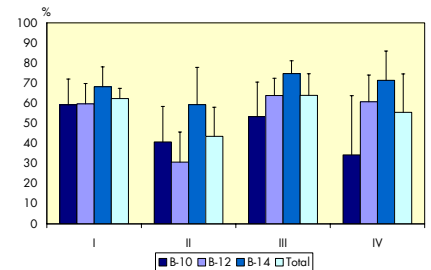


Figure 3. The relative percentages of correct answers in different groups.

## CONCLUSIONS

Based on the results it seems that junior players in these age categories were already quite familiar with soccer specific terminology.

Younger and less experienced players were mainly familiar with basic technical and tactical terms whereas the oldest and the most experienced players had already developed a wider and more elaborate knowledge base concerning the methods of defensive play and different team formations. Findings also reveal that players were more familiar with the terminology concerning defensive play than with the continuous model of the game, in which they had to acknowledge both offensive and defensive aspects of the game.

To conclude it seems that appropriate instruction and practice experiences have already facilitated the building up of more sophisticated knowledge structures, which could also be pertinent for other cognitive processes used during game play.

## REFERENCES

- Helsen, W. & Pauwels, J. 1993. *Cognitive Issues in Motor Expertise*, 109-134.  
Williams, M. & Davids, K. 1995. *Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology*, 17, 259-275.

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