

SAQ[®] Training in football

Speed, agility and



SAQ[®]

Most activity in football last approximately 5-6 seconds and for about 25 yards in distance. Football involves a start-stop process, which utilises fast twitch muscle fibres and a focus towards the anaerobic energy system. The SAQ[®] (speed, agility and quickness) training system developed in the UK can make the vital difference between winning and losing E.g. a player exploding through a defensive gap, checking, turning and side-stepping to mesmerise defenders and make a winning strike on goal.

quickness



Breno working with SAQ® founder, Alan Pearson at Bayern Munich

The ability to accelerate and decelerate in all directions with speed and precision is fundamental to athletic performance. The ability to change direction without loss of balance, strength, speed or body control characterizes the athletic excellence that sportspersons yearn to possess and spectators yearn to see. This article will outline these qualities and how they can be dramatically improved through the SAQ® International training system.

“My experience with SAQ® fundamentally changed the way I looked at my training. The SAQ® Programme is without doubt one of the reasons I still maintain my current position in the premier league at nearly 37 years old. With continued use I feel able to continue my career well into my 40’s.”

David James - Goalkeeper, Portsmouth FC, England

Sports and Activity Competent Movement

Automatic, explosive movement is what is used by an elite player to wrong foot an opponent and explode into a gap created or occupy an indefensible position. It is the sequence of actions a player will make to cut back to receive a ball, step inside and then turn to accelerate down the pitch. Through continuous, but precise, repetition the neuromuscular link between intention and action is imprinted. Players of all sports can learn to react explosively, whatever their sport, activity or playing position or experience level. With on-going SAQ® training it is possible to gradually re-train the neuro-muscular system, to re-programme and remove limits to a player’s performance. Give messages from the brain a clearer path to the muscles and the result will be an instinctively quicker football player.

SAQ® is structured by a system a progressive sequence of training ‘phases’. Called the ‘Continuum’ it gives coaches a natural confidence in delivery. Players are guaranteed to see improvements in their explosive, multi-directional speed, agility and quickness, acceleration/ deceleration, quality and speed of response control as they progress. A brief description follows:

Dynamic-Flex®

Warming-up on the move is absolutely central to SAQ® training principles. No static stretching feature immediately prior to dynamic performance, be it training or a match. Dynamic-Flex® is now established as the professional’s choice in the modern game.

Mechanics

Characterized by different sizes of ‘V’ Hurdle, the Mechanics phase precisely concentrates on optimising linear and lateral mechanics. There are an enormous number of possible drills that can be conducted with ‘V’ Hurdles, from basic to more complex and position specific so that variety is never an issue. Balls can be incorporated but, as with all SAQ® training, until a player has mastered the basic drills they should not progress.

Innervation

This 'phase' is well loved by both coach and player. It focuses on activating the neural pathways to 'fire' muscles quickly and with accuracy. This is done by using Fast Foot® ladders, ladder forms with rungs spaced ideally through which footwork drills are performed. Starting with simple drills, progressing to more complex ones the licensed SAQ® Trainer has the power to finely tune a player's movement.

Accumulation of potential

In football, skills are not isolated but clustered together e.g. run for 20 yards, decelerate, fast foot change of direction, jump, turn, side-step. In simple terms this phase combines principles and elements of the Mechanics and Innervation phases. It adds to them with the development of other skills such as balance and does so in a functional manner, literally accumulating potential to perform.

Explosion

Quickness of movement is radically improved, using functional tools like the Viper Belt (padded belt with latex resistance cord), the Sidestepper (resistance between the ankles) and the Sonic Chute (a running parachute). Fast twitch nerve fibres are recruited and players feel the effects immediately. With the guidance of their SAQ® Trainer they can continue to safely outperform players using outdated techniques.

Expression of potential

Moving on to more game-like, random play with plenty of opportunities for the SAQ® Trainer to test players' abilities and for players themselves to see how they are progressing.

Cool Down

Most easily described as Dynamic Flex® in reverse, concluding with some held stretches.

Case study

The success of the SAQ® Programme is evident (see below) following its introduction during pre-season at Norwich City F.C. The comparison is between the first home league game of last season when 3 points were at stake, 25,000 supporters were present and performance bonuses were payable.

| Norwich City F.C Performance evaluation | | | |
|--|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Performances Recorded | Distance/Time (Aug. 07) | Distance/Time (Aug. 08) | % Change post SAQ® |
| High intensity distance covered | 8.8 km | 11.1 km | 26% increase |
| Distance covered sprints | 2.1 km | 3.2 km | 52% increase |
| Distance covered high speed runs | 6.7 km | 7.9 km | 18% increase |
| Number of high intensity activities | 1160 km | 1602 km | 38.1% increase |
| Average Recovery Time | 49 secs | 45 secs | reduced by 8.1% |

Performances recorded by ProZone

Matches assessed: Norwich City vs Sheffield Wed (Aug. 07) to Norwich City vs Colchester (Aug. 08)

The players were simply unable to run at a higher intensity.

The improved stats were performed in the final friendly of the 2008 season against Colchester where the crowd was only 7000 and the only incentive was team selection.

Further details about SAQ® Awards, SAQ® Equipment and the SAQ® I-Diploma distance learning course for international students can be found at

www.saqinternational.com



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Tel: +44 (0) 1664 810 101
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