

What makes a great footballer?

June 28 2009

Scientists are studying footballing ability to gain insight into the role that skill plays in the physical performance of vertebrates. The results, to be presented at the Society for Experimental Biology meeting on Sunday, June 28, show that skill is as important, if not more important, than athletic ability. The study also suggests a scientific method that could help professional football clubs in the selection and identification of new talent.

While most fans are in awe of what their football heroes can do with a football, the source of their remarkable skill remains strangely mysterious. Although being in excellent physical condition undoubtedly helps, few people actually believe that intense physical training alone can turn an average bloke into a Ronaldo.

Now, scientists from the University of Queensland have decided to study what this "something else" might be. Dr. Robbie Wilson will talk about the details of this study and the results that have been obtained so far in his talk at the Society of Experimental Biology Annual Meeting in Glasgow on Sunday 28th June 2009.

Dr. Wilson believes that this type of research may have applied outcomes for football clubs: "Our analyses suggest that unambiguous metrics of a player's skill components should be used to help in the selection and identification of new talent. Our studies could help to streamline selection criteria and efficiency by providing a rank ordering of individuals based upon competitive one-on-one tasks. In addition, the relative importance of each type of skill component could be tailored to

each player's position and the club's immediate and future requirements."

Members of the semi-professional University of Queensland Football Club (UQFC) were recruited as experimental subjects, and they were made to compete against each other in one-on-one "football tennis" games, which require very similar athletic and skill sets to that required for regular football games. In parallel, the same players were evaluated for overall athleticism and skill in sixteen different tasks. "There was no evidence of any correlations between maximal athletic performance and skill", explains Dr. Wilson. "Our studies suggest that skill is just as important, if not more important, than athletic ability in determining performance of complex traits, such as performance on the [football field](#)".

Interestingly, the researchers are hoping that focusing on footballing ability in humans will also provide them with insight into the role that individual skills play in other species, for example during aggression, prey capture or escape from a predator. Dr. Wilson argues that the importance of skill for the evolution of vertebrate physical performance is currently unknown and largely treated by researchers as a difficult 'black box' to understand. "To develop an understanding of the evolution and function of complex performance traits, we need to investigate the role of individual skill".

Source: Society for Experimental Biology

Citation: What makes a great footballer? (2009, June 28) retrieved 25 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2009-06-great-footballer.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private

study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.