

Sprinting 'like a jet' will produce Premier League strikers of tomorrow

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Sprinting "like a jet plane taking off" will help produce Premier League star strikers of tomorrow, new research has revealed.

A University of Essex study of Tottenham Hotspur's academy has shown that just a few words can instantly boost sprinting speed by 3 percent over 20 meters.

It would normally take weeks of targeted training to achieve such a large increase.

These short bursts of acceleration are largely seen in goal-scoring situations and could be the difference between beating a defender and finding the net.

Dr. Jason Moran, from the School of Sport, Rehabilitation and Exercise Sciences, discovered simple analogies increased performance in this key area.

The study showed elite young players ran faster when focusing on their environment rather than their bodies.

Dr. Moran said, "The words we speak to athletes have a demonstrable and instant effect on their performance."

"It's long been known that it's better to direct an athlete's attention to the environment around them rather than focusing on their body positions, which seems to interfere with the fluidity of movement."

"This could be enhanced even further by using certain analogies; for example, asking a player to 'accelerate like a Ferrari' may create a more evocative image in their mind instead of simply telling them to run fast."

The research used 20 members of the North London side's academy, all between 14–15-years-old.

Before taking part in sprint drills, the promising players were given

different directions before running.

External analogies telling them to "push the ground away" achieved better results than "driving their legs into the ground."

And top performances were encouraged by players being urged to "sprint as if you are a jet taking off into the sky ahead."

In coaching, analogies can make it easier for someone to learn how to move their body in the right way by hiding complicated instructions within simple spoken words.

For example, by using analogies, a coach can tell an athlete how fast and in what position their body needs to be without using hard-to-understand technical terms.

It is thought that this could be particularly advantageous in young learners who may show relatively lower levels of focus.

Away from elite sport, it is thought these cues and coaching tactics could be used in PE lessons and at the grassroots.

Dr. Moran added, "Although these findings focus on the highest level of youth football, it could easily be used in schools or on a Saturday morning."

"By using a simple [analogy](#), teachers and parents might be able to get the most out of their kids whatever the sport."

The findings are [published](#) in the *Journal of Sports Sciences*.

More information: Jason Moran et al, How effective are external cues and analogies in enhancing sprint and jump performance in academy

soccer players?, *Journal of Sports Sciences* (2024). [DOI: 10.1080/02640414.2024.2309814](https://doi.org/10.1080/02640414.2024.2309814)

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