

1 The relationship between repeated kicking performance and maximal aerobic capacity in elite
2 junior Australian football

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16 Running Title: Aerobic capacity and kicking performance

1 **Abstract**

2 Australian football (AF) is a physically demanding game, requiring players to engage in a
3 range of anaerobic activities interspersed with prolonged aerobic exercise. Coupled, players
4 have to perform a range of technical skills, the most fundamental of which being to
5 effectively kick (dispose) the ball. The aim of this study was to ascertain the extent to which
6 aerobic capacity influenced kicking performance in AF. Twenty four elite U18 players
7 competing in the same U18 competition performed the Australian Football Kicking test
8 (AFK) three times with the yo-yo IR2 completed twice (between each AFK), with no rest
9 between all three AFKs. Linear mixed models (LMM) reported the extent to which kicking
10 speed and accuracy scores were influenced by the level reached on the yo-yo IR2. Results
11 indicated that players who recorded a higher level on the yo-yo IR2 produced a faster average
12 kicking speed following each AFK ($P < 0.01$), while for all players, kicking speed was faster
13 and more accurate on their dominant kicking leg regardless of score on the yo-yo IR2 (P
14 < 0.01). The LMMs also reported that those who maintained kicking speeds following two yo-
15 yo IR2 also had higher competition kicking efficiency than those who reported reduced
16 kicking speeds. These results show that aerobically proficient U18 AF players who attain a
17 relatively higher score on the yo-yo IR2 may be better equipped at preserving their kicking
18 speed. Thus, coaches may wish to integrate both technical and aerobic drills in an attempt to
19 preserve a player's capability to execute ball disposals with a high velocity.

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21 **Key Words:** aerobic capacity, kicking speed, kicking accuracy, Australian football

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26 **Introduction**

27 Australian football (AF) is a dynamic team invasion sport requiring players' at all
28 developmental levels to possess unique physical, technical, and perceptual performance
29 qualities (8, 12). Gradually, game demands have evolved so that AF today is a faster and
30 more open game, particularly at the elite senior level (i.e., within the Australian Football
31 League; AFL) (12, 27). As a response, the physical demands placed on AFL players have
32 been shown to increase in terms of running velocity and intensity (24, 12). Notably, AFL
33 players generate greater physiological outputs during game-play relative to players competing
34 within sub-elite and junior competitions (5, 22). This increased physiological output during
35 game-play may be explained by superior experience and physical fitness, with Lyons et al.
36 (13) demonstrating that physiologically superior elite soccer players were better at preserving
37 technical and perceptual skills throughout the game, relative to their less physically able
38 counterparts. The negative effect of central fatigue on AF maximal kicking distance
39 kinematics (9), as well as kicking accuracy (28) supports the evidence found with soccer
40 players (13). However, the use of field-based and functional kicking (speed and accuracy)
41 tests in AF along with a comparison to kicking efficiency during competition, would have
42 implications for both game and physical demands. Pertinently, there is yet to be work that
43 investigates the effects of maximal aerobic capacity on kicking performance extracted from
44 field and game-based means in AF.

45

46 In response to today's more open and faster flowing game (17, 27), there have been
47 numerous investigations into the physical demands of AF players during game-play (5, 8,
48 24). Research has focused on the physical movement demands of sub-elite and elite U18
49 competitions for the purpose of successful player development and drafting into the AFL (5,
50 6, 21). Coutts et al. (8) reported a decrease in high intensity running (HIR) and total distance

51 (TD) after the first quarter in elite AF. Similar results are reported at the elite U18 level, with
52 midfielders showing a reduced number of HIR bouts after the first quarter (22). Coutts et al.
53 (8) suggested the increased number of HIR bouts and TD covered during the first quarter
54 influenced the onset of fatigue in the following quarters. Similar reductions have been
55 reported in sub-elite players relative to their elite counterparts (4). Although no differences in
56 technical skill were reported, a reduction in physical game performance (HIR), did not have a
57 detrimental effect on technical skill. Sub-elite midfield players have shown to cover more
58 distance at higher running speeds than other playing positions, however, these physical traits
59 are shown to be inferior to midfield players at the elite level (5, 22). It was interesting to note
60 Burgess et al. (6) reported that elite U18 midfielders exhibit less total game time than their
61 elite counterparts, indicating that elite players work harder per minute, and are capable of
62 executing accurate ball disposals at an increased game speed. However, it is unclear to what
63 effect the role of aerobic fitness has on elite U18 midfielders, based on the differences
64 reported between them and their elite counterparts when considering accurate ball disposals.

65
66 Research has shown that the use of a yo-yo IR2 is a strong indicator of HIR in AF (15). The
67 yo-yo IR2 is used to evaluate maximal aerobic capacity (3), and comparisons with game
68 physical movement patterns has reported an indirect influence on number of disposals when
69 players perform HIR (15). However, although Mooney et al. (15) reported that playing
70 experience influenced the relationship between HIR and disposals in elite senior AF players,
71 it is currently unclear if disposals were effective, and if similar results would exist for elite
72 U18 players.

73
74 Indeed, work has investigated the influence of fatigue on kicking performance in AF.
75 Notably, Young et al. (28) reported that elite midfield players were able to maintain a higher

76 kicking accuracy than sub-elite players and non-nomadic position players (forwards and
77 defenders) when kicking to a target on a projected screen either side of a 2x 2 min time trial.
78 Coventry et al. (9) reported that elite and sub-elite players modify their kicking kinematics to
79 maintain foot speed, during incremented fatigue. However, despite offering insights into
80 fatigue and its impact on kicking performance in AF, neither study examined the relationship
81 between maximal aerobic capacity (as ascertained via the yo-yo IR2) and kicking
82 performance measures. Accordingly, it is currently unknown whether maximal aerobic
83 capacity influences kicking performance in elite junior AF players. Further, it is unknown if
84 kicking performance under training conditions is related to that of competition kicking
85 performance measured through kicking efficiency statistics.

86
87 The aim of this study was to determine the effect of maximal aerobic capacity on kicking
88 performance in elite junior AF players. Given the work of others (28), it was hypothesised
89 that those with a greater maximal aerobic capacity would be better equipped at preserving
90 both speed and accuracy elements, and this would transfer to competition.

91 92 **Methods**

93 *Participants & Experimental Protocol*

94 Twenty four participants competing in a state-based U18 competition were recruited to
95 participate. Selected participants were midfield players in an attempt to standardise potential
96 positional influences on the physiological characteristics of players. All participants were
97 injury free at the time of data collection, and participating in regular training sessions and/or
98 games for a minimum of four weeks prior to data collection. Accordingly, data collection was
99 undertaken during the late competition phase of the season. Participants were informed of the
100 experimental protocol during their recruitment, and informed consent was obtained from

101 parents/guardians where required. Ethical approval was granted by the relevant University
102 Human Research Ethics Committee (Reference number: XXX).

103

104 A single data collection session was undertaken on an outdoor AF oval, under standardised
105 environmental conditions. Prior to data collection, a standardised warm-up was completed,
106 consisting of light jogging and dynamic stretches. Participants then performed the Australian
107 Football Kicking Test (AFK), as reported by Woods et al. (25). The AFK was completed
108 three times with the yo-yo IR2 completed twice (between each AFK), with no rest between
109 all three AFKs. The testing was performed in pre-determined groups of three, with the
110 coaches classing participants as either high, moderate or low aerobic fitness level in an
111 attempt to minimise the rest periods. Three separate yo-yo IR2 (one per participant), and one
112 AFK were set up to help standardise testing conditions.

113

114 ***Data Collection***

115 *The Australian Football Kicking Test*

116 Prior to undertaking the AFK, participants specified their dominant and non-dominant
117 kicking legs. Further, the players undertook the AFK testing procedure in full in attempt to
118 prevent a scoring bias learned effect. Following the protocols described by Woods et al. (25),
119 one kick was performed at each distance (20 m, 30 m and 40 m) for the dominant leg, and
120 then repeated for the non-dominant leg. Right leg dominant participants would kick to the
121 'dominant' targets on the left side of their body, then to the right side of their body for the
122 non-dominant, left leg (25). The test commenced with the participant facing away from the
123 targets. They would then run to the turn cone, pick up a stationary football, before turning
124 180°, and run to the disposal line to kick to a now known target, designated by one scorer.
125 The designated target player was instructed to call for the ball, but remain inside the target

126 circle. The test was repeated until all three distances had been kicked to, then repeated for the
127 non-dominant leg. Participants were instructed to kick “as quickly and as accurately as
128 possible”, and were allowed three seconds to dispose of the ball once received from the
129 feeder in an attempt to standardise disposal time (25). A visual representation of the AFK is
130 presented in Figure 1. Two criteria were used to assess kicking performance; accuracy and
131 speed. Kicking accuracy was assessed by elite AF coaches with more than ten years’
132 experience coaching at state level, using the criteria presented in Table 1. The score for each
133 distance were used as the criterion value for analysis for accuracy. Secondly, a radar speed
134 gun (Bushnell Velocity Gun 101911, Kansas City, Missouri) was used to assess peak ball
135 speed for each kick and distance, which was manually operated by the same user in front of
136 kicker (Figure 1). Accuracy of the speed gun was reported to be $\pm 2 \text{ km.h}^{-1}$, as well as its
137 reliability reported to have an ICC of 0.90, and SEM of 1.48% when used for baseball
138 pitching (11).

139
140 INSERT FIGURE 1 ABOUT HERE

141 INSERT TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE

142 143 *The Yo-Yo IR2*

144 The yo-yo IR2 is a maximal aerobic capacity test that consists of repeated 2 x 20 m shuttle
145 runs that are performed at progressively increasing speeds. These workloads were
146 interspersed with 10 s active rest periods in which the participant was instructed to walk
147 around a cone 5 m away. This recovery period differentiates the yo-yo IR2 from other multi-
148 stage fitness tests, making it more specific to intermittent AF movement patterns (3, 15).
149 Participants were instructed to run in time with the ‘beeps’ that occur at shorter and shorter
150 intervals as the test progresses. The test was terminated when the participant could no longer

151 reach the cone within the 'beep', twice in succession, or voluntarily terminated. Mooney et al.
152 (15) reported the yo-yo IR2 is an ecologically valid indicator of running performance in AF,
153 however, the choice to perform the test twice (and without rest) was taken to induce a
154 cumulative load, assuming to replicate first and second halves of an AF game.

155

156 *Competition Kicking Efficiency*

157 To investigate the relationship between kicking performance under testing conditions and
158 competition, a commercial statistical provider; namely Champion Data© (Champion Data©,
159 Melbourne, Australia), was used to extract the midfield players kicking efficiency. The
160 reliability of the notations reported by Champion Data© in an U18 competition have been
161 shown to be comparable to that of those at the elite senior level (18). Averaged kicking
162 efficiency statistics from five randomly chosen games per participant was acquired. Kicking
163 efficiency was reported as number of *completed* kicks (%), i.e. a kick reaching an intended
164 teammate, who was not dispossessed, or had the kick intercepted by an opposing player.
165 Competition kicking efficiency was reported as the difference in kicking efficiency between
166 the first and fourth quarters of a game.

167

168 *Data Analysis*

169 For each AFK performed, the average accuracy score of the two scorers was reported for
170 each kick (18 kicks total), for each participant. A single ball speed value was reported,
171 corresponding to each individual AFK kick score. The two yo-yo IR2 scores were also
172 recorded for each participant. A single value per participant was reported as the difference in
173 competition kicking efficiency between the first and fourth quarters of five randomly selected
174 games.

175

176 *Statistical Analysis*

177 Descriptive statistics (mean \pm standard deviation) were reported for all criterion variables.
178 Further, the effect size of AFK 'test' (three levels: yo-yo IR2, post 1st yo-yo IR2 and post 2nd
179 yo-yo IR2) on each criterion variable was calculated using Cohen's *d* statistic (7), where an
180 effect size of $d < 0.2$ was considered small, $d = 0.21 - 0.50$ moderate, $d = 0.51 - 0.80$ large,
181 and $d \geq 0.80$ very large (7). The difference in yo-yo IR2 scores and actual game kicking
182 efficiency were reported also, using paired t-tests.

183

184 Two linear mixed models were produced, one for kicking speed and one for kicking
185 accuracy, where these two variables were entered as the dependant (response) variables. For
186 each model, kicking distance (short, medium and long), leg (dominant and non-dominant),
187 and AFK number were entered as factors, while the yo-yo IR2 score and competition kicking
188 efficiency were entered as covariates. Post-hoc pairwise comparisons were performed using a
189 Bonferroni correction, to assess differences across all levels of kick distance (i.e. short to
190 medium, medium to long, and short to long) and AFK. IBM SPSS Statistics for Windows,
191 Version 22.0 (Armonk, NY: IBM Corp.) was used to generate the linear mixed models.
192 Residual tests for normality on each final model was used to ensure the assumption for each
193 model was met. Statistical significance was set at $\alpha < 0.05$.

194

195 **Results**

196 No significant difference in yo-yo IR2 score was observed for the two tests, as well as
197 competition kicking efficiency, with the average score for the first yo-yo IR2 being $20.0 \pm$
198 0.7 , and the second being 19.5 ± 0.7 . Competition kicking efficiency difference between the
199 first and fourth quarters decreased by $9.9 \pm 32.0\%$. However, it is important to highlight the
200 large variation, suggesting that a range of diverse factors may have influenced this variable.

201 Table 2a and 2b show the effect of each yo-yo IR2 test on kicking accuracy and speed for
202 each AFK over the three distances (short, medium and long) and for each leg (dominant and
203 non-dominant). The linear mixed models for kicking speed and accuracy (Tables 3a and 3b)
204 report the differences between these factors.

205

206 INSERT TABLE 2a & 2b ABOUT HERE

207

208 Table 3a shows the linear mixed model for kicking speed, which reported significant ($P <$
209 $.01$) between-level differences for factors; kicking distance, leg, but not for AFK number. For
210 kicking distance, post hoc pairwise comparisons showed significantly ($P < .01$) faster kicking
211 speeds between all three comparisons (i.e. short to medium, medium to long, and short to
212 long). The dominant kicking leg was shown to have produced significantly ($P < .01$) faster
213 kicking speeds, over the non-dominant kicking leg. For the covariates, it was reported that
214 those who attained a higher yo-yo IR2 score (higher aerobic capacity) across the two yo-yo
215 IR2 tests were able to produce significantly ($P < .01$) faster kicking speed. Also, those who
216 had a higher competition kicking efficiency were also shown to produce significantly ($P <$
217 $.01$) faster kicking speeds.

218

219 INSERT TABLE 3A ABOUT HERE

220

221 Table 3b shows the linear mixed model for kicking accuracy, which reported significant
222 between-level differences for factors; kicking distance, leg, and AFK number. For kicking
223 distance, post hoc pairwise comparisons showed a significant ($P < .01$) decrease in kicking
224 accuracy between short to medium and short to long, but not for medium to long kicking
225 distances. Further, a significant ($P < .01$) decrease in kicking accuracy was reported between

226 the first and second AFK, but not for the second and third AFK. The dominant kicking leg
227 was shown to be significantly ($P < .01$) more accurate, over the non-dominant kicking leg. Of
228 the two covariates, neither yo-yo IR2 score nor competition kicking efficiency were
229 significant.

230

231 INSERT TABLE 3B ABOUT HERE

232

233

234 Discussion

235 The aim of this study was to determine the effect of maximal aerobic fitness on kicking
236 performance in elite junior AF, with results linked to actual game-play. Previous laboratory-
237 based investigations have reported that cumulative loading of maximal aerobic capacity
238 modifies the kicking kinematics, kicking accuracy, and number of disposals for AF players
239 (9, 15, 28). Thus, based on this previous work, it was hypothesised that maximal aerobic
240 capacity would impact both kicking performance and competition kicking efficiency. Results
241 partially supported our study hypothesis, with significant associations being resolved between
242 maximal aerobic capacity and kicking speed.

243

244 Score on the yo-yo IR2 did not meaningfully change between each performance. Also, a non-
245 significant reduction of $9.9 \pm 32.0\%$ in competition kicking efficiency was reported between
246 selected competition game's first and fourth quarters. The relatively large standard deviation
247 is comparable with midfielders even at the elite (AFL) level, who often kick to more difficult
248 targets than passing backwards to an unmarked defender (18, 20). The non-significant drop in
249 yo-yo IR2 score was also reported by Mooney et al. (15), who report that elite AF players
250 produce similar exercise capacity ($\text{load}\cdot\text{min}^{-1}$) when in a fatigued state. Despite Young et al.

251 (28) using a single protocol, the repeated protocol used by Coventry et al. (9), produced a
252 small (yet significant) 0.09 s increase in 20 m sprint time, between-fatigue protocols,
253 complementing the results of this study.

254

255 Linear mixed models (kicking speed and kicking accuracy) were used to investigate the effect
256 of maximal aerobic capacity from two yo-yo IR2 tests (cumulative load), specific to AF
257 kicking performance on both the dominant and non-dominant leg. Firstly, the *kicking speed*
258 linear mixed model reported between-level differences for factors, with the dominant kicking
259 leg producing higher ball speeds than the non-dominant leg, and kicking speed reported to
260 increase from both short to medium, and medium to long kicking distance. These results
261 correspond to those reported by Woods et al. (25), who utilised the AFK test to identify
262 talent. Faster kicking speeds on the dominant kicking foot were reported by Woods et al. (25)
263 to be associated with talent identified players. These results are also explained by Ball (1, 2),
264 who reported that the dominant kicking foot produces faster kicking speeds, dependant on
265 required kicking distance.

266

267 Between-level differences in kicking speed were reported for covariates, with those who
268 attained a higher yo-yo IR2 score (presumed aerobically fitter) producing faster kicking
269 speeds. Mohr et al. (14) reported that elite soccer players scored higher on the yo-yo IR2 than
270 sub-elite players, which may have augmented superior technical skill shown during game-
271 play. This is supported by research in AF, where players possessing superior aerobic
272 capabilities have been shown to maintain a higher level of technical skill under a higher acute
273 workload (HIR) (4, 28). Further, AF players with a higher aerobic capacity have been shown
274 to have a greater involvement in a game, where kicking speed may be important when
275 creating scoring opportunities (19, 26). Possibly the most interesting covariate from the linear

276 mixed model, competition kicking efficiency, was reported to be higher for those who had
277 faster kicking speeds. Sullivan et al. (21) reported that effective kicking was higher in
278 quarters which were won. Accordingly, a player who is able to produce greater kicking
279 speeds (coupled with accuracy) may be able to transition the ball to a teammate faster,
280 limiting the capability of the opposition to intercept the kick or fill 'dangerous' space. This
281 can also be linked to maintaining kicking efficiency in the latter stages of a game through a
282 greater aerobic capacity (26). Additionally, Burgess et al. (6) suggested that U18 players who
283 can maintain ball speed and have a higher tolerance to acute cumulative loads are more likely
284 to be talent identified.

285
286 The *kicking accuracy* linear mixed model reported between-level differences for factors, with
287 kicking accuracy reported to decrease with kicking distance, the dominant leg kicking more
288 accurately than the non-dominant leg, and kicking accuracy decreasing with each AFK.
289 Neither of the covariates (yo-yo IR2 score or competition kicking efficiency) were associated
290 with kicking accuracy. Results for the above factors can be explained in a similar way in
291 which they are explained in the *kicking speed* linear mixed model. The use of the AFK by
292 Woods et al. (25) suggested that U18 players had reduced accuracy when kicking to further
293 targets, irrespective of being talent identified or non-talent identified. This is further
294 explained by Ball (2) who reported kicking kinematics are less efficient when kicking to
295 further targets, as well as when kicking on the non-dominant foot; potentially impacting
296 subsequent accuracy. Although score on the yo-yo IR2 score did not directly influence
297 kicking accuracy, a decrease in kicking accuracy was reported between the first and second
298 AFK, but not between the second and third AFK. While speculating, this may indicate that
299 the acute load induced by the initial yo-yo IR2 test influenced the players kicking
300 performance to a greater extent than the second yo-yo IR2 test. As Coutts et al. (8) suggests,

301 player movement demands including HIR and TD decrease after the first quarter, yet
302 technical skill in even sub-elite players is seemingly maintained (4).

303

304 Despite our promising findings, the study is not without limitations. With regards to the
305 ecological validity and application of this study, the reported values for competition kicking
306 efficiency were taken from five random games where the score or final outcome were not
307 reported. Further, although the standard deviation for competition kicking efficiency was
308 high, similar results have been reported at the professional (AFL) level (20). Sullivan et al.
309 (21) reports an increase in player movement patterns (HIR) and physiological demands for
310 games in which the selected team are losing, or eventually go on to lose. Therefore, the linear
311 mixed model for kicking speed that reported players who had a higher competition kicking
312 efficiency were also shown to produce faster kicking speeds, may have had games selected in
313 which the team was winning, and possibly had lower movement patterns and physiological
314 demands. Further, the use of five games does limit the representation of the results, thus,
315 future work may wish to quantify kicking performance throughout the entirety of an AF
316 season. Secondly, although players were recruited from the same elite junior competition,
317 external factors not quantified within this study, such as training history, may have influenced
318 the observed results. Thirdly, although the AFK has been shown to be a discriminately valid
319 test of kicking skill in junior AF (25), it is important to note that the targets were stationary,
320 whereas during game-play, it is likely that targets would be dynamic (i.e., kicking to a
321 teammate running in space). Thus, future work may wish to incorporate dynamic targets
322 when integrating tests of kicking performance in AF to increase the specificity of the results.
323 Lastly, data collection was undertaken in the latter stages of the competition season, so it is
324 possible that yo-yo IR2 score, functional kicking performance, and influence of current
325 playing form influenced results.

326

327 **Conclusions**

328 This study examined the impact of maximal aerobic capacity on kicking performance in elite
329 U18 AF players. Results demonstrated that kicking speed was influenced by the level attained
330 on the Yo-Yo IR2 test, indicating that aerobically fitter players may be better equipped at
331 preserving ball speed relative to their less aerobically proficient counterparts. Coaches may
332 wish to integrate training drills that concurrently target both technical and aerobic
333 proficiencies to maximise a players kicking performance during game-play. Future work may
334 wish to investigate the association between kicking performance and competition
335 performance at the positional level, across a larger sample of game observations.

336

337 **Practical Applications**

338 The fundamental practical application from this work indicates that AF coaches and
339 conditioning staff may wish to integrate training drills that target both the development of
340 maximal aerobic capacity and technical skill (kicking) proficiency. By doing so, kicking
341 performance (namely kicking speed) may be persevered through the concurrent development
342 of a player's maximal aerobic capacity.

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443 exercise on kicking accuracy in elite Australian football players. *J Sci Med Sport* 13:
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Table 1. Scoring criteria for the AFK (25)

Points	Criteria
3	The ball reached the target player on the full and they did not have to leave the target circle to receive possession
2	The ball reached the target player on the full; however, they were required to place one foot outside of the target circle to receive possession
1	The ball reached the target player on the full, but they had to place both feet outside of the target circle to receive possession
0	The target player did not receive possession of the ball on the full

ACCEPTED

Table 2a. Descriptive statistics for kicking speed ($\bar{x} \pm SD$, and between-AFK effect sizes)

		AFK ¹	AFK ²	ES ¹	AFK ³	ES ²	ES ³
Short	Dom	56.0 ± 7.6	56.0 ± 8.2	0.00	54.9 ± 7.5	0.14	0.15
	Non Dom	52.2 ± 10.2	49.2 ± 6.3	0.36	47.5 ± 11.1	0.19	0.44
Medium	Dom	63.8 ± 8.4	66.7 ± 7.0	-0.38	62.6 ± 8.8	0.52	0.14
	Non Dom	56.3 ± 8.5	57.9 ± 9.2	-0.18	55.6 ± 9.7	0.24	0.08
Long	Dom	68.5 ± 6.2	71.1 ± 4.7	-0.47	70.1 ± 4.7	0.21	-0.29
	Non Dom	61.8 ± 8.8	66.5 ± 8.5	-0.54	62.3 ± 10.4	0.44	-0.05

Speed – m.s⁻¹, ES¹ – between AFK^{1&2} effect size, ES² – between AFK^{2&3}, ES³ – between AFK^{1&3}

Table 2b. Descriptive statistics for kicking accuracy ($\bar{x} \pm SD$, and between-AFK effect sizes)

		AFK ¹	AFK ²	ES ¹	AFK ³	ES ²	ES ³
Short	Dom	2.5 ± 0.9	2.1 ± 1.2	0.38	2.3 ± 1.2	-0.17	0.19
	Non Dom	1.8 ± 1.3	1.6 ± 1.1	0.17	1.3 ± 1.3	0.25	0.38
Medium	Dom	2.1 ± 1.1	2.1 ± 1.0	0.00	2.0 ± 1.2	0.09	0.09
	Non Dom	1.6 ± 1.3	1.7 ± 1.2	-0.08	1.2 ± 1.3	0.40	0.31
Long	Dom	1.8 ± 1.2	2.0 ± 1.1	-0.17	1.2 ± 1.2	0.69	0.50
	Non Dom	1.0 ± 1.1	1.3 ± 1.2	-0.26	0.9 ± 1.2	0.33	0.09

Accuracy – points, ES¹ – between AFK^{1&2} effect size, ES² – between AFK^{2&3}, ES³ – between AFK^{1&3}

Table 3a. Linear mixed model for kicking speed

Variable	Estimate	SE	95% Lower-Upper CI	P value
¹ YYIRT2 score	0.046	0.554	2.153 – 4.331	.000*
¹ Comp kicking efficiency	3.242	0.121	0.023 – 0.070	.000*
² Leg				
Dominant	6.704 ^a	0.764 ^a	5.202 – 8.206	.000 ^{a*}
Non dominant				
² Kick distance				
Short [^]	-15.609 ^a	0.972 ^a	-17.520 – -13.699	.000 ^{a*}
Medium [^]	-7.755 ^a	0.972 ^a	-9.666 – -5.844	.000 ^{a*}
Long [^]				
² AFK				
Pre YYIRT2	-0.924 ^a	0.934 ^a	-2.763 – 0.916	.324 ^a
Post 1 st YYIRT2	1.472 ^a	0.934 ^a	-0.367 – 3.312	.116 ^a
Post 2 nd YYIRT2				

¹ covariate, ² factor, [^] pairwise between-test difference, ^a between-test estimate, error or significance, CI – confidence interval, *sig to < .01 level

Table 3b. Linear mixed model for kicking accuracy

Variable	Estimate	SE	95% Lower-Upper CI	P value
¹ YYIRT2 score	0.001	0.082	-0.160 – 0.163	0.989
¹ Comp kicking efficiency	0.002	0.002	-0.001 – 0.006	0.190
² Leg				
Dominant	0.644 ^a	0.114 ^a	0.420 – 0.867	0.000 ^{a*}
Non dominant				
² Kick distance				
Short [^]	-0.576 ^a	0.145 ^a	0.291 – 0.860	0.000 ^{a*}
Medium	-0.423 ^a	0.145 ^a	0.139 – 0.707	0.004 ^{a*}
Long [^]				
² AFK				
Pre YYIRT2	-0.326 ^a	0.139 ^a	-0.600 – 0.005	0.020 ^{a*}
Post 1 st YYIRT2 [^]	-0.278 ^a	0.139 ^a	-0.302 – 0.246	0.842 ^a
Post 2 nd YYIRT2				

¹ covariate, ² factor, [^] pairwise between-test difference, ^a between-test estimate, error or significance, CI – confidence interval, *sig to < .01 level

