



Influence of Maturation Status on Eccentric Hamstring Strength Improvements in Youth Male Soccer Players following the Nordic Hamstring Exercise

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1 **Purpose:** This study examined the effects of a 6-week nordic
2 hamstring exercise (NHE) program in youth male soccer players of
3 less mature (Pre-Peak Height Velocity [PHV]) or more mature
4 (Mid/Post-PHV) status. **Methods:** Forty-eight participants were
5 separated into Pre-PHV (11.0 ± 0.9 yrs) or Mid/Post-PHV ($13.9 \pm$
6 1.1) groups and further divided into experimental (EXP) and
7 control (CON) groups with eccentric hamstring strength assessed
8 (Nordbord) both pre and post the training program. Participants in
9 the EXP groups completed a periodised NHE program performed
10 once or twice weekly over a 6-week period. **Results:** The NHE
11 programme resulted in moderate and small increases in relative
12 eccentric hamstring strength (N.kg⁻¹) in the Pre-PHV EXP ($d =$
13 0.83 [$0.03 - 1.68$]) and Mid-PHV EXP ($d = 0.53$ [$-0.06 - 1.12$])
14 groups respectively. Moderate increases in the same measure were
15 also seen in the between-group analyses in the Pre-PHV ($d = 1.03$
16 [$0.23 - 1.84$]) and Mid-PHV groups ($d = 0.87$ [$0.22 - 1.51$]), with a
17 greater effect observed in the former. **Conclusion:** The results
18 from this study demonstrate that a 6-week NHE program can
19 improve eccentric hamstring strength in male youth soccer players
20 with less mature players achieving mostly greater benefits. The
21 findings from this study can aid in the training prescription of the
22 NHE in youth male soccer players.

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47 Introduction

48 To support the athletic development of youth soccer players
49 and to reduce their injury potential, the safest and most successful
50 training methods should be incorporated to help youth players
51 compete at the highest level.¹ Additionally, it has been suggested
52 that due to the developmental nature of youth soccer players and
53 their desire to achieve professional status, it is important to reduce
54 the occurrence of injury.² Indeed, it has recently been reported that
55 injury risk increases with age in young soccer players from as early
56 7 years old.³ In particular, to support the aforementioned within
57 soccer, the FIFA 11+ program has been developed to support the
58 prevention of lower extremity injuries for players aged 14 years
59 and above.⁴ Furthermore, evidence of the efficacy of using the
60 FIFA 11+ to reduce the incidence of injury in male youth soccer
61 players aged between 14-19 years has previously been
62 demonstrated.⁵ Therefore, the inclusion of specific injury
63 prevention strategies to mitigate injury risk in youth soccer players
64 is required.

65
66 A key component of the FIFA 11+ is the emphasis placed
67 upon the development of eccentric hamstring strength via
68 performing the nordic hamstring exercise (NHE). Its inclusion as
69 an injury prevention exercise is supported due to its ability to
70 greatly reduce hamstring injuries.⁶ For example, in elite soccer
71 players, high levels of eccentric hamstring strength has been shown
72 to reduce the risk of hamstring injury.⁵ Furthermore, the specific
73 inclusion of the NHE has been shown to reduce hamstring injury
74 risk in male adult soccer players.^{7,8,9} However, although the
75 inclusion of the NHE is recommended within the FIFA 11+ for all
76 playing levels, direct evidence supporting the beneficial effects of
77 the NHE in increasing eccentric hamstring strength in male youth
78 soccer players under the age of 14 years has not been reported.
79 Although eccentric hamstring strength was not directly measured,
80 it has recently been demonstrated that a 5-week training period
81 with two sessions per week of the FIFA 11+ warm up improved
82 body stability in male 10-year-old soccer players.¹⁰ The limited
83 information that exists pertaining to the benefits of the inclusion of
84 the NHE in developing eccentric hamstring strength in youth
85 soccer players is surprising. Indeed, this becomes further apparent
86 when considering that it has been reported that practitioners
87 working in elite English male youth soccer academies have
88 indicated that players aged 13–16 are at the greatest risk of injury
89 and that a lack of eccentric hamstring strength is amongst the most
90 important injury risk factors.¹¹

91

92 Despite the efficacy of the NHE in adult athletes, its
93 inclusion within youth athletes is not be commonplace. For
94 example, a previous iteration of FIFA 11+, simply entitled '11',
95 excluded the exercise on the basis that it was considered too
96 intense for young and inexperienced athletes.¹² In contradiction to
97 this though, a significant increase of 12.6% in eccentric hamstring
98 strength has been reported in male basketball players aged between
99 10 to 12 years following the performance of a 5-week NHE
100 training program.¹³ Therefore, although the inclusion of the NHE
101 in male youth soccer players warm-up protocols may aid in the
102 prevention of injuries, the specific improvements in eccentric
103 hamstring strength within this population is unknown. Moreover,
104 this notion is further confounded by the individual's maturation
105 status, which can influence performance capacities in youth.¹⁴ For
106 instance, in youth soccer it has been shown that maturity status in
107 male youth soccer players influences the outcomes from training
108 programs such as sprinting^{15,16} and plyometrics^{16,17} with changes
109 attributed to differences such as muscle size, co-ordination, and
110 hormonal profile.¹⁸ Therefore, the present study investigated the
111 effects of a NHE program on improvements in eccentric hamstring
112 strength in youth male soccer players, comparing responses in pre-
113 pubertal (Pre-PHV) and Mid/Post-pubertal (Mid/Post-PHV) male
114 participants. Based on previous findings of strength and power
115 training in youth athletes, we hypothesised that greater
116 improvements in eccentric hamstring strength would be observed
117 in the more mature participants.

118

119 **Methods**

120 *Design*

121 A randomized controlled trial was conducted to compare
122 the effects of six weeks of NHE training in male youth soccer
123 players. To calculate the sample size, statistical software (GPower;
124 University of Dusseldorf, Dusseldorf, Germany) was used. Given
125 the study design (4 groups, 2 repeated measures), the effect size =
126 1.05 based on a previous research investigating the effects of lower
127 limb strength training in Pre-PHV and Mid/Post-PHV young male
128 athletes,¹⁹ alpha-error <0.05, the nonsphericity correction $\epsilon = 1$, the
129 correlation between the repeated measures = 0.5, and a desired
130 power (1- β error) = 0.80, the total sample size resulted in a
131 minimum of 8 participants required in each condition.
132 Subsequently, a total of forty-eight participants were recruited
133 from the soccer team and randomly allocated
134 (www.randomizer.org) into two experimental (EXP) groups (n = 8
135 x Pre-PHV and n = 16 x Mid/Post-PHV) and two control (CON)
136 groups (n = 11 x Pre-PHV and n = 13 x Mid/Post-PHV). The

137 experiment took place within the competitive season and
138 participants continued to participate in their regular soccer training
139 programs performed twice per week for a period of 6 weeks;
140 however, the EXP groups additionally performed a NHE program
141 prior to the beginning of each soccer training session. All
142 participants were tested for eccentric hamstring strength before and
143 after the 6-week programme, by the same investigators who were
144 not blinded to the groups. During the previous two weeks prior to
145 pre-testing occurring, four separate familiarization sessions were
146 conducted for all participants to ensure technical proficiency of
147 performing the NHE. A maximum of three to five repetitions of the
148 NHE were performed in each session and this was overseen by the
149 lead researcher. Each familiarization session took place at the
150 club's training facility prior to their soccer training session and was
151 separated by a minimum of 48 hrs.

152

153 *Participants*

154 Initially, seventy-six male youth soccer players volunteered
155 to participate in the study. However, after completion of the
156 experiment, twenty-eight participants had to be removed from the
157 study because they did not follow the targeted adherence rate, were
158 released by the club or did not present for post-training tests. No
159 participants were excluded from the study due to injury. Subject
160 characteristics per maturity level and training group are presented
161 in Table 1. All participants were free from lower-limb
162 musculoskeletal injuries prior to the start of the study, were
163 physically active, had ≥ 2 years of soccer experience, participating
164 regularly in training at their club. Participants were not involved
165 with any formalised strength and conditioning programmes and
166 had no prior experience of performing the NHE. Parental informed
167 consent was obtained for participants as they were under the age of
168 18 years. The University Research Committee provided ethical
169 approval prior to testing beginning and the study was completed in
170 accordance with the Declaration of Helsinki.

171

172 ***Insert Table 1 near here***

173

174 *Procedures*

175 Eccentric hamstring strength was tested both before and
176 after the training intervention. These tests were performed a
177 minimum of 48 h after the most recent training session or match to
178 allow appropriate recovery. Prior to each testing session, the
179 participants completed the same standardised warm up which was
180 subsequently completed prior to all training sessions. The warm up
181 lasted approximately 10 minutes and included low intensity
182 jogging, change of direction drills, lower-limb dynamic stretching

183 and jumping based tasks. All participants in the EXP and CON
184 groups performed soccer specific training with the club, twice per
185 week, on a Monday and Wednesday evening from 6pm-9pm. A
186 weekly competitive match was scheduled on a Saturday.

187

188 *Anthropometrics*

189 Before testing started, data on age, stature and body mass
190 were recorded to assert each player's current maturation status.
191 Body mass measurements were also collected following
192 completion of the training program prior to follow-up-testing
193 occurring. Participants' standing and seated height were measured
194 using a stadiometer (Seca Model 213, Birmingham, England), to
195 the nearest 0.1 cm. Body mass was measured, using a calibrated
196 electronic scale (Seca Model 813, Birmingham, England), to the
197 nearest 0.1 kg. To estimate maturity status, these anthropometric
198 measurements were taken and entered into an equation to predict
199 maturity offset,²⁰ within an error of ± 1 year, 95% of the time. The
200 assessment is a non-invasive and practical method of predicting
201 years from PHV as a measure of maturity offset. Maturation
202 groups were divided in accordance to previous recommendations
203 with Pre-PHV participants categorized as < -2 years from PHV,
204 whilst Mid/Post-PHV were between -1 to $+2.5$ years from PHV.²¹

205

206 *Eccentric Hamstring Strength*

207 The NHE was performed on the NordBord apparatus
208 (Nordbord, Vald Performance, Australia) which has been shown to
209 be a reliable device to assess eccentric hamstring strength (IC =
210 $0.83-0.90$ and CV% = $5.8\%-8.5\%$).²² Similarly, we have found
211 values for between session relative reliability for male youth
212 soccer players from our lab (CV% = $6.1-7.4\%$). All baseline and
213 follow-up testing occurred at the same location and facility which
214 was the team's training centre. For the assessment of eccentric
215 hamstring strength, participants were instructed to kneel on the
216 padded part of the NordBord and were positioned with their ankles
217 secured with padded hooks, which were attached to load cells.
218 Participants' position was altered so that ankles would be
219 perpendicular to the lower leg and the hooks were positioned
220 superior to the lateral malleolus. The NHE was performed using an
221 eccentric muscle action of the knee flexors and participants were
222 instructed to gradually lower the upper body trying to resist the
223 movement by contracting the hamstrings and keeping the trunk and
224 hips held in a neutral position throughout. Participants were
225 encouraged upright posture with their spine and pelvis in a neutral
226 position. Participants' arms were flexed at the elbow joints such
227 that the palms of the hands were facing forward at the level of the
228 shoulder joints. The participants were allowed to use their arms in

229 the final stages of the movement to buffer the fall as they
230 approached the ground. For the ascent, the research personnel
231 assisted the participants back to the starting position. Due to the
232 inherent maturation-related differences in strength that existed
233 between the experimental groups, we elected only to include
234 relative peak force as an outcome measure, instead of absolute
235 peak force which would have favoured the Mid-PHV groups in the
236 analyses. Relative peak force normalised to body mass ($N \cdot kg^{-1}$) for
237 each leg of the three trials was recorded in newton's (N) using
238 LabChart 7.3 (AD Instruments, New South Wales, Australia) and
239 subsequently analyzed in a pre-designed excel spreadsheet with the
240 average of each limb from the three trials added together and
241 divided by two to provide a bilateral score which was used for data
242 analysis.

243

244 *Training Programs*

245 The NHE program lasted six weeks (Table 2). To be
246 included in the final analyses, participants were required to
247 complete at least 85% of the total training sessions (nine of eleven
248 scheduled sessions). This adherence threshold was chosen to
249 reflect a recent experiment in male youth soccer players that also
250 used a similar training program duration.²³ Furthermore, greater
251 benefits in strength have been reported when compliance over this
252 threshold has been achieved.²⁴ To monitor the compliance to the
253 NHE protocol, participants' attendance rates at the training
254 sessions were recorded for each individual session by a strength
255 and conditioning coach using a registration form which was
256 subsequently confirmed by the respective age group coach. To
257 ensure the correct execution of the NHE each training group was
258 allocated a strength and conditioning coach to oversee the training
259 program, which helped provided the participants with instructions
260 regarding their technique where necessary. Each session was
261 separated by a minimum of 48 hrs. The NHE program was
262 immediately performed after the warm-up.

263

264

Insert Table 2 near here

265

266 The structure of the NHE program was adapted from
267 previous recommendations with the volume of training
268 progressively increasing weekly.⁹ Coaching cues and instructions
269 used throughout the training program were the same as those
270 provided throughout the aforementioned NHE testing procedures.
271 Identical weekly increases in NHE training volume was performed
272 for both EXP groups and each participant alternated between
273 performing one set and assisting their partner in doing the same
274 with approximately 60-90 seconds of inter-set rest provided.

275 Whilst the EXP group completed the NHE program, the CON
276 group participated in low intensity passing drills until the main
277 training session begun in which both groups completed the same
278 soccer training. No formal sprint training was scheduled within the
279 training sessions throughout the experiment period as it has been
280 recently reported that improvements in eccentric hamstring
281 strength in adolescents can be improved to a similar extent via
282 sprint training or the NHE.²⁵

283

284 *Statistical Analysis*

285 Initial analyses were performed using SPSS) (version 23,
286 IBM Corp., Armonk, NY, USA). The Shapiro-Wilk test was
287 conducted to test for normality in each variable and this condition
288 was satisfied ($P < 0.05$). Independent samples t-tests were used to
289 test for any differences between each maturity groups EXP and
290 CON conditions for anthropometric measures and initial eccentric
291 hamstring strength. Thereafter, magnitude-based inferences were
292 used to quantify within- and between-group differences from
293 baseline to follow-up, and to compare changes in experimental and
294 control conditions respectively. Uncertainty in the effect sizes (d)
295 was represented by 90% confidence limits.²⁶ Effect sizes were
296 interpreted using previously outlined ranges [<0.2 = trivial, 0.2-
297 0.6 = small, 0.6-1.2 = moderate, 1.2-2.0 = large, 2.0-4.0 = very
298 large, >4.0 = extremely large].²⁷ An effect size of 0.2 was
299 considered the 'smallest worthwhile difference'.²⁶ The scale for
300 interpreting the probability that the result was significant was as
301 follows: almost certainly not = $<1\%$; 1-5% = very unlikely; 5-25%
302 = unlikely; possibly = 25-75%; likely = 75-95%; very likely = 95-
303 99.5%; most likely $>99.5\%$ and was calculated using an online
304 spreadsheet.²⁸ Differences were considered unclear if the
305 confidence interval overlapped thresholds for substantial positive
306 and negative values. Data are presented as mean \pm SD.

307

308 **Results**

309 No significant differences ($p > 0.05$) between the Pre-PHV
310 and Mid/Post-PHV experimental groups and their respective
311 control group for anthropometric and initial eccentric hamstring
312 measures were found. Effect sizes and their descriptors and
313 likelihood estimates of beneficial effects for within and between
314 group analyses are shown in Tables 3 and 4, respectively.

315

316 ***Insert Tables 3 and 4 near here***

317

318 Within-group analyses showed an increase in relative peak
319 force in both EXP groups although this was improved to a greater
320 extent in Pre-PHV compared to Mid/Post-PHV ($d = 0.83$ vs. 0.53).

321 Both Pre-PHV and Mid/Post-PHV CON groups demonstrated
322 trivial increases.

323

324 Between-group analyses revealed moderate increases in
325 both maturity groups with the larger effect size being seen in the
326 Pre-PHV group ($d = 1.03$ vs. 0.87).

327

328 Discussion

329

330 The aim of this study was to examine the effects of a NHE
331 program on improving eccentric hamstring strength in youth male
332 soccer players of different maturation status, comparing Pre-PHV
333 and Mid/Post-PHV players. The within-group analyses revealed
334 that the inclusion of the NHE increased relative eccentric
335 hamstring strength in both Pre-PHV and Mid/Post-PHV groups,
336 although larger effects were observed in the Pre-PHV group.
337 Additionally, both control groups yielded no changes in eccentric
338 hamstring strength values from pre to post testing. To the authors'
339 knowledge, this is the first study to demonstrate the effectiveness
340 of the NHE in developing eccentric hamstring strength in male
341 youth soccer players and to specifically compare the influence of
342 different maturation status on this outcome.

342

343 The Pre-PHV and Mid/Post-PHV EXP groups increased
344 relative peak force by ~19% and ~10%, respectively. These
345 findings are similar to those previously reported in studies
346 following a NHE program in which increases of absolute and
347 normalised eccentric hamstring strength have been reported to be
348 ~11% and ~14% in well-trained soccer players following a 10-
349 week (250-286 repetitions) or 4-week (162 repetitions) NHE
350 training program, respectively.^{29,30} Similarly, in amateur male
351 soccer players, a 12 week (642 repetitions) NHE program
352 performed either before or after training resulted in increases in
353 eccentric hamstring strength of ~12%.³¹ Furthermore, in male
354 adults with no prior experience of performing the NHE, similar to
355 the participants used in this study, increases of ~15% in eccentric
356 hamstring strength has been shown following a 6-week (340
357 repetitions) NHE program.³² However, we do acknowledge that
358 such comparisons in the changes in eccentric hamstring strength in
359 our study should be taken with caution due to the differences in the
360 assessment method used. Nonetheless, the current findings suggest
361 that a well-structured NHE programme conducted over a 6-week
362 training period is sufficient to elicit beneficial changes in eccentric
363 hamstring strength in male youth soccer players, without causing
364 injury.

365

366 To the authors' knowledge, only one previous study has
367 investigated the effects of the NHE in male youth athletes with
368 male youth basketball players, aged 10-12 years, increasing their
369 eccentric hamstring strength.¹³ The participants in that study
370 completed 232-304 repetitions over a 5-week period which
371 resulted in a 12.6% increase in eccentric hamstring strength.
372 Although our study resulted in similar increases, these were
373 achieved with a total of 162 repetitions. Therefore, it appears that
374 increases in eccentric hamstring strength via the completion of use
375 of NHE training program in youth male soccer players can be
376 achieved via relatively modest training volumes. However,
377 whether such improvements can be made with lower training
378 volumes within this population remains to be seen as it has been
379 recently demonstrated that in elite youth soccer players a low
380 volume NHE programme, including just 10 repetitions per week, is
381 sufficient to elicit benefits in eccentric hamstring strength.³³ In
382 particular, our finding of increased strength in the Pre-PHV EXP
383 group is interesting as, to date, some doubt over the
384 appropriateness of this exercise for use in a prepubertal population
385 had been expressed.¹² However, in this study we demonstrated
386 performance gains that were also achieved without any occurrence
387 of musculoskeletal injuries. Participants who withdrew from the
388 study, due to failing to meet the agreed training adherence rate, did
389 so due to other issues, rather than factors such as muscle soreness
390 that have been thought to be associated with the use of eccentric
391 exercise in younger individuals. Indeed, conceptions such as these
392 would not be supported by current evidence in any case.^{34,35}

393
394 Our results also showed that although the NHE program
395 resulted in improvements in eccentric hamstring strength in both
396 EXP groups, the magnitude of the effects were greater in Pre-PHV
397 than in Mid/Post-PHV (Table 3). We chose relative strength as an
398 outcome measure as higher body mass and absolute strength can
399 influence total eccentric hamstring strength scores in the NHE
400 exercise.³⁶ Relatedly, our finding that pre-pubertal boys responding
401 more positively to resistance training than post-pubertal boys is not
402 entirely in agreement with previous research in which it has been
403 demonstrated that more mature males experience greater
404 improvements in strength and power-related characteristics than
405 less mature males.^{19,37,38} However, it may indicate the importance
406 in ingraining relative strength as a base for absolute strength in less
407 mature individuals from an early age. From an exercise
408 prescription standpoint, a potential explanation for the differences
409 in responses between the EXP groups may be due to the possible
410 inadequate stimulus of the NHE program for the Mid/Post-PHV
411 group. For example, whilst both groups within this study had no

412 prior experience of the NHE, the greater chronological age of the
413 Mid/Post-PHV group may have acted as a surrogate of training
414 age, whereby older players have adapted positively from a longer
415 training history.³⁹ Indeed, in adolescents it has recently been
416 reported that eccentric hamstring strength can be improved to a
417 similar extent via sprint training or the NHE.²⁵ Therefore, whilst
418 high-speed sprint training was avoided during the training
419 program, the Mid/Post-PHV group players' higher training age and
420 exposure to training stimuli, such as sprinting, may have meant
421 that the NHE program produced a lower adaptation than that seen
422 in the Pre-PHV group. Consequently, Mid/Post-PHV athletes may
423 require an altered training prescription.

424

425 In light of the aforementioned, the programming of the
426 NHE during growth and maturation may require further specificity
427 to optimise its effectiveness. For example, due to only bodyweight
428 being used as the loading strategy in this study, it could be
429 speculated that this may have inadvertently provided a lower
430 training stimulus for the Mid/Post-PHV group. This is because
431 performance of the NHE is largely body mass dependent and it has
432 been predicted that soccer players should be expected to achieve
433 eccentric hamstring strength scores (N) of $4 \times \text{BM (kg)} + 26.1$
434 when assessed with the Nordbord.³⁶ Therefore, considering the
435 initial relative strength scores of the Mid/Post-PHV ($4.69\text{N}\cdot\text{kg}^{-1}$)
436 compared to those of the Pre-PHV EXP group ($4.27\text{N}\cdot\text{kg}^{-1}$), this
437 may have created a ceiling of adaptation for the more mature
438 individuals, especially with training volume being equated. Indeed,
439 it has been reported that additional loads, such as weighted vests,
440 should be used during the NHE to promote strength increases.⁴⁰
441 Therefore, although unknown, there may be a certain threshold of
442 eccentric hamstring strength that, once achieved, requires further
443 augmentation to provide sufficient overload. Another potential
444 explanation for this may be that the NHE presented an altered
445 motor control strategy for the Mid/Post-PHV group, which
446 subsequently influenced the performance of the exercise. This is
447 because during the NHE, as the trunk moves forward, the
448 movement becomes progressively uncontrolled due to the
449 shortening of the hamstring moment arm whilst the body mass
450 moment arm lengthens.⁴¹ Therefore, due to alterations in both
451 upper and lower limb lengths during PHV and accompanying
452 changes in body mass,²⁰ it could be plausible that this increases the
453 complexity of the NHE during the growth spurt, which
454 subsequently may impact performance of the exercise. However,
455 this requires further investigation.

456

457 This study is not without limitations. Due to the age range
458 of the participants available for this study, it was not possible to
459 include separate Mid-PHV and Post-PHV groups (a combined
460 Mid/Post group was used). Considering responses to training
461 stimuli can differ between these maturation groups,^{17,42} it would be
462 beneficial to examine such effects in future. In addition, although
463 improvements in eccentric hamstring strength were evident within
464 and between maturation groups, the mechanisms behind such
465 adaptations are unknown. Therefore, future studies could examine
466 the effects of the NHE in youth athletes accounting for changes
467 such as muscle action and muscle architecture, in addition to effect
468 on physical fitness tests such as jumping, sprinting and
469 deceleration.

470

471 **Practical Applications**

472 Whilst current guidelines such as the FIFA 11+ provide
473 helpful guidelines for the inclusion of the NHE, the training
474 program used in this study provides a potentially more structured
475 periodised program that can be followed by inexperienced youth
476 athletes. Furthermore, the inclusion of NHE may be utilised with
477 youth male soccer players from the age of 10 years old. Therefore,
478 the inclusion of a low dosage NHE programme, as part of a well-
479 structured warm prior to soccer training, in male youth players is
480 advised. However, we suggest that technical proficiency in the
481 NHE should be taught prior to its inclusion within the athlete's
482 long-term physical development plan and that the NHE forms part
483 of a holistic strength and conditioning programme that enhances
484 physical fitness in male youth soccer players.

485

486 **Conclusion**

487 This is the first study to examine the effects of a NHE
488 program on eccentric hamstring strength in male youth soccer
489 players of different maturation status. Results show the completion
490 of a 6 week NHE provides beneficial increases in eccentric
491 hamstring strength in both Pre-PHV and Mid/Post-PHV players
492 although larger improvements were observed in less mature
493 players. The training program utilised within this study may help
494 practitioners working with male youth soccer players to implement
495 the NHE into their training programmes.

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Table 1. Participants characteristics (mean [SD])

Maturation Status	Group	Number	Age (yrs)	Standing Height (cm)	Seated Height (cm)	Body Mass (kg)	PHV Offset (yrs)
Pre-PHV	EXP	8	11.0 ± 0.9	144.2 ± 4.4	71.5 ± 2.0	37.7 ± 2.8	-2.8 ± 0.3
	CON	11	10.9 ± 0.8	147.2 ± 4.4	72.5 ± 3.0	40.3 ± 4.1	-2.7 ± 0.5
Mid/Post-PHV	EXP	16	14.0 ± 1.1	172.3 ± 7.0	84.6 ± 3.4	61.8 ± 6.3	0.4 ± 0.9
	CON	13	13.7 ± 1.0	171.9 ± 8.3	85.1 ± 4.3	59.5 ± 8.3	0.1 ± 0.8

Note: PHV: Peak height velocity; EXP: Experimental; CON: Control.

Table 2. 6 week nordic hamstring exercise training programme.

Week	Frequency	Prescription	Total Weekly Volume
1	1	2 x 5	10
2	2	2 x 5	20
3	2	2 x 6	24
4	2	3 x 6 (S1), 2 x 6 (S2)	30
5	2	3 x 6	36
6	2	3 x 8 (s1), 3 x 6 (S2)	42

Note: S1: session 1 ; S2: session 2.

Table 3: Within-group analysis for pre and post scores, effect sizes (ES) with 90% confidence intervals, % outcome of likelihood effect is beneficial, trivial or harmful and odds ratio for eccentric hamstring strength normalised to body mass (N.kg⁻¹)

Pre-PHV	Pre (N.kg⁻¹)	Post (N.kg⁻¹)	ES (90% CI)	ES Descriptor	Beneficial	Trivial	Harmful	Odds Ratio
EXP (n=8)	4.27 ± 0.88	4.95 ± 0.76	0.83 (0.03 - 1.68)	Moderate	Likely (90.3%)	Unlikely (7.1%)	Very Unlikely (2.6%)	357
CON (n=11)	4.24 ± 0.83	4.20 ± 0.70	-0.05 (-0.75 - 0.65)	Trivial	Most Unlikely (0%)	Most Likely (100%)	Most Unlikely (0%)	0
Mid/Post-PHV	Pre (N.kg⁻¹)	Post (N.kg⁻¹)	ES (90% CI)	ES Descriptor	Beneficial	Trivial	Harmful	Odds Ratio
EXP (n=16)	4.69 ± 0.85	5.17 ± 0.95	0.53 (-0.06 - 1.12)	Small	Likely (85.4%)	Unlikely (13.2%)	Very Unlikely (1.4%)	397
CON (n=13)	4.45 ± 0.69	4.43 ± 0.72	-0.03 (-0.67 - 0.20)	Trivial	Most Unlikely (0%)	Most Likely (100%)	Most Unlikely (0%)	0

Table 4: Between-group analysis for pre and post scores, effect sizes (ES) with 90% confidence intervals, % outcome of likelihood effect is beneficial, trivial or harmful and odds ratio for eccentric hamstring strength normalised to body mass (N.kg⁻¹)

Variable	Group	ES	ES Descriptor	Beneficial	Trivial	Harmful	Odds Ratio
Relative peak force (N.kg ⁻¹)	Pre-PHV EXP vs Pre-PHV CON	1.03 (0.23 - 1.84)	Moderate	Likely (91.1%)	Unlikely (6.3%)	Very Unlikely (2.6%)	373
	Mid/Post-PHV EXP vs Mid/Post-PHV CON	0.87 (0.22 - 1.51)	Moderate	Likely (89.9%)	Very Unlikely (7.8%)	Very Unlikely (2.3%)	384