

Football performance impaired by mental fatigue

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Professional footballers and their coaches often complain about the mental fatigue induced by the stress of frequent matches.

Now research from the University of Kent has demonstrated for the first time that [mental fatigue](#) can have a [negative impact](#) on [football](#) performance by reducing running, passing, and shooting ability.

Professor Samuele Marcora of Kent's School of Sport and Exercise Sciences worked with researchers from the University of Technology, Sydney, Australia, and Ghent University in Belgium on the study published in the journal *Medicine & Science in Sport & Exercise*.

This [research](#) consisted of two separate studies. In both studies, mental fatigue was induced experimentally by asking footballers to perform a mentally demanding computerised task for 30 minutes. In study 1, the physical performance of 12 footballers was assessed by measuring how far they run in a shuttle running test. In study 2, the technical performance of 14 footballers was measured using validated passing and shooting tests.

Footballers in study 1 perceived running to be harder when mentally fatigued despite similar heart rate, and ran significantly less compared to the control condition (no mental fatigue). In study 2, footballers made significantly more passing mistakes in the mental fatigue condition. Mental fatigue also impaired shot speed and shot accuracy.

The authors concluded that strategies to minimize mental fatigue should be developed and implemented in order to optimize the performance of football players during stressful competitions like EURO 2016.

More information: MITCHELL R. SMITH et al, Mental Fatigue Impairs Soccer-Specific Physical and Technical Performance, *Medicine & Science in Sports & Exercise* (2016). [DOI: 10.1249/MSS.0000000000000762](#)

Provided by University of Kent

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