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**Peak Running Intensity of Elite Female Field Hockey Players During Competitive Match Play.**

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**Citation** (please note it is advisable to refer to the publisher's version if you intend to cite from this work)

**McGuinness, A, Passmore, D, Malone, S and Collins, K (2020) Peak Running Intensity of Elite Female Field Hockey Players During Competitive Match Play. Journal of Strength and Conditioning Research. ISSN 1533-4287**

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1 **Category of Manuscript:** Original Article

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3 **Peak running intensity of elite female field hockey players during competitive match play**

4

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23

24 **Abstract Word Count:** 260

25

26 **Word Count:** 3500

27

28 **Number of tables and figures:** 2 tables and 3 figures

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1 **ABSTRACT**

2

3 In recent years backroom coaching staff have relied heavily on the global demands of competitive  
4 match-play to monitor running performance within training and match environments. Although, these  
5 figures help prepare players for the demands of match-play they do not account for the physical and  
6 physiological stress of the most intense periods of competition. The aim of the current study was to  
7 quantify the duration and position specific maximal running performance during match-play using a 1-  
8 10 min moving average epoch methodology. Twenty-six ( $n = 26$ ) elite international female field hockey  
9 players ( $23 \pm 3$  years;  $162.6 \pm 13$  cm;  $66 \pm 6$  kg) participated in the current observational study. Data  
10 was collected during 22 international games, resulting in over three hundred and sixty individual  
11 samples ( $n = 368$ ) being obtained for analysis. Players were categorised based on their positional lines  
12 of play (defenders, midfielders and forwards). Variables of interest included relative total ( $\text{m}\cdot\text{min}^{-1}$ ),  
13 high-speed ( $> 16 \text{ km}\cdot\text{h}^{-1}$ ;  $\text{m}\cdot\text{min}^{-1}$ ) and sprint distance ( $> 20 \text{ km}\cdot\text{h}^{-1}$ ;  $\text{m}\cdot\text{min}^{-1}$ ). Regardless of position  
14 varying differences were observed between 10 minute rolling average for relative total (*mod - large*),  
15 high-speed (*mod- large*), and sprint (*mod - large*), distance respectively. Furthermore, as the duration  
16 of the rolling average increased so too did the observed differences (*small*). The forwards ( $119.3 \pm 19.7$   
17  $\text{m}\cdot\text{min}^{-1}$ ) were reported to have the highest peak output during minute one for relative high-speed  
18 distance when compared to the defenders ( $100.7 \pm 19.7$ , ES 0.9, *large*) and the midfield ( $106.8 \pm 23.4$   
19  $\text{m}\cdot\text{min}^{-1}$ , ES 0.5, *moderate*). The results of the current study show that the running performance of field  
20 hockey players alters during match-play irrespective of moving average. Finally, the data will aid  
21 practitioners in the development of sport specific drills to adequately prepare hockey players for the  
22 maximal intensity periods of elite hockey match-play.

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25 **Key Words:** Team Sport, GPS, Intermittent exercise, Peak

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# 1 INTRODUCTION

2

3 Field hockey is a stick and ball invasive team sport which is comprised of both technical and tactical  
4 components completed at moderate to high levels of intensity (15,17). In recent years the International  
5 Hockey Federation (FIH) has introduced many rule changes to competitive match-play, with the major  
6 structural change being the change of the game from a halves based game to a quarters based game  
7 (18). Indeed, prior to 2015, competitive match-play comprised of two 35-minute halves which were  
8 separated by a ten-minute half-time. However, match-play now consists of four 15-minute quarters with  
9 a 2-minute break separating quarters and a 10-minute break for half-time, reducing the overall game  
10 time from 70 minutes to 60 minutes. The most recent rule change implemented by the FIH is the  
11 stopping of the match clock when a penalty corner is awarded. If a penalty corner is awarded both teams  
12 have 40 seconds to prepare for this high scoring opportunity, in turn increasing the overall game time  
13 by an additional 40 seconds every time a penalty corner is awarded.

14

15 Previous studies have shown that elite female field hockey players will cover on average  $4847 \pm 583$  m  
16 , representative of a work-rate of  $127.6 \pm 15.3$  m·min<sup>-1</sup>, with  $580 \pm 147$  m or  $15.3 \pm 3.9$  m·min<sup>-1</sup>  
17 performed at high-speed ( $> 16$  km·h<sup>-1</sup>) (15,17,18). McMahon and colleagues (18) were the first to report  
18 the changes to players activity profiles following the rule changes in 2015. Meanwhile, McGuinness et  
19 al., (15) reported the changes in running performance across the quarters of competitive match-play.  
20 The study reported no difference across relative total distance for players over the course of match-play  
21 however a significant difference was reported between the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter and the again between the  
22 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> quarter for relative high-speed distance. In recent years coaching staff have relied heavily on  
23 the global demands of competitive match-play to monitor running performance during training and  
24 match-play (4,6,9,12,16,21). However, due to the stop-start nature of match-play and the frequent  
25 changes in running intensity, variation in players relative running demands are to be expected.  
26 Although, these figures help prepare players for the demands of match-play they do not make  
27 allowances for the stress inflicted on players during the most intense epochs of match-play (6,14).

28

29 Advancements in match-analysis software and tracking devices has allowed for the monitoring of  
30 players within specific epochs of match-play (1,4). Bradley et al., (3) were among the first to report the  
31 high intensity activity and temporal fatigue patterns within elite soccer players with respect to position.  
32 During match-play and independent of position, players were reported to cover up to  $241 \pm 71$  m.  
33 Furthermore, results suggested that the decline in high-intensity running directly after the most intense  
34 5-minute epoch was up to ~51% ( $114 \pm 57$  m). When the positional differences were reported, attackers  
35 were shown to have the greatest decline in high-intensity running immediately after the most intensified  
36 epoch of play (~60%). Although the current study shows the inability of athletes to maintain optimal

1 performance during the most intensified 0 - 5 and 0–10 min epochs, it is hard to define exactly at what  
2 point athletes are faced with these “worst case scenario” epochs of play. Furthermore, these periods fail  
3 to account for the technical and tactical elements of match-play. Recently studies have shown the  
4 duration specific running intensities utilizing a rolling average methodology during match-play across  
5 numerous sports (4,7,10,17). Delaney et al., (5) quantified the duration specific running during  
6 professional rugby league competition with players running intensities quantified during competitive  
7 match-play using a 1–10 min rolling average epoch. It was reported that during match-play a significant  
8 difference was observed in players average relative distance ( $\text{m}\cdot\text{min}^{-1}$ ) as the time of the rolling average  
9 increased. However, no difference was observed between nine and ten minutes. During match-play the  
10 forwards were reported to cover significantly less relative distance than the rest of the positions with  
11 the full-backs covering significant greater relative distance during the 1- and 2-minute rolling averages.  
12 Malone et al., (14) reported a similar trend in Gaelic football. During match-play it was reported that  
13 the middle three positions (half-back, midfield and half-forwards) had the highest relative output ( $241$   
14  $- 255 \text{ m}\cdot\text{min}^{-1}$ ) due to the transitional role of these specific positions.

15

16 It has been suggested that as the duration of the moving average decreases the relative running demands  
17 of the athletes increases (5,14). Given the nature of field hockey and the use of rolling substitutions, the  
18 above studies provide a justification for the utilization of a 1-10-minute rolling average analysis. The  
19 use of multiple rolling average time epochs may allow teams the ability to decipher the appropriate time  
20 epoch to implement specific individual timings for their teams' rotational strategies. Additionally, such  
21 information can show the importance of duration during sport specific training as a change of up to 1  
22 minute can change the relative output of players considerably. Although significant positional changes  
23 were reported in both studies (5,14) it is important to note that these changes may not justify changes  
24 to positional training prescription. Overall the identification of the “worst case scenarios” of each  
25 individual during intermittent team sport match-play can be utilised by practitioners to build sport  
26 specific drills. These specified drills can help target specific running-based outputs that are reflective  
27 of the maximal intensity epochs during match-play. Therefore, allowing coaches to ascertain not only  
28 the technical quality of drills but also the physical quality within these drills to understand if these drills  
29 are preparing athletes appropriately for competitive play. The aim of the current study therefore is to  
30 quantify the duration and position specific maximal running performance of elite female field hockey  
31 players during match-play. It was hypothesized that forwards would have the highest running  
32 performance across all durations given their tactical role within the outlet phases of play in dynamic  
33 leading running. Additionally, forwards role in counter-attack play results in increased running  
34 demands when compared to other players.

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## 1   **METHODS**

2

### 3   *Experimental approach to the Problem*

4

5   The current observational study was designed to quantify the peak running demands of elite female  
6   field hockey players over the course of the 2017 - 2018 season encompassing the 2018 FIH World Cup.  
7   Data was collected during 22 international games, resulting in over three hundred and sixty individual  
8   samples ( $n = 368$ ). Game data was only included if a full match was completed (60 mins). During the  
9   time of data collection, the team was exposed to various playing formations during each game. Players  
10   running performance was monitored using global positioning systems (10 Hz V4, JOHAN Sports,  
11   Noordwijk, Netherlands). During match-play players were categorised into three positional lines of play  
12   specifically, defence ( $n = 119$  data files), midfield ( $n = 123$  data files) and forward ( $n = 126$  data files).  
13   All competitive matches took place between 14.00 and 20.00. Temperature during match-play ranged  
14   between 12 – 21 °C. Prior to match-play the players were advised to abstain from any strenuous activity  
15   and to maintain their normal pre-match routine. Additionally, players were reminded to continue with  
16   their pre-game dietary requirements with special emphasis being placed on the intake of fluids and  
17   carbohydrates.

18

### 19   *Subjects*

20

21   Twenty-three ( $n = 23$ ) elite international female field hockey outfield players ( $23 \pm 3$  years;  $162.6 \pm 13$   
22   cm;  $66 \pm 6$  kg) participated in the current observational study. Players were selected from the current  
23   national World Cup training squad and were therefore deemed the best players within the period of  
24   testing. Prior to data collection and after ethical approval, participants were provided with information  
25   which informed them of the purpose, benefits, and procedures of the current study. Written informed  
26   consent and medical declaration were obtained from participants in line with the procedures set by the  
27   local institution's research ethics committee, The Institute of Technology Tallaght.

28

### 29   *Activity Profiling*

30

31   During match-play athletes were required to wear an individual GPS unit (V4, JOHAN Sports,  
32   Noordwijk, Netherlands) sampling at 10-Hz, containing a tri-axial accelerometer across 22 international  
33   games, resulting in over three hundred and sixty individual samples ( $n = 368$ ). during the 2017–2018  
34   season. The GPS unit was encased within a protective harness and worn by the athletes between the  
35   shoulder blades. Previous literature has shown the coefficient of variation (CV %) of the GPS units  
36   used within the current investigation to range between 1–3 % for several running and speed based  
37   measures (20). Post-match-play in a retrospective analysis all data was extracted from each unit and

1 split using the unit's software (JOHAN Sports, Noordwijk, Netherlands). Variables of interest included  
2 relative total distance (RTD;  $\text{m}\cdot\text{min}^{-1}$ ), high-speed distance (RHID,  $\text{m}\cdot\text{min}^{-1}$ ;  $> 16 \text{ km}\cdot\text{h}^{-1}$ ) and sprint  
3 distance (RSD,  $\text{m}\cdot\text{min}^{-1}$ ;  $> 20 \text{ km}\cdot\text{h}^{-1}$ ). Once the data was uploaded to the bespoke GPS software, games  
4 were cut for each quarter and the times of the breaks between quarters were noted. Once the data was  
5 cut for quarters a segmental 1-minute analysis was conducted for all athletes across the quarters of play.  
6 The data at the end of each quarter was not included if the minute was not completed by the athlete.  
7 Once analysis was finalized it was then exported to Microsoft Excel (Microsoft, Redmond, USA) and  
8 added to customized spreadsheets to allow the calculation of players' moving averages. At this time  
9 players 1-10 min rolling average epochs were calculated for both RTD, RHID and RSD. Each players'  
10 rolling average relative distance was calculated by taking the distance covered by the athlete and  
11 dividing it by duration of the rolling average (e.g.  $345\text{m}$  in 2 minutes is equal to  $172.5 \text{ m}\cdot\text{min}^{-1}$ ).

12

### 13 *Statistical Analysis*

14

15 Data are presented as a mean (MN)  $\pm$  standard deviation (SD) with 95% confidence intervals (95% CIs)  
16 effect size (ES) and partial Eta-squared ( $\eta^2$ ) unless stated otherwise. Multiple repeated measures  
17 ANOVA's were used to determine the potential running performance differences across a 1 - 10 min  
18 rolling average epoch with respect to positional lines of play. When significant main effects were  
19 observed, Games-Howell post hoc test was applied to determine the significant differences across the  
20 position groups. The level of statistical significance was set at an accepted level of  $p < 0.05$ .  
21 Standardized effect sizes were defined as *trivial* ( $< 0.009$ ), *small* ( $0.01 - 0.08$ ), *moderate* ( $0.09 - 0.24$ )  
22 *large* ( $> 0.25$ ). Where an effect size (Cohen's D) of  $\geq 0.5$  (*medium*) was observed it was flagged as a  
23 potential difference. All statistical analyses were performed using SPSS for Windows (Version 22,  
24 SPSS Inc. Chicago, USA).

25

26

## 27 **RESULTS**

28

### 29 *Global activity profile based on a moving average*

30 Selected running variables are presented in table 1 and table 2. Firstly, results showed that there was a  
31 non-significant interaction between position and the rolling average epochs for RTD (Wilks's Lambda  
32 = 0.4,  $F(18, 16) = 0.51$ ,  $p = 0.9$ ,  $\eta^2 = 0.37$ , *large*). A main effect for time (Wilks's Lambda = 0.5,  $F(9,$   
33  $8) = 19.1$ ,  $p \leq 0.001$ ,  $\eta^2 = 0.95$ , *large*) across all three positions was observed showing a reduction in  
34 RTD over the ten-minute rolling average epochs analysed (see Table 1.). Regardless of position  
35 *moderate - large* differences were observed between 1- and 2-minute epochs when compared to 10-  
36 minute rolling average epochs (ES 0.5 - 1.4) for RTD. There was a non-significant interaction between

1 position and the rolling average epochs for RHID (Wilks's Lambda = 0.5, F (18, 16) = 0.4, p = 1.0,  $\eta^2$   
2 = 0.29, *large*), with a significant main effect for time reported (Wilks's Lambda = 0.02, F (9, 8) = 29.4,  
3 p ≤ 0.001,  $\eta^2$  = 0.97, *large*). All three positions showed a reduction in RHID over the ten-minute rolling  
4 average epochs when analysed (see Table 2.). Regardless of position *moderate* – *large* differences were  
5 observed across the 10 rolling average epochs (ES 0.7 – 2.1) for RHID. A *large* difference was  
6 observed between 1- and 2-minute epochs when compared to 10-minute rolling average epochs.  
7 Furthermore, a non-significant interaction between position and the rolling average epochs for RSD  
8 was observed (Wilks's Lambda = 0.26, F (18, 16) = 0.85, p = 0.6,  $\eta^2$  = 0.49, *large*). There was a  
9 significant main effect for time (Wilks's Lambda = 0.03, F (9, 8) = 30.76, p ≤ 0.001,  $\eta^2$  = 0.97, *large*)  
10 with all three positions showing a reduction in RSD over the 10-minute rolling average epochs (Table  
11 2.). Regardless of position *moderate* – *large* differences were observed across the 10-minute rolling  
12 average epochs (ES 0.5 – 2.5) for relative sprint distance.

13  
14 **\*\* INSERT TABLE ONE HERE \*\***

### 15 16 ***Positional Activity Profile***

17 Selected running variables are presented in table 1 and table 2. The main effect comparing the positional  
18 lines of play was non-significant for both RTD (p = 0.06, F (2, 16) = 3.6,  $\eta^2$  = 0.31, *large*) and RHID  
19 (p = 0.12, F (2, 16) = 2.4,  $\eta^2$  = 0.22, *moderate*) suggesting no significant difference in the positional  
20 demands across rolling average epochs. Multiple significant main effects were observed (ES 0.5 – 0.9)  
21 when RHID across the positional lines of play was considered (see Table 2.). Defenders were reported  
22 to have a lower peak output when compared to the midfield and forwards. The forwards ( $119.3 \pm 19.7$   
23  $\text{m}\cdot\text{min}^{-1}$ ) were reported to have the highest peak output during one-minute epochs for RHID when  
24 compared to the defenders ( $100.7 \pm 19.7$ , ES 0.9, *large*) and the midfield ( $106.8 \pm 23.4 \text{ m}\cdot\text{min}^{-1}$ , ES 0.5,  
25 *moderate*). Non-significant main effects were observed for positional lines of play (p = 0.86, F (2, 16)  
26 = 0.14,  $\eta^2$  = 0.02, *small*) when RSD was considered suggesting no differences in the positional demands  
27 for RSD during hockey match-play. Multiple significant main effects were observed (ES 0.5 – 2.5)  
28 when RHID was considered with respect to positional lines of play (see Table 2.). Defenders had a  
29 higher one-minute epoch for relative sprint output ( $67.7 \pm 8.5 \text{ m}\cdot\text{min}^{-1}$ ) when compared to the midfield  
30 ( $62.6 \pm 16.7 \text{ m}\cdot\text{min}^{-1}$ , ES 0.8, *large*) but a lower output when compared to the forwards ( $78.8 \pm 16.6$   
31  $\text{m}\cdot\text{min}^{-1}$ , ES 0.9, *large*).

32  
33 **\*\*INSERT TABLE TWO HERE\*\***

34  
35  
36



## 1 DISCUSSION

2

3 The aim of the current study was to quantify the duration and position specific maximal running  
4 performance of elite female field hockey players during match-play using a 10-minute rolling average  
5 epoch methodology. The results of the current study suggest that elite female field hockey players have  
6 a higher relative output ( $\text{m}\cdot\text{min}^{-1}$ ) across all running variables than previously reported (15,16,18).  
7 Indeed, previous literature has allowed for the quantification of the overall match-play demands but  
8 failed to consider the natural peak and troughs of these demands during competitive international  
9 hockey match-play. Our findings suggest regardless of position elite female field hockey players have  
10 a maximal running performance of  $196 \pm 14.9 \text{ m}\cdot\text{min}^{-1}$ . Furthermore, varying differences were observed  
11 over the 10-minute rolling average epochs for RTD (ES 0.5 – 1.4, moderate – large), RHID (ES 0.7 –  
12 2.1, *moderate - large*), and RSD (ES 0.5 – 2.5 *moderate - large*), respectively. Furthermore, when  
13 positional differences were considered forwards ( $119.3 \pm 19.7 \text{ m}\cdot\text{min}^{-1}$ ) were reported to have the  
14 highest peak output during 1-minute epochs for RHID ( $> 16 \text{ km}\cdot\text{h}^{-1}$ ) when compared to the defenders  
15 ( $100.7 \pm 19.7$ , ES 0.9, *large*) and the midfield players ( $106.8 \pm 23.4 \text{ m}\cdot\text{min}^{-1}$ , ES 0.5, *moderate*).

16

17 Previous literature has shown that elite female field hockey players cover between 113 - 142  $\text{m}\cdot\text{min}^{-1}$   
18 with forwards covering the highest relative total ( $142 \text{ m}\cdot\text{min}^{-1}$ ) and high-speed distance ( $18 \text{ m}\cdot\text{min}^{-1}$ )  
19 when compared to the defenders ( $115 \text{ m}\cdot\text{min}^{-1}$ ,  $14 \text{ m}\cdot\text{min}^{-1}$ ) and midfield ( $132 \text{ m}\cdot\text{min}^{-1}$ ,  $15 \text{ m}\cdot\text{min}^{-1}$ )  
20 (15,17,18). The results of the current study have shown a decrease in running performance across 1-  
21 10-min rolling epochs for peak RTD ( $215.2 - 186.3 \text{ m}\cdot\text{min}^{-1}$ ) RHID ( $119.4 - 77.6 \text{ m}\cdot\text{min}^{-1}$ ) and RSD  
22 ( $77.8 - 44.1 \text{ m}\cdot\text{min}^{-1}$ ) during competitive match-play. A major finding of the current observational study  
23 was that, as the duration of the rolling average epoch decreased, so too did the relative running  
24 performance ( $194.9 - 169.3 \text{ m}\cdot\text{min}^{-1}$ ). *Moderate - large* differences were observed between 1-minute  
25 epochs and all other epoch durations. While a *moderate* difference was reported across 3- and 4-minute  
26 epochs (ES: 0.5 – 0.7). It may be suggested that tactical decisions such as rotational strategies may be  
27 related to the observed moderate effect across the analysed running variables. During match-play teams  
28 are permitted to make “rolling” substitutions with most international teams making these substitutions  
29 within the first three to four minutes of each quarter of play. It is believed that these impact substitutions  
30 prevent the continuous drop in running performance across match-play. Our data would appear to  
31 support these coaching perceptions with a noted levelling off of across running performance variables  
32 after the first rolling epoch. Given the above findings, special consideration must be given when  
33 developing hockey specific drills to best replicate the running outputs of players during match-play  
34 with respect to rolling average epochs. However, the majority of team sports training time is spent  
35 within small-sided games (SSG). These SSG have been shown to improve the players’ technical and  
36 tactical awareness of competitive match-play (10,11). If such games are not planned correctly some

1 critical attributes (e.g. maximal velocity exposures and high-speed running distance) that have  
2 previously been shown to protect the athlete against injury will be significantly reduced (13,19). Based  
3 on the results of the current study it may be suggested that coaches monitor athletes exposure to ‘worst-  
4 case scenario’ events during match-play and utilised these data to understand potential differences  
5 between match-play demands and training demands across their specific athletes. Therefore, the results  
6 of the current study can be used to customise the duration and distance requirements of field-hockey  
7 players during specific SSG or training drills to simulate the demands of match-play.

8  
9 **\*\* INSERT FIGURE 1 & 2 HERE\*\***

10  
11 The secondary aim of the current investigation was to quantify the position specific peak running  
12 performance of elite female field hockey players during match-play. Previous literature has shown  
13 positional variations during competitive match-play exist (7,15,18). A major finding of the current study  
14 was that, as the duration of the moving average epoch increased, the distance cover by players  
15 decreased. These results were consistent across all the positional lines of play. The average peak  
16 distance achieved during the 10-minute rolling average epoch ranged between 159.7 – 201.1 m·min<sup>-1</sup>  
17 (Figure 2). The forwards were reported to have the highest RTD ( $201 \pm 11.9$  m·min<sup>-1</sup>) when compared  
18 to the midfielders ( $195.1 \pm 15.2$  m·min<sup>-1</sup>) and the defenders ( $188.4 \pm 24.8$  m·min<sup>-1</sup>) for 1-minute epochs.  
19 Similar trends were reported for RHID and RSD (Figure 3). During match-play the midfield and  
20 forwards were reported to cover significantly more RHID ( $106.8 \pm 23.4$  m·min<sup>-1</sup> &  $119.3 \pm 22.9$  m·min<sup>-1</sup>)  
21 when compared to other positional lines. Furthermore, the forwards had the highest RSD ( $20$  km·h<sup>-1</sup>  
22 <sup>1</sup>) output ( $78.8 \pm 16.6$  m·min<sup>-1</sup>). Similar trends were reported across the 10-minute rolling average epochs  
23 when position was considered. It may be suggested that the specific tactical role of both the midfielders  
24 and forwards during match-play may explain the observed positional difference. Indeed, during match-  
25 play both the midfielders and forwards are exposed to many opportunities that allow them travel at  
26 high-speed. These opportunities arise for example when a team is defending, and they turn the ball over  
27 during an opposition attacking phase in their own defensive quarter. During these counter-attacking  
28 phases of play these positions are often required to transition from defence to attack quickly covering  
29 on average 65–70 m. Additionally, due to positional spacing and the nomadic nature of the midfield  
30 position players are given the opportunity to cover vast distances allowing them to achieve high relative  
31 distances across different duration epochs. It is important to note that during match-play different phases  
32 of play or set plays may require positions to cover large distances in a condensed period of time  
33 increasing their chances of high relative outputs within specific epochs or a “worst-case scenario” event  
34 (e.g. a defensive short corner). Once the short corner has been awarded, players are required to retreat  
35 to the half way line and return to their goal quickly once the short corner has been taken. This may  
36 explain similar 1-minute epochs for RTD being completed by defenders when compared to the other

1 positional lines of play. Furthermore, midfielders and forward lines of play are often exposed to shorter  
2 rotation periods when compared to defenders. Due to their positional nature forwards are often required  
3 to spend anywhere between 4 – 6 mins in play with 3 – 4 minutes of recovery. These durations are  
4 similar to that of the midfielders who are required to complete 6 – 8 mins in match-play with 2 – 3  
5 minutes recovery. These durations are significantly different to that of the defenders, who may be  
6 exposed to rotations of 12 - 14 minutes during match-play. These longer recovery periods along with  
7 their positional demands may provide the reasoning as to both midfielders and forwards having higher  
8 “worst-case scenarios” across all epochs when compared to defenders.

9  
10 **\*\* INSERT FIGURE 3 HERE \*\***

11 When compared to previously literature the results for the relative running demands across 1-10 minute  
12 rolling average epochs within the current study were lower than that recently reported within elite  
13 female field hockey (7). Delves et al. (7) recently quantified the mean peak running intensities in sub-  
14 elite male and female field hockey in the domestic Australian hockey league (AHL). In addition to  
15 being known as the highest domestic league in Australia the AHL is also globally recognised as a league  
16 for other international athletes to join for a 6 – 8-week period thus being recognised as one of the  
17 premier club competitions within club field hockey. While our data were lower when compared to  
18 Delves et al. (7), similar trends were observed across positional lines. Both studies reported midfielders  
19 and forwards covered the highest peak distance when compared to the defenders. Furthermore the  
20 midfielders were more likely to cover more distance than the forwards. However, the results of the  
21 current observational study need to be considered within the context of the study’s limitations. Although  
22 the results of the current study include 22 international games which took place during major  
23 international tournaments, the investigation only analysed one team. Therefore, it is recommended that  
24 future research should aim to quantify the peak running performance of elite female field hockey players  
25 over multiple seasons, during each tournament and across multiple international teams. These factors  
26 will allow for a better understanding of the global running performance demands during competitive  
27 match-play across different competitive phases. By examine the effect of competition level it will allow  
28 practitioners ensure their athletes are prepared for the “worst-case scenario” of each tournament (e.g.  
29 continental championships, World cups and Olympic games). Furthermore, during the current  
30 investigation the tactical style of play during each game was not considered. Due to the fluid alteration  
31 of tactical shape during elite field hockey the authors suggest that future studies aim to examine the  
32 effect playing formation has on the global demands of elite female field hockey players both globally  
33 and with respect to duration specific epochs. The identification of how specific styles of play and the  
34 level of opposition effect the running performance of players will allow coaching staff to include plan  
35 for these contextual variables when developing SSG and training drills that aim to attain position  
36 specific “worst-case scenarios” as part of the teams overall periodised training programme.

## 1 PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS

2 To the authors' knowledge, the current study is the first to quantify the duration and position specific  
3 maximal running performance of elite international female field hockey players during competitive  
4 match-play using a 10-minute rolling average epoch methodology. The results of the current study  
5 suggest that regardless of playing position there are *moderate – large* differences observed between 10-  
6 minute rolling average epochs across specific running variables namely; relative total, high-speed and  
7 sprint distance during match-play. Furthermore, it was observed that as the duration of the rolling  
8 average epoch increased the relative distance reported for these epochs decreased. Our data suggests  
9 that forwards have the highest peak output during 1-minute epochs for RTD ( $200.7 \pm 11.8 \text{ m}\cdot\text{min}^{-1}$ ) and  
10 RHID ( $119.3 \pm 22.9 \text{ m}\cdot\text{min}^{-1}$ ) when compared to the defenders ( $188.4 \pm 16.9$ , ES 0.8, *large* &  $100.7 \pm$   
11  $19.7$ , ES 0.9, *large*) and the midfield playing positions ( $195.0 \pm 15.1$ , ES 0.4, *small* &  $106.8 \pm 23.4$   
12  $\text{m}\cdot\text{min}^{-1}$ , ES 0.5, *moderate*). Given the above, the current study has shown the need for the forward and  
13 midfield positional lines to be exposed to similar stress to mirror the demands they may face during  
14 match-play. Furthermore, the forwards should be exposed to additional position specific running which  
15 simulates their match-play requirements or specifically modified small side games that will allow them  
16 to achieve a great total distance in a shorter period of time when compared to other positional lines of  
17 play. It is important to note however that these figures represent the players “worst-case scenario” and  
18 should only be performed in moderation and as part of a structured and periodised training programme.  
19 Coaching staff and practitioners alike need to consider the results of the current study to pre-plan the  
20 specific duration for player rotations during match-play in order to maintain consistent peak running  
21 performances across duration specific epochs, these data in turn could impact the substitution policy  
22 of teams during match-play to allow each player to achieve their peak running demands across rolling  
23 epochs.

24

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## **TABLES AND FIGURES**

**Table 1.** The comparison of peak relative total distance ( $\text{m}\cdot\text{min}^{-1}$ ) outputs of elite female field hockey players for a 10-minute rolling average ( $M \pm \text{SD}$ , ES)

**Table 2.** The maximum relative high-speed ( $\text{m}\cdot\text{min}^{-1}$ ;  $> 16 \text{ km}\cdot\text{h}^{-1}$ ) and sprint ( $\text{m}\cdot\text{min}^{-1}$ ;  $> 20 \text{ km}\cdot\text{h}^{-1}$ ) distances for elite female field hockey players across the positional lines of play ( $M \pm \text{SD}$ )

The numbers 1 and 2 signify the variation across the rolling average minutes. The letters a, b, c signifies the positional variation between the defenders (a), midfield (b) and forwards (c).

**Figure 1.** The maximum relative distance ( $\text{m}\cdot\text{min}^{-1}$ ) of elite female field hockey players across a 1 to 10 - minute rolling average. ( $M \pm \text{SD}$ )

The numbers 1 and 2 signify the variation across the rolling average minutes.

**Figure 2.** The average maximum relative distance ( $\text{m}\cdot\text{min}^{-1}$ ) across the positional lines of play of elite female field hockey players during a 1 to 10 - minute rolling average. ( $M \pm \text{SD}$ )

The letters a, b, c signifies the positional variation between the defenders (a), midfield (b) and forwards (c).

**Figure 3.** The maximal relative high-speed distance ( $\text{m}\cdot\text{min}^{-1}$ ;  $> 16 \text{ km}\cdot\text{h}^{-1}$ ) of elite female field hockey players across the positional lines of play. ( $M \pm \text{SD}$ )

The letters a, b, c signifies the positional variation between the defenders (a), midfield (b) and forwards (c).

**Table 1.**

|        | 1 min                           | 2 min                           | 3 min                       | 4 min                       | 5 min                       | 6 min                       | 7 min                       | 8 min                       | 9 min                       |
|--------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 2 min  | ↓ 10.5 ± 1.3<br><i>moderate</i> |                                 |                             |                             |                             |                             |                             |                             |                             |
| 3 min  | ↓ 14.6 ± 1.4<br><i>large</i>    | ↓ 4.1 ± 0.6<br><i>small</i>     |                             |                             |                             |                             |                             |                             |                             |
| 4 min  | ↓ 16.2 ± 1.3<br><i>large</i>    | ↓ 5.7 ± 0.5<br><i>small</i>     | ↓ 1.6 ± 0.4<br><i>small</i> |                             |                             |                             |                             |                             |                             |
| 5 min  | ↓ 18.2 ± 1.4<br><i>large</i>    | ↓ 7.7 ± 0.5<br><i>small</i>     | ↓ 3.6 ± 0.4<br><i>small</i> | ↓ 2.0 ± 0.3<br><i>small</i> |                             |                             |                             |                             |                             |
| 6 min  | ↓ 19.3 ± 1.4<br><i>large</i>    | ↓ 8.8 ± 0.7<br><i>small</i>     | ↓ 4.8 ± 0.5<br><i>small</i> | ↓ 3.2 ± 0.5<br><i>small</i> | ↓ 1.2 ± 0.3<br><i>small</i> |                             |                             |                             |                             |
| 7 min  | ↓ 20.9 ± 1.6<br><i>large</i>    | ↓ 10.4 ± 0.6<br><i>moderate</i> | ↓ 6.3 ± 0.5<br><i>small</i> | ↓ 4.7 ± 0.5<br><i>small</i> | ↓ 2.7 ± 0.3<br><i>small</i> | ↓ 1.6 ± 0.3<br><i>small</i> |                             |                             |                             |
| 8 min  | ↓ 21.9 ± 1.6<br><i>large</i>    | ↓ 11.4 ± 0.7<br><i>moderate</i> | ↓ 7.3 ± 0.5<br><i>small</i> | ↓ 5.7 ± 0.5<br><i>small</i> | ↓ 3.7 ± 0.4<br><i>small</i> | ↓ 2.5 ± 0.5<br><i>small</i> | ↓ 1.0 ± 0.3<br><i>small</i> |                             |                             |
| 9 min  | ↓ 22.6 ± 1.6<br><i>large</i>    | ↓ 12.1 ± 0.7<br><i>moderate</i> | ↓ 8.0 ± 0.6<br><i>small</i> | ↓ 6.4 ± 0.5<br><i>small</i> | ↓ 4.4 ± 0.4<br><i>small</i> | ↓ 3.2 ± 0.4<br><i>small</i> | ↓ 1.7 ± 0.3<br><i>small</i> | ↓ 0.7 ± 0.2<br><i>small</i> |                             |
| 10 min | ↓ 23.9 ± 1.6<br><i>large</i>    | ↓ 13.3 ± 0.8<br><i>moderate</i> | ↓ 9.3 ± 0.6<br><i>small</i> | ↓ 7.7 ± 0.6<br><i>small</i> | ↓ 5.7 ± 0.5<br><i>small</i> | ↓ 4.5 ± 0.5<br><i>small</i> | ↓ 2.9 ± 0.4<br><i>small</i> | ↓ 1.9 ± 0.2<br><i>small</i> | ↓ 1.3 ± 0.3<br><i>small</i> |

**Table 2.**

| <i>High-Speed Distance (m.min)</i> | <b>Average</b>              | <b>Defender</b>            | <b>Midfielder</b>         | <b>Forward</b> |
|------------------------------------|-----------------------------|----------------------------|---------------------------|----------------|
| <b>1 min</b>                       | 119.4 ± 24.5                | 100.7 ± 19.7 <sup>c</sup>  | 106.8 ± 23.4 <sup>c</sup> | 119.3 ± 22.9   |
| <b>2 min</b>                       | 105.1 ± 17.8 <sup>1</sup>   | 83.7 ± 15.3 <sup>c</sup>   | 89.7 ± 20.9               | 93.6 ± 20.1    |
| <b>3 min</b>                       | 88.5 ± 16.2 <sup>1,2</sup>  | 74.9 ± 13.7 <sup>b,c</sup> | 85.6 ± 19.5               | 85.6 ± 18.3    |
| <b>4 min</b>                       | 84.8 ± 15.2 <sup>1,2</sup>  | 71.8 ± 12.6 <sup>b,c</sup> | 84.7 ± 18.6               | 83.8 ± 17.1    |
| <b>5 min</b>                       | 84.2 ± 14.6 <sup>1,2</sup>  | 71.2 ± 12.1 <sup>b,c</sup> | 80.9 ± 17.8               | 84.2 ± 16.3    |
| <b>6 min</b>                       | 85.3 ± 14.2 <sup>1,2</sup>  | 70.4 ± 11.7 <sup>b,c</sup> | 78.8 ± 17.3               | 79.2 ± 15.9    |
| <b>7 min</b>                       | 81.0 ± 13.9 <sup>1,2</sup>  | 68.1 ± 11.4 <sup>b,c</sup> | 79.5 ± 17.0               | 75.8 ± 15.6    |
| <b>8 min</b>                       | 78.9 ± 13.9 <sup>1,2</sup>  | 68.7 ± 11.3 <sup>b,c</sup> | 77.4 ± 16.8               | 75.7 ± 15.7    |
| <b>9 min</b>                       | 77.8 ± 13.9 <sup>1,2</sup>  | 66.9 ± 11.3 <sup>b,c</sup> | 75.6 ± 16.7               | 76.8 ± 15.7    |
| <b>10 min</b>                      | 77.6 ± 13.8 <sup>1,2</sup>  | 67.6 ± 11.2 <sup>b,c</sup> | 74.5 ± 16.6               | 75.9 ± 15.6    |
| <i>Sprint Distance (m.min)</i>     |                             |                            |                           |                |
| <b>1 min</b>                       | 78.8 ± 16.6 <sup>2-10</sup> | 67.7 ± 8.5 <sup>c</sup>    | 62.6 ± 16.7 <sup>c</sup>  | 78.8 ± 16.6    |
| <b>2 min</b>                       | 67.5 ± 13.3 <sup>3-10</sup> | 55.3 ± 13.7                | 54.3 ± 13.6               | 58.2 ± 13.7    |
| <b>3 min</b>                       | 59.9 ± 11.9 <sup>4-10</sup> | 51.6 ± 12.3                | 46.6 ± 12.5 <sup>c</sup>  | 54.4 ± 12.1    |
| <b>4 min</b>                       | 54.6 ± 11.0 <sup>5-10</sup> | 45.2 ± 11.4                | 44.8 ± 11.7 <sup>c</sup>  | 50.0 ± 11.5    |
| <b>5 min</b>                       | 48.8 ± 10.5 <sup>10</sup>   | 44.7 ± 11.0                | 44.2 ± 11.2               | 48.4 ± 10.6    |
| <b>6 min</b>                       | 50.3 ± 10.2 <sup>9,10</sup> | 43.4 ± 10.8                | 42.9 ± 10.8               | 45.2 ± 10.1    |
| <b>7 min</b>                       | 49.5 ± 10.0 <sup>10</sup>   | 43.0 ± 10.6                | 42.1 ± 10.5               | 43.8 ± 9.9     |
| <b>8 min</b>                       | 48.2 ± 10.0                 | 42.0 ± 10.5                | 41.3 ± 10.3               | 42.7 ± 9.8     |
| <b>9 min</b>                       | 45.1 ± 9.9                  | 39.7 ± 10.5                | 39.9 ± 10.2               | 42.8 ± 9.8     |
| <b>10 min</b>                      | 44.1 ± 9.9                  | 40.1 ± 10.5                | 38.9 ± 10.1               | 41.6 ± 9.7     |



Figure 1.

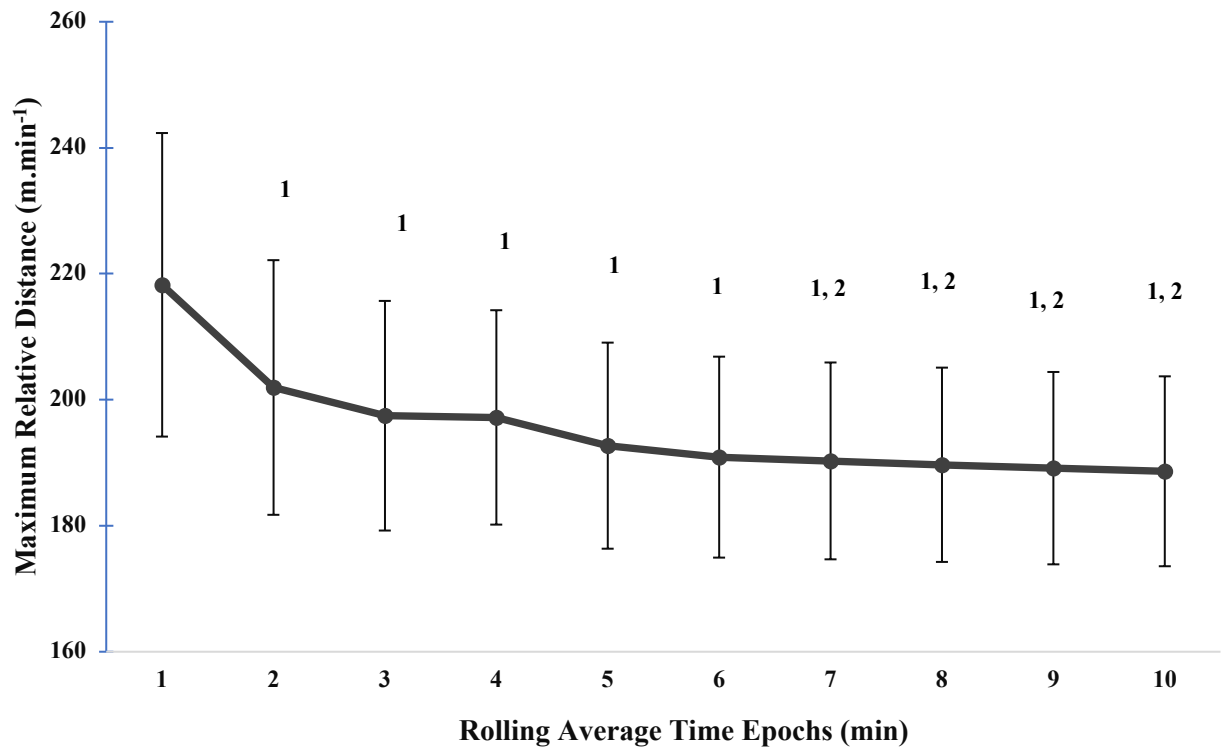


Figure 2.

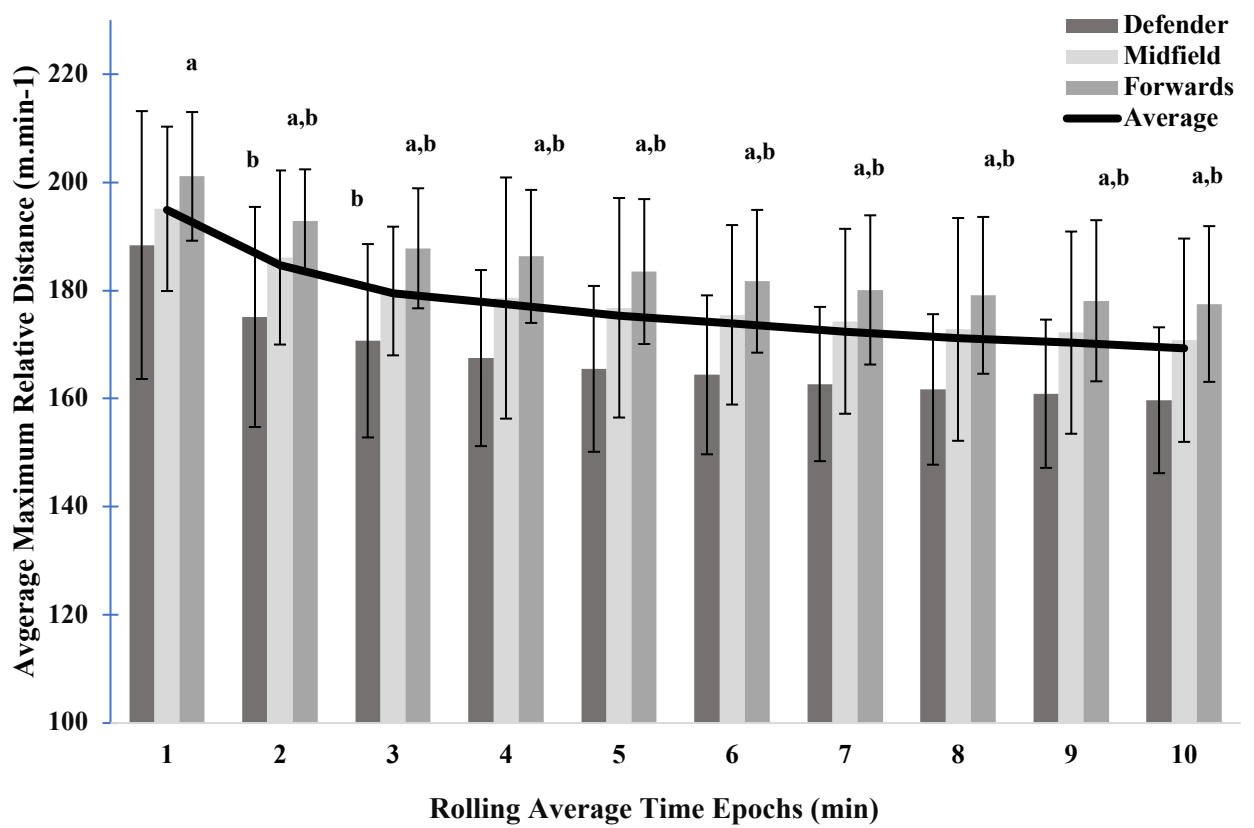


Figure 3.

