

# FUNCTIONAL MOVEMENT TESTING IN FEMALE SOCCER PLAYERS FOLLOWING PRIORITY BASED TRAINING

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## Background

Strength & conditioning programmes within soccer are often developed for sports-specific requirements and not the individual athlete's needs (Little and Williams, 2006). This study aimed to evaluate an individual's functional performance and identify key areas of weakness. The weaknesses were classified into priority areas and specific exercises were given to improve the priority regions.

## Methodology

Sixteen female soccer players were recruited from the U17/U20 SAFA National Ladies Football Academy based at the High Performance Centre in Pretoria. Age ranged from 14-21yrs with a mean age of 16yrs. Each participant was screened on 13 functional movements at baseline and again after performing an 8week priority-based strength and conditioning programme. Each movement was recorded, and then viewed and scored independently by two researchers. The movements were scored on a scale of 0-5, depending on the athlete's ability to perform the movement. Total scores of all movements were also added together to gain an overall score.



## Results

A sign test was used to assess changes in functional movement scores after completing the 8 week priority based strength and conditioning programme.

Overall, significant improvements were seen in the athletes' total functional movement scores ( $p=0.02$ ). On individual functional movements, significant improvements were seen in left sided rotational stability ( $p=0.01$ ), the toe touch flexibility test ( $p=0.02$ ) and trunk stability ( $p=0.03$ ). No other significant differences were found.

## Discussion

Overall total scores of the athlete's functional movements improved after an 8 week priority based excise programme. This is supported by Heidt, Sweeterman, Carlonas, Taub and Tekulve (2000) who also found movement improved when priority areas were targeted. In general, athletes who scored lower on initial testing showed more improvement.

Although three movements showed a significant difference post exercise, ten movements did not show a significant difference. Further research into priority based exercise programmes and there effects on a functional movement scores are needed.

## References

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