

Stamina Training for Modern Soccer



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The average distance covered by a soccer player during a game is about 11 to 13 kilometers (6.8 to 8.07 miles). This is broken up into a variety of intervals of work and rest. This distance varies in relationship to the position played. No player in the world runs continually for this distance, at whatever pace.

Soccer is broken down into many different intensities, and duration of work/rest. No player at whatever level they play at can sprint forever. But the ability to develop aerobic power will affect the percentage of maximum speed that can be repeated. A good aerobic power is the key to sprints in terms of quantity (how many times you can sprint in a game) and quality (without slowing down).

The intervals can be simplified into basic categories.

- **Walk.** (Forwards and backwards).
- **Jog.** (Forwards, backwards and sideways).
- **Intense run.** (Forwards, backwards and sideways).
- **Maximum sprint.** (Forwards, backwards and sideways).

The percentage of work dependent on position is as follows.

DEFENDERS.

- Walk. 36%.
- Jog. 41%.
- Intense run. 17%.
- Sprint (max) 6%.

MIDFIELD.

- Walk. 31%.
- Jog. 38%.
- Intense run. 20%.
- Sprint. 11%.

FORWARDS.

- Walk. 29%.
- Jog. 35%.
- Intense run. 23%.
- Sprint. 13%.

Obviously all of these distances are the mean average for these positions, and every team will have players who supersede these levels.

Many coaches and teachers, define soccer as repeated sprints, high tempo all out effort. Which in a sense is a wrong interpretation considering that players spend a lot of time walking or jogging, as well as the all out sprints or movements.

Another consideration to take into account is that during any of the above work intervals or phases, a secondary action might take place.

1. Jumping for a ball (header or other challenge).
2. Tackling on the floor, air, or a mixture of both.
3. Physically holding an opponent or opponents off, whilst running or jogging or controlling the ball.
4. A combination of any or all of the above!

Work rate is affected by a player's level of fatigue, which is a direct consequence of the individual level of fitness. The biggest advantage of being fit is being able to sustain the same or higher intensities for longer periods of time, without experiencing any drop off in performance.

Significance for the soccer player:

- Poor aerobic fitness reduces your muscle strength.
- It impairs your coordination and reflexes.
- It makes it more difficult to concentrate and focus.

All of the above must be understood, in order to design a stamina program for the soccer player. One that is soccer specific not based on myths, tradition, hearsay or old wives tales. Based on the actual demands of the game, with its random variables, and nuances.

To use all of the above information and statistics in an intelligent way, to improve each player regardless of his current playing level, is the coach's directive.

Soccer is also played with time restrictions (90 minutes, split into two 45 minute segments), therefore the template is in place, and all that has to be done is to fill in the details.