

Effects of situational variables on the physical activity profiles of elite soccer players in  
different score line states.

Athalie J. Redwood-Brown<sup>1</sup>, Peter G. O'Donoghue<sup>2</sup>, Alan M. Nevill<sup>3</sup> Chris Seward<sup>1</sup> Nicholas  
Dyer<sup>4</sup> and Caroline Sunderland<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Sport, Health and Performance Enhancement Research Centre, Department of Sports  
Science, Nottingham Trent University, UK. <sup>2</sup>Cardiff Metropolitan University, UK,  
<sup>3</sup>Wolverhampton University, UK, <sup>4</sup>Teqnick Ltd, UK,

Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to  
[Athalie.Redwoodbrown@ntu.ac.uk](mailto:Athalie.Redwoodbrown@ntu.ac.uk)

## **ABSTRACT**

The aims of this study were to investigate the effects of playing position, pitch location, team ability and opposition ability on the physical activity profiles of English premier league soccer players in difference score line states. A validated automatic tracking system (Venatrack Ltd.) was used to track players in real time (at 25Hz) for total distance covered, high speed running distance and sprint distance. This is the first study to include every team from an entire season in the English premier league, resulting in 376 games, 570 players and 35'000 rows of data from the 2011-12 season being analysed using multi-level modelling. Multi-level regression revealed an inverted “u” shaped association between total distance covered and goal difference (GD), with greater distances covered when GD was zero and reduced distances when GD was either positive or negative. A similar “u” shaped association was found with high speed distance covered at home. In addition distance covered (both at home and away) were predicted by playing position. All activity profiles (with the exception of sprint distance at home) were predicted by pitch location and time scored. Lastly, distance away from home and high speed running at home were predicted by opposition ability. Score line appears to effect player activity profiles across a number of temporal factors and thus should be considered by managers when preparing and selecting teams in order to maximise performance. The current study also highlighted the need for more sensitive score line definitions in which to consider score line effects.

**Key Words:** Multi-level modelling, Playing position, Pitch location, Opposition ability, Team ability. Goal difference.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Determining what constitutes successful performance (defined as winning) has been one of the main points of focus for football performance research in order to provide objective performance evaluations, comparisons and predictions<sup>1,2,3</sup>. A large portion of football game research has investigated situational variables related to successful performance, such as game location (i.e. home or away) or quality of opposition (defined as either finishing position in the league table or progress in knock out competition) as well as key performance indicators (e.g. action related variables such as high speed distance completed or accuracy of passing)<sup>2,4,5,6,7,8,9</sup>. Advancements in technology (such as computerised tracking systems) have enabled researchers to analyse match performance in a more detailed manner helping professionals to identify these key attributes of success more readily<sup>8,10,11,12,13,14</sup>.

In order to win a match, the successful team must score more goals than their opponent. Commonly, comparisons between successful and unsuccessful teams are made through the investigation of playing patterns and success of performance variables such as shots on goal, crosses, corners, ball possession etc.<sup>12</sup>. Although some studies<sup>11,13</sup> have investigated the activity profiles of various playing positions of elite soccer players, only a few to date have considered how successful and unsuccessful teams differ when in different score lines states (e.g. 1-0, 2-0, 1-1 etc.). Those that have investigated specific score line effects<sup>11,13</sup> have generally excluded key temporal factors (opposition ability, team ability, score lines and match location), which have been shown to effect player performance<sup>5,6,7,8</sup>.

The main methodological criticism of previous research has been the failure to consider normal performance, e.g. how teams perform when no goals are scored and the standard of the opposition (e.g. whether the team were considered top, middle or bottom of the league). For example, much of the difference in work rate observed between different score line states may

25 be due to the opposition's ability or simply fatigue rather than score line. Although studies have  
26 shown that the percentage of time spent performing high intensity activity is lower during the  
27 second half of soccer matches than during the first half<sup>15</sup> it is possible that differences in the  
28 percentage of time spent performing high intensity activity may result from score line effects  
29 rather than fatigue. Especially as more recent research has suggested that teams pace  
30 themselves injecting periods of sub-maximal or maximal bursts late on in matches<sup>5,16</sup> therefore  
31 dismissing the previous thoughts that teams fatigue towards the latter stages of a match.  
32 Redwood-Brown et al.<sup>17</sup> recently highlighted the impact of psychological factors on the  
33 performance of players during a match, suggesting players reduce their effort if the outcome  
34 of a match becomes obvious during the second half (e.g., the opposition are of a higher  
35 standard)<sup>18</sup>. Although fatigue and normalised performance has been considered in recent  
36 studies<sup>5,8,16</sup> the sample size and subjective nature of the data collection methods has limited the  
37 application of the findings.

38 A secondary issue has been the technological barriers in data collection methods that  
39 have limited the ability to generalise findings for both physical and technical performance  
40 investigated. Categorising players by position (defenders, midfielders, attackers) in relation to  
41 score line effects has been considered for activity profiles but only using very small data sets<sup>5,19</sup>  
42 or single clubs<sup>20</sup> using overall match status (winning, drawing, losing) rather than by how much  
43 the team were winning or losing by. There is however, a need to investigate score line effects  
44 on performance using a greater volume of data as well as objective and reliable methods. Semi-  
45 automatic player tracking systems are a useful tool providing large volumes of objective and  
46 reliable movement data to professional soccer clubs<sup>15,21</sup>. The volume of player movement data  
47 available from semi-automatic player tracking would allow further investigation of how  
48 different playing positions react to score line changes. Access to data can also be problematic

49 leading to many studies using a case study approach, with only one team analysed limiting the  
50 application of findings to wider populations.

51 The third issue with previous studies into score line is the lack of a gold standard for  
52 defining activity profiles that occur during the match (such as high speed running and  
53 sprinting). The use of computerised systems have been more apparent when investigating  
54 player movement, although with a number of different definitions, this has led to a difficulty  
55 in comparing findings. It has also been suggested that using a running speed as a high intensity  
56 value does not consider the energy cost of moving at a full range of speeds, for example, when  
57 a player is in possession of the ball<sup>22</sup> or moving in backwards and sideways directions at much  
58 lower speeds. In 2012 Redwood-Brown et al.<sup>23</sup> validated the first fully automated tracking  
59 system (measuring at 25Hz) which was found to have good validity over a range of soccer  
60 specific movements and speeds. In addition this system is highlighted in its ability to produce  
61 and store data on a much larger scale and to a greater accuracy than seen in previous studies.  
62 The aim of the present study was to investigate the interaction of a number of situational factors  
63 (playing position, pitch location, opposition ability, team ability) which have independently  
64 been found to impact on player performance, specifically activity profiles in different score  
65 line states. The use of the automated tracking system validated by Redwood-Brown et al.<sup>25</sup> can  
66 also allow the aggregated data of several teams to be analysed rather than a single team, thus  
67 creating more normative data to improve team performance in a collective way. We  
68 hypothesise that performance, specifically high speed running and sprint distance will be  
69 highest when the score is close. We also hypothesise that performance will differ between  
70 different playing position and pitch location in different score line states.

## 71 **2. MATERIALS AND METHODS**

### 72 **2.1 Data Set**

73 In total 376 of the 380 games played during the 2011-2012 English Premier League season  
74 were used in the current study which included 570 independent players and 35'000 rows of  
75 data. The omission of four games was due to a number of technological incidents outside of  
76 the operators' control, which disabled the system and resulted in the tracking data becoming  
77 unusable. This resulted in 20 teams who played against each other at both their own ground  
78 and that of their opponent's, with the exception of the teams affected by the excluded games.  
79 The ability of each team and their respective opponents was calculated using their final league  
80 position (ranked 1-20, i.e., 1<sup>st</sup> in the league to 20<sup>th</sup> in the league) at the end of the season once  
81 all games had been played. This was in line with previous research<sup>24</sup> which has highlighted the  
82 need for greater sensitivity when using ability as a situational factor relating to team  
83 performance. For accuracy, player position (striker, midfielder, defender) was determined at  
84 the start of each game using the official team's sheets provided to the press association. This  
85 ensured players who may change positional role depending on the tactical strategy adopted by  
86 the team were accurately defined for each game. In line with previous research<sup>25</sup> the pitch was  
87 split evenly into three sections (attacking third, middle third and defensive third) using a  
88 theodolite and calibrated pitch dimensions (specific to each individual stadium). Consent to  
89 use the data for research purposes was given by both Venatrack Ltd and the English Premier  
90 League. Ethical approval was granted by the University's Ethics Committee.

## 91 **2.2 Data Gathering**

92 Visual-AI (Venatrack Ltd, UK) technology was used to track the players in the current study.  
93 This allowed players to be monitored in real time (at 25 Hz) providing identification through  
94 recognition algorithms (based on x,y,z coordinates for hands, feet, head and the pelvis &  
95 shoulder lines; Venatrack Ltd, UK). The video capture system used 28 HD colour cameras  
96 positioned at specific locations around the respective soccer stadium. Twenty Eight HD  
97 cameras were used to ensure maximum positional accuracy (visual acuity) was provided to the

98 computer algorithm. By using a greater number of cameras, a greater number of pixels with  
99 which to quantify the pitch area and thus provide a greater accuracy for measuring each point  
100 was achieved. The estimated visual acuity for the current system was in the range 5 – 25mm  
101 compared to previous systems, which have been estimated at between 500mm – 1500m  
102 depending on the region of the pitch. The cameras position, orientation and field of vision were  
103 determined and fixed using a Theodolite (Nikon NPL 362, Japan) during installation. The  
104 cameras were positioned to give a full view of the pitch using the systems unique configuration  
105 co-ordinates (unique to each ground), which allowed each position on the pitch to be covered  
106 by at least five cameras at any one time (Venatrack Ltd, UK). Calibration of the automatic  
107 tracking system was completed by a team of technical experts who had collectively over  
108 eighteen years of experience of visual AI technology, such as that used by the system in  
109 question. The system was also found to be valid and reliable for tracking player movement at  
110 both high speed and sprinting distances<sup>23</sup>

111 .

### 112 **2.3 Performance Indicators (Activity Profiles)**

113 For each player, the total playing time was used to calculate how much relative time the player  
114 spent in each activity zone. Initially the zones were presented as incremental categories from  
115 0-1 m·s<sup>-1</sup>, 1-2 m·s<sup>-1</sup> etc. and then further categorised into high speed running and sprinting  
116 based on previous literature<sup>5,7</sup>. High speed running was defined as “*the total distance spent*  
117 *moving at 4 m·s<sup>-1</sup> or faster*” (to include movements such as shuffling, running backwards etc.  
118 which have been shown to increase work rate but are not included when higher speeds are used)  
119 <sup>22</sup>. Sprinting was defined as “*the total distance spent moving at 8 m·s<sup>-1</sup> or faster*”. This resulted  
120 in three values for each player; total distance covered, total distance covered in the high speed  
121 zone ( $\leq 4 \text{ m}\cdot\text{s}^{-1}$ ) and total distance covered in sprinting zone ( $\leq 8 \text{ m}\cdot\text{s}^{-1}$ ).

## 122 2.4 Data Analysis

123 Firstly, due to the hierarchical structure of the data, multi-level modelling was used to predict  
124 the activity profiles across goal differences with each of the match related and performance  
125 related variables using MLwiN software package (v 2.22, Bristol University, Bristol, UK). For  
126 each variable, a two-level hierarchical structure was defined with repeated measures (level 1)  
127 grouped with match ID (level 2). The benefit of this hierarchical structure means that, unlike  
128 traditional longitudinal data analysis techniques such as repeated measures ANOVA, the same  
129 number of measurement points per individual are not required. Therefore, due to the variation  
130 that occurs between matches in the current data set, this statistical technique is well suited to  
131 the current data structure. A multi-level model of this nature is also able to describe the  
132 underlying trends of a particular component in the population (the fixed part of the model), as  
133 well as modelling the unexplained variation around the mean trend for that component due to  
134 individual differences (the random part of the model)<sup>26</sup> or in this case differences both within  
135 (repeated measures) and between matches (match ID).

136 The first stage in this multi-level modelling statistical analysis approach was to create  
137 a model that explained changes in distance covered, high speed distance covered and sprint  
138 distance covered. Each activity profile (total distance covered, high speed distance covered,  
139 sprint distance covered) performance characteristic was modelled in turn. Firstly, to investigate  
140 the variance between players the intercept was allowed to vary randomly between players. The  
141 effect of score line defined by GD (centered at 0 goals) on each of the three activity profiles of  
142 players was modelled. GD was introduced to the model as a quadratic term to establish whether  
143 the data would be better explained by a curve. Subsequently, the effect of playing position, the  
144 zone on the pitch the activity took place; the time the goal was scored; the opposition's ability  
145 and the team's ability were added to the model (fixed components). These fixed components  
146 were accepted or rejected on the basis of firstly, changes in the model fit; as indicated by a

147 difference in log likelihood between models, and the effect of the variable on the activity  
148 profiles of players, indicated by z-scores. Following each analysis, the assumption that  
149 variations in intercepts were normally distributed with an average of zero was assessed visually  
150 using normality probability plots<sup>26</sup>. Statistical significance was accepted at the 95% confidence  
151 level ( $P < 0.05$ ). Mean  $\pm$  SD were used to describe the average and variability of the activity  
152 profile data.

### 153 **3. RESULTS**

154 A total of 570 players across 376 games were analysed, with the maximum number of  
155 appearances from one player being 38 games and the minimum 1 game. Table 1 presents the  
156 activity profiles for each of the teams included in the analysis across the three match statuses  
157 (winning, drawing, losing). The average distance covered per player per game (Mean  $\pm$  SD)  
158 was 10020.2m  $\pm$  141.7m, with players covering on average 395.6  $\pm$  33.9m of high speed  
159 running per game and 107.0  $\pm$  21.3m sprinting distance (a full break down of each teams  
160 activity profiles can be seen in the supplementary Table 1).

161 Tables 2 and 3 present the final multi-level models for the development of the match-  
162 running performance characteristics of total distance covered, high speed distance covered and  
163 sprint distance covered for players of different playing positions, in different pitch zones, across  
164 different abilities and against different standards of opposition of players in the 376 English  
165 Premier League games analysed. The random part of the multi-level models predicted that the  
166 fit of all models was improved when the intercept was allowed to vary randomly ( $P < 0.05$ ), as  
167 indicated by the between game standard error displayed in Tables 2 and 3. Only variables that  
168 were significant when added to the model are presented in the tables.

#### 169 **3.1 Distance Covered**

170 Modelling indicated that the distances covered at both home and away in relation to GD were  
 171 non-linear and best described with a quadratic term. The estimated models of distance cover  
 172 for home and away teams that included GD as an independent factor can also be seen in Table  
 173 2. The table shows that for distance covered at home; GD, GD<sup>2</sup>, playing position, time scored  
 174 and pitch zone significantly improved the model fit. For distance covered away from home, the  
 175 same was true, with the addition of opposition ability. It is possible to calculate the performance  
 176 of players, playing either, at home or away using the coefficients from Table 2. For example,  
 177 the prediction equation for distance covered at home for a midfielder in the middle 3<sup>rd</sup> of the  
 178 pitch, who are in a +2 GD at half time (45 minutes) is: Constant + ( $\beta_1$  \* GD centered at 0) + ( $\beta_2$   
 179 \* GD centered at 0<sup>2</sup>) + ( $\beta_3$  \* midfielder) + ( $\beta_4$  \* middle 3<sup>rd</sup>) + ( $\beta_5$  \* time scored) which is:  
 180  $118.53 + (-0.601 * 2) + (-0.462 * 2^2) + (7.275) + (-12.082) + (-0.069 * 45) = 107.6 \text{ m} \cdot \text{min}^{-1}$   
 181 (9681.1m per 90 min. game).

### 182 3.2 High Speed Running

183 Modelling indicated that high speed running distance covered away from home in relation to  
 184 GD was non-linear and best described with a quadratic term. Goal difference was not found to  
 185 significantly influence distance covered whilst playing at home. The estimated models of high  
 186 speed distance covered for home and away teams can be seen in Table 3. The table shows that  
 187 for high speed distance covered at home, pitch zone, opposition ability and time scored  
 188 significantly improved the model fit. For high speed running distance covered away from  
 189 home, GD, GD<sup>2</sup>, the time goals were scored and pitch zone significantly improved the model.  
 190 The prediction equation for high speed distance covered away from home for all players in the  
 191 middle 3<sup>rd</sup> of the pitch, who are in a +2 GD at half time (45 minutes) is: Constant + ( $\beta_1$  \* GD  
 192 centered at 0) + ( $\beta_2$  \* GD centered at 0<sup>2</sup>) + ( $\beta_3$  \* middle 3<sup>rd</sup>) + ( $\beta_4$  \* time scored) which is: =  
 193  $7.376 + (0.21 * 2) + (-0.112 * 2^2) + (-4.904) + (0.001 * 45) = 2.9 \text{ m} \cdot \text{min}^{-1}$  (260.5m per 90 min.  
 194 game).

### 195 3.3 Sprint Distance

196 Modelling indicated that sprint distance covered at both home and away was not affected by  
197 GD. In fact the only parameter that was found to explain this activity was pitch zone and only  
198 when playing away from home. The prediction equation for sprint distance covered away from  
199 home for all players in the middle 3<sup>rd</sup> of the pitch, who score at half time (45 minutes) is:  
200  $\text{Constant} + (\beta_3 * \text{middle } 3^{\text{rd}}) + (\beta_4 * \text{time scored})$  which is:  $2.742 + (-2.002) + (0.015 * 45) =$   
201  $1.42 \text{ m}\cdot\text{min}^{-1}$  (127.4m per 90 min. game).

### 202 3.4 Goal Difference Effects

203 Figures 1-3 display the predicted goal difference related changes in significant activity (per  
204 player per 90 minutes) for each playing position, pitch zone and opposition ability (ranked 1<sup>st</sup>,  
205 10<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup>) respectively. Supplementary Tables 2, 3, 4 and 5 display the mean  $\pm$  SD of  
206 match-running performance for each of the categories (playing position, pitch location, team  
207 ability rank and opposition ability rank).

208 Models predicted that for all playing positions and across all pitch zones, the total  
209 distance covered both at home and away from home was greatest when GD was close (-1 to  
210 +1) decreasing towards the extremes of GD (+5 or -5). Players also tended to decrease their  
211 activity more when losing heavily as opposed to winning, this was more prominent when  
212 playing away from home. Goal difference was only found to predict high speed running when  
213 playing away from home showing a similar pattern to total distance covered. Teams covered  
214 less distance (both total distance covered away and high speed distance at home) when playing  
215 lower ranked teams (e.g. rank 20), whereas in comparison a team's own ability was not found  
216 to predict any physical performance across GDs. Although time scored appeared in the majority  
217 of predictive models, its impact was small. Across all performance parameters (except sprint

218 distance at home) models predicted that the later into the game a goal was scored the less total  
219 distance, high speed distance and sprint distance away from home that was covered.

## 220 **4. DISCUSSION**

221 The aim of the present study was to investigate the effect of playing position, pitch location,  
222 team ability and opposition ability on the activity profiles of English premier league players  
223 across various goal differences (GD). The multi-level model suggested that activity profiles  
224 changed with changes in GD in a non-linear manner and there was significant variation  
225 between matches, specifically teams covered more distance and more high speed distance (at  
226 home) when the score was close (e.g., +/- 2 goals). Modelling also suggested that activity  
227 profiles were influenced by playing position, pitch location and opposition ability, as well as  
228 the time at which goals were scored.

### 229 **4.1 Goal Difference/Score line**

230 In general, predictive modelling suggested that distance covered decreased as GD increased  
231 either positively (scoring team) or negatively (conceding team), across all playing positions  
232 and all pitch locations. Playing away from home this decrease was greater when teams  
233 conceded goals than when teams scored (e.g. less distance was covered at -3 compared to +3  
234 GD), whereas at home the decrease was even for both the scoring and conceding teams.  
235 Research <sup>3,6,27</sup> suggests that teams who are winning may relax their work rate, potentially  
236 allowing opponents back in the game. Alternatively, although losing teams may initially  
237 increase their work rate<sup>4,28</sup> to get back in the game, they may quickly lose motivation to  
238 maintain a sufficient work rate which maybe especially true when teams play away from home  
239 as shown in the findings here. From a psychological perspective, it has been suggested<sup>29</sup> that  
240 teams move through a period of building momentum as they work towards scoring through  
241 positive play to cruising (where teams try and economise effort). This often results in a decrease

242 in effort<sup>27, 29 30</sup> once the goal has been achieved as shown in the current study. The reverse  
243 maybe true when teams are losing and experiencing negative momentum, i.e., although an  
244 initial surge in effort is sometimes seen to overcome this deficit (as teams search for a goal to  
245 get back in the game), if the negative momentum persists, teams tend to abandon the activity  
246 and reduce their effort dramatically<sup>29,30</sup> as seen when teams conceded more goals in the current  
247 study. The current findings further support the misconception that physical activity profiles are  
248 related to purely fatigue, rather than the psychological effects of the score line. This is  
249 especially pertinent as recent research<sup>5,16</sup> has found little support for decreases in physical  
250 activity as a function of fatigue.

251 High speed running also decreased as GD increased either positively (scoring team) or  
252 negatively (conceding team). Away from home, this decrease was more rapid for the conceding  
253 team, whereas when playing at home the decrease was similar for both conceding and scoring  
254 teams. As previous research considering GD as opposed to match status has been limited, it is  
255 difficult to compare results from this current study, however in general, high speed running  
256 was at its highest when the GD was small (e.g. -1-+1) supporting previous studies which have  
257 shown that players spend a greater percentage of time performing high speed activity when  
258 level, than when behind or ahead<sup>18,29</sup>. In support of previous research<sup>18</sup> the current findings  
259 suggest that players may maintain their efforts to overcome negative momentum (e.g., losing  
260 or conceding) whilst they perceive the goal to still be in reach (e.g., conceding only 1-2 goals).  
261 However, once this goal is perceived out of reach (e.g., -3 and beyond in the current study)  
262 findings suggest teams decrease their effort, especially when playing away from home. This  
263 therefore suggests that although GD is a major factor in influencing player activity, the 'size'  
264 of the GD and the environment (playing at home or away) may also play a role in predicting  
265 player movement activity and thus should be considered by managers and coaches.

## 266 4.2 Playing Position

267 According to the predictive models, playing position influenced total distance covered both at  
268 home and away from home across all GD's. Midfielders covered more meters per minute when  
269 playing both at home and away from home than either strikers (1.1 m·min<sup>-1</sup> less at home and  
270 0.43 m·min<sup>-1</sup> less away from home than midfielders) or defenders (7.3 m·min<sup>-1</sup> less at home  
271 and 6.8 m·min<sup>-1</sup> less away from home than midfielders). This was consistent across all GD's.  
272 No significant differences were found between playing positions for either high speed running  
273 or sprint distance. Indeed, it is commonplace for midfielders to cover more distance due to their  
274 interlinking role between attack and defence within a team<sup>15</sup>. Strikers, on the other hand have  
275 generally been found to cover more high speed running and sprint distance than defenders and  
276 in some cases midfielders in an attempt to capitalise on goal scoring opportunities<sup>31</sup>. The lack  
277 of significant differences between players in the current study is most likely related to the  
278 higher frequency of the automated tracking system used ensuring more accurate estimates of  
279 both high speed running and sprint distance, which has previously been problematic.

280 In relation to score line Redwood-Brown et al.<sup>8</sup> found midfielders covered more high  
281 speed running when level, defenders more when losing and attackers more when winning. A  
282 similar pattern was reported by Bradley and Noakes<sup>11</sup> who found central defenders covered  
283 17% less and attackers 15% more high speed running during matches that were heavily won  
284 versus heavily lost (score differential  $\geq 3$  goals). The lack of sensitivity to the playing positions  
285 maybe the reason for no significant effect of high speed running or sprint distance in the current  
286 study. Thus suggesting that individual player comparisons maybe more relevant when  
287 investigating the effect of score line in relation to physical activity profiles.

### 288 **4.3 Pitch Zone**

289 All playing positions were found to cover more distance per minute in the attacking 3<sup>rd</sup> both at  
290 home and away from home than either the middle 3<sup>rd</sup> (12.1 m·min<sup>-1</sup> less at home and 14.1

291  $\text{m}\cdot\text{min}^{-1}$  less away from home than attacking 3<sup>rd</sup>) or defending 3<sup>rd</sup> ( $7.9 \text{ m}\cdot\text{min}^{-1}$  less at home  
292 and  $11.4 \text{ m}\cdot\text{min}^{-1}$  less away from home) across all GDs. High speed running followed a similar  
293 pattern with more covered in the attacking 3<sup>rd</sup> both at home and away than either the middle  
294 3<sup>rd</sup> ( $4.0 \text{ m}\cdot\text{min}^{-1}$  less at home and  $4.9 \text{ m}\cdot\text{min}^{-1}$  less away from home than attacking 3<sup>rd</sup>) or  
295 defending 3<sup>rd</sup> ( $2.0 \text{ m}\cdot\text{min}^{-1}$  less at home and  $3.2 \text{ m}\cdot\text{min}^{-1}$  less away from home) across all GDs.  
296 No significant differences were found between pitch location for sprint distance covered at  
297 home, however when playing away from home, more distance was covered in the attacking 3<sup>rd</sup>  
298 than either the middle 3<sup>rd</sup> ( $2.0\text{m}$  less away from home than attacking 3<sup>rd</sup>) or defending 3<sup>rd</sup>  
299 ( $2.01\text{m}$  less away from home than attacking 3<sup>rd</sup>) across all GDs.

300         Although research considering the interactional effect of pitch position and score line  
301 is scarce, Lago<sup>6</sup> did find when teams were behind they spent more time in the attacking third  
302 than when in the lead potentially in search of a consolation goal if the opportunity arises.  
303 Similarly, García-Rubio et al.<sup>32</sup> found that when teams are winning they tend to play less risky  
304 options, and with a more structured defence strategy placing more players between the ball and  
305 their own goal thus reducing the amount of time, and thus distance covered in the defending  
306 and middle thirds. This supports the idea that winning teams are more likely to adopt a  
307 counterattack style of play<sup>6,10</sup> and therefore helps to explain why the middle 3<sup>rd</sup> had the lowest  
308 values for distance covered in the current study as the majority of games end with one dominant  
309 team.

310         The strategy (e.g., time spent in each pitch location) teams employ when either winning  
311 or losing maybe somewhat determined by the ability of that team. For example, winning teams  
312 have been found to maintain ‘control’ of the game by keeping possession especially if higher  
313 in ability<sup>2,9</sup>, which contradicts the idea that teams adopt a direct style of play when winning<sup>2,9</sup>.  
314 This therefore suggests that there is a need to investigate activity profiles and technical  
315 performance together especially, when considering the pitch location during different score

316 line states as higher ability teams may be able to maintain their style of play despite other  
317 variables (e.g., match location or evolving score)<sup>28</sup>.

#### 318 **4.4 Team Ability**

319 Models predicted that the ability of the team did not predict activity profiles of players across  
320 GDs. Even though research has found teams higher in ability covered more distance than lower  
321 ranked teams, especially in higher speed zones<sup>19</sup>. A possible explanation for this maybe that  
322 teams are more capable than previously thought at adapting their strategy based on the evolving  
323 score. A more plausible explanation is that there may not be much difference between the top  
324 and bottom ranked teams in the English Premier League in terms of physical activity profiles  
325 and ‘ability’ is better explained by a team’s technical performance<sup>33</sup> This provides additional  
326 support for the need to investigate both physical and technical performance together in line  
327 with individual teams, playing formations and strategies in order for managers and coaches to  
328 maximum team performance.

#### 329 **4.5 Opposition Ability**

330 Models predicted that when playing away from home, teams covered 0.09m per minute, less  
331 total distance and when playing at home 0.04m less high speed distance for every decrease in  
332 rank position of their opposition. For example when playing against opposition who finished  
333 second in the league, teams would cover 0.09m total distance and 0.04m high speed distance  
334 per minute less than when playing the top ranked team. Whereas when playing opposition  
335 ranked 10<sup>th</sup> in the league teams covered 0.81m total distance and 0.36m high speed distance  
336 less per minute. This was in support of previous research<sup>5,19</sup> which has found players cover  
337 more ground when their opposing team is higher in ability compared to medium or bottom  
338 ranked teams<sup>4</sup>. No significant differences were found for total distance covered at home, high  
339 speed running away from home or sprint distance either home or away. Lago and Dellal<sup>9</sup>

340 suggested when playing against higher or lower ranked opposition, teams may bunch together  
341 at either end of the pitch reducing the total distance covered, but increasing sub-maximal and  
342 maximal activity profiles. Lago-Penas and Lago-Ballesteros<sup>34</sup> suggested that match location  
343 and quality of opposition have equal importance, for example if a lower rank teams plays at  
344 home against higher ranked opposition the influence of both these variables maybe  
345 compromised accounting for the small effect shown in the current findings.

346 Teams consistently reported the highest distance covered and high speed distance when  
347 the game was close (e.g., -1 to +1). Although it is not always the case that these games will end  
348 in a close final score, previous research has found teams cover more high speed running when  
349 they play opposition of similar ability compared to lower ranked or higher ranked teams<sup>5</sup>. These  
350 findings also support the idea that the technical performance of a team maybe more indicative  
351 of their overall ability (final league position) than how far they run during a match<sup>4,33,35</sup>. This  
352 is especially true, as recent research has shown teams are able to inject sub-maximal and  
353 maximal runs towards the end of the match, showing no signs of physical fatigue<sup>9</sup>.

#### 354 **4.6 Limitations**

355 Although the current study included playing position in the multi-level modelling, unlike more  
356 recent studies only 3 categories were used. Splitting these categories further (e.g., into wide  
357 and central midfielder) would further highlight any variation between playing position. It  
358 would however, be interesting to investigate the extent that individual differences contribute to  
359 the overall team, or in this case, the overall mean of their playing position given the amount of  
360 research<sup>20,36</sup> that suggests variability between players with regards performance  
361 accomplishments and success and failure. Another consideration/limitation of the current  
362 study was the definition used for score line, although the current study used a more sensitive  
363 score line definition to the traditional win, loss, draw it did not give an indication to the actual

364 evolving score line; e.g. 2-0 could be perceived by players differently to 4-2 but would have  
365 the same GD. This should therefore be investigated in future research.

#### 366 **4.7 Perspectives and Future Directions**

367 Goal difference was found to have a large and varied impact on the activity profiles of premier  
368 league soccer players where total distance both at home and away and high speed distance  
369 covered at home were greatest when the goal difference was close. Pitch zone was found to  
370 have the biggest effect on activity profiles across GD being present in all but one model, this  
371 was followed by playing position. Opposition ability was found to effect teams but on a much  
372 smaller scale – supporting the findings that the difference in ability maybe negated when teams  
373 are on their own territory<sup>37</sup>. The absence of team ability in all models suggests that the physical  
374 movement of players is less of a predictor of overall team performance than technical  
375 performance and thus both aspects should be considered when modelling player and team  
376 performance.

377 One area that should be considered in future research is the impact of individual player  
378 performance. The current study was not able to present individual players data with regards to  
379 the impact of score line however previous work using a case study approach of one team has  
380 found that players differ in their approach to different score line states<sup>20</sup>. In order to achieve  
381 maximum success, it may therefore be more appropriate, that in order to maximise team  
382 performance, the starting eleven should be picked based on the external factors highlighted to  
383 influence player performance, for example, if playing against top opposition it may be more  
384 appropriate to select players who perform better against higher abilities, or in a negative score  
385 line states. Similarly, if some players prefer to defend a lead it may be more appropriate to sub  
386 them on, once a lead has been established. In summary players' individual perceptions of the  
387 score line have been shown to alter players' motivation, confidence and effort<sup>17</sup> and thus the

388 effect they have on their physical activity profiles. Due to the variety of results found in the  
389 current study, future research should consider adopting a case study approach in order to  
390 maximise player and ultimately team performance in relation to temporal factors.

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38. TABLE 1. Mean activity profiles per player for each club included in the analysis in a winning, drawing and losing score line state.

39.

Team	Number Games Played	Number of Players Included	WINNING			DRAWING			LOSING		
			Total DC (m)	Total HSR (m)	Total Sprint Dist. (m)	Total DC (m)	Total HSR (m)	Total Sprint Dist. (m)	Total DC (m)	Total HSR (m)	Total Sprint Dist. (m)
1	38	32	9885	422	169	10332	397	97	9896	372	118
2	38	27	9822	403	135	10294	386	87	9827	386	126
3	38	31	9776	423	137	10077	371	114	9889	468	161
4	38	30	9600	439	156	10153	402	114	9685	387	147
5	35	29	9801	395	94	10338	396	77	9693	430	90
6	38	30	10265	439	126	10539	399	93	10007	416	124
7	37	29	9796	381	84	10217	355	85	9929	371	91
8	37	25	9555	379	120	10198	404	99	9927	403	139
9	38	26	9919	354	97	10425	316	92	9684	335	109
10	38	32	10073	423	143	10385	383	78	10238	429	168
11	37	27	9806	324	100	10530	569	105	9981	369	118
12	38	28	10056	382	106	10504	435	106	10198	444	94
13	38	36	9796	412	130	10005	346	68	9807	370	134
14	38	23	9887	348	74	10365	338	69	9905	307	74
15	38	28	9690	393	102	10339	449	184	9869	541	150
16	38	25	9929	413	105	10179	386	102	10118	428	147
17	38	31	9790	321	103	10187	434	59	9646	339	65
18	37	25	9652	361	112	10266	399	77	9892	399	101
19	38	24	9854	377	80	9966	317	63	9729	342	84
20	37	32	10109	350	79	10482	404	87	10077	452	134
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>376</b>	<b>570</b>	<b>9853.5</b>	<b>387.6</b>	<b>117.2</b>	<b>10289.6</b>	<b>394.9</b>	<b>98.6</b>	<b>9900.2</b>	<b>399.8</b>	<b>123.7</b>
SD		3	174.7	35.6	32.6	166.8	54.9	36.8	169.6	54.2	36.9

40.

TABLE 2. Estimated models for total distance covered per minute both home and away.

Distance Covered – Home			Distance Covered – Away		
Fixed Effects	Coefficient (m)	SE (m)	Fixed Effects	Coefficient (m)	SE (m)
Constant	118.527	0.646	Constant	123.625	1.088
Goal Difference	0.601	0.189	Goal Difference	1.388	0.217
Goal Difference <sup>2</sup>	-0.462	0.072	Goal Difference <sup>2</sup>	-0.362	0.083
Midfielder	7.275	0.554	Midfielder	6.75	0.601
Striker	1.116	0.557	Striker	0.433	0.605
Time Scored	-0.069	0.01	Time Scored	-0.087	0.011
Defending 3 <sup>rd</sup>	-7.884	0.558	Defending 3 <sup>rd</sup>	-11.436	0.606
Middle 3 <sup>rd</sup>	-12.082	0.553	Middle 3 <sup>rd</sup>	-14.081	0.602
Opposition Ability			Opposition Ability	-0.204	0.078
Random Effects	Variance	SE	Random Effects	Variance	SE
Between Game (Repeat)	349.365	6.146	Between Game (Repeat)	407.802	7.215
Within Game (Match ID)	27.199	3.589	Within Game (Match ID)	44.289	5.217

Notes. Intercept estimates at (Goal Difference 0) for each playing position (reference defender), pitch location (reference attacking 3<sup>rd</sup>), team ability (rank 1), opposition ability (rank 1) and time scored (minute 1).

TABLE 3. Estimated models for total high speed distance covered per minute both home and away.

High Speed Running – Home			High Speed Running – Away		
Fixed Effects	Coefficient (m)	SE (m)	Fixed Effects	Coefficient (m)	SE (m)
Constant	6.654	0.238	Constant	7.376	0.289
Defending 3 <sup>rd</sup>	-1.971	0.174	Goal Difference	0.21	0.103
Middle 3 <sup>rd</sup>	-4.011	0.168	Goal Difference <sup>2</sup>	-0.112	0.042
Opposition Ability	-0.035	0.017	Defending 3 <sup>rd</sup>	-3.221	0.302
Time Scored	0.011	0.003	Middle 3 <sup>rd</sup>	-4.904	0.294
			Time Scored	0.01	0.005
Random Effects	Variance	SE	Random Effects	Variance	SE
Between Game (Repeat)	29.707	0.554	Between Game (Repeat)	88.651	1.664
Within Game (Match ID)	1.279	0.232	Within Game (Match ID)	6.298	0.904

*Notes.* Intercept estimates at (Goal Difference 0) for each playing position (reference defender), pitch location (reference attacking 3<sup>rd</sup>), team ability (rank 1), opposition ability (rank 1) and time scored (minute 1).

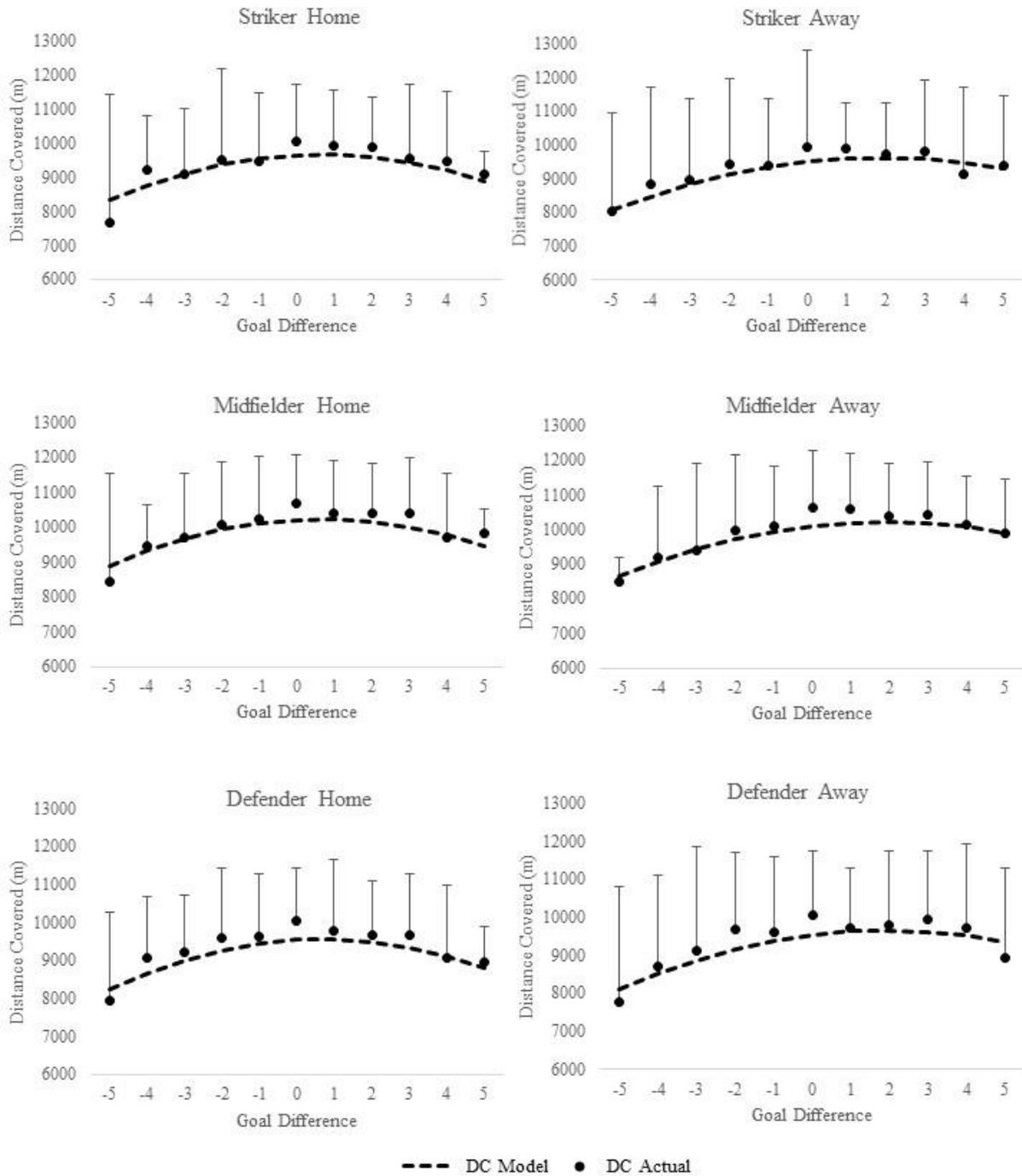


Figure 1: Total distance covered(m) during match-play in English Premier League across difference goal differences. Curves are based on predicted distances covered from multi-level models of longitudinal data. Points are based on the 'raw' distance covered data (mean  $\pm$  SD). Data are presented by playing position both at home and away during match-play.

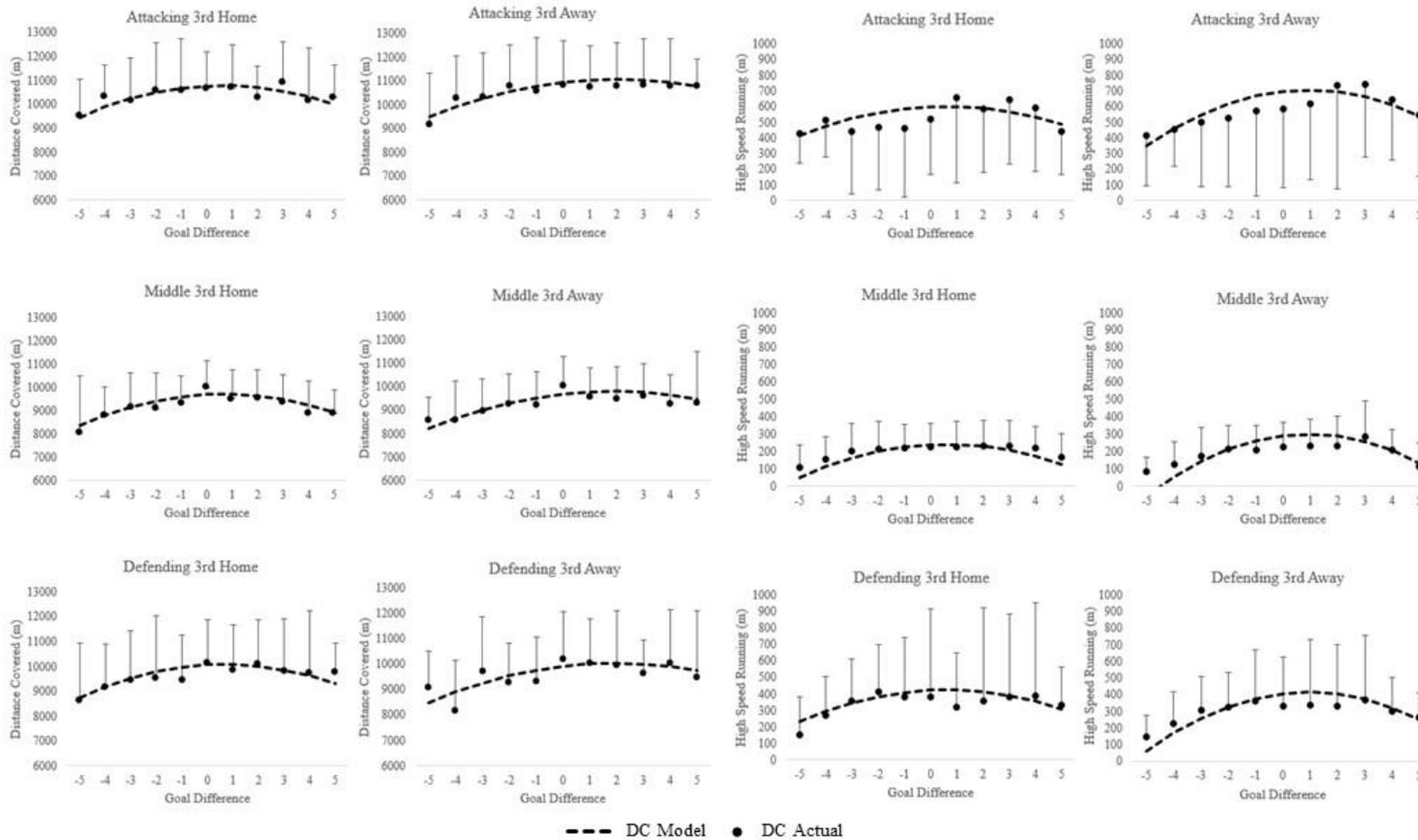


Figure 2: Total distance covered (m) and total high speed distance covered (m) during match-play in English Premier League across difference goal differences. Curves are based on predicted distances covered from multi-level models of longitudinal data. Points are based on the 'raw' distance covered data (mean  $\pm$  SD). Data are presented by pitch location during match-play.

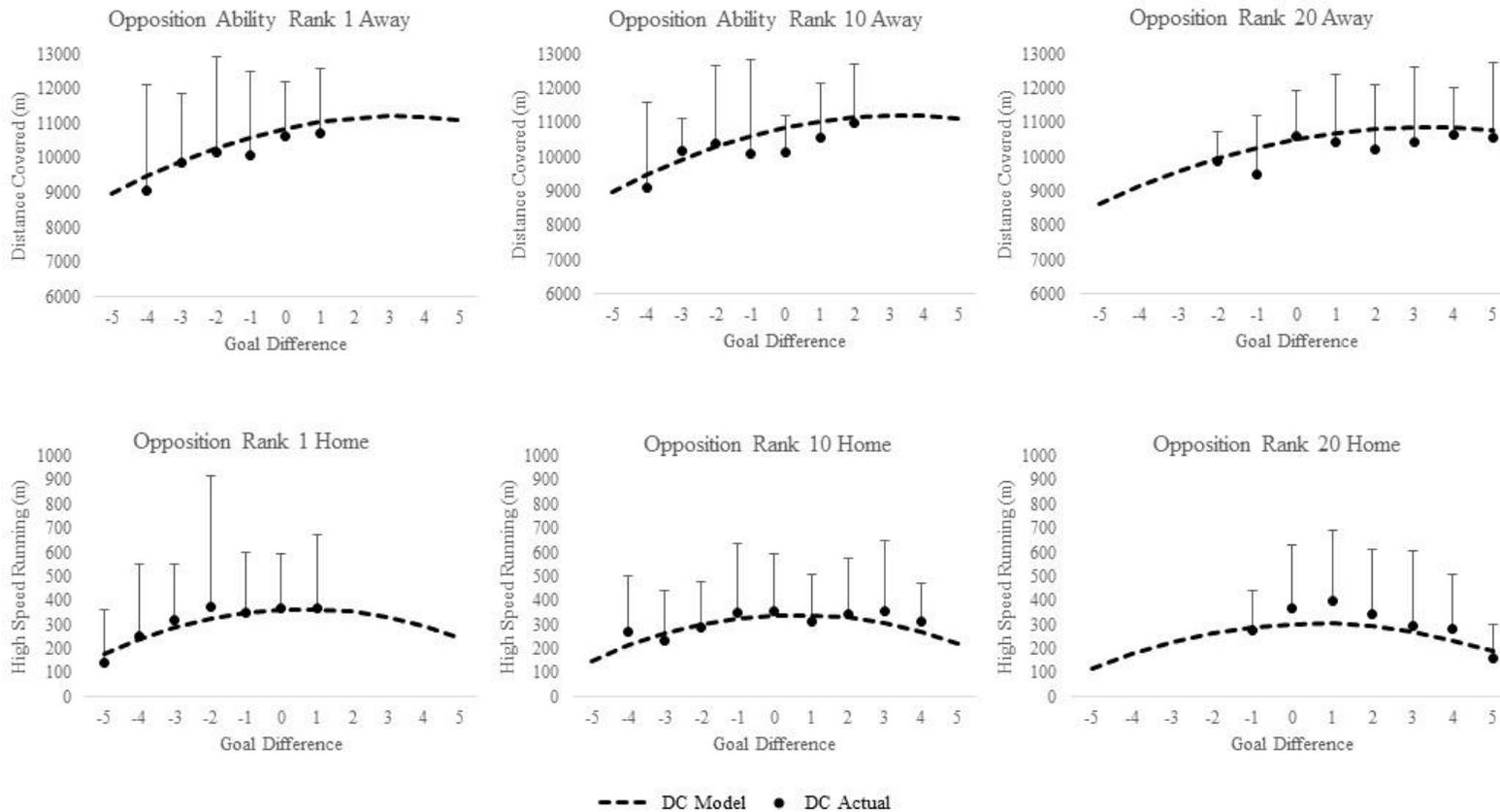


Figure 3: Total distance covered (m) during match-play in English Premier League across difference goal differences. Curves are based on predicted distances covered from multi-level models of longitudinal data. Points are based on the 'raw' distance covered data (mean  $\pm$  SD). Data are presented for opposition ability rank that were significant predictors of performance variables during match play within the model.

TABLE 1: Mean activity profiles for each club included in the analysis.

Team Ranked	Number Games Played	Number of Players Included	DC/90 mins (m)	DC/min (m)	HSR/90 mins (m)	HSR/Min (m)	Sprint Distance/90 mins (m)	Sprint Distance/Min (m)	TOTAL HIA/90 mins (m)	HIA/Min (m)
1	38	32	10030	111.5	399	4.4	127	1.4	527	5.9
2	38	27	9965	110.7	393	4.4	117	1.3	511	5.7
3	38	31	9907	110.1	414	4.6	133	1.5	548	6.1
4	38	30	9813	109.0	413	4.6	138	1.5	552	6.1
5	35	29	9966	110.7	403	4.5	87	1.0	490	5.5
6	38	30	10298	114.4	418	4.7	111	1.2	530	5.9
7	37	29	9983	110.9	369	4.1	86	1.0	455	5.1
8	37	25	9915	110.2	396	4.4	116	1.3	513	5.7
9	38	26	10031	111.5	336	3.7	99	1.1	435	4.8
10	38	32	10238	113.8	409	4.5	120	1.3	529	5.8
11	37	27	10098	112.1	465	5.2	109	1.3	574	6.5
12	38	28	10260	114.0	419	4.7	103	1.1	522	5.8
13	38	36	9880	109.8	376	4.2	104	1.2	481	5.4
14	38	23	10071	111.9	336	3.7	71	0.8	408	4.5
15	38	28	9976	110.9	451	5.0	150	1.7	601	6.7
16	38	25	10070	111.9	405	4.5	113	1.3	518	5.8
17	38	31	9895	110.0	364	4.0	79	0.9	444	4.9
18	37	25	9923	110.3	386	4.3	96	1.1	482	5.4
19	38	24	9854	109.5	345	3.8	74	0.8	419	4.7
20	37	32	10219	113.6	403	4.5	99	1.1	503	5.6
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>376</b>	<b>570</b>	<b>10020</b>	<b>111.3</b>	<b>395</b>	<b>4.4</b>	<b>107.0</b>	<b>1.2</b>	<b>502.6</b>	<b>5.6</b>
SD	0.8	3.3	141.7	1.6	33.9	0.4	21.3	0.2	51.0	0.6

TABLE 2: Mean  $\pm$  SD match-running performance characteristics by goal difference related to position and match location (home or away).

Goal Difference	Playing Position	HOME			AWAY		
		Total Distance/ 90 minutes (m)	High-Speed Distance / 90 minutes (m)	Sprint Distance/ 90 minutes (m)	Total Distance/ 90 minutes (m)	High-Speed Distance / 90 minutes (m)	Sprint Distance/ 90 minutes (m)
-5	Striker	7658 $\pm$ 3786	561 $\pm$ 454	106 $\pm$ 116	8047 $\pm$ 2897	248 $\pm$ 220	76 $\pm$ 95
	Midfielder	8430 $\pm$ 3111	400 $\pm$ 242	97 $\pm$ 70	8485 $\pm$ 720	380 $\pm$ 281	77 $\pm$ 73
	Defender	7948 $\pm$ 2313	414 $\pm$ 279	80 $\pm$ 73	7761 $\pm$ 3059	279 $\pm$ 256	57 $\pm$ 67
-4	Striker	9232 $\pm$ 1576	545 $\pm$ 577	283 $\pm$ 280	8813 $\pm$ 2912	357 $\pm$ 217	162 $\pm$ 364
	Midfielder	9461 $\pm$ 1159	367 $\pm$ 255	92 $\pm$ 56	9177 $\pm$ 2052	389 $\pm$ 358	71 $\pm$ 77
	Defender	9059 $\pm$ 1626	414 $\pm$ 361	108 $\pm$ 186	8689 $\pm$ 2411	438 $\pm$ 597	95 $\pm$ 128
-3	Striker	9089 $\pm$ 1924	346 $\pm$ 401	233 $\pm$ 501	8973 $\pm$ 2387	351 $\pm$ 304	107 $\pm$ 164
	Midfielder	9712 $\pm$ 1809	473 $\pm$ 524	194 $\pm$ 301	9395 $\pm$ 2533	384 $\pm$ 342	102 $\pm$ 175
	Defender	9222 $\pm$ 1502	414 $\pm$ 330	114 $\pm$ 160	9120 $\pm$ 2735	386 $\pm$ 523	128 $\pm$ 176
-2	Striker	9486 $\pm$ 2680	343 $\pm$ 419	97 $\pm$ 124	9440 $\pm$ 2530	376 $\pm$ 662	185 $\pm$ 943
	Midfielder	10076 $\pm$ 1766	395 $\pm$ 368	108 $\pm$ 166	9973 $\pm$ 2167	359 $\pm$ 330	134 $\pm$ 360
	Defender	9585 $\pm$ 1831	407 $\pm$ 359	106 $\pm$ 133	9684 $\pm$ 2027	396 $\pm$ 475	456 $\pm$ 1328
-1	Striker	9475 $\pm$ 1982	367 $\pm$ 511	118 $\pm$ 371	9372 $\pm$ 2004	352 $\pm$ 498	138 $\pm$ 422
	Midfielder	10212 $\pm$ 1824	363 $\pm$ 384	147 $\pm$ 683	10080 $\pm$ 1749	360 $\pm$ 285	96 $\pm$ 195
	Defender	9633 $\pm$ 1641	345 $\pm$ 334	107 $\pm$ 133	9601 $\pm$ 2007	389 $\pm$ 616	151 $\pm$ 928
0	Striker	10058 $\pm$ 1665	393 $\pm$ 532	104 $\pm$ 293	9928 $\pm$ 2858	473 $\pm$ 700	116 $\pm$ 254
	Midfielder	10682 $\pm$ 1375	389 $\pm$ 317	134 $\pm$ 686	10640 $\pm$ 1632	398 $\pm$ 397	118 $\pm$ 844
	Defender	10055 $\pm$ 1383	352 $\pm$ 289	153 $\pm$ 485	10060 $\pm$ 1691	371 $\pm$ 659	128 $\pm$ 627
1	Striker	9926 $\pm$ 1626	426 $\pm$ 439	145 $\pm$ 249	9898 $\pm$ 1333	414 $\pm$ 563	128 $\pm$ 166
	Midfielder	10383 $\pm$ 1536	414 $\pm$ 728	253 $\pm$ 269	10594 $\pm$ 1621	438 $\pm$ 583	130 $\pm$ 315
	Defender	9774 $\pm$ 1870	398 $\pm$ 512	133 $\pm$ 170	9708 $\pm$ 1586	335 $\pm$ 393	112 $\pm$ 200
2	Striker	9866 $\pm$ 1492	426 $\pm$ 520	146 $\pm$ 194	9724 $\pm$ 1521	508 $\pm$ 552	191 $\pm$ 299
	Midfielder	10380 $\pm$ 1445	387 $\pm$ 337	87 $\pm$ 97	10396 $\pm$ 1525	438 $\pm$ 464	323 $\pm$ 1208
	Defender	9653 $\pm$ 1440	416 $\pm$ 366	112 $\pm$ 170	9780 $\pm$ 1971	422 $\pm$ 745	159 $\pm$ 336
3	Striker	9541 $\pm$ 2166	507 $\pm$ 548	157 $\pm$ 225	9791 $\pm$ 2135	652 $\pm$ 647	228 $\pm$ 214
	Midfielder	10387 $\pm$ 1607	482 $\pm$ 504	189 $\pm$ 368	10433 $\pm$ 1506	520 $\pm$ 630	200 $\pm$ 331
	Defender	9661 $\pm$ 1626	390 $\pm$ 384	163 $\pm$ 286	9946 $\pm$ 1788	414 $\pm$ 507	279 $\pm$ 638
4	Striker	9464 $\pm$ 2057	474 $\pm$ 535	137 $\pm$ 161	9126 $\pm$ 2589	519 $\pm$ 561	255 $\pm$ 472
	Midfielder	9687 $\pm$ 1835	389 $\pm$ 358	71 $\pm$ 77	10150 $\pm$ 1386	469 $\pm$ 435	165 $\pm$ 254
	Defender	9083 $\pm$ 1879	345 $\pm$ 360	125 $\pm$ 180	9730 $\pm$ 2207	348 $\pm$ 343	237 $\pm$ 280
5	Striker	9087 $\pm$ 661	330 $\pm$ 249	68 $\pm$ 79	9380 $\pm$ 2073	409 $\pm$ 232	179 $\pm$ 141
	Midfielder	9814 $\pm$ 696	480 $\pm$ 369	149 $\pm$ 161	9902 $\pm$ 1535	404 $\pm$ 381	89 $\pm$ 100
	Defender	8970 $\pm$ 903	337 $\pm$ 305	97 $\pm$ 156	8941 $\pm$ 2350	310 $\pm$ 298	46 $\pm$ 28

TABLE 3: Mean  $\pm$  SD match running performance characteristics by goal difference related to pitch location and match location (home and away).

Goal Difference	Pitch Position	HOME			AWAY		
		Total Distance/ 90 minutes (m)	High-Speed Distance / 90 minutes (m)	Sprint Distance/ 90 minutes (m)	Total Distance/ 90 minutes (m)	High-Speed Distance / 90 minutes (m)	Sprint Distance/ 90 minutes (m)
-5	Attacking	9531 $\pm$ 1521	425 $\pm$ 186	132 $\pm$ 79	9132 $\pm$ 2200.4	417 $\pm$ 323	110 $\pm$ 157
	Middle	8027 $\pm$ 2471	106 $\pm$ 133	45 $\pm$ 42	8603 $\pm$ 975.6	81 $\pm$ 83	43 $\pm$ 35
	Defending	8647 $\pm$ 2276	149 $\pm$ 231	89 $\pm$ 70	9065 $\pm$ 1444.6	146 $\pm$ 125	43 $\pm$ 28
-4	Attacking	10313 $\pm$ 1322	511 $\pm$ 234	161 $\pm$ 173	10263 $\pm$ 1790.8	452 $\pm$ 235	130 $\pm$ 130
	Middle	8771 $\pm$ 1243	157 $\pm$ 130	46 $\pm$ 64	8574 $\pm$ 1690.3	128 $\pm$ 127	35 $\pm$ 60
	Defending	9186 $\pm$ 1702	268 $\pm$ 237	173 $\pm$ 186	8149 $\pm$ 2010.6	223 $\pm$ 192	68 $\pm$ 57
-3	Attacking	10159 $\pm$ 1759	443 $\pm$ 401	157 $\pm$ 145	10338 $\pm$ 1817.0	498 $\pm$ 412	161 $\pm$ 226
	Middle	9146 $\pm$ 1459	201 $\pm$ 160	114 $\pm$ 281	8993 $\pm$ 1343.2	174 $\pm$ 164	54 $\pm$ 80
	Defending	9454 $\pm$ 1955	355 $\pm$ 254	231 $\pm$ 400	9692 $\pm$ 2159.9	309 $\pm$ 201	122 $\pm$ 142
-2	Attacking	10554 $\pm$ 2025	469 $\pm$ 404	111 $\pm$ 139	10755 $\pm$ 1780.0	528 $\pm$ 439	207 $\pm$ 423
	Middle	9075 $\pm$ 1521	215 $\pm$ 155	57 $\pm$ 92	9285 $\pm$ 1266.8	216 $\pm$ 135	54 $\pm$ 80
	Defending	9540 $\pm$ 2510	413 $\pm$ 285	152 $\pm$ 177	9236 $\pm$ 1573.6	326 $\pm$ 210	120 $\pm$ 297
-1	Attacking	10575 $\pm$ 2149	459 $\pm$ 435	117 $\pm$ 211	10586 $\pm$ 2228.1	568 $\pm$ 539	158 $\pm$ 252
	Middle	9300 $\pm$ 1203	219 $\pm$ 134	50 $\pm$ 74	9221 $\pm$ 1410.12	206 $\pm$ 142	51 $\pm$ 155
	Defending	9455 $\pm$ 1798	378 $\pm$ 363	124 $\pm$ 166	9259 $\pm$ 1794.5	360 $\pm$ 309	85 $\pm$ 289
0	Attacking	10655 $\pm$ 1539	522 $\pm$ 354	163 $\pm$ 362	10798 $\pm$ 1907.8	587 $\pm$ 508	196 $\pm$ 358
	Middle	9983 $\pm$ 1160	228 $\pm$ 134	45 $\pm$ 67	10023 $\pm$ 1258.7	228 $\pm$ 141	49 $\pm$ 154
	Defending	10157 $\pm$ 1699	383 $\pm$ 529	103 $\pm$ 318	10142 $\pm$ 1896.8	329 $\pm$ 295	67 $\pm$ 103
1	Attacking	10679 $\pm$ 1814	658 $\pm$ 547	210 $\pm$ 273	10742 $\pm$ 1734.4	616 $\pm$ 485	219 $\pm$ 249
	Middle	9517 $\pm$ 1244	223 $\pm$ 147	54 $\pm$ 70	9557 $\pm$ 1236.9	228 $\pm$ 157	60 $\pm$ 148
	Defending	9881 $\pm$ 1780	318 $\pm$ 331	85 $\pm$ 179	10036 $\pm$ 1746.2	334 $\pm$ 398	136 $\pm$ 382
2	Attacking	10267 $\pm$ 1322	583 $\pm$ 404	182 $\pm$ 176	10769 $\pm$ 1839.4	736 $\pm$ 660	320 $\pm$ 333
	Middle	9527 $\pm$ 1219	233 $\pm$ 146	55 $\pm$ 66	9488 $\pm$ 1384.4	234 $\pm$ 171	78 $\pm$ 137
	Defending	10110 $\pm$ 1778	355 $\pm$ 564	91 $\pm$ 179	9917 $\pm$ 2176.2	333 $\pm$ 367	114 $\pm$ 214
3	Attacking	10894 $\pm$ 1710	640 $\pm$ 408	222 $\pm$ 195	10819 $\pm$ 1970.1	739 $\pm$ 462	383 $\pm$ 419
	Middle	9367 $\pm$ 1160	233 $\pm$ 145	79 $\pm$ 101	9627 $\pm$ 1348.5	286 $\pm$ 202	86 $\pm$ 96
	Defending	9832 $\pm$ 2098	380 $\pm$ 504	151 $\pm$ 343	9590 $\pm$ 1361.8	369 $\pm$ 390	121 $\pm$ 159
4	Attacking	10163 $\pm$ 2211	594 $\pm$ 406	197 $\pm$ 183	10771 $\pm$ 1992.6	641 $\pm$ 382	380 $\pm$ 423
	Middle	8874 $\pm$ 1376	219 $\pm$ 127	51 $\pm$ 49	9293 $\pm$ 1200.8	207 $\pm$ 119	69 $\pm$ 44
	Defending	9753 $\pm$ 2470	388 $\pm$ 563	71 $\pm$ 151	10034 $\pm$ 2109.5	301 $\pm$ 203	149 $\pm$ 369
5	Attacking	10282 $\pm$ 1364	443 $\pm$ 279	185 $\pm$ 177	10784 $\pm$ 1126.6	544 $\pm$ 394	218 $\pm$ 130
	Middle	8882 $\pm$ 1007	163 $\pm$ 139	39 $\pm$ 37	9341 $\pm$ 2166.0	110 $\pm$ 136	58 $\pm$ 49
	Defending	9795 $\pm$ 1135	330 $\pm$ 228	153 $\pm$ 164	9477 $\pm$ 2596.5	262 $\pm$ 146	69 $\pm$ 84

TABLE 4: Mean  $\pm$  SD match-running performance characteristics by goal difference and opposition ability (finish position in the EPL).

Goal Difference	Rank Opposition Ability	HOME			AWAY		
		Total Distance/ 90 minutes (m)	High-Speed Distance / 90 minutes (m)	Sprint Distance/ 90 minutes (m)	Total Distance/ 90 minutes (m)	High-Speed Distance / 90 minutes (m)	Sprint Distance/ 90 minutes (m)
-5	Rank 1	6788 $\pm$ 3196	145. $\pm$ 216	234 $\pm$ 0			
	Rank 10						
	Rank 20						
-4	Rank 1	9579 $\pm$ 2269	249 $\pm$ 299	213 $\pm$ 265	9065 $\pm$ 3059	346 $\pm$ 219	138 $\pm$ 161
	Rank 10	9643 $\pm$ 2700	272 $\pm$ 229	130 $\pm$ 155	9112 $\pm$ 2461	303 $\pm$ 0	0 $\pm$ 0
	Rank 20						
-3	Rank 1	9586 $\pm$ 1434	321 $\pm$ 231	106 $\pm$ 139	9848 $\pm$ 2033	466 $\pm$ 591	148 $\pm$ 269
	Rank 10	9563 $\pm$ 2233	235 $\pm$ 203	253 $\pm$ 359	10158 $\pm$ 956	426 $\pm$ 259	63 $\pm$ 58
	Rank 20						
-2	Rank 1	9946 $\pm$ 1417	374 $\pm$ 543	83 $\pm$ 70	10145 $\pm$ 2787	435 $\pm$ 332	128 $\pm$ 188
	Rank 10	10398 $\pm$ 1678	288 $\pm$ 187	165 $\pm$ 359	10396 $\pm$ 2277	334 $\pm$ 364	85 $\pm$ 89
	Rank 20				9874 $\pm$ 877	350 $\pm$ 216	99 $\pm$ 149
-1	Rank 1	9845 $\pm$ 1595	349 $\pm$ 350	101 $\pm$ 166	10067 $\pm$ 2442	415 $\pm$ 502	97 $\pm$ 139
	Rank 10	9684 $\pm$ 1317	351 $\pm$ 286	99. $\pm$ 154	10102 $\pm$ 2738	277 $\pm$ 230	70 $\pm$ 73
	Rank 20	9625 $\pm$ 2287	274 $\pm$ 164	75 $\pm$ 104	9471 $\pm$ 1757	337 $\pm$ 355	62 $\pm$ 51
0	Rank 1	10320 $\pm$ 1039	368 $\pm$ 224	91 $\pm$ 102	10637 $\pm$ 1562	481 $\pm$ 683	104 $\pm$ 158
	Rank 10	10381 $\pm$ 1443	353 $\pm$ 242	75 $\pm$ 108	10153 $\pm$ 1073	340 $\pm$ 193	88 $\pm$ 123
	Rank 20	10149 $\pm$ 1359	370 $\pm$ 258	107 $\pm$ 157	10627 $\pm$ 1307	421 $\pm$ 285	120 $\pm$ 235
1	Rank 1	9848 $\pm$ 2473	368 $\pm$ 306	224 $\pm$ 221	10726 $\pm$ 1862	368 $\pm$ 352	121 $\pm$ 158
	Rank 10	10015 $\pm$ 927	314 $\pm$ 192	160 186	10557 $\pm$ 1606	482 $\pm$ 538	160 $\pm$ 186
	Rank 20	10304 $\pm$ 1542	396 $\pm$ 293	128 $\pm$ 151	10420 $\pm$ 1991	462 $\pm$ 574	186 $\pm$ 449
2	Rank 1						
	Rank 10	10039 $\pm$ 1130	346 $\pm$ 228	93 $\pm$ 81	11009 $\pm$ 1687	321 $\pm$ 233	122 $\pm$ 121
	Rank 20	10254 $\pm$ 1511	343 $\pm$ 271	174 $\pm$ 199	10224 $\pm$ 1871	436 $\pm$ 397	170 $\pm$ 254
3	Rank 1						
	Rank 10	10379 $\pm$ 1986	357 $\pm$ 293	225 $\pm$ 246			
	Rank 20	11104 $\pm$ 1749	294 $\pm$ 310	273 $\pm$ 213	10444 $\pm$ 2189	394 $\pm$ 382	258 $\pm$ 378
4	Rank 1						
	Rank 10	10600 $\pm$ 2542	315 $\pm$ 153	57 $\pm$ 26			
	Rank 20	10520 $\pm$ 1344	284 $\pm$ 225	122 $\pm$ 153	10646 $\pm$ 1369	295 $\pm$ 307	45 $\pm$ 0
5	Rank 1						
	Rank 10						
	Rank 20	10390 $\pm$ 1793	161 $\pm$ 136	61 $\pm$ 83	10574 $\pm$ 2163	332 $\pm$ 148	108 $\pm$ 99

TABLE 5: Mean  $\pm$  SD match-running performance characteristics by goal difference and team ability (finish position in the EPL).

Goal Difference	Rank Team Ability	HOME			AWAY		
		Total Distance/ 90 minutes	High-Speed Distance / 90 minutes	Sprint Distance/ 90 minutes	Total Distance/ 90 minutes	High-Speed Distance / 90 minutes	Sprint Distance/ 90 minutes
-5	Rank 1						
	Rank 10						
-4	Rank 20	10408.6 $\pm$ 1512.8	409.6 $\pm$ 219.3	73.6 $\pm$ 52.3	9826.8 $\pm$ 1509.8	136.9 $\pm$ 71.7	15.8 $\pm$ 10.3
	Rank 1						
-3	Rank 10				9928.8 $\pm$ 1023.1	401.8 $\pm$ 210.9	104.6 $\pm$ 147.5
	Rank 20	10071.4 $\pm$ 2442.6	460.1 $\pm$ 525.9	57.5 $\pm$ 26.4	9856.7 $\pm$ 971.8	406.2 $\pm$ 167.6	48.5 $\pm$ 29.4
-2	Rank 1						
	Rank 10				9878.9 $\pm$ 1142.2	416.4 $\pm$ 336.0	145.9 $\pm$ 192.2
-1	Rank 20	9732.8 $\pm$ 1483.1	409.6 $\pm$ 368.1	155.1 $\pm$ 188.9	11285.7 $\pm$ 2345.9	359.9 $\pm$ 269.9	119.1 $\pm$ 150.1
	Rank 1						
0	Rank 10				10265.3 $\pm$ 2404.0	313.3 $\pm$ 211.9	110.8 $\pm$ 156.4
	Rank 20	8586.4 $\pm$ 3251.2	329.5 $\pm$ 146.9	97.9 $\pm$ 75.3	10309.9 $\pm$ 1607.4	335.7 $\pm$ 231.3	70.9 $\pm$ 81.7
1	Rank 1						
	Rank 10	9517.9 $\pm$ 1043.2	343.3 $\pm$ 315.9		8886.7 $\pm$ 1650.6	303.5 $\pm$ 231.0	158.6 $\pm$ 138.5
2	Rank 20	10237.5 $\pm$ 2078.4	379.1 $\pm$ 282.1	121.7 $\pm$ 173.4	9962.6 $\pm$ 1332.3	321.6 $\pm$ 260.6	71.1 $\pm$ 74.8
	Rank 1						
3	Rank 10				9914.2 $\pm$ 1956.1	362.5 $\pm$ 238.2	86.4 $\pm$ 89.6
	Rank 20	10082.4 $\pm$ 2353.9	405.6 $\pm$ 330.3	90.5 $\pm$ 83.3	9914.2 $\pm$ 1956.1	362.5 $\pm$ 238.2	86.4 $\pm$ 89.6
4	Rank 1						
	Rank 10	10418.1 $\pm$ 1334.4	424.7 $\pm$ 308.4		10250.5 $\pm$ 1116.9	371.9 $\pm$ 261.6	98.9 $\pm$ 167.7
5	Rank 20	10271.1 $\pm$ 1260.1	363.1 $\pm$ 276.3	75.9 $\pm$ 91.1	10487.7 1516.9	359.5 $\pm$ 277.0	80.8 $\pm$ 137.9
	Rank 1						
6	Rank 10				10448.9 $\pm$ 1373.3	397.7 $\pm$ 312.2	96.4 $\pm$ 160.6
	Rank 20	10513.7 $\pm$ 1144.9	411.7 $\pm$ 265.1	79.2 $\pm$ 80.7	10448.9 $\pm$ 1373.3	397.7 $\pm$ 312.2	96.4 $\pm$ 160.6
7	Rank 1						
	Rank 10	10126.8 $\pm$ 1533.4	418.8 $\pm$ 318.6		10015.7 $\pm$ 1324.3	359.1 $\pm$ 252.9	83.3 $\pm$ 96.4
8	Rank 20	10321.2 $\pm$ 2163.3	346.2 $\pm$ 431.4	97.8 $\pm$ 192.3	10144.7 1390.4	393.1 $\pm$ 338.8	109.1 $\pm$ 148.3
	Rank 1						
9	Rank 10				10122.6 $\pm$ 1725.0	412.1 $\pm$ 414.8	135.3 $\pm$ 218.9
	Rank 20	9897.0 $\pm$ 1659.4	358.6 $\pm$ 403.7	63.5 $\pm$ 68.1	10040.4 $\pm$ 1505.3	350.3 $\pm$ 252.3	93.1 $\pm$ 86.8
10	Rank 1						
	Rank 10	9814.2 $\pm$ 1274.5	185.5 $\pm$ 147.8	93.8 $\pm$ 86.4	10747.9 1268.8	327.5 $\pm$ 242.6	82.5 $\pm$ 101.9
11	Rank 20	10039.2 $\pm$ 1279.9	360.2 $\pm$ 240.6	74.6 $\pm$ 130.4			
	Rank 1						
12	Rank 10				9977.1 $\pm$ 1137.8	416.2 $\pm$ 424.9	142.5 $\pm$ 163.5
	Rank 20	10133.8 $\pm$ 1913.1	358.2 $\pm$ 313.9		11165.7 2165.4	396.3 $\pm$ 371.0	283.1 $\pm$ 155.5
13	Rank 1						
	Rank 10	9909.9 $\pm$ 2186.7	351.5 $\pm$ 322.3		10078.9 $\pm$ 2007.5	431.3 $\pm$ 368.3	160.1 $\pm$ 142.8
14	Rank 20	9161.8 $\pm$ 1529.2	230.0 $\pm$ 204.9	191.9 $\pm$ 0.0	10585.8 $\pm$ 1729.5	180.1 $\pm$ 234.2	0.0 $\pm$ 0.0
	Rank 1						
15	Rank 10				9001.9 $\pm$ 2121.3	304.2 $\pm$ 426.3	26.1 $\pm$ 0.0
	Rank 20						

