

# Competitive football players have superior vision, study suggests

June 9 2017

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The visual abilities of competitive football players are substantially better than those of healthy non-athletes, according to the first-ever comprehensive assessment of visual function in English Premier League players, published in *Science and Medicine in Football*.

Average visual clarity, [contrast sensitivity](#), and near-far quickness of competitive footballers (both elite and intermediate) were significantly better than those of non-athletes. However, results showed there was no difference in visual [function](#) between the elite and intermediate players.

Interestingly, defensive players displayed faster near-far quickness than offensive players. According to the researchers, this visual function may be particularly helpful to defenders who are responsible for ensuring that the 'offside trap' is not broken and typically have to quickly switch their attention, and therefore [eye gaze](#), between several opponents in near and far locations.

In the study, researchers from Liverpool John Moores University in the UK recruited 49 elite male players from an English Premier League football club as well as 31 intermediate male players (university level). They examined visual functions that are considered critical to sport performance in players of different skill levels and playing positions using the Nike SPARQ Sensory Station.

The assessments included visual clarity (ability to see detail at a given distance), contrast sensitivity (ability to detect an object against a

background), near-far quickness (ability to change eye gaze and attention between near and far distances), and target capture. The researchers then compared these data to those from a study of 230 healthy non-athletic men and women using the same apparatus.

The study highlights the importance of good vision in [football](#) and the potential for gaining a competitive edge through vision support and training. However, the authors stress the limitations of the study and the need for further investigation to consider the specific visual demands of player position and the role for regular eye examinations.

According to the Professor Bennett: "While these findings add to the growing evidence that a good level of vision could be important in dynamic invasion sports, future studies need to determine the precise nature of the relationship with on-field performance."

**More information:** Read the full article online:

[www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/17445019.2017.1330552](http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/17445019.2017.1330552)

Provided by Taylor & Francis

Citation: Competitive football players have superior vision, study suggests (2017, June 9)  
retrieved 4 February 2024 from

<https://medicalxpress.com/news/2017-06-competitive-football-players-superior-vision.html>

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