

## SPRINT PERFORMANCE OF ELITE YOUNG SOCCER PLAYERS

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The soccer player has several physical and technical capacities that allow him/her to perform with quality the art of soccer. The ability to run fast (sprint) has become fundamental for the success on soccer. Although the frequency of the sprints is not high, they are important on some vital situations of the game. In this study we determined the capacity to sprint of 82 elite non-senior soccer players from the best Portuguese soccer club. They performed 5 sprints of 30 meters, with 90" of rest between the repetitions. We measured the time spent to run 10 and 30 meters with digital watches connected to 3 pairs of photoelectric cells. We divided the players by age groups and by their position on the field. With the results we made the tables of percentiles for the weight, height and time spent to sprint over the 10 and 30 meters distance.

age groups	time at 10 m	time at 30 m	speed at 10m	speed at 30m	speed last 20m
Initiate (I) (12-14 y) n=33	1.665+0.105 1)3)	4.604+0.297	6.065+0.365 1)3)	6.543+0.412 1)3)	6.817+0.481 1)3)
Juvenile (II) (15-16 y) n=23	1.376+0.075 2)	3.894+0.179	7.280+0.377 2)	7.720+0.336 2)	7.961+0.345
Junior (III) (17-19 y) n=26	1.353+0.078	3.805+0.136	7.422+0.443	7.903+0.285	8.174+0.247

1) p<0.05 between I and III; 2) p<0.05 between II and III; 3) p<0.05 between I and III.

The average age, weight and height were 13.4, 16.0, 18.2 years, 54.2, 68.6, 71.0 Kgs, and 161.1, 172.6, 174.7 cm, respectively, for the 3 groups. The goal-keepers were in general the slowest and the forwards were almost always the fastest. The youngest players were the slowest (p<0.05) comparing with the two older groups. The differences in the performance (and also on weight and height) between the two younger groups were much higher than the differences between the older groups. The results suggest that the body dimensions and the performance are related and that after the age of 15 years the differences between the players are very small and there is small improvements on the sprint capacity after the junior age.