Performance characteristics of professional players aged 13 - 18 years old.

Background: A number of previous research studies have provided information regarding the physiological and performance characteristics of elite level football players from a wide range of age groups. Although such information can be used for the identification of future talent in football, it must be stressed that simply being able to meet the scores set by professional players does not predispose an individual to the same level of success experienced by their elite counterparts as success in football is dependant upon a whole host of factors. Nevertheless, coaches, and/or parents of aspiring youth talent (or indeed the players themselves) may find the comparison of scores to those obtained by elite youth players to be helpful. Therefore Tables 1 and 2 present data of height, weight, 15 and 30 m sprint times (assessed with Brower timing gates), and maximal vertical jump height (assessed using a jump mat) collected at the end of the 2009/2010 playing season for three age groups of 12 players (i.e., 13s and 14s, 15s and 16s, 17s and 18s).

Table 1: Individual results of post-season testing for three age groups of player enrolled in a Centre of Excellence

Player	Age (years)	Height (m)	Mass (kg)	Vertical jump (in) Best of 3 attempts	15 m sprint (s) Best of 3 attempts	30 m sprint (s) Best of 3 attempts
1	13	1.78	73.6	18.3	2.42	4.32
2	14	1.73	55.9	19.7	2.33	4.17
3	14	1.62	61.2	18.2	2.42	4.32
4	13	1.65	51.9	21.1	2.49	4.43
5	14	1.50	39.2	14.5	2.83	5.11
6	14	1.81	62.7	16.1	2.51	4.47
7	14	1.62	53.7	16.5	2.44	4.34
8	14	1.70	68.6	18.0	2.37	4.14
9	14	1.78	69.6	18.9	2.46	4.31
10	13	1.62	58.1	18.7	2.40	4.30
11	14	1.58	61.4	22.2	2.29	4.08
12	14	1.69	57.8	19.6	2.47	4.41
13	16	1.72	64.3	20.0	2.43	4.25
14	16	1.81	66.7	19.5	2.33	4.07
15	16	1.76	67.3	18.5	2.46	4.19
16	16	1.77	73.2	21.9	2.31	4.03
17	16	1.72	69.4	21.1	2.39	4.22
18	14	1.69	57.4	19.0	2.44	4.30
19	15	1.70	53.3	18.9	2.36	4.20
20	15	1.58	54.2	20.4	2.49	4.30
21	15	1.66	59.9	19.5	2.35	4.18
22	15	1.71	65.5	22.4	2.38	4.17
23	15	1.63	52.1	18.3	2.39	4.24
24	15	1.78	69.4	22.7	2.39	4.14
25	17	1.80	84.5	21.9	2.43	4.29
26	18	1.79	70.9	24.8	2.30	4.00
27	18	1.84	83.3	20.5	2.34	4.12
28	18	1.69	58.7	20.8	2.39	4.19
29	18	1.77	74.1	19.9	2.40	4.26
30	17	1.76	70.7	20.6	2.33	4.15
31	17	1.73	72.3	18.8	2.43	4.32
32	17	1.83	75.8	22.8	2.31	4.03
33	17	1.70	71.8	20.6	2.44	4.30
34	17	1.75	60.8	25.6	2.34	4.10
35	17	1.69	63.2	20.0	2.38	4.17
36	17	1.71	65.9	21.8	2.29	4.01

13s and 14s 15s and 16s 17s and 18s

Table 2: Average results of post-season testing for three age groups of player enrolled in a Centre of Excellence

Group	Age (years)	Height (m)	Mass (kg)	Vertical jump (in)	15 m sprint (s)	30 m sprint (s)
13s and 14s	13.8	1.67	59.5	18.5	2.45	4.37
15s and 16s	15.3	1.71	62.7	20.2	2.39	4.19
17s and 18s	17.3	1.75	71.0	21.5	2.37	4.16

Discussion: Table 1 provides information that may be of use to coaches, players, and/or parents involved with youth football teams. Consequently, such data can be used as a benchmark for those involved in youth football. As expected, with an increase in age then height, weight and performance of vertical jumping and sprinting (both over 15 and 30m) increases (see Table 2). Players who jumped the highest also produced some of the fastest sprint times in their age groups (see data on players 11, 16, and 26); a finding not uncommon in football players and hence the reason for including a range of jumping exercises in the training of these athletes as improvements gained in jump height can influence sprint performance.

Conclusion: Older players outperform their younger counterparts in a range of physical performance tests and that players who jump the highest are characterised by faster sprint times over 15 and 30 m.