

# Footballers not running for their money

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Dr Paul Bradley.

Millions of pounds may be splashed on elite footballers in the English Premier League, but it is those who play in the second and third tier of football who run further on the pitch, new research reveals.

For years, [players](#) in the top tier of English football have been paid much higher wages compared to those in the Championship and League One. However, research at the University of Sunderland has found it is those in the lower leagues who are covering a greater distance at a higher intensity.

Research published in the journal *Human Movement Science* analysed 300 players in the English Premier League, Championship and League One. It is the first time research has looked at the match performance across all three divisions.

The research found that those in League One ran a lot further at a higher intensity than those in the Championship. The same was true when Championship players were compared to those in the Premier League. The researchers believe this could be due to more teams adopting a long ball style of play the further you go down the football pyramid.

However, academics did find that those playing in the Premier League performed a greater number of passes and successful passes. They also received the ball more often and had more touches of the ball than those in the Championship and League One.

The research, 'Match performance and physical capacity of players in the top three competitive standards of English professional soccer', could also back up the belief that players at a higher standard have a far higher level of technical skill, and do not use the long ball tactic of 'kick and rush'.

Additionally, the research found that when players were relegated from the Premier League to the Championship, they began to run more distance at a higher intensity. However, when players moved in the opposite direction they didn't change the levels of running and intensity.

Dr Paul Bradley, led the research and is a senior lecturer in Sport and Exercise Science at the University of Sunderland, said: "This research highlights that the long ball game does make you work harder, and that the context of the game dictates how each individual or team works. Some of the results were quite surprising as we expected there would be differences in the technical areas between the leagues, but not the physical nature."

The report stated: "The data provides new insight into the possible impact technical characteristics have on match running performances and highlights that players at lower standards could tax their physical capacity to a greater extent....These findings could be associated with technical characteristics inherent to lower standards that require players to tax their physical capacity to a greater extent."

**More information:** "Match performance and physical capacity of players in the top three competitive standards of English professional soccer." Bradley PS, Carling C, Gomez Diaz A, Hood P, Barnes C, Ade J, Boddy M, Krstrup P, Mohr. *M. Hum Mov Sci.* 2013 Aug;32(4):808-21. [DOI: 10.1016/j.humov.2013.06.002](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.humov.2013.06.002). Epub 2013 Aug 24.

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