

The Spatiality of the Body in Football

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ABSTRACT

This research aims to address the critical issue of how the spatiality of the body intersects with football philosophy, with a specific focus on the context of training and match strategies. Traditionally, in football, coaching factors emerge within the training environment and are closely aligned with the intended game model. However, isolating these factors from the broader game model risks decontextualizing them, potentially undermining crucial aspects such as solidarity, team spirit, motivation, discipline, and rigor. Moreover, there is a pressing need to ensure that physical, technical, and psychological aspects are subordinated to tactical thinking and a relentless pursuit of victory during training sessions. This imposes a mindset of seriousness and rigor to effectively navigate the demands of complexity inherent in collective play. Drawing insights from philosophical discussions by Merleau-Ponty and Edgar Morin, as well as contributions from Manuel Sérgio and other scholars, this research seeks to deepen our understanding of the intricate relationships between players within a team. By exploring these dynamics, the study aims to shed light on how interactions among players shape team dynamics and influence individual players' perceptions within the broader coaching context. Ultimately, the paper endeavours to contribute to a nuanced comprehension of the spatial and philosophical dimensions inherent in football training processes, thus offering valuable insights for both researchers and practitioners in the field.

Keywords: Corporeality, Football Philosophy, Own Body, Complexity, Intentionality.

INTRODUCTION

According to Merleau-Ponty [quoted by Sérgio], philosophy "is an awakening, to see more and transform our world for the better." Sérgio [1] adds that philosophy "requires deep reflection, not accepting as obvious and evident all things, all ideas, all attitudes, without a critical, problematizing attitude; it is the expressed thematization of the questions that reason necessarily poses." Hence, the entire training process in football, as well as the game itself, must be thought out in minute detail, structured, and systematized to generate outcomes. As opposed to overall practice, training can reflect a complex thought, from which emerge the relationships

established between the team's players, and equally the image that players, as individuals, have of the culture they are part of.

"Operationalizing a philosophy is giving substance to intelligence, imagination, and creativity. It is the responsibility of an umbilical connection between the exercise, ideological reference, and its inventor. Evolution occurs at the pace of each exercise, each training session, each game, and each competition. It is experienced as it is constructed. The aim remains consistent: to intellectualize the behavioural dynamics among players, organize a system that embodies a philosophy, and evoke emotions. This consists in making a set of principles conscious and then subconscious to naturally exponentiate a certain way of playing" [Faria, quoted by Oliveira et al.]. In sum, it means creating intentions and habits in a constantly changing environment. In this way, the philosophy of play and training, or the principles and sub-principles providing the game model, will always be a unique process of its own identity. Established from personal knowledge, it is born and develops according to everyday experiences. It becomes a complex process and, along the way, an increasingly faithful reflection of the coaching staff. The need for continuous review requires constant consideration, meditation, and constant pondering about new ideas, emerging problems, and possible solutions, knowing in advance that situations are provisional and never fully repeatable on a daily basis. This process quickly becomes richer, more demanding, and more complex, and is always unfinished. The ongoing nature of the training process persists even if the literature has strongly relevant concepts to offer and important advances in training methodology and sport pedagogy have shown the way to operate game models within training.

The objectives of this research venture comprise a multifaceted investigation into various facets of football training. Initially, a comprehensive in-depth analysis will be conducted, scrutinizing the traditional trainable factors within the context of football training. This involves delving into the intricate dynamics and interdependencies of these factors within the framework of the intended game model. Additionally, the study will explore the contextual significance of training components by examining the implications of isolating specific elements from the central game model. Special attention will be given to understanding how the decontextualization of training elements may impact the emergence of crucial aspects of team play.

Furthermore, the research aims to investigate the operationalization of important aspects outlined by Oliveira et al. [2] and their role in shaping the team's ethos, which encompasses the collective character, values, and credibility of the team, all judged as influences towards a team's identity, cohesion, and effectiveness. This includes a focused examination of the emergence and integration of solidarity, team spirit, and other key elements within training context. The study will analyse the subordination of physical, technical, and psychological facets to tactical considerations in football training, evaluating the impact of aligning training aspects with tactical thinking and an unwavering pursuit of victory. Moreover, the research will explore the significance of the constant and systematic repetition of collective play during training. This involves an investigation into how attention to the demands of complexity enhances skill development and fosters effective teamwork. The mindset of seriousness and rigor advocated by Sérgio [1] in football training will be examined, assessing its influence on player development, team dynamics, and overall training effectiveness.

To articulate all these concepts efficiently, the narrative starts with a critical review of corporeality in football that draws insights from classical authors such as Merleau-Ponty and Edgar Morin. This includes an examination of the philosophical underpinnings of corporeality and its implications for player performance and training methodologies. The narrative will conclude with a comparative analysis of theoretical insights from classical authors and the practical realities of football. Points of convergence and divergence will be identified, providing valuable insights into the application of philosophical concepts in contemporary football training. In essence, this paper aspires to offer a philosophical grounded exploration of the spatiality of the body in football, enriching the discourse with classical philosophical perspectives and pragmatic considerations.

CORPOREALITY

Corporeality refers to the role and utilization of the body in the physical world, whose identity is shaped by socio-cultural factors determining our understanding of its existence in that place and space [3]. Green [3] explains that corporeality, which literally means to have and be a body, emphasises our existence in the physical world, through the mediation of our bodies as material objects capable of material consequences through our bodily actions. In contemporary literature, corporeality is often associated with critical disability studies though not exclusively [4], giving that corporeality denotes philosophically a body's physical form and its real intersection with varying social institutions, such as education, media, and sporting practices [5].

Historically, René Descartes [6] sought to study the theme of corporeality, being one of the first philosophers to apply a dual form to the body: the separation between the thinking subject (*res cogitans*) and the extended thing (*res extensa*), thus operationalizing a subject/object model and differentiating Philosophy from Science. He states that man as a thinking being is capable of studying the body as an extended thing, different from what s/he is, and an object in the world like all others. Accordingly, the real body is a body that can be scientifically known as an object but can only be lived as a whole [6]. For this author, the whole is the result of the sum of the parts; that is, what we understand about the whole results from what we understand about each of the parts, analysed and studied in isolation. In the case of football, a player should be understood as an indivisible body, studied through performance dimensions.

Within the scope of football, understanding a player necessitates a nuanced analysis incorporating a spectrum of performance dimensions, markedly the physical, technical, tactical, and psychological components. The physical dimension involves an intricate examination of the player's physiological attributes, including aspects such as strength, endurance, agility, and overall fitness. Technical dimensions delve into the player's skill set, including ball control, passing accuracy, shooting proficiency, and other technical abilities relevant to the sport. Tactically, the player's understanding of strategic elements, positional awareness, decision-making, and the ability to contribute to team game model are pivotal components. The psychological dimension explores into the player's mental strength, resilience, focus, motivation, and emotional intelligence, elucidating the complex interaction between cognitive and emotional factors that significantly influence performance on the football pitch.

Each of these dimensions operates synergistically, forming an integrated framework that defines the holistic identity of a football player. A scientific approach to player analysis involves

employing empirical methods, quantitative metrics, and qualitative assessments to gauge and understand these dimensions comprehensively. Physiological assessments, technical skill analyses, tactical evaluations, and psychological profiling contribute to a holistic player profile, fostering a deeper knowledge of the individual within the context of football. This multidimensional perspective is imperative for devising tailored training programs, strategic game plans, and fostering overall player development within the complex dynamics of football.

Therefore, the reality of football in the corporeal sense is based in the intersection of the players mediation of its physical capabilities, its technical evolution, its tactical understanding, and psychological development of the body. This suggests fundamentally an aspect of intracorporeally within football [3]. That is, according to Green [3], to be a body in football requires intracorporeal navigation of various aspects, therefore a body in football is always in transition across several spaces of play. Furthermore, this intracorporeally fundamentally suggests an intersection of sociality, that is how the body exists in the social world. So, if we understand the corporeality of football as developed through the physical, technical, tactical, and psychological concepts that exist only in cognisance of others, the corporeality in football must be interconnected with the social world. A relevant comparison is embedded in the social links between players in the play if analysed through the passes between specific players [7]. Hence, to speak of the corporeal/body in football is to directly detail how the body expresses its itself physically, technically, tactically, and psychologically in the social world, bringing together both subject (*res cogitans*) and object (*res extensa*).

This view is in line with Descartes's [6] ideas of dualism of the body as both a thinking being and an extended being within the social world. Indeed, *everything that I am is corporeal, and everything that I am is an extension*. For some authors like Morin, Heidegger, and Prigogine [cited by Lourenço and Ilharco], "the mathematization of beings and things decontextualizes them from the whole that is the world, from the lived and experienced reality, to only consider as intelligible and explainable realities the formulas and equations that govern quantifiable parts." The individual cannot step out of unity to study the body; therefore, they can only study the extension. Accordingly, Husserl argues that the body is known as it appears in our consciousness [9]. The phenomenon is genuinely described at the level of consciousness, studying the body as a unity as a personal phenomenon. Thus, he states that there are two bodies: *Körper*, referring to an objective body, capable of studying its parts; and *Leib*, referring to a carnal body or one's own body, which encompasses all experiences of being a body [10].

Manuel Sérgio, a Portuguese philosopher, considers the human being, like Morin, a complex, inseparable, and indivisible whole; hence, "to be a body is to be human" [1]. Comparing with Husserl's ideas, he rejects the body as a mere *res extensa*, or as a simple machine subject to the laws of nature because without the body, one ceases to be who one is; therefore, the body is not physical, not as Husserl refers to it, *Körper*, but the foundation of its entire existence, of its subjectivity, *Leib* [10]. The concept of human motricity then emerges as the human being is considered as a complex whole and something that exceeds mere movement, and rather being an intentional expression and production of the individual's and society's experience/knowledge [1]. The author advocates the transition from the body-object to the body-subject, relying on the studies of António Damásio, where "the mind is so shaped by the body and destined to serve it that only a mind can emerge in it" [11]. He believes that human motricity transitions from the physical to the body in action, and "it is not by thinking that we

exist, it is by being that we think; only through and with my body can I be myself in all my human dimension and complexity" [1].

In his reflections on corporeality, Merleau-Ponty [12] raise questions about Husserl's own body. This is because the human being does not have access to their own body within them, and it cannot be understood as a psychological reality; the body itself only appears in experiences of totality, in the experience of being an intensive body, and must be studied in this way as a lived body; this experience of the body is performed in space [12]. Thus, what the person is, is not just a physical body because it makes no sense to simultaneously have a spiritual body beside it. The author instead considers it a phenomenon, and as a phenomenon, if it is real in the body, it is real in space. It is asserted that the essence of a football player extends beyond mere physicality. Analogous to the rejection of the notion of a simultaneous spiritual body, in football, the player's identity is not divided into distinct physical and spiritual entities. Instead, the player is perceived as a comprehensive phenomenon, where the reality of their existence, skills, and contributions on the pitch is inherently linked to their physical embodiment [13].

In football, the player's skills, movements, and interactions within the game can be considered as manifestations of this phenomenon. The rejection of a separate spiritual entity implies that all of the aforementioned elements constitute the player's essence and are intricately interwoven with their physical presence on the pitch, whether it be technical prowess, tactical acumen, or psychological resilience. The dynamics of the game, the strategies employed, and the coordination among teammates are phenomena that unfold within the spatial dimensions of the football field. Furthermore, considering the player as a phenomenon in space aligns with the idea that the player's actions and contributions are inseparable from the spatial context of the game [14]. Manoeuvres, positioning, and interactions with teammates and opponents unfold within the spatial framework of the football pitch. Thus, the essence of the football player, affiliated to the human described in the statement, is a phenomenon actualised in the body and manifested in the spatial dynamics of the football environment.

To further develop the narrative, it is relevant to add a quick note about how corporeality contributes to training by emphasising the embodied experiences and physical engagements of players during training sessions. This includes how players' bodily movements, spatial awareness, and sensorimotor skills are improved and refined through game-like scenarios, ultimately shaping their performance on the pitch [15]. Additionally, understanding corporeality in the context of training allows coaches to tailor their methods to enhance players' physical capabilities, tactical understanding, and overall performance within the game model.

THE SPATIALITY OF THE OWN BODY

According to Merleau-Ponty [12], the body is a complex phenomenon studied from various perspectives and revealing itself in various ways. The author stresses that there is practical knowledge hidden in human motor skills, referred to as *Praktognosia*, that reinforces that everything starts in the body. For him, all higher knowledge begins in the movement of the body, in the knowledge that the existence of space precedes the thought of space. He refers to the existence of a lived totality, an experience of the whole body without knowing where it ends; he considers the body's outline as a boundary "ordinary spatial relationships do not transgress" because both parts relate, intertwining with each other. Therefore, the body is not just a

fragmentation of space because space would not exist without the body. Movement actively encompasses the relationship between the body and space because spatiality is assumed in action. Seeking to transfer the knowledge from the reflections made by this author to the reality of football, it can be observed that the player itself is a body involved in a specific zone of the pitch, not marked previously by any kind of delimitation, e.g., action zone, specific and different from any other player on the team. Training should then favour the practise in specific action zones where the player will later perform. Consequently, it is offered a reconceptualised view of training, one which highlights the relationship between space and the corporeal both philosophically and historically. It is argued that football would be best served by understanding the role, significance, and totality of corporeality, as it was discussed earlier, to better understand how the body creates and utilises space [16].

Simultaneously, the concept of Praktognosia, through which the learning of the lived body is carried out according to motor skills, leads us to the need to train to play according to the team's playing model. A high volume of practice based on game models is useful since it takes time to assimilate the principles and sub-principles, learning from various experiences that occur through the unpredictability of the game [17]. Training according to the unpredictability of the game allows for more unknown stimuli, simultaneously increasing the number of experiences of the lived body and lived space, improving the body's adjustment capacity in space.

Consider now the testimony of a patient that Merleau-Ponty [12] analysed on the theme: "I feel the movements as a result of the situation, the chaining of events themselves; I and my movements are only, so to speak, a link in the unfolding whole, and I am barely aware of voluntary initiative. Everything goes on its own." When this patient is asked to perform a movement on command, he places himself "in the affective situation as a whole, and it is from it that the movement flows, as in life." Regarding bodily space, there is the existence of "knowledge of the place that is reduced to a kind of coexistence with it." [12] Thus, training should reflect the practice of the game in its own space, since the body is not exclusively interior; it is in space. Therefore, training players in their own action spaces on the field creates a habituation of their actions in space. Training in the preparatory period, according to some classical authors of training methodology, in spaces outside the football pitch, is thus revealed to be decontextualised because, before thinking about the body, the body is already thinking about me, all this in space; the body is not separated from the world; it is a principle of mixture, not a principle of separation; nothing of what the player is exists outside the body and separated from space, and the actions performed are intimately linked to space.

Continuing to analyse the studies of this author, the body is not in space or even in time; it inhabits space and time because, for the body to move toward an object, the object must exist for it first: "the perception of space and the perception of the thing, the spatiality of the thing and its being as a thing, do not constitute two distinct problems: to be a body is to be tied to a certain world, and the body is not primarily in space, it is space" [12]. In other words, the body has its world and understands it without needing to go through "representations," without subordinating itself to a "symbolic" or "objectifying" function. In football, the coach should give less importance to explaining players' movements and strategies in tactical boards; this knowledge should be acquired through practise, through the exercise of game principles and body placement in space, performing the specific functions of the position. Only this motor

experience that the body performs is already a particular form of knowledge: it provides a way to access the world and the object, what we previously referred to as *Praktognosia*.

Still analysing Merleau-Ponty [12], the author considers that "habit expresses the power we have to dilate our being in the world or to change existence by annexing new instruments to ourselves." As referred to in cognitive science, it is an implicit knowledge in the limbs after the regular practice of certain movements [18]. In acquiring this habit, the body understands what needs to be done, the muscle groups and energy pathways it needs to activate. This new habit is only acquired when a new "signification" has been formed, when it has assimilated a new significant nucleus. All movements learned previously are available from a common signification since our body is a knot of living significations [12]. For them, the body is not an object for "I think"; it is a set of "lived significations" that walk toward their balance. Sometimes, a new knot of significations is formed, and our old movements integrate into a new motor entity. After so many years of practising football, the ball begins to be an extension of the player, an extension of the body during its manipulation. In that sense, the player does not need to look at it to know where it is. This analysis also refers to the need to perform integrated training, where all physical, technical, tactical, and psychological components are constantly present during exercises because only through regular practice, daily routine, with a view to improving the playing model, do new "significations" form within the team, seeking to consolidate them in such a way that they become a habit, a "lived signification". This analysis refers to what one of the world's best football coaches, José Mourinho [in Lourenço] states: "I don't know where the physical ends and the psychological or tactical begins. For me, football is totality, just like man. This man is a complex whole in his context, so working on individualised and/or decontextualised qualities of the complexity of the game is, for me, a serious mistake."

To further enrich the narrative, it is pertinent to highlight how the spatiality of the body contributes to practise and training in football. This involves acknowledging how players navigate and interact within the physical space of the pitch, utilising their bodily movements, positioning, and spatial awareness to perform tactical strategies and game plans effectively. Understanding the spatial dimensions of the body allows coaches to design training drills that simulate real-game scenarios, promoting player adaptation to different spatial contexts, and fostering a deeper understanding of spatial relationships on the pitch [15]. Moreover, integrating spatial considerations into training sessions enhances players' ability to read the game, anticipate opponents' movements, and make informed decisions in dynamic, spatially complex situations during matches [20]. Ultimately, incorporating the spatiality of the body into practice and training methodologies optimises player performance and cultivates a strategic edge for the team.

THE OPERATIONALIZATION OF COMPLEXITY

Edgar Morin [21] aimed to conceptualize a perspective that sought to encompass the entirety of the human being and the body. This is because he considers that things are known through their totality, based on previous experiences, what has been and what is already known. He states, "human beings are complex; the rational person is also the person of affectivity, myth, and delirium; the person of work is also the person of play; the empirical person is also the imaginary person; the person of the economy is also the person of consumption" [21]. He believes that the same part can perform many varied functions in many varied wholes, and the meaning given to that thing always depends on the person observing it. Thus, the perspective

of complexity emerges, considering five major principles: the primacy of the situation, the identification and reaction to stimuli, anticipation, human being as a whole, and contextualization. Marcel Mauss [also quoted by Lourenço] also states that "it is necessary to recompose the whole," that is, one must understand the correct underlying perspective, that of complex thinking, in the logic of the whole that is in the parts because we first see the whole and only then the parts, making our first and natural perception of the things in the surrounding world.

This approach of complex thinking is vital in understanding football. According to Lourenço and Ilharco [8], each part of the game, whether it's a player, a tactic, or a strategy, is interconnected and integral to the whole. To comprehend the game's intricacies, one must grasp how these individual elements relate to and influence each other within the broader context of football. Any attempt to isolate parts from the whole risks losing its significance and disrupting the balance of the game. As emphasised by Morin's research, Hegel [quoted by Lourenço and Ilharco] suggests that "truth is the whole," highlighting the importance of considering football as a unified entity rather than a collection of isolated components. Therefore, in football, players evolve beyond mere physical abilities; they become multifaceted athletes, integrating technical, psychological, and social dimensions into their performance on the pitch. According to Lourenço [19], our existence in football, much like in life, gains meaning through our connections and interactions within the game's universe.

In football, this analysis refers to the relationships between players, managers, doctors, coaches, etc., where the added value lies in the whole, which is superior to the sum of the parts. The football team should not be perceived in isolation but as a group with its identity and projects, inserted in a web of relationships and a hierarchy of structures. One should seek to imbue all these structures with the same philosophy because they have a "global dimension, and it is precisely in this globality that the perspective of complexity is operationalized and applied" [19]. As explained by the Lourenço [19], the coach must prioritize the total team, the whole man, playing as an aggregating phenomenon; the whole is something that is intuited, systematically modelled by training, doing, discovering, feeling, and doing again, always in development. Because in the player, there is no separation between the physical, technical, tactical, and psychological, just as in the human being, there is no separation between professional and personal life: there is a need to see the player as a whole in all aspects of their life, centred on a collective goal through which individual benefits can be obtained. The player is only disciplined on the pitch as part of the group if they can be disciplined outside of it, and vice versa. They must be intelligent and think to observe, as they do not play football only with the lower limbs. "The player must understand the game, and to understand it, he must understand life and the world, so he must understand society, family, politics, and so on" [19]. In other words, what matters is the athlete-human, this "complex whole" in intimate relation to the world around them, not just football but their personal life; this worldview by the player will influence their way of seeing football.

In training, the important thing is the global sports form, which includes physical, technical, tactical, psychological aspects, etc., and is measured by how the player participates in the team's regular game organization. The player is a whole that is part of another whole, which is the team, with physical, technical, tactical, and psychological characteristics that must be developed in an integrated way, that is performing as an entirety. According to Lourenço and

Ilharco [8], "training should be focused doubly on the whole: from the point of view of collective play, and from the point of view of the whole player." Thus, with this strong idea of the collective, of the whole that governs the parts, the group works towards another whole: the game [15]. This training must be seen as part of the game, not as preparation, thus "to train is to play, and to play is to train" [22].

To further develop the narrative, it's important to note how the operationalisation of complexity contributes to practise and training in football. By embracing the complexity inherent in the game, coaches and players can design training sessions that simulate real match scenarios, exposing players to the dynamic and unpredictable nature of football. This approach helps players develop adaptability, decision-making skills, and teamwork, essential qualities for success on the pitch. Additionally, incorporating complexity into training sessions fosters a deeper understanding of the game's particularly and encourages players to think critically and strategically. Ultimately, by operationalising complexity in practice, coaches can better prepare players to navigate the challenges they will encounter during matches, enhancing their overall performance and success as a team.

INTENTIONALITY

In his work about football philosophy, Sérgio [1] refers a group of authors who have sought to study the intentionality of human movement, elaborating on their perspectives. According to Stéphane Ferret, "an action is not just a gesture or series of gestures. An action is an intentional gesture or series of gestures, in the sense that they are attributable to an agent. To say that an action is intentional is also to emphasise that an action always has a purpose" [23]. Husserl states that consciousness boils down to an "intentional experience," as without intentionality, there is no creativity or decision-making ability [1]. Lévinas argues that intentionality is "essentially the act of lending meaning; it is to give meaning to what is seen, to bring it together under the same gaze, to understand it not in isolation but as a whole; it is the uninterrupted effort of totalisation, never reaching totality." [1]

Merleau-Ponty [12] mention that "human motility presupposes intentionality; the subject-body acts with meaning, with skill, with competence and purposes"; between the body and the world, there is an intimate relationship of involvement, so motility presupposes intentionality. He also highlights the transition from the object-body, where traditional physical preparation was applied in training, to the subject-body, which "acts with meaning, with skill, with competence and purposes". In this correspondence, the body is complexity, as Morin [21] states, where one cannot isolate the physical from human totality, which, according to Sérgio [1] is body-mind-desire-nature-society. In football, it is important that, according to the complexity perspective proposed by Morin [21], the ball and the player form a whole, subordinated, according to Nietzsche [quoted by Sérgio], to the demands of the "will to power" that animates this whole.

The analyses of these authors on intentionality lead us to what José Maria Pedroto [also quoted by Sérgio], one of the greatest Portuguese football coaches, was already practising in his time: "The mistake of fitness coaches and sports medicine doctors is to believe that they know an athlete by diligently studying the structure and disregarding the process, which is essentially a global process. We believe, like Hegel, that only the whole is true. Thus, in all elements and moments in which training is divided, the whole must always be present, manifesting a certain intentionality." According to Sérgio [1], human motility is always a goal-oriented practice;

hence, in football, tactics should inform practice. Thus, being a sport, football is rooted in human motility; without intentionality and the will to transcend, sports practice is not possible.

To further enrich the narrative, it's relevant to note how intentionality contributes to practice and training in football. Intentionality refers to the deliberate and purposeful actions taken by players and coaches during training sessions to achieve specific objectives. In football training, coaches design drills and tasks with clear intentions, such as improving passing accuracy, enhancing defensive positioning, or developing tactical awareness. Players engage in training with the intention of developing their skills, mastering new techniques, and preparing for competitive matches. Intentionality guides every aspect of training, from warm-ups to cool-downs, ensuring that each session is focused and productive. By incorporating intentionality into practice, coaches can optimise player development, foster a growth mindset, and maximise the effectiveness of training sessions, ultimately leading to improved performance on the pitch.

CONCLUSION

The spatiality of the body in football is a multifaceted concept that encompasses the lived experience of players as they navigate, interact, and engage with the dynamic spatial environment of the game. Drawing on phenomenological perspectives, particularly Merleau-Ponty's [12] emphasis on the embodied nature of perception and action, this paper has explored the interconnectedness of corporeality and spatiality in the context of football. The player's body is not a passive object but an active subject that shapes and is shaped by the spatial dimensions of the game. Understanding the spatiality of the body in football requires an appreciation of the player's corporeal awareness, intentionality, and ability to adapt to the constantly changing dynamics of the game. The player's body becomes a locus of meaning, a medium through which tactical understanding and strategic intentions are expressed. As football is a sport that unfolds in real time, the spatiality of the body is a dynamic and evolving aspect that demands continuous engagement and adaptation from players.

Coaches, therefore, play a crucial role in cultivating and enhancing the spatial awareness and intentionality of players during training sessions [24]. Designing drills and exercises that simulate game-like situations, encourage quick decision-making, and develop spatial intelligence can contribute to players' ability to effectively navigate the complexities of the football pitch. By integrating the concepts of corporeality and spatiality into coaching methodologies, practitioners can foster a holistic understanding of the player as an embodied agent in the game, enriching both the training process and the player's on-pitch performance.

Concluding, it is crucial to emphasise that training in isolation contradicts the logic of football. Football is inherently a team sport, requiring cohesive interaction among players to achieve success. Isolating training components from the collective game model disrupts the holistic understanding of the sport. It's essential to highlight that the whole of training sessions must reflect the sum of its parts to effectively prepare players for the dynamic and interconnected nature of football matches. Moreover, the context of play can be customised to accommodate specific characteristics, tactics, and strategies tailored to the team's strengths and weaknesses. By aligning training with the context of play, coaches can create an environment that fosters skill development, teamwork, and adaptability, ultimately enhancing the team's performance on the pitch.

Disclosure Statement

The authors report there are no competing interests to declare.

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