

# The Effect of Ball-assisted Aerobic Training on Motor Response Speed and Passing Accuracy Under Pressure in Young Football Players

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**Abstract:** This experimental study investigates the effect of ball-assisted aerobic training on reaction speed and passing accuracy under pressure among young football players. The study population was purposively selected from 145 players from youth clubs in Diyala Governorate during the 2024 sports season. The study sample consisted of 22 players from Al-Khalis Sports Club. A random draw was conducted to divide the players into two equal groups: an experimental group (11 players) and a control group (11 players). The most important issues of this study showed how ball-assisted aerobic training led to a clear improvement in reaction speed and passing accuracy under pressure among young football players. Furthermore, the most important recommendation is to regularly include ball-assisted aerobic training programs in youth training programs. With a focus on training for speed of motor response and accuracy of passing under pressure to improve technical and skillful performance in matches.

**Keywords:** Ball-Assisted Aerobic Training, Motor Response Speed, Handling Accuracy, Football.

## Introduction

Football is one of the most popular sports worldwide. Because it requires a combination of physical, technical, and mental abilities, in addition to the speed of decision-making and reaction to game variables such as ball direction, opponent movement, and available time. Aerobic training is considered one of the important foundations for enhancing a player's physical ability and overall readiness. It contributes to increasing cardiovascular endurance, improving oxygen consumption during intense performance and reducing muscle fatigue during long matches. According to the aerobic training is "a set of exercises aimed at developing" cardiovascular endurance. It increases the body's ability to consume oxygen during prolonged physical activity at moderate to high intensity," this ability is considered essential in the sport of football (Bompa & Haff, 2009).

The player needs to move long distances while maintaining physical and mental performance throughout the match. According to McMillan et al. aerobic training is "a variety of methods" (McMillan et al, 2005). Such as continuous running for specific distances or intermittent running for short and medium distance "Circular exercises that combine movement and technical skill,". Also Reilly confirmed what Thomas states that "aerobic

training is not limited to enhancing endurance capacity only" (1976). It also contributes to improving the player's technical and tactical performance, especially when combining exercises with the ball. A player who trains using aerial techniques combined with the ball learns to control the ball during physical exertion and increases reaction speed and passing accuracy under pressure, reflecting a greater ability to handle real match situations," the researcher says, adding that aerial training represents the cornerstone of physical preparation programs for football players. Combining it with ball skills provides a comprehensive training environment that simulates the demands of matches. This enhances neuro-motor response speed and improves technical performance under physical and mental stress.

Furthermore, motor response speed is considered a fundamental element for a football player. Due to the fast-paced nature of the game, which requires a high level of focus, attention, and quick response from all players. Whether they are in different positions or goalkeepers According to the duties assigned to them during training or matches, football imposes special requirements on the player. The ability to quickly change direction and make correct decisions in a short time is crucial for effective performance during play. Khayoun defined it as "the time from the moment a stimulus enters the senses to the end of the entire movement, encompassing reaction time and movement time" (2010).

This leads us to the accuracy of passing under pressure. It is considered one of the essential skills that directly affect team performance and the outcome of the match. Training under physical and mental pressure helps players maintain passing quality in competitive conditions. Combining aerobic training with ball work creates a training environment that simulates real-life pressure. This increases passing accuracy and improves ball control, hence the importance of research targeting the youth football category. Those who are in the growth and skills development stage Ball-assisted training interventions can lead to tangible improvements in technical and physical performance, and help coaches design more effective training programs. Therefore, this study contributes to improving reaction speed and passing accuracy under pressure. What enhances the individual and collective performance of the players. It increases the effectiveness of teams in sports competitions.

## **Research Problem**

By following the governorate's youth football league, the researcher notes a clear difficulty among the players in maintaining possession of the ball when facing physical or tactical pressure from opponents. The player loses the ball quickly and shows a delay in responding to changing situations on the field. This observation indicates a deficiency in ball control and reaction speed under pressure. This negatively affects individual and team performance and reduces the chances of success in matches , thus giving rise to a research problem. The researcher decided to delve into it, and he attributes this problem to a set of factors. This includes the limited physical fitness of some players, which reduces their ability to move and control the ball when tired. Weak neuromotor response, which slows decision-making when facing an oppone coupled with a lack of specialized training that integrates physical and technical skills under pressure, makes players less able to execute passes accurat situations. The research question is: What is the effect of ball-assisted aerobic

training on reaction speed and passing accuracy under pressure among young football players?

**Research objectives:**

1. Designing aerobic exercises or drills combined with the ball aimed at enhancing reaction speed and passing accuracy under pressure in young football players.
2. Identifying the impact of ball-assisted aerobic training on the physical and technical abilities of young players And to determine the extent of its contribution to improving reaction speed and passing accuracy under pressure during real-life playing situations.

**Research hypotheses:**

1. There are statistically significant differences between the pre-tests and post-tests in the research variables for the experimental and control groups.
2. There are statistically significant differences between the experimental and control groups in the post-tests of the research variables.

**Areas of Research:**

1. Human field: Al-Khalis Sports Club junior football players for the 2024 sports season.
2. Time period: 14/6/2024 to 5/8/2024.
3. Spatial area: Al-Khalis football club stadium.

**Methodology****Research Methodology**

The researcher used the experimental method, by designing two groups. experimental and controlled This design was adopted because it aligns with the research objectives.

**Research Population and Sample:**

The study sample is deliberately selectes, encompassing all junior players from clubs in Diyala Governorate during the 2024 sports season. The total number of players is (145), while the research sample consisted of the players of Al-Khalis Sports Club for Juniors, numbering (22) players. Those who were chosen were selected because they met the research requirements and could be monitored and given exercises and tests. To ensure objectivity and fairness, a random draw was conducted to divide the players into two equal groups:

- The experimental group: 11 players who underwent aerobic training combined with the ball.
- Control group: 11 players continued with regular training without any modifications, for comparison purposes.

The main issues of this study conducts exploratory experiment on 5 players outside the research sample. This is to verify the validity of the measuring and exercise tools. Adjusting procedures and timings practically This ensures the accuracy of the results and their suitability for the actual experimental phase.

**Sample homogeneity:**

**Table 1.** is shown in the variables (age - height - mass - training age).

No	Variables	unit measurement	ofIn the middlestandard of my account	deviation	The mediator	Torsion coefficient
1	the age	year	15,20	1.36	15	0.017
2	height	poison	173.15	6.16	171.5	0,934
3	The block	kg	65.7	6.77	36.5	0.679
4	Training age	month	34.8	16.05	36	0.333

From Table (1), it appears that the values of the skewness coefficient were respectively (0.017, 0.934, 0.679, 0.333), and all of them are values between (+3). “Whenever the values of the skewness coefficient are between (+3), this indicates that the scores are distributed normally. If they increase or decrease from that, then this means that there is some defect in the selection of the sample” (Alawi and Radwan, 2000, 151).

**Sample Equivalence:**

The researcher performed equivalence tests for the experimental and control groups in the pre-tests in the research tests (speed of motor response and accuracy of handling), and Table (2) shows this.

**Table 2.** The equivalence of the sample in the research variables is shown.

Statistical processing Variables	unit measurement	of-Q	c±	Value t	Error rate	Significance
Motor response speed	Experimental group	6,2	10,0	0.126	0,903	immaterial
	Control group	57,2	11,0			
Handling accuracy	Experimental group	2.5	0.52	0,429	0.678	immaterial
	Control group	2.4	0.51			

Table 2 shows that the error percentage values are greater than the error percentage under the significance level of (0.05). This indicates the equivalence of the sample in the tests under investigation.

**Information gathering methods, devices, and tools**

Methods of collecting information 2.3.1.

- Arabic and foreign sources.
- Testing and measurement.
- world wide web.

**Devices and Tools:**

- HP laptop calculator.
- A camera.
- Measuring tape.
- (12) footballs.
- Whistle.
- Stopwatch.
- An optical device that points in a specific direction (right or left).
- A small goal.
- Registration form.
- Stationery.

**Field Research Procedures****Tests Used in The Research:**

First: Motor response test: Running 10 meters to an unknown stimulus: (Ali, 2004, p. 72)

The purpose of the test: To measure the player's response time when faced with a sudden visual stimulus that determines the direction he should move towards.

**Tools used:**

- Electronic stopwatch.
- A 10-meter running track, divided into three sections: the first 5 meters are straight, and the next 5 meters are for moving right or left according to the signal.
- A light device that points in a specific direction (right or left) when activated by the supervisor.
- A proven science for determining the end of a path.

**Method of Performance:**

The player stands at the starting line in a ready position when the whistle blows, starts running quickly to the first marker at 3 meters, and then the supervisor gives the light signal to determine the direction (right or left). The player immediately heads towards the indicated direction and continues running for an additional 5 meters until he reaches the finish line.

**Registration Method:**

Time is measured in seconds from the moment the starting whistle blows until the player crosses the finish line to the designated side. The test is repeated several times (usually 3 attempts) and the average is calculated to obtain the accurate motor response time.

Second: Testing the ball towards a small target at a distance of 20 meters: (Hamza, 1999)

The purpose of the test: Measuring the accuracy of ball handling by players.

Tools used:

- Five footballs.
- A small target with dimensions of (110 cm x 63 cm).

### **Testing Procedures:**

A starting line 1-meter-long is drawn 20 meters from the small target, and the ball is placed on the starting line for each attempt as shown in the figure.

Test description:

The player stands behind the starting line facing the small goal. Upon receiving the signal, they begin passing the ball towards the goal, attempting to score. Each player is given five consecutive attempts to complete the test.

Registration method:

Scores are calculated based on the player's performance in the five attempts as follows:

- Two points for each correct attempt in which the ball enters the goal.
- 1 point if the ball does not enter the goal but touches the post or crossbar.
- 0 points if the ball goes out of bounds without touching the post or crossbar.

### **Preparing aerobic training exercises combined with a ball:**

After reviewing several previous studies related to developing the physical and technical abilities of football players, a set of ball-assisted aerobic training exercises was prepared. These exercises aim to improve reaction speed and passing accuracy under pressure in young players and were developed in a progressive and systematic manner. It includes 16 diverse exercises combining aerobic aspects and technical skills, taking into account the age group characteristics of the participants and the requirements of the game. The exercises are divided so that they begin with simple basic movements to increase endurance and ball control, then gradually progress to include more complex activities under competitive pressure, with an emphasis on quick passes. Changing directions, in addition to stimulating a rapid response to sudden stimuli, enhances the integration between the physical and technical aspects of the players. Care was taken to ensure that all exercises could be carried out within ordinary football fields with simple and readily available tools, thus ensuring that they could be applied practically with ease and effectiveness. While maintaining the element of fun and challenge for the players during training.

### **Exploratory Experiment:**

On Friday, June 14, 2024, a pilot study was conducted on five players from the research community outside the research sample to ensure the validity of the measurement tools and exercises used in the study, and to adjust the practical procedures before the main application. The pilot study aimed to test and adjust the performance time, monitor the clarity of the instructions and the method of conducting the tests, and identify any potential difficulties that the players might face during the exercise or tests.

### **Pre-tests**

Pre-tests were conducted on Monday, June 18, 2024, at Al-Khalis Sports Club stadium. The researcher and team sought to stabilize all environmental and technical conditions to ensure the consistency of the results, including ensuring the necessary equipment was ready and the distances were adjusted. The players were prepared to be in the appropriate physical and psychological condition to perform the tests. Instructions were given to each player clearly before the start of each test, with some trial attempts made to ensure that the players understood the method of performance, and the results were accurately recorded for each test.

### **Main Experiment:**

The main experiment on the experimental research sample began on Saturday, June 22, 2024. Three training sessions per week (Saturday, Monday, Friday) for six weeks. The total number of training units reached 18, and the ball-assisted aerobic training exercises were implemented according to the planned sequence. The sessions began with basic movements aimed at improving endurance and ball control, then gradually progressed to include passing drills under pressure, dribbling, quick changes of direction, and dealing with various stimuli such as colored clothing or audio signals to enhance players' reaction speed. The exercises also included various drills to increase muscle endurance during intense performance and exercises to develop attention and focus. Taking into account the level of each player and his ability to execute correctly, the last training session ended on Friday, August 2, 2024, thus completing the implementation of all the planned training sessions.

### **Post-tests**

After completing the main experiment, the post-tests were conducted on Monday, August 5, 2024 At the Al-Khalis Sports Club stadium, ensuring the same conditions were maintained as during the preliminary tests. To ensure the reliability of the results Taking into account the repetition of attempts as in the pre-tests to obtain an accurate average, it was possible to compare performance before and after the application of the ball-assisted aerobic training and to determine the statistical differences between the experimental and control groups.

### **Statistical Methods:**

SPSS statistical package to analyze and extract the results.

## Results and Discussion

### Presentation of the results of the experimental and control groups:

**Table 3.** It shows the results of the experimental and control groups in the research variables.

No:	Variables	unit of measurement	Pre-test		Post-test		Value of T	Error rate	Significance
			-Q	$\xi\pm$	-Q	$\xi\pm$			
1	Motor response speed	second	2.6	0.05	2.05	0.10	16.32	0,000	moral
3	Handling accuracy	degree	2.50	0.52	6.10	0.73	13.33	0.001	moral
Control group									
1	Motor response speed	second	2.57	11,0	2.29	0.02	8.23	1 0.00	moral
3	Handling accuracy	degree	4,2	0.52	3.75	0.16	8.38	0.001	moral

### Discussion

Table (3) shows that the research results showed statistically significant differences between the pre- and post-measurements in favor of the post-measurement for both the speed of motor response and the accuracy of passing under pressure among young football players. The researcher attributes this to the effectiveness of applying aerobic training combined with the ball in developing the physical and technical aspects of the players. The noticeable improvement in the speed of motor response is attributed to the nature of the exercises that combined continuous aerobic effort and the technical skills specific to playing, as (Laidi et al., 2023, p. 15).

This type of exercise helps to improve the efficiency of the neuromuscular system, increase the speed of decision-making and the execution of movements quickly and accurately. It also enhances the players' ability to discriminate sensory information and respond quickly to stimuli, which directly improves reaction speed during play". Al-Islam believes that "aerobic training helps to increase overall physical endurance. Meanwhile, the anaerobic elements incorporated into short-intensity exercises contributed to developing the ability to perform under conditions of sudden stress. This enhances the player's ability to maintain accuracy in passing and to act quickly during matches" (2020, p. 47).

Aerobic exercises combined with ball work play a role in improving circulatory efficiency and neuromuscular endurance. Recent foreign studies have shown that combining aerobic training with technical skills increases players' ability to translate physical improvement into skill, reflecting the practical application of the game's demands (Johnson, 2022, p. 115). Regarding passing accuracy under pressure. The results show that the combined exercises helped develop ball control and precise aiming towards the goal. Even under physical exertion or time pressure, the players' ability to maintain accuracy despite fatigue is enhanced by continuous repetition under diverse conditions, including rapid changes of direction and handling multiple stimuli.

This is attributed to the continuous repetition of these exercises state that “ball-guided aerobic exercises are among the most effective means of improving performance under pressure because they clearly contribute to improving the handling accuracy of football players.” (Youssef et al, 2019). It works to develop ball control under pressure by stimulating players to move longer distances quickly while keeping the ball in control during the movement. Such exercises enhance players' ability to accurately control the ball even in cases of physical stress, as confirmed by (Dahli et al, 2022). These exercises increase focus and sensory attention by incorporating multiple stimuli such as sound signals or different colors, which motivates players to respond quickly to stimuli. This improves the accuracy of passing the ball towards the goal or their teammates during the match. It enhances players' ability to adapt to changing game conditions.

Furthermore, combining physical endurance with technical skills helps players execute accurate passes despite fatigue, as aerobic training improves their ability to maintain a high level of focus and ball control throughout the match. Finally, the researcher concludes that these combined exercises enhance coordination between the nervous and muscular systems. This improves passing timing and handling power, and increases the player's effectiveness in different situations on the field.

**Presenting the results of the two groups (experimental and control) in the post-tests:**

**Table 4.** It shows the results of the two groups (experimental and control) in the post-tests

ability	unit measurement	ofExperimental group		Control group		Calculated T	Error rate	Significance
		-Q	ε±	-Q	ε±			
Kinetic response speed	second	2.05	0.10	2.29	0.02	7.81	0.001	moral
Handling accuracy	degree	6.10	0.73	3.75	0.16	10.42	0.000	moral

The post-test results showed clear differences between the experimental and control groups in favor of the experimental group in both the motor response speed and passing accuracy under pressure variables. This reflects the effectiveness of applying ball-assisted aerobic exercises to improve the technical and physical performance of players, as the exercises for the experimental group were designed to combine aerobic endurance with rapid movement. Evasion Technical skills with the ball: Aerobic exercises combined with the ball have proven effective in developing players, as these exercises have helped players improve their overall physical endurance and ability to perform technical skills accurately under conditions of fatigue.

The player was able to maintain a high level of focus and attention while maneuvering and passing the ball accurately. The exercises also contributed to enhancing reaction speed and proper handling of unexpected situations during play, as confirmed by Helgerud. Engen, Wisløff & Hoff who claimed “It has been shown that aerobic training contributes to improving football performance by increasing the distance covered and work

intensity.” (Helgerud, Wisløff & Hoff, 2001). Number of movements with the ball Such as changing direction quickly and dodging under pressure. In addition, These exercises helped strengthen the coordination between the nervous and muscular systems, which improved the timing of movement and the speed of executing skills, and enhanced the players' ability to cope with the pressure of matches and adapt to different game variables,” (Dehli et al, 2022).

The integration of aerobic training with technical skills contributed to reducing errors and increasing the effectiveness of technical performance. This confirms that these exercises represent an effective means of simultaneously improving the physical and technical performance of young football players. Based on the foregoing, the researcher believes that the superiority of the experimental group is due to continuous physical stimulation, which increased overall endurance and the ability to maintain performance levels despite fatigue. In addition to enhancing coordination between the nervous and muscular systems, which contributed to improving reaction speed and handling accuracy, this type of training made players more prepared to face the variables of real-world games. Such as rapid direction changes, evasion, and handling under pressure, which demonstrates that combining aerobic endurance with technical skills in a realistic field context leads to better results compared to traditional training.

## **Conclusions**

1. The application of ball-assisted aerobic exercises led to a clear improvement in the players' ability to control the ball and execute technical skills accurately under physical pressure.
2. These exercises contributed to increasing the speed of reaction and motor response of the players, enabling them to deal better with sudden situations on the field and make faster and more accurate decisions during play.

## **Recommendations:**

1. It is recommended that ball-assisted aerobic exercises be included periodically in the training programs of young football players, with an emphasis on combining physical endurance with technical skills.
2. It is recommended to design the exercises in a gradual manner and focus on evasion. Fast movement, ball control, with the introduction of various effects such as visual or audio signals to enhance the players' ability to make the right decision in sudden situations during matches.

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### Appendix (1)

It explains the exercises used in the research.

1. **Running at the signal:** The player stands at the starting line. Upon hearing an audible signal, he runs with the ball at speed towards a specific target for a distance of 10–15 meters.
2. **Running and stopping suddenly:** Sprinting with the ball for a short distance When the coach gives the signal, he stops suddenly and then changes direction to stimulate a quick response.
3. **Responding to a sudden ball impact:** If the ball is passed suddenly to a player from any direction, he must control it quickly and then pass it towards the goal.
4. **Rapid movement between cones Arrange (6) cones in a straight line.** The player must run quickly between the cones with the ball upon hearing an audible signal.
5. **Vertical running with a direct pass:** Running a specific distance and then passing the ball to a teammate as soon as he reaches a specific point, to enhance the speed of decision and reaction.
6. **Pass to a small target:** Pass the ball towards a small target 10–15 meters away while maintaining passing accuracy.
7. **Continuous passing:** The player passes the ball to a teammate repeatedly within a specific time frame. To improve control and accuracy under pressure.
8. **Passing the ball after a quick stop:** Run a short distance, then stop suddenly, then pass the ball to a specific target.
9. **Alternating passes between points:** Arranging cones or small targets. The player passes the ball sequentially between different points quickly and accurately.

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10. **Long passes between players:** Passing the ball over long distances accurately while maintaining a fast response time in passing.
  11. **Running, responding, then passing:** Running a certain distance upon receiving an audible signal, then receiving the ball and passing it accurately towards the goal.
  12. **Responding to the ball while running between the cones:** Dribbling between the cones while receiving the ball from a sudden direction and passing it quickly.
  13. **Circle exercise with consecutive passing:** The players are arranged in a circle. The player runs around his teammates and responds to the coach's signal to pass the ball to a specific teammate.
  14. **Fast running with longitudinal passing and accuracy:** Running 15–20 meters at a speed Then pass the ball a long distance accurately to a small target.
  15. **The scrolling sequence is accompanied by sound response:** The player responds to the coach's signal, changes direction, and then passes the ball accurately to a specific target.
  16. **Running with a multi-point pass:** The player runs around specific points. He responds to various signals and passes the ball to more than one target with accuracy and speed.