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Journal article

**The distribution of match activities relative to the maximal mean intensities in professional rugby league and Australian football**

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1 **Title:** The distribution of match activities relative to the maximal mean intensities in  
2 professional rugby league and Australian football

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28 **ABSTRACT**

29 This study determined the distribution of distance, impulse and accelerometer load  
30 accumulated at intensities relative to the maximal mean 1-minute peak intensity within  
31 professional rugby league and Australian football. Within 26 rugby league (n = 24 athletes)  
32 and 18 Australian football (n = 38 athletes) games, athletes wore GNSS devices (n = 608 match  
33 files). One-minute maximal mean values were calculated for each athlete per game for speed  
34 ( $\text{m}\cdot\text{min}^{-1}$ ), accelerometer load ( $\text{AU}\cdot\text{min}^{-1}$ ), and acceleration ( $\text{m}\cdot\text{s}^{-2}$ ). Volumes for each  
35 parameter were calculated by multiplying by time, specifying total distance, accelerometer load  
36 and impulse. The distribution of intensity of which these variables were performed relative to  
37 the maximal mean was calculated, with percentages ranging from zero to 110%, separated into  
38 10% thresholds. Linear mixed models determined if the distribution of activities within each  
39 threshold varied, and positional differences. Effects were described using standardized effect  
40 sizes (ES), and magnitude-based decisions. Across both sports, the distribution of activity (%)  
41 largely reduced the closer to the maximal mean 1-minute peak and was highest at ~60% of the  
42 maximal mean peak. When compared to Australian football, a higher percentage of total  
43 distance was accumulated at higher intensities (70-80% and 100-110%) for rugby league (ES  
44 range = 0.82 to 0.87), with similar, yet larger differences for accelerometer load >80% (0.78 to  
45 1.07) and impulse >60% (1.00 to 2.26). These findings provide information of the volume of  
46 activities performed relative to the mean maximal 1-minute peak period, which may assist in  
47 the prescription of training.

48 Key Words: Team sports; match activities; moving average; physical; acceleration

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53 **INTRODUCTION**

54 Team sports are typically invasion games that are characterized by periods of high-intensity  
55 activity, interspersed with periods of low-intensity activity (23, 24). The high-intensity  
56 activities performed are wide-ranging, including short sprint efforts, rapid changes of direction,  
57 high speed running, and also, in some sports, physical contact (14, 24, 34). The ability for  
58 practitioners to understand the activities of match-play is vital in implementing specific training  
59 interventions. With the advancement of tracking technology there has been a large growth in  
60 research targeted at assessing the physical demands of team sports. Typically, research has  
61 investigated the total volume (distance covered) and average intensity (speed; metres per  
62 minute) of match-play (1, 24), providing an insight into the global demands of competition (16,  
63 18), although doing little to help guide the prescription of training intensity. Furthermore,  
64 assessing average speed over the duration of a game in intermittent sports may not be useful,  
65 as this does not provide information regarding intense passages of play, potentially resulting in  
66 athletes not being adequately exposed to competition intensity where planned.

67

68 An understanding of the high the high-intensity periods of team sport competition is important  
69 to allow for appropriate training intensities during technical-tactical drills to be prescribed. As  
70 such, research has partitioned games into fixed 3 to 5 min discrete periods from the start of the  
71 match (e.g. 1 to 3 min, 4 to 6 min etc.) (3, 20, 28). Whilst useful at identifying fluctuations in  
72 intensity, this method has been shown to underestimate the peak intensity of competition when  
73 compared to a moving average by as much as 20-25% (6, 31). Unlike fixed periods, a moving  
74 average involves calculating the mean of a variable over a subset period (i.e. 1-minute), then  
75 forward shifting this subset over the dataset, one datapoint at a time. The maximal value of the  
76 means is then established. This method has been used extensively across a range of team sports

77 (8, 10-12, 34), for a range of variables (speed, acceleration, and accelerometer load [the vector  
78 magnitude of triaxial accelerations]). Regardless of the variable assessed, a consistent finding  
79 of these studies is a decline in intensity as the duration of the moving average increases.  
80 Practically, this information permits the prescription of match specific intensities over a range  
81 of drill durations; allowing players to be exposed to maximal mean competition intensities.  
82 Within team sports, prescribing drills that aim to expose athletes to competition intensities is  
83 common practice, however little research has examined how this prescription should be  
84 periodized.

85

86 Although speed ( $\text{m}\cdot\text{min}^{-1}$ ) and high-speed distance (distance covered above a pre-defined  
87 threshold [i.e.  $>5.5 \text{ m}\cdot\text{s}^{-1}$ ]) are important to measure, due to the intermittent nature of team  
88 sports, players are rarely afforded the opportunity to cover large distances at a constant velocity  
89 (23, 24). For example, in Australian Football, the maximal mean 1-minute speed is  
90  $\sim 220 \text{ m}\cdot\text{min}^{-1}$ , equating to  $\sim 3.6 \text{ m}\cdot\text{s}^{-1}$ , which in most cases would still be considered low-speed  
91 activity. As such, measures of speed are likely to underestimate the true demands of  
92 competition and the constant changes in speed emphasize that acceleration is an important  
93 physical attribute of team sports (7). An effective method to quantify acceleration is the mean  
94 rectified acceleration for a given duration which represents the mean absolute change in speed  
95 over a given period (7). This method of quantifying changes in speed has been demonstrated  
96 as more reliable (7, 30) than using traditional counts of accelerations and decelerations within  
97 pre-defined thresholds (i.e.  $>2 \text{ m}\cdot\text{s}^{-2}$ ). Further, due to differing filtering processes, there are  
98 large inconsistencies in acceleration counts between manufacturers when monitoring the same  
99 activity (7, 30). Practically, examining the global acceleration intensity of team sports is useful  
100 as opposed to potentially sporadic high-intensity efforts, as this measure can be used to  
101 prescribe drills (7). Previous work has established the maximal mean rectified acceleration

102 demands of match-play using the moving average method (8, 10). Evidently, there are regular  
103 changes of velocity that occur during team sport competition, which are not captured by simply  
104 measuring average speed or distance covered. Therefore, more information is required  
105 regarding these demands so that practitioners can prescribe appropriate drills that reflect the  
106 changes of pace that occur during competition.

107

108 Information regarding the maximal mean speed, accelerometer load and acceleration during  
109 competition is important, and can provide practitioners with relevant information for the  
110 prescription of the appropriate intensity of training drills. However, it must be noted that the  
111 ‘peak’ only occurs once throughout a game, thus not reflecting the overall demands of  
112 competition, specifically regarding the volume completed at, or close to this ‘peak’ intensity.  
113 Indeed, when the maximal mean demands of professional and semi-professional rugby league  
114 competition are assessed, there is little difference between standards (25). Whilst we can use  
115 maximal mean intensities to guide the prescription of training intensity, the training volume  
116 that should be performed at these intensities is unknown. Such information would assist in  
117 prescribing training drills (i.e. small-sided games [SSGs]) which potentially aim to expose  
118 athletes to competition intensities. For example, if an athlete only spends 1-minute of a game  
119 close to their maximal mean competition intensity, prescribing SSGs that expose athletes to  
120 this intensity for 10 minutes may be excessive, and not within the principles of training  
121 periodization. Further to this, despite some preliminary work showing greater running  
122 intensities in AFL compared with rugby league (33), it is unclear as to which variables derived  
123 from microtechnology devices best encapsulate the high-intensity activities performed in a  
124 sport. Given the free-flowing nature of AFL, compared to the stop-start, contact dominant  
125 activities performed in rugby league, there are likely differences between sports that  
126 practitioners working within these sports may need to be mindful of. As such, the aim of this

127 study was to determine the distribution of the maximal mean 1-minute speed, accelerometer  
128 load and acceleration across both professional rugby league and Australian football  
129 competition.

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131

## 132 **METHODS**

### 133 **Experimental Approach to the Problem**

134 Physical activity profiles were measured during professional National rugby league (NRL)  
135 matches and professional Australian Football League (AFL) matches across the 2018 and 2019  
136 seasons using microtechnology devices. The maximal mean speed, accelerometer load and  
137 acceleration for a 1-minute period was established for each player across every match file.  
138 Subsequently, the positional mean of the maximal mean 1-minute speed, accelerometer load  
139 and acceleration were calculated. These maximal mean 1-minute periods were then used as the  
140 reference value in order to determine the distribution of relative intensity across the entire game  
141 for all other rolling 1-minute periods.

142

### 143 ***Subjects***

144 Twenty-four rugby league (age =  $25.4 \pm 4.1$  years; stature =  $187.4 \pm 6.4$  cm; body mass =  $100.4$   
145  $\pm 9.8$  kg) and 38 Australian football (age =  $24.0 \pm 3.5$  years; stature =  $187.2 \pm 6.2$  cm; body  
146 mass =  $84.4 \pm 6.5$  kg) athletes took part in this study from two clubs playing in the NRL and  
147 AFL competitions, respectively. Prior to the commencement of the study, ethical approval was  
148 sought (2018-290E). All data were collected as part of the routine monitoring processes of the

149 club with players providing written consent for their data to be used for research purposes. Data  
150 were deidentified prior to analysis.

151

## 152 *Design*

153 Microtechnology devices were used to measure the physical activity profiles of players during  
154 26 NRL (10 losses, 16 wins; n = 351 match files) and 12 AFL matches (15 losses, 3 wins; n =  
155 367 match files). The NRL club used StatSports Apex units (StatSports, Newry, Northern  
156 Ireland), and the AFL club used Optimeye S5 units (Catapult Sports, VIC, Australia). These  
157 units have shown acceptable validity and reliability for measuring activities common to team  
158 sports (2, 30) and rugby league (21, 32). The microtechnology units used in this study (different  
159 manufacturers) comprized a 10 Hz multi-global navigation satellite system (GNSS) chip, a 100  
160 Hz triaxial accelerometer, 100 Hz gyroscope and 10 Hz magnetometer. The same device was  
161 worn by each player, as to minimize interunit variability (5). The use of two separate GNSS  
162 devices is not deemed as a limitation in this study, as comparisons were made between sports  
163 after data was normalized, expressed as a percentage relative to individual maximal mean  
164 values.

165

166 Prior to the start of each match, the units were switched on approximately 20-min prior to the  
167 warm-up and fitted into a padded compartment sewn into the playing jersey. Jerseys were tight  
168 fitting, in order to minimize measurement noise, particularly accelerometer load (29). The  
169 quality of the data was determined by recording the horizontal dilution of position (HDOP),  
170 and the number of satellites; any files with a HDOP >1.5 were removed from the analysis.  
171 Subsequently, 0 AFL files, and 15 NRL files were removed. For AFL games, there was an



172 average HDOP of  $0.69 \pm 0.09$  and  $10.5 \pm 0.65$  satellites. For NRL games, there was an average  
173 HDOP of  $0.76 \pm 0.25$  and  $17.7 \pm 1.90$  satellites.

174

175 Following each match, the data files were downloaded using the manufacturer provided  
176 software and trimmed to only include match time before being exported in their rawest form  
177 into a comma delimited file (csv), with each row representing a GNSS data point for each  
178 athlete. Once exported, moving averages were calculated over a 1-minute for speed ( $\text{m}\cdot\text{min}^{-1}$ ),  
179 accelerometer load per minute ( $\text{AU}\cdot\text{min}^{-1}$ ), and acceleration ( $\text{m}\cdot\text{s}^{-2}$ ) in RStudio (Version  
180 1.1.383, RStudio, Boston, MA). The GNSS variables (speed and acceleration) sampled at 10  
181 Hz, therefore a 1-minute moving average included 600 data points, while for 100 Hz  
182 accelerometer load, the 1-minute moving average included 6000 data points. Subsequently, the  
183 maximal mean value was extracted for each athlete for each match file, and position specific  
184 (rugby league: forwards and backs; AFL: midfielder, small defender, small forward, ruck, tall  
185 back, and tall forward) averages for the maximal mean 1-minute period was used as the  
186 reference value to determine the relative intensity of all other rolling 1-minute periods. The  
187 reference values used are shown in Table 1.

188

189 Using the three variables calculated (speed, accelerometer load and acceleration), the total  
190 distance, accelerometer load and impulse accumulated over the duration of the match was  
191 established for each file. Subsequently, the distribution of these variables accumulated in 10%  
192 buckets (i.e., 110-100%, 100-90%, all the way to 0) was determined. As speed was provided  
193 in the manufacturer supplied export, the accumulated distance within each bucket was  
194 calculated. For example, using the rugby league dataset, the peak 1-minute speed was 171  
195  $\text{m}\cdot\text{min}^{-1}$  or forwards, therefore the 90-100% threshold corresponded to speed ranging from 154

196 to 171 m·min<sup>-1</sup>. As such, the distance accumulated between 154 to 171 m·min<sup>-1</sup> was  
197 established.

198

199 Accelerometer load is a vector magnitude of the sum of triaxial accelerations taken from the  
200 100 Hz accelerometers embedded within the microtechnology devices. This is termed *Total*  
201 *Loading* in the Apex software, the formula is protected by a non-disclosure statement, so it  
202 cannot be presented in the paper. For the AFL games, within the manufacturer software, this  
203 variable is termed *PlayerLoad*<sup>TM</sup>, where a similar manufacturer provided formula was used  
204 compared to that within the Apex software (4). Due to the differing terminology between  
205 manufacturers of this variable, within the present study, the terminology ‘accelerometer load’  
206 was used. Additionally, GNSS derived acceleration and deceleration were calculated as the  
207 absolute rate of change of velocity (m·s<sup>-2</sup>). Acceleration was converted to a load measure,  
208 impulse, and the impulse accumulated at different percentages of the mean maximal  
209 acceleration was established by multiplying the corresponding acceleration by each individual  
210 athletes’ body mass, and then multiplying this by the 0.1 seconds (sampling rate of the GNSS  
211 unit). The sum of impulse accumulated within each percentage of the maximal mean  
212 acceleration was then established to reflect the volume of acceleration/deceleration performed  
213 at different intensities. Subsequently, as explained above, the distribution of these variables  
214 (distance, accelerometer load and impulse) accumulated in 10% buckets (i.e., 110-100%, 100-  
215 90%, all the way to 0) was determined and normalized the variables, allowing for comparisons  
216 between variables to be made.

217

218 ***Statistical Analysis***

219 To determine the difference in the percentage distance, accelerometer load and impulse  
220 accumulated at relative intensities linear mixed models were used. Separate models were built  
221 for each sport with match number and athlete identification number used as random effects,  
222 and variable (distance, accelerometer load and impulse) as fixed effects. Resulting SDs and  
223 mean differences were then assessed to establish standardized effect sizes (ES) and 90%  
224 confidence intervals (CI). Standardized effect sizes were described using the magnitudes;  
225 <0.20 trivial; 0.21 – 0.60 small; 0.61 – 1.20 moderate; 1.21 – 2.0 large and > 2.01 very large  
226 (19). Effects were deemed to be real if they were 75% greater than the smallest worthwhile  
227 difference (calculated as 0.6 x the between-athlete SD). A moderate worthwhile difference was  
228 deemed appropriate in the analysis of these data, due to the inherent variability of GNSS  
229 measured variables (i.e. speed) of team sport activity. For example, the SD of maximal mean  
230 running speeds over 5 minutes has previously been reported to be  $\sim 12 \text{ m}\cdot\text{min}^{-1}$  in elite rugby  
231 league (9). When multiplied by 0.2 (small effect), this results in the smallest worthwhile  
232 difference being  $2.4 \text{ m}\cdot\text{min}^{-1}$  or  $0.04 \text{ m}\cdot\text{s}^{-1}$ , a value similar to the error previously reported when  
233 quantifying the mean speed assessed from GNSS devices in comparison to a criterion (VICON)  
234 system (13). All statistical analysis was performed in R Studio software (version 1.0.143,  
235 RStudio Inc.)

236

237 **RESULTS**

238 The mean maximal 1-minute values by position for both Australian football and rugby league  
239 used for the analysis are shown in Table 1. The percentage distribution of distance,  
240 accelerometer load and impulse relative to the maximal mean 1-minute peak intensity for

241 Australian football and rugby league are shown in Figure 1 A and B, respectively. The raw  
242 values for the activity performed in each zone are shown in Table 2 for both sports.

243 \*\*\* Insert Table 1 near here\*\*\*

244 \*\*\* Insert Figure 1 near here\*\*\*

245 \*\*\* Insert Table 2 near here\*\*\*

246

#### 247 *Within Sport Comparison*

248 Differences between distance, accelerometer load and impulse within each zone are shown in  
249 Figure 2. In Australian football, there were no substantial differences between the proportion  
250 of accelerometer load and distance accumulated in each zone other than at 20-30% in favour  
251 of accelerometer load (Figure 2A). There was however a trend for a greater proportion of  
252 distance over 50-80% zones, and a greater proportion of accelerometer load at 100-110%, with  
253 *small to moderate* differences. In rugby league however, there was a substantially greater  
254 proportion of distance compared to accelerometer load from 50-80%, with *moderate to large*  
255 differences; these differences decreased as intensity increased. At very high intensities, there  
256 was a trend for greater accelerometer load compared to distance, 90-100% (ES = 0.34 [0.22-  
257 0.45] and 100-110%; ES = 0.34 [0.23-0.45]), although these were unsubstantial.

258

259 \*\*\*Insert Figure 2 near here\*\*\*

260

261 As shown in Figure 2B, Australian footballers performed a lower proportion of impulse  
262 compared to distance at intensities between 60-100% of the maximal mean 1-minute period

263 (ES range = 1.19 to 0.50). This difference decreased as intensity increased, with no difference  
264 at 110%. In rugby league however, above 70% of the maximal mean 1-minute period, athletes  
265 accumulated a greater proportion of impulse compared with distance (*moderate to small*), with  
266 the greatest difference occurring at 80-90% (ES = 0.83 [0.56-1.12]).

267

268 In Australian football, there was a greater proportion of accelerometer load compared with  
269 impulse (ES range = 0.29 to 0.43) for intensities above 80% of the maximal mean 1-minute  
270 period (Figure 2C). However, in rugby league, there was a greater (*large to small*) proportion  
271 of impulse compared to accelerometer load across 60-100%, of peak 1-minute (ES range =  
272 0.35 to 1.27); this difference decreased as the intensity increased.

273

#### 274 *Between Sport Comparison*

275 For distance, when compared to Australian football, the intensity distribution distance was  
276 substantially higher for rugby league between 60-70% (ES = 0.82 [0.52-1.11]) and 100-110%  
277 (ES = 0.87 [0.58-1.16]). For accelerometer load, the relative intensity was substantially higher  
278 for Australian football compared to rugby league between 80-110% (ES range = 0.78 to 1.07).  
279 Impulse was higher for rugby league between 60-110% (ES range = 1.00 to 2.26), whereas for  
280 lower intensities (0-60%), impulse was higher for Australian football compared to rugby league  
281 (ES range = 0.70 to 2.15).

282

## 283 **DISCUSSION**

284 The purpose of this study was to determine the distribution of distance, accelerometer load and  
285 impulse accumulated relative to the maximal mean 1-minute period during professional rugby

286 league and Australian football competition. A primary finding of this study within both rugby  
287 league and Australian football was that the distribution of activity (%) largely reduced the  
288 closer to the maximal mean 1-minute peak, however the highest distribution for both sports  
289 was at approximately 60% of the maximal mean. There were different distributions of activity  
290 between sports, with Australian football having a greater proportion of distance and  
291 accelerometer load accumulated closer to the 1-minute peak period compared to impulse.  
292 Whereas in rugby league, there was less distance and more impulse and accelerometer load  
293 accumulated closer to the peak 1-minute period. This information develops our understanding  
294 of the volume of activities performed relative to the mean maximal 1-minute peak period,  
295 which may be useful in the prescription of skill-based training.

296

297 Previous research has assessed the mean maximal periods during Australian football (10, 27)  
298 and rugby league (8, 15, 34). Whilst this information has been vital in understanding the most  
299 intense periods of team sport competition (35), they only provide information on the peak,  
300 which happens once a game. The lack of information on the volume of work performed at these  
301 intensities causes difficulties for practitioners in implementing periodized programs that  
302 expose athletes to the demands of competition. The results in this study demonstrate the volume  
303 and proportion of activity in relation to the mean maximal 1-minute period as depicted in Figure  
304 1 and Table 1. A primary finding of this research was that in Australian football, players  
305 perform accumulated 13% of total distance, 7% of total impulse, and 11% of the total  
306 accelerometer load above 70% of the mean maximal 1-minute period. In rugby league, 17% of  
307 total distance, 23% of total impulse, and 16% of total accelerometer load were accumulated  
308 above 70%. Interestingly, as depicted in Figure 1, the distribution of activity across each  
309 threshold followed a normal distribution (i.e. a bell curve) with the volume of activity being  
310 the greatest at ~60% of the maximum mean 1-minute peak, falling thereafter. Together, these

311 data may be used by practitioners to more precisely prescribe skill-based training drills, where  
312 the volumes at specific intensities can be prescribed, rather than simply using the maximal  
313 mean 1-minute value as a guide.

314

315 As depicted in Figure 1 and Table 1, within Australian football, a greater proportion of distance  
316 was accumulated at higher intensities compared to impulse and accelerometer load, although  
317 not at intensities above the mean maximal 1-minute period. However, in rugby league, at higher  
318 intensities, athletes had a greater proportion of impulse, and even higher accelerometer load.  
319 These differences are likely a reflection of the distinct movement patterns of the two sports.  
320 Further, Australian football is played over a longer period, with approximately 100 minutes  
321 playing time, and on a larger playing area compared with rugby league (23, 24). Therefore,  
322 players have more opportunity to accumulate large distances, with the most intense periods of  
323 play occurring during expansive passages of play. In rugby league on the other hand, there are  
324 fewer opportunities to cover large distances, and the most intense periods of match-play  
325 typically occur when defending the goal-line (17). Given that goal-line defence could occur for  
326 prolonged periods of play (e.g. repeated defensive sets) unlike open running, it is unsurprising  
327 that players accumulate a larger proportion of accelerometer load and impulse at higher  
328 intensities. Indeed, previous research has shown that accelerometer loading is sensitive to  
329 changes of direction and non-running activities such as contact (21, 22, 26). Based on this  
330 information, distance is likely to be a better metric to quantify the high-intensity passages of  
331 play in Australian football other than for very high-intensity periods of play (e.g. 100-110% of  
332 maximal mean 1-minute), where there is a greater proportion of accelerometer load, but these  
333 periods are likely to be less than 1-minute in duration. In rugby league however, periods of  
334 accumulating large distances are rare, and therefore accelerometer load or impulse are likely  
335 to be more reflective of the most intense periods of competition.

336

337 When comparing the proportion of impulse compared to accelerometer load accumulated at  
338 intensities above 50% of the mean maximal 1-minute period, there was a difference between  
339 sports as depicted in Figure 2. Australian football match-play was characterized by a greater  
340 proportion of accelerometer load compared to impulse at high intensities of match-play  
341 ( $\geq 70\%$ ). This was the opposite in rugby league, where impulse was greater than accelerometer  
342 load at high intensities, although the difference was reduced as the intensity increased. The  
343 reason for this is likely due to the activity patterns of the sports. Rugby league is an onside  
344 sport, with the 10-m rule and tackle contest producing large changes of velocity, largely in the  
345 sagittal plane, whereas the offside nature of Australian football likely produces more  
346 directional changes (i.e.  $360^\circ$ ) which are related to the accelerometer derived loading metrics  
347 that are available from the proprietary software of wearable devices. As such, impulse in rugby  
348 league and accelerometer load in Australian football may be useful metrics to monitor high-  
349 intensity activity.

350

351 Overall the results of this study demonstrate that the highest volume of activity is performed at  
352  $\sim 60\%$  of the maximal mean 1-minute period of match-play, following a normal distribution  
353 trend. In Australian football, there is a greater proportion of distance covered at, or close to the  
354 maximal mean 1-minute period although greater accelerometer load above 100%. In rugby  
355 league however, there is a greater proportion of impulse as the intensity of match-play increases  
356 in comparison to accelerometer load and distance. This information can be used to guide  
357 training practices, particularly in regards the type and volume of activity that is performed close  
358 to the maximal mean 1-minute period. There are some limitations with the rolling average  
359 method utilized in this study and elsewhere in that data points in the first and last minute of



360 each half will be underrepresented in all the moving average periods. Whilst this only  
361 represents a small sample of the overall game, there may be some information that is missed  
362 using this approach. It is also important to note that the match intensities reported in this study  
363 are unlikely to be of sufficient intensity to induce significant training adaptations from a  
364 physiological standpoint. As such, these data should be used to prescribe training intensity for  
365 skill-based drills rather than generic conditioning drills that do not involve any technical and  
366 tactical components.

367

## 368 **PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS**

- 369 • In rugby league, above 70% of the maximal mean 1-minute peak, there is 17% of  
370 distance, 23% of impulse, and 16% of accelerometer load accumulated, therefore  
371 training drills should reflect this distribution.
- 372 • In Australian football above 70% of the maximal mean 1-minute peak, there is 13% of  
373 distance, 7% of impulse, and 11% of accelerometer load accumulated. As such, training  
374 drills should reflect this distribution.
- 375 • For rugby league, high-intensity drills with a focus on change of velocity should be  
376 more frequent than high-speed drills.
- 377 • In Australian football, high-intensity periods of distance are the most frequent, other  
378 than above the maximal mean 1-min period, where accelerometer load dominates.

379

380

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385

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**Table 1.** The maximal mean 1-minute period values used for the analysis from professional Australian football and rugby league matches. Data are expressed as mean and standard deviation.

<b>Intensity zone</b>	<b>Speed (m·s<sup>-1</sup>)</b>	<b>Acceleration (m·s<sup>-2</sup>)</b>	<b>Accelerometer load (AU·min<sup>-1</sup>)</b>
<i>Australian football</i>			
Midfielder	234 ± 13	0.81 ± 0.06	26.3 ± 3.8
Small defender	228 ± 15	0.81 ± 0.07	23.1 ± 2.3
Small forward	247 ± 16	0.81 ± 0.06	26.8 ± 3.0
Ruck	208 ± 15	0.69 ± 0.04	20.1 ± 1.0
Tall back	221 ± 19	0.80 ± 0.08	23.5 ± 1.2
Tall forward	240 ± 13	0.76 ± 0.05	25.5 ± 4.8
<i>Rugby league</i>			
Forward	175 ± 34	0.92 ± 0.10	3.3 ± 0.6
Back	173 ± 38	0.87 ± 0.11	3.5 ± 0.6

AU = arbitrary units.

**Table 2.** Distance, impulse and accelerometer load accumulated in each zone relative to the maximal mean 1-minute period during professional Australian football and rugby league matches. Data are expressed as mean and standard deviation.

Intensity zone	Australian football			Rugby league		
	Distance (m)	Impulse (kN.s)	Accelerometer load (AU)	Distance (m)	Impulse (kN.s)	Accelerometer load (AU)
0-10%	140.3 ± 46.7	4.3 ± 1.3	0 ± 0	52.1 ± 32.5	1.9 ± 1.7	2.9 ± 1.4
10-20%	337.6 ± 96.1	10.5 ± 2.5	76.2 ± 50.6	157.2 ± 59	11.4 ± 3.3	6.4 ± 2.4
20-30%	1109.2 ± 262.6	23.4 ± 7.7	171 ± 95.5	428 ± 144.5	12.4 ± 4	11 ± 4.3
30-40%	2204.9 ± 436.2	48.2 ± 13.9	262.7 ± 99.6	768.8 ± 243	20 ± 6.9	15.9 ± 5.6
40-50%	3089.2 ± 508.6	72.4 ± 13.5	287.4 ± 70.2	1185.2 ± 357.1	31.6 ± 9.5	19.2 ± 5.9
50-60%	3236.8 ± 492.2	70.7 ± 15.7	275 ± 99	1550.8 ± 442.2	39 ± 10.7	19.1 ± 6
60-70%	2564.8 ± 525.7	42.4 ± 17.1	212.5 ± 102.1	1383.1 ± 453.5	38.2 ± 12.6	15.4 ± 6.3
70-80%	1334.3 ± 490.8	15.7 ± 10.5	110.5 ± 78.8	798.2 ± 361.5	27.7 ± 12	9.7 ± 5.8
80-90%	414.6 ± 248.9	4 ± 4.2	34.2 ± 36.1	276.9 ± 179	13.8 ± 8.4	5.1 ± 4.2
90-100%	72.8 ± 88.5	0.7 ± 1.2	6.8 ± 10.6	65 ± 67.5	4.6 ± 4	2.1 ± 2.4
100-110%	0.0 ± 0.5	0 ± 0	0 ± 0.2	28.6 ± 65.4	0.9 ± 1.2	0.9 ± 1.6
<b>Match total</b>	14505 ± 1483	292 ± 33	1436 ± 199	6694 ± 1589	202 ± 47	108 ± 25

AU = arbitrary units. kN.s = kiloNewton seconds.

