ISTRIBUTION OF TRAINING LOADS IN THE ANNUAL CYCLE OF FOOTBALL PLAYERS

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Annotation: *The volume and intensity of training loads in the annual training cycle of football players are not constant quantities; they change unevenly. Therefore, their duration is monitored based on relevant data, while the curve of training-load intensity is tracked according to the amount of load (high, medium, low). Analyzing this information makes it possible to develop principal schemes for distributing loads within the annual training cycle of football players.*

Keywords: *Annual training cycle, cycles between matches, training loads in football players, game technique and tactics, special physical qualities training, individual characteristics of players.*

Football is a mass sport with hundreds of professionals and thousands of enthusiasts. The results of recent major international football competitions show that one of the key factors ensuring a team's victory is the ability to perform sharp, fast and unexpected movements effectively. In the latest World Cup as well, several teams based their winning strategies on executing high-intensity, rapid technical and tactical actions. For instance, the Uruguay national team successfully applied this strategy, demonstrating quality performance and achieving positive results.

In addition, it became evident that a number of other national teams also prepared their playing strategies based on such tactical approaches. Since modern football requires taking these aspects into account, we believe that the preparation of football players must likewise be adapted to such conditions.

Under the initiative of President Shavkat Mirziyoyev, a development strategy for the New Uzbekistan was created. In this strategy, it is emphasized that "Further development of physical education and sports is an important factor in ensuring public health." Moreover, Objective 67 of the 2022–2026 Development Strategy of New Uzbekistan outlines the goal of increasing the number of citizens regularly engaged in physical education and sports, with a target of reaching 33 percent of the population by 2026.

Particularly during the special meeting dedicated to the development of mass sports on April 1 of the current year, the President set the goal of increasing the number of young people aged 7 to 30 who regularly engage in mass sports to 6 million. In his address on December 20, 2022, to the people of Uzbekistan, deputies of the Oliy Majlis, and Senators, he emphasized that "there is a lack of systematic work to teach physical exercises to people of different age groups." The 2023 national development strategy also gives significant attention to physical education and sports.

The volume and intensity of training loads in the annual training cycle of football players are not constant but change unevenly. Changes in the volume curve of football training loads are monitored depending on the number and duration of training sessions and competitions, while the intensity curve of training loads is observed based on the amount of load (high, medium, low). Analyzing these data makes it possible to develop fundamental models for distributing training loads within the annual cycle.

At the beginning of the annual cycle (preparatory period, January–March), the overall volume of loads is gradually increased, followed by an increase in intensity (April–July). After that, the load progressively decreases until the transition period begins. The initial intensity of training loads rises steadily throughout almost the entire annual cycle and decreases sharply only in the final phase of the competition period. In the second half of the competition period (August–September), training intensity reaches its peak. Afterwards, considering the growing fatigue of players, the intensity is gradually reduced. It is crucial to periodically reduce training load (lowering intensity) to support players' recovery. Competitions and their number are planned according to the competition calendar, taking into account their timing and difficulty. Friendly matches are scheduled according to their level of difficulty as follows:

During the preparatory period, competitions are planned with a gradual increase in importance;

during the competition period, matches are scheduled according to the players' training and readiness level;and during the transition period, the importance of competitions is gradually reduced.

All competitions are distributed by months within the annual cycle.

Rest is planned based on the number and difficulty of competitions, the volume and intensity of training sessions, and the players' level of preparation. To determine changes in the physical, technical, and tactical preparedness of football players, control tests and medical examinations must be conducted. After scheduling competition days, rest days, control tests, and medical examinations, the remaining days are allocated for training sessions of varying duration and intensity.

According to intensity, training sessions are divided into high-, medium-, and low-load sessions. Training loads must be highly individualized. The execution speed of exercises

should be 80–85% of the player's maximum speed, and by the end of the exercise, heart rate should reach approximately 175–180 beats per minute. Rest intervals should be at least 45–90 seconds and at most 3–4 minutes.

Sample weekly distribution table of the preparatory period

Table 1

Duration	Location	Tasks
1–3 weeks	Determined by the team management.	– Conducting comprehensive medical examinations; – Testing functional and physiological preparedness; – Organizing training sessions aimed at restoring and improving motor abilities and technical–tactical skills; – Improving players' moral and volitional qualities; – Developing sports form.
4–6 weeks	Determined by the team management.	– Training in game technique and tactics, as well as special physical qualities; – Enhancing psychological preparation and moral condition, taking into account the individual characteristics of the players; – Adapting to high and maximal training intensity.
7–8 weeks	Determined by the team management.	– Improving game technique and tactics under extreme conditions; – Organizing training sessions that adapt offensive and defensive actions to match

		conditions; – Perfecting standard play systems.
9–10 weeks	Determined by the team management.	– Improving team play during special training sessions and friendly matches; – Bringing all players to peak sports form and a high level of readiness for the first match.

Exercises with low load include those in which the heart rate reaches 130–150 beats per minute. The execution speed of such exercises is 50–60% of the athlete's maximum speed. Simple jogging around a circle, walking in various positions, slow dribbling, various gymnastic exercises, shooting at the goal from a stationary position, passing the ball from a standing position, learning new technical skills, and similar low-intensity activities can be included in this category.

Exercises with medium load include those performed at 70–85% of maximum speed, during which the heart rate reaches 150–165 beats per minute. For example: running from various starting positions, running different distances at varying speeds (20–30 m), high-intensity short sprints (15–20 m), standing long jumps, high jumps combined with pulling the knees to the chest, passing the ball after dribbling, dribbling in a limited area, performing various relays with the ball, fast dribbling, and similar exercises.

Exercises with high load include those in which the heart rate reaches 170–190 beats per minute. Examples include competitive-style "zigzag" running, playing tag in a limited area, jumping up from a crouched position, sprinting 8–10 meters at maximum speed while engaged with an opponent followed by shooting at a target, performing special tasks (maintaining high intensity, playing with fewer teammates, or playing in small-sided games: 2×3, 3×3, 4×4, 6×6, 8×8).

When conducting training sessions at a certain intensity level, the following factors must be considered:

a) the nature of the training session (pace, difficulty, etc.) and its duration;
b) the duration and type (passive or active) of rest intervals between exercises;
the duration of training and rest following previous training sessions or competitions;
d) the individual characteristics of the football players;
e) environmental conditions;
f) the duration of recovery after completing an exercise.

When planning training loads, it must be remembered that load volume is determined not by the duration of the training session but by its intensity. For example, 70 minutes of ball-handling work at a heart rate of 165–180 beats per minute is considered a high-load session, while the same duration of ball-handling at 130–150 beats per minute is considered a low-load session.

Sports loads are gradually increased by raising the total workload, training intensity, and duration. In this process, it is necessary to consider:
a) gradual entry into work at the beginning of each training session and competition;
b) gradual re-entry into work after rest, illness, injury, or any break in training;
c) the gradual increase or decrease of training loads in different phases, stages, and periods of the annual cycle.

Before each training session and competition, a warm-up must be conducted. Its content should be adjusted based on the condition of the players, their individual characteristics, and environmental conditions.

In training cycles and cycles between matches, gradual transitions are observed: from competitions and rest days to training sessions, from medium-load exercises to high-load exercises, and vice versa—from high-load exercises to medium- and low-load exercises. High-load exercises, however, do not elicit the exact same responses as those observed during competitions. For example, after medium-load exercises, players typically lose about 1 kg of body weight; after high-load exercises, about 2 kg; and after a match, approximately 3 kg. Similar physiological changes can be observed in indicators such as heart rate, blood pressure, breathing rate, dynamometry, and the eye's electrical sensitivity.

The effects of physical loads on specific functions, as well as on recovery reactions, depend on the type of exercises performed, their intensity and duration, the number of repetitions, and the length of rest intervals between them. Training loads are applied according to the specific requirements of football players' physical fitness, including: speed-strength preparation, general endurance improvement, and speed endurance enhancement. Both specific exercises (technical-tactical drills) and non-specific exercises (performed without the ball) are used.

Understanding the recovery processes in players' bodies after different types of physical loads is crucial. Recovery processes are monitored through various indicators such as blood pressure, electrocardiogram readings, body weight, hand muscle strength measurements, vascular tone, heart contraction frequency, eye electrical sensitivity, and response to additional loads. Adherence to recovery and hygiene requirements, as well as regular training in clean air, is important for strengthening players' health. Following these practices improves metabolism and ensures a strong and healthy musculoskeletal and nervous system.

The effectiveness of football matches depends on many factors. A team must have a certain level of preparation to organize attacking actions effectively. To execute attacks successfully in a match, players require special preparation, and team cohesion plays a key role.

As in other forms of preparation, attacking actions have their own principles, which must be followed to organize effective attacking plays.

It is well known that a football team consists of ten outfield players. Even in the most advanced teams, not all players have the same level of physical attributes, technical skill, and tactical readiness. Some players may be fast but lack endurance, while others may have the opposite characteristics. Some players may possess excellent dribbling skills or shooting ability. Historically, even the most famous footballers did not simultaneously excel in all football-related qualities.

A football player, even with a high level of overall preparedness, should develop their style of play based on their strongest attributes. Coaches, knowing the players' individual characteristics, must direct their actions toward the team's objectives and make effective use of their strengths when necessary.

For example, the Kyiv "Dynamo" team once demonstrated this approach: their midfielders (A. Konkov, V. Kolotov, V. Veremyayev, V. Bessonov, V. Muntyan, A. Bal) were highly capable of executing attacking roles effectively. They completed attacks efficiently whenever the opportunity arose. Today, in modern football, such situations are becoming common, and players are increasingly required to have universal preparedness.

During the preparatory period for highly skilled football players, it is necessary to divide the period into stages and allocate sufficient time to accomplish the tasks planned for each stage. At every stage of the preparatory period, significant attention is paid to physical, technical–tactical, and psychological preparation.

In the general preparatory stage of the preparatory period, the main focus is on developing the players' overall physical fitness in all aspects. Training sessions emphasize exercises that enhance strength, endurance, and agility.

In the special preparatory stage of the preparatory period, direct preparation for official competitions is conducted. In this stage, in addition to technical and tactical exercises, special emphasis is placed on developing speed, strength, and power-related abilities.

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