

Accepted Manuscript

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PII: S1440-2440(17)30478-4
DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/doi:10.1016/j.jsams.2017.06.014>
Reference: JSAMS 1553

To appear in: *Journal of Science and Medicine in Sport*

Received date: 17-3-2017
Revised date: 24-5-2017
Accepted date: 13-6-2017

Please cite this article as: Woods Carl T, Robertson Sam, Sinclair Wade H, Collier Neil French. Non-metric multidimensional performance indicator scaling reveals seasonal and team dissimilarity within the National Rugby League. *Journal of Science and Medicine in Sport* <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.jsams.2017.06.014>

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Non-metric multidimensional performance indicator scaling reveals seasonal and team dissimilarity within the National Rugby League

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Abstract

Objectives: Analysing the dissimilarity of seasonal and team profiles within elite sport may reveal the evolutionary dynamics of game-play, while highlighting the similarity of individual team profiles. This study analysed seasonal and team dissimilarity within the National Rugby League (NRL) between the 2005 to 2016 seasons.

Methods: Total seasonal values for 15 performance indicators were collected for every NRL team over the analysed period ($n = 190$ observations). Non-metric multidimensional scaling was used to reveal seasonal and team dissimilarity.

Results: Compared to the 2005 to 2011 seasons, the 2012 to 2016 seasons were in a state of flux, with a relative dissimilarity in the positioning of team profiles on the ordination surface. There was an abrupt change in performance indicator characteristics following the 2012 season, with the 2014 season reflecting a large increase in the total count of 'all run metres' ($d = 1.21$; 90% CI = 0.56 – 1.83), 'kick return metres' ($d = 2.99$; 90% CI = 2.12 – 3.84) and decrease in 'missed tackles' ($d = -2.43$;

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